

Australia



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General information

- Australia officially known as the Commonwealth of Australia, is a country comprising the mainland of the Australian continent, the island of Tasmania, and numerous smaller islands.
- It is the world's sixth-largest country by total area.
- The capital of Australia is Canberra.
- The largest city is Sydney.



The name

- The name Australia is derived from the Latin Terra Australis ("southern land") a name used for putative lands in the southern hemisphere since ancient times. The earliest recorded use of the word Australia in English was in 1625 in "A note of Australia del Espíritu Santo", written by Sir Richard Hakluyt, published by Samuel Purchas.
- On 12 December 1817, Macquarie recommended to the Colonial Office that it be formally adopted. In 1824, the Admiralty agreed that the continent should be known officially as Australia.



History

- Human habitation of the Australian continent began between 42,000 and 48,000 years ago, with the migration of people by land bridges and short sea-crossings from Southeast Asia.
- At the time of European settlement in the late 18th century, most Indigenous Australians were hunter-gatherers, with a complex oral culture and spiritual values based on the respect for the land and a belief in the Dreamtime.



Environment/Climate

- Australia includes a range of habitats. From alpine heaths to tropical rainforests.
- About 85% of flowering plants, 84% of mammals, more than 45% of birds, and 89% of temperate-zone fish. Australia has the greatest number of reptiles of any country, with 755 species.
- The climate of Australia is influenced by ocean currents, including the Indian ocean. Much of the northern part of the country has a tropical, summer-rainfall climate. The southwest corner of the country has a Mediterranean climate.



Language

- Although Australia has no official language, English has always been the national language.
- Australian English is a variety of the language with a different accent and lexicon and slightly different from other varieties of English in grammar and spelling.
- According to the 2011, English is the only language for close to 81% of the population. The next most common languages are Mandarin (1.7%), Italian (1.5%), Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.3%), Greek (1.3%), and Vietnamese (1.2%)

Culture

- Since 1788, Australian culture has been strongly influenced by Anglo-Celtic Western culture. Cultural features have also arisen from Australia's natural environment and Indigenous cultures. Since the mid-20th century, American popular culture has strongly influenced Australia, particularly through television and cinema. Other cultural influences come from Asian countries and through non-English-speaking nations.



Education

- Education is the responsibility of the individual states, but in general, children are required to attend school from the age of 5 up until 16.
- In some states children aged 16–17 are required to either attend school or participate in training.
- Australia has an adult literacy rate that was estimated to be 99% in 2003. However, a 2011–12 report said that Tasmania has a literacy and numeracy rate of only 50%.

Art

- The rock art of Australia's Indigenous peoples is the oldest and richest in the world, dating as far back as 60,000 years and spread across hundreds of thousands of sites.
- During the first century of European settlement, colonial artists, trained in Europe, showed a fascination with the unfamiliar land.
- Australian literature grew slowly in the decades following European settlement.



Music

- The music of Australia has an extensive history. Indigenous Australian music is a part of the unique heritage of a 40,000–60,000 year history.
- Australia's biggest selling domestic hit is: 'You are the one that I want', by Australian singer Olivia Newton John.

THE END