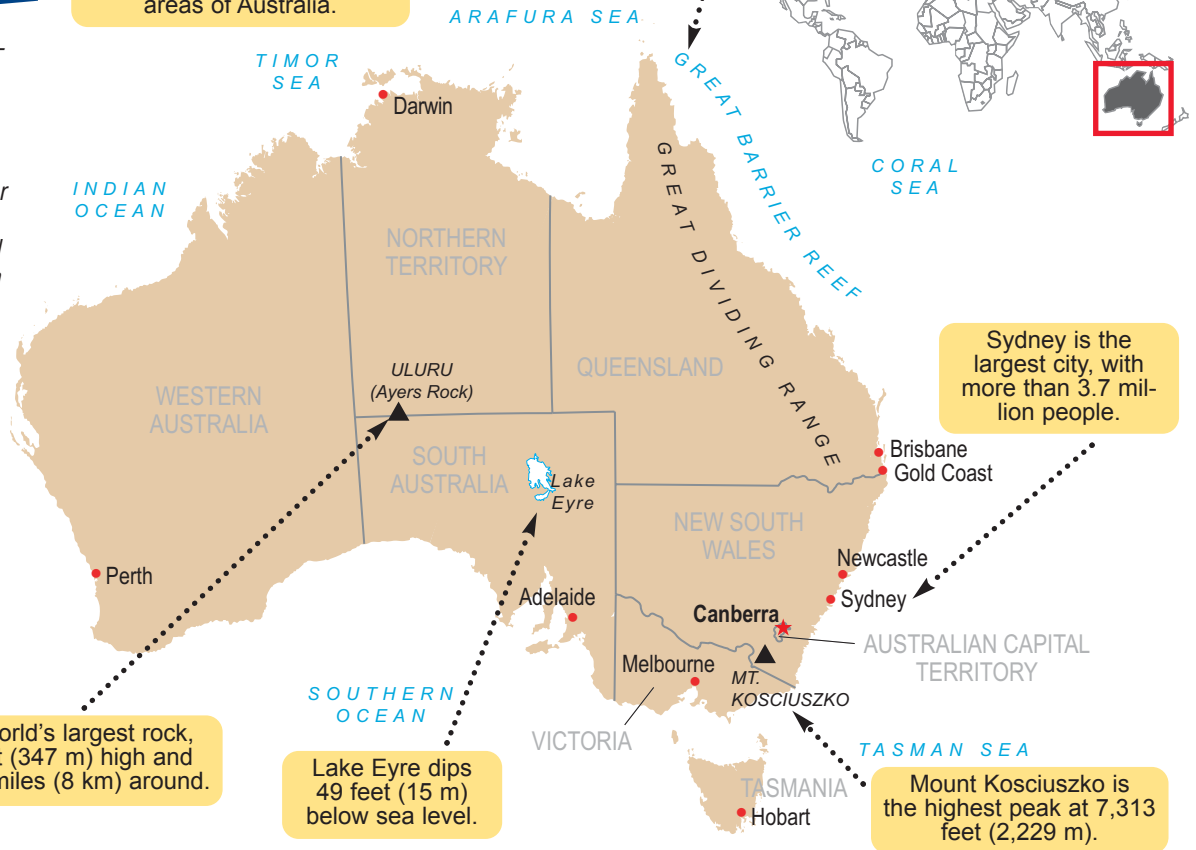




Australia's flag was adopted in 1909. The five stars represent the Southern Cross, a constellation in the Southern Hemisphere. The larger seven-point star is for the country's six states plus territories, and the Union Jack emblem in the upper left corner represents Australia's ties to the United Kingdom.

The Outback includes all remote, deserted, and harsh areas of Australia.

The Great Barrier Reef is the largest area of coral reefs in the world.



Australia is the driest inhabited continent in the world.

Uluru, the world's largest rock, is 1,140 feet (347 m) high and more than 5 miles (8 km) around.

Lake Eyre dips 49 feet (15 m) below sea level.

Sydney is the largest city, with more than 3.7 million people.

Mount Kosciuszko is the highest peak at 7,313 feet (2,229 m).

Land and Climate

Australia is the only country that spans an entire continent, and it is the sixth largest country in the world. One-third of the land is desert and another third is poor-quality land. The best farmland is east of the Great Dividing Range mountain chain. Wheat and cattle are raised to the west. The Outback, though mostly barren, is a symbol of Australia's strength and independence. Since Australia lies in the Southern Hemisphere, summer is from December to February and winter is June through August. In the cities, summer temperatures range from 70°F to 90°F (20–32°C). The interior is much, much hotter. Northern cities have warmer winters (50–80°F, or 10–27°C) than southern cities (30–50°F, or -1 to 10°C).



National Bird—
Emu

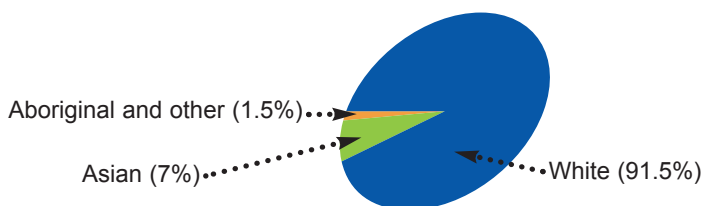


National Animal—
Kangaroo



National Flower—
Golden wattle

Population (19.2 Million)



Can You Say It in Aussie?

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Hello | G'day |
| What do you think? | What d'ya reckon? |
| Excuse me? | Ay? |
| Well done | Good on ya |
| Let's have a barbecue | Let's have a barbie |
| Do you want some candy? | Want a lolly? |

Remote Prison

Although the Dutch explored Australia in 1620, most of it was left alone until 1770, when Captain James Cook claimed the east coast for England. The first 1,500 Europeans arrived in 1788, but most were prisoners. England wanted to use the new territory as a penal colony. About 160,000 prisoners (men, women, and children) were eventually sent to the prisons in Sydney, Hobart, and Brisbane. Free settlements were established in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. After gold was discovered in 1851, immigration increased rapidly. Australia's rich potential became clear, and prisoners were no longer sent to the colony after 1868. Many convicts settled in Australia after their release from prison. Soldiers sent to guard the jails also often stayed.

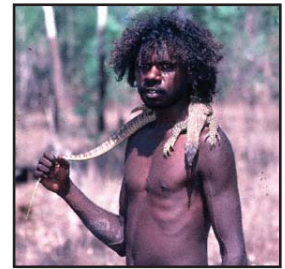
Twentieth Century

By the early 1900s, Australia had several fine cities with roads and railways to connect them. Many settlers had become wealthy from mining and ranching. Six colonies formally united in 1901 as the Commonwealth of Australia, but the nation was still part of the British Empire. In 1926, Australia was accepted as an autonomous member of the British Commonwealth. That meant it had the right to govern itself but would recognize royal authority in certain matters. Australia had its own army and navy, and it fought as a British ally in both world wars. The economy grew fast after World War II. People from many different nations soon migrated to Australia; this created a more diverse society that is still evolving.



Aboriginal Culture

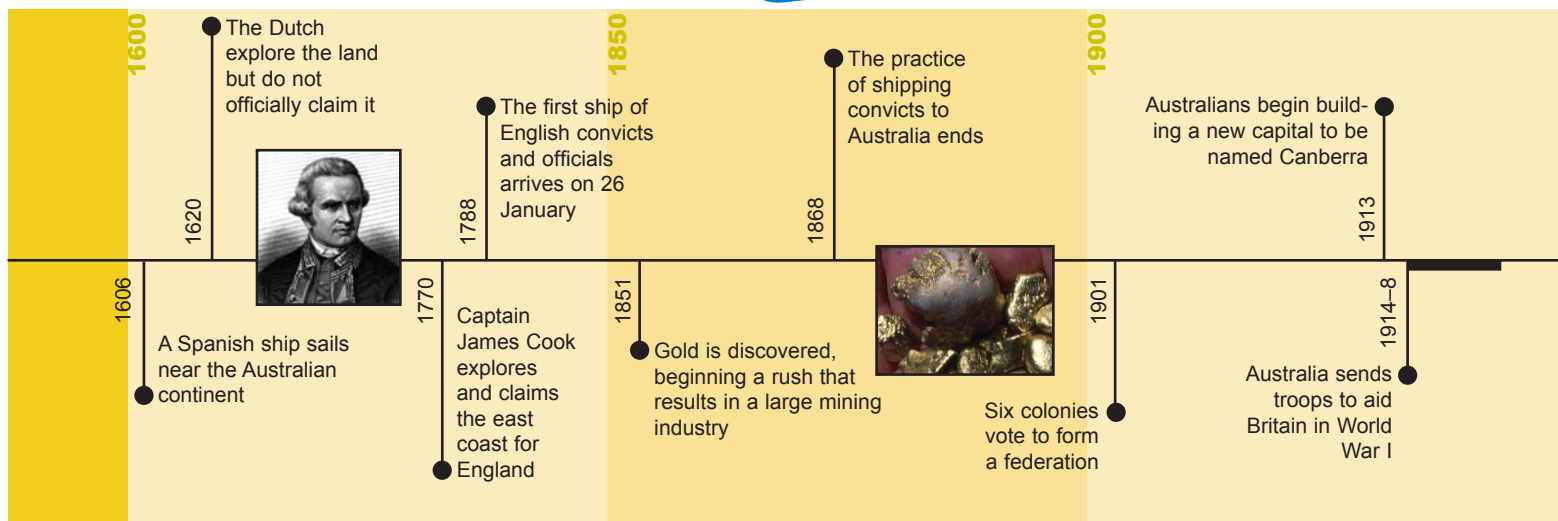
About 300,000 people already lived in Australia when the British arrived. They formed more than one hundred different tribal groups and had various cultures and languages.



While they seemed backward to the Europeans, their natural medicines, weapons (like the *boomerang*), and other tools were very sophisticated. They were expert trackers and hunters, and they understood nature better than scientists. Many of these people, called *Aborigines* by the white settlers, began to die as their land was taken from them, as they battled settlers, and as they became sick from European diseases like smallpox. Their poverty and lack of rights received greater attention in the 1960s, and conditions improved for them to be full members of Australian society. However, Aborigines also retain ancient beliefs and practices that emphasize their spiritual link to the land.

Sports

Australians love sports. Cricket is the national sport, but Australian-rules football and rugby are just as popular. Kids often learn cricket by starting with *rounders*, which uses a softer ball and smaller bat. They also play soccer, basketball, and netball. Netball is similar to basketball and is especially popular with girls. Kids swim, ride bikes, and go hiking (*bush-walking*). They like picnics and barbecues. Many learn to fish at some point because fishing is the country's most popular outdoor activity.

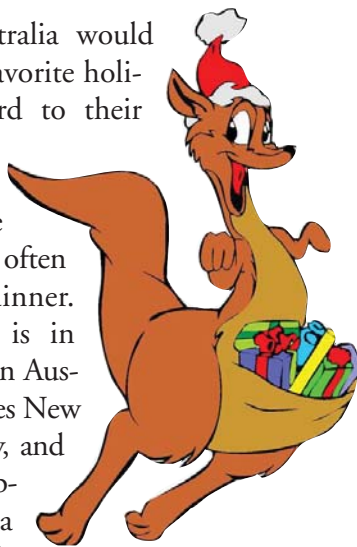


Aussies Speak English

In Australia, people speak a unique form of English with many idioms, abbreviated words, and phrases found only there. Words are often shortened in everyday conversation: *kindi* (kindergarten), *telly* (television), *uni* (university), *footy* (football), *sunnies* (sunglasses), and so on. Other words are simply different than what you might use, like *loo* (toilet), *prang* (car wreck), *bludger* (lazy person), *chewy* (chewing gum), *togs* (swimming suit), *biscuit* (cookie), *chips* (french fries), *petrol* (gasoline), *dodgy* (something suspicious), *daks* (pants), and *Oz* (Australia). There are entire dictionaries for translating Aussie (pronounced AH-zee) phrases into Standard English.

Holidays

Most children in Australia would say Christmas is their favorite holiday. They look forward to their presents from Santa Claus on Christmas morning. They also have family parties, which often include a barbecue dinner. Remember, December is in the middle of summer in Australia. Everyone celebrates New Year's Day on 1 January, and many Australians also observe Chinese New Year a few weeks later. The main national holiday is Australia Day (26 January), which marks the arrival of the first Europeans.



Eating

Australians eat European, Asian, and American foods. Kids like fast food (called *takeaway*), but at home they eat meat, potatoes, pasta, seafood, rice, fruit, bread, sandwiches, and so on. Most kids don't like to eat vegetables. Dessert after dinner might include ice cream, fruit salad, or pudding. Parents expect their children to keep elbows off the table and to stay seated until finished eating. Dinner (also called *tea*) is sometimes followed by a bedtime snack (*supper*).



Life as a Kid

You probably have a lot in common with Australian kids. They go to school about six hours a day. They wear uniforms, and they like recess most. They don't have much homework the first few years. The main classes in *primary* (elementary) school include math, science, writing, physical education, swimming, and history. After school, kids might go to a friend's house to play or go home for a snack. Kids like computer and video games; many play sports or like to play outdoors.

Parents expect their kids to clean their rooms and help out with basic chores at home. Sound familiar?



1925

1926

Australia's autonomy is confirmed by Britain, but Australia remains loyal to the British crown

1939–45

More than one million Australians fight in World War II

1950

1956

Melbourne hosts the Olympics

1962

Aboriginals gain the full right to vote in federal elections

Laws are removed that discriminate against Aboriginals

1967

1975

1975

Color television is introduced; the first black-and-white broadcast had been in 1956



The government recommends that Australia become a republic with a president and cut all ties to England

1998

Voters reject the idea of a republic and so retain ties to Britain

Sydney hosts the Olympics

2000

1999






2001

Australia's one-hundred-year anniversary as a federation

PRESENT

Present

Did You Know?

-  The Parliament House, in Canberra, has a grass-covered roof that people can walk on. When viewed from the air, the building looks like two boomerangs connected at the center.
-  The Sydney Harbour Bridge is the world's widest and heaviest arch bridge. People in Sydney call it the "coat hanger" because that is what it looks like.
-  The Sydney Opera House extends out into a harbor. Its roof is made to look like the sails of a ship.
-  The Great Barrier Reef is home to four hundred types of coral and 1,500 species of fish, in addition to other marine life. It stretches some 1,250 miles (2,011 km) along the northeast coast.
-  It is warm enough in Australia that many homes do not have central heating.



Government

Australia is a federal parliamentary state with six states and two territories. Australia is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, countries that were once colonies or territories of Great Britain. Because of this, Australia technically considers Britain's Queen Elizabeth II as its queen. In practice, though, Australia is independent and is led by an elected prime minister. His name is John Howard. The federal Parliament, or legislature, has two houses: a 76-member Senate and a 148-member House of Representatives. The voting age is 18. It is against the law to not vote in federal or state elections.

Economy

Mining and agriculture have long been important to Australia. The country *exports* (sells to other countries) bauxite, iron ore, coal, silver, gold, diamonds, and copper. Australia is the world's leading exporter of wool and beef. Factories in Australia produce

machines, clothing, furniture, chemicals, boats, cars, building materials, and much more. Australia has a strong economy and is seen as the leader in the Pacific.



Money

The currency is the Australian dollar (\$A). Paper bills come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 dollars. Coins come in 5-, 10-, 20-, and 50-cent pieces and 1- and 2-dollar pieces.



Animal Kingdom

Australia is famous for its unique animals, like the kangaroo, koala, dingo, Tasmanian devil, and the duck-billed platypus. A baby kangaroo is called a *joey*. There are 48 different species of kangaroo. A koala is not a bear; it eats only eucalyptus leaves and sleeps 20 hours a day in a tree. The *emu*, a flightless bird, can run as fast as 40 mph (64 km/h) and can swim. It is the world's second largest bird, next to the ostrich. The world's largest kingfisher bird is

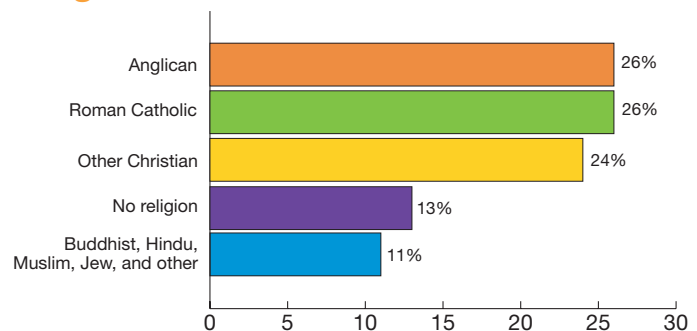


called the *kookaburra*; its call sounds like

a laugh. Some of the world's most poisonous snakes live in Australia, but not all of the 160 species are harmful. The *taipan* is the deadliest, but other dangerous types include the copperhead, death-adder, and tiger snake. Saltwater crocodiles only eat small prey, but freshwater ones sometimes kill and eat cattle or even people.



Religion



Do You Want to Know More?

There are many books and Web sites about Australia. See what your library has or check out the official government Web site, www.fed.gov.au. Or write to the Embassy of Australia, 1601 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036-2273; phone (202) 797-3000.



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