



DISCOVER AUSTRALIA

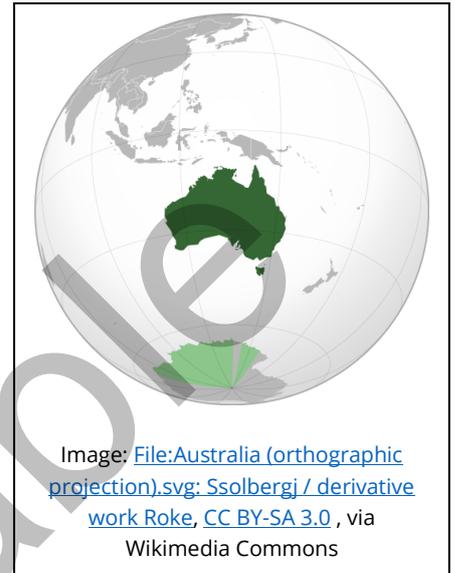
Australia is the sixth biggest country in the world and the smallest continent. It lies between the Pacific and Indian Ocean, about 3,000 km from the **mainland** of Asia.

It is very far away from Europe and by plane it takes you over 20 hours to get there. Australia is often called Down Under because the whole continent lies south of the **equator** .

All of the world's climates are found on the continent - from the tropical rainforest in the north to the cool and **temperate** climates in the south and southeast.

Australia was once a British colony and after its **discovery** in 1788 people from Great Britain **settled** there. In the past **decades** people from all over the world have come to Australia. Today it is a **multicultural society** .

The continent is also one of the richest countries in the world. It produces wool and meat as well as gold, **bauxite** and other minerals. Australians have a high **standard of living** .



Australia Facts

Size	7.7 million square kilometres
Population	27.7 million
Capital	Canberra
Largest cities	Sydney (5.2 m) , Melbourne (4.9 m)
Currency	The Australian Dollar
Flag	A British flag with five small stars that show the Southern Cross .One large star represents the country's six territories.

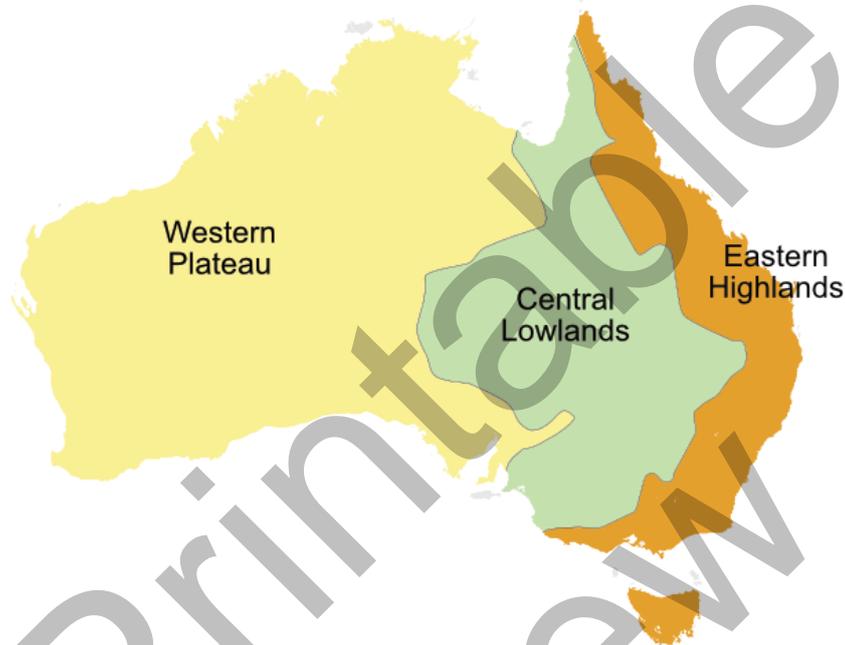


Image: [Cloudcounter, CC0](#) , via Wikimedia Commons



Regions of Australia

Most of Australia is flat. The highest part of the country lies in the east. Australia can be **divided** into three big regions:



Regions of Australia

Source : <https://freevectormaps.com/australia/AU-EPS-01-0001?ref=atr>

The **Eastern Highlands** are the highest parts of the continent. This region is also called the Great Dividing Range because the rivers that **flow** down the eastern **slopes** end in the ocean and the rivers that run down the western slopes flow into the Central Lowlands and dry up there.

The highest **peaks** can be found in the Australian Alps - in the southern part of the Great Dividing Range. They are covered with snow in winter, and many Europeans go there to ski during the summer months in the northern **hemisphere**.

The **Central Lowlands** consist of very flat **plains**. Rivers **flow** through this area after it rains a lot but during the rest of the year the **riverbeds** are mostly dry. In the southern part of the lowlands the grass gets high enough for farmers to **raise cattle** and sheep. **Wheat** is often grown here. In the northern part of the lowlands it gets drier and it is usually too hot and dry to grow **crops**. The region is not very **populated** and only has a few small towns.

The **Western Plateau** covers about two thirds of Australia. It is higher than the Central Lowlands. Most of it is made up of large **deserts**. Rain only falls in the north-eastern and south-western parts. Along the southern coast the Nullarbor Plain is about 700 km long. The name comes from the Latin words "nulla" and "arbor" which mean "no tree".



Climate

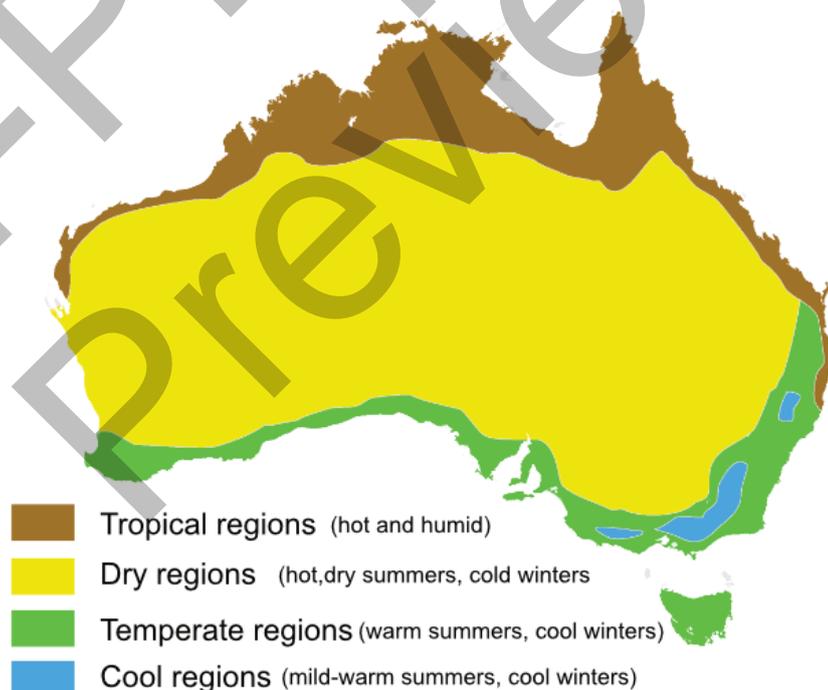
Australia lies south of the **equator** , so its seasons are different from those of the northern **hemisphere**.

The southern part of Australia has four seasons. Winters are cool and rainy and **last** from June to August. Summers are hot and dry and last from December to January.

The northern part of the continent has a tropical climate with only two seasons. The wet season from November to April brings a lot of rain , storms and **floods** . The dry season lasts from May to October.

One third of Australia is **desert** and gets less than 25 cm of rainfall a year. The wettest part of the continent lies in the south and southeast. It gets rain the whole year, sometimes up to 3 metres . Snow only falls in the higher places of the Australian Alps.

Droughts are a big problem in many parts of Australia. In some places it doesn't rain for many months. This **leads** to bush fires and a **shortage** of water.



Australia - Climate Zones

Source : <https://freevectormaps.com/australia/AU-EPS-01-0001?ref=atr>



Plants and Animals

Plants

The eucalyptus or gum tree is a classic Australian tree. It has **narrow**, oily leaves that look like leather and smell good, but also **cause** the tree to burn easily. It is one of the tallest trees in the world and can grow to a **height** of 100 metres.

Tourists who wander around in Australia can find thousands of wildflowers in the country. The **seeds** lie in the **desert** during the dry season and when it rains, they **blossom** in all kinds of different colours.



Eucalyptus tree in Queensland

[Ethel Aardvark at English Wikipedia, CC BY 3.0](#),
via Wikimedia Commons

Animals

When the earth was formed there was only one continent. About 200 million years ago Australia was **separated** from this big continent and animals **developed** differently from those that live in other places. That is why Australia has animals that you can't find anywhere else.

Australia's most famous animals are **marsupials**. They are **mammals** that have their babies in **pouches**. Kangaroos, koalas or wallabies are the best-known marsupials in Australia. The **platypus** is a mammal that lays eggs, from which babies **hatch**.



Koala climbing a tree

Photo by DAVID ILIFF.

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Australia has about 700 different types of birds. Among the most famous is the kookaburra. Emus are large birds that cannot fly.

There are many **species** of **reptiles** and snakes in Australia, some of which are **poisonous**.



Australia's Population

Australia is one of the most **sparsely populated** countries in the world. 9 out of 10 people live on only 3% of the land.

Most of Australia's 27 million people live near the coast, because the inner parts are made up of **deserts**. 80% of the country's population live in the south-eastern part of the country. Here you can also find the big cities like Sydney and Melbourne, or the **capital** Canberra.

Most people in Australia come from families who **emigrated** to the country from Europe. Until the beginning of the 20th century most of the **immigrants** came from Great Britain and Ireland. After World War II, Australia's **government** allowed people from other countries to enter. Since the 1970s more and more people from Asian countries have been coming to Australia.

However, not everybody is allowed to come and live in Australia. You must pass a special test and show special **skills** that the Australians need.

Aborigines – Natives of Australia

The Australian Aborigines have a history which is much like that of Native Americans. When British **settlers** landed on the continent at the beginning of the 19th **century** many Aborigines were killed or they had to leave their homes. The English took away their land. As they **developed** Australia, they left the Aborigines **locked out**.

Today, some Aborigines live in cities and big towns, but they can't always get jobs there. Many have stayed on their **traditional** land. There they live in small **communities** in the same way they did hundreds of years ago. They **preserve** their culture, draw paintings and sell **handicrafts** to tourists who pass by and visit them.

However, most of the country's 700,000 Aborigines cannot live like the white **population**. They don't have houses and **medical care** and most of them don't earn as much money as white people.

Recently, the **government's** feelings about their native people have changed. Over the last few **decades**, the government has created many programs to **improve** the life of Aborigines. They send them to better schools and help them get better jobs. The Australians are also starting to give them back the land that they took away 200 years ago.



Cities of Australia

Sydney

Sydney is Australia's oldest and largest city, home to about 5.3 million people. It is Australia's most important industrial city and the **capital** of New South Wales. Sydney's **harbour** is one of the most beautiful in the world. Harbour Bridge and the Opera House are among the famous tourist **attractions**.

Sydney was, at first, a **prison** colony back in 1788. At that time, many nations sent **criminals** to faraway places. The first prisoners were farmers and started **raising** sheep. In 1848 Great Britain stopped sending prisoners to Australia and a few years later gold was **discovered**. Sydney started to grow very quickly. By 1890, the population was about 400,000. During the 20th **century** many European **immigrants** arrived and turned Sydney into a **multi-cultural** city.

The people of Sydney are called Sydneysiders. About 70 % were born in Australia but in the last few **decades** many Asians have come to Sydney.

Downtown Sydney has many **skyscrapers** and **office buildings**, but there are also many historic buildings and parks in which Sydneysiders can spend their free time. Many people like outdoor **activities** because the city has a mild climate. Sydney offers its people long beaches that **attract** swimmers, surfers and **sunbathers**.

Sydney is a **major** industrial city. One third of all products made in Australia come from here. The city has a wool and food market because there are many farms nearby.

In 2000, Sydney was the **host** of the Olympic Summer Games. A lot of money was spent on rebuilding roads and other buildings. New stadiums were built and many parts of the city were **restored** and modernized.

Melbourne

Melbourne is Australia's second largest city with a **population** of 4.8 million. **Situated** around Port Phillip Bay, the city is the capital and **commercial** centre of Victoria. Melbourne is a multicultural city. More than a third of its **inhabitants** arrived as **immigrants** from **overseas**. Melbourne is the home of famous art galleries, museums and festivals. Sport events take place **on a regular basis**. Among the most popular are the Formula 1 Grand Prix, the Australian Open Tennis Championship and the Melbourne Cup, an **annual** horse race. In 1956 the city hosted the Olympic Summer Games.



Melbourne was **founded** as a **permanent settlement** in 1835 and was **declared** a city in 1847. When gold was discovered in the 1850s, Melbourne's rise as the centre of southern Australia started. It soon became Australia's largest city but was **eventually overtaken** by Sydney. When Australia became **independent** in 1901, Melbourne became the **temporary** capital until Canberra was completed.

Canberra

Canberra, with a **population** of about 300,000 is Australia's **capital**. The city is built around many hills. A **dam** on the Mongolo River forms Lake Burley Griffin in the middle of the city.

Australia's parliament meets at Canberra. Many government buildings and other offices are **situated** here too. About half of the city's people work for the **government**. Others work in smaller industries, **trade** and tourism.

When Australia became **independent** in 1901, the new government started looking for a place to build the capital city. In 1913 **construction** began and in 1927 Canberra became Australia's capital.

Brisbane

Brisbane, on Australia's eastern **coast**, is the capital of Queensland and with a population of 2.5 million, Australia's third largest city. It got its name from the river that flows through it. In its early days some of the first **prisoners** were **transferred** there from Sydney.

Today the city **profits** from its **moderate** climate all year long and is an attraction for people **seeking** outdoor activities. **Although** it does not lie directly on the coast, wonderful beaches are only a few kilometres away.

Perth

Perth is the largest city in western Australia, and, with a population of 2 million, Australia's fourth largest city. Because it is thousands of km away from other **major** cities, Perth is one of the most **isolated** in the world.

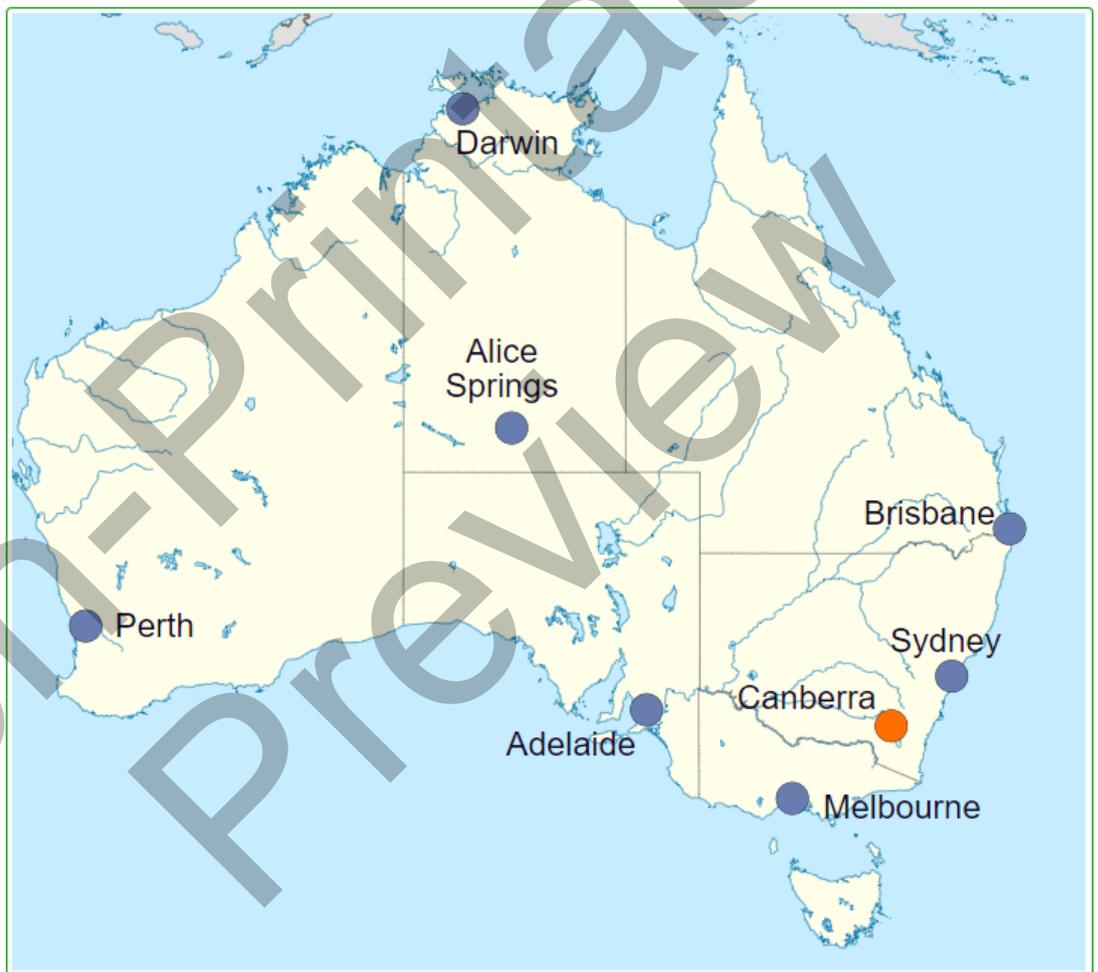
The city became important during Australia's **gold rush** towards the end of the 20th **century**. As time went on, western Australia turned out to be rich in **minerals**. Since World War II, Perth has become the **headquarters** for **major** **mining** companies.



Adelaide

Adelaide is the **capital** of South Australia and with 1 million **inhabitants**, Australia's fifth most **populous** city. **Founded** in 1936, Adelaide is the only city in Australia that was made for free **settlers** and not for British **prisoners**.

Today is a multicultural city, often **regarded** as the food, wine and festival capital of Australia. It also offers parks, beaches and nearby hills for **various** outdoor activities .



Cities in Australia

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Australia_location_map.svg



Australia's Economy

Australia is one of the world's **wealthiest** countries. It exports **valuable minerals** and farm products to all parts of the world.

Various kinds of **raw materials** are produced. Many of them, however, are located in dry areas very far away from bigger cities or harbours. Workers must build railroad lines or roads to the **mines**, which is a reason why **mining** is a very expensive industry in Australia. **Foreign** companies come to Australia to **invest** money to mine raw materials .

Australia is a leading country in the production of diamonds, **bauxite** and **lead**. It also produces a **big quantity** of coal, and nickel. Almost all of the world's valuable **opals** are mined in Australia. The country also has much of the world's uranium under its **surface**.

About 60% of Australia is farmland, most of which is used to **raise cattle** and sheep. Farmers can grow **wheat** in many parts of the country because wheat doesn't need very much rain . Other products include **sugar cane** and bananas in the tropical north and fruits like apples, oranges and pears in the south.

Australia is the world's largest wool producer. Most of it is exported to countries all over the world. Wine making is a part of the **economy** that has been growing very quickly. Grapes grow in the southern and south-eastern part of the continent and produce wine of excellent quality.

Not many people work on Australian farms because farmers have many machines to work with. Only about 5 % of the population are farmers, but they produce almost everything that the country needs.

Tourism has become very important for the economy of the country. Australia **offers** many **sights** like Ayers Rock, the Great Barrier Reef or Sydney Opera House. Because it is so far away from Europe and North America, it costs a lot to travel "down under".



Shearing sheep in western Australia

Image: [Martin Pot \(Martybugs at en.wikipedia\)](#), [CC BY 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



The Australian Way of Life

More than 80 % of Australians live in cities or bigger towns. Most of them live in the **suburbs** and have their own schools, churches and shopping centres there. They live in **bungalows** with their own gardens. Older houses are made of wood and have verandas or porches. Some of them are built on **poles** . Most newer houses are made of **brick** or stone.

Country life in Australia is not like anywhere else in the world. The inner part of the continent is often called the outback (which means " out in the back country "). Farms in the outback are called stations. Farmers **raise cattle** and sheep and they grow **wheat** . These stations are very large, sometimes up to 2,000 or more square kilometres . The nearest town may be over one hundred km away.

Life in the outback is very hard. There are not always **paved roads** , so travelling by car is difficult ,sometimes impossible. Many families have smaller airplanes which they use to get to the next town and back again. Because it is the driest region of Australia, the people in the outback must **cope with** natural **disasters** , like **droughts** or bush fires.

Many Australian children who live in the outback get their **education** at home. Students used to get their homework by **two-way radio**; today the internet has taken over as the **main technology** .

Flying Doctors give **medical treatment** to people who live far away from doctors or hospitals.

Australians like to eat meat , especially **beef** , **poultry** and **mutton** . When Europeans from other countries started to come to Australia they brought their eating habits with them. Today, you can find Italian, Greek and other restaurants all over the county.

Beer is the most **popular** alcoholic drink, but many Australians also like to drink wine that grows in the southern and south-eastern part of the continent. Older people still drink lots of tea - like in Great Britain - but younger ones drink more and more coffee.

Australians love sport because they spend a lot of their free time **outdoors** . Swimming, sailing and **diving** are some popular water sports. Many Australians also play golf and tennis.

The most popular team sports are cricket and rugby. Many world-famous **athletes** come from Australia, and the country has won many medals at Olympic Games and World Championships.



Sights and Places to See

The Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the biggest group of **coral reefs** in the world. It is more than 2,000 km long and lies off the north-eastern coast of Australia.

The **coral** that forms the reef is made up of **skeletons** of dead water animals called **polyps**. They are small but often **light up** in many bright colours. These colourful reefs and the bright colours of fish and other water animals make the Great Barrier Reef a beautiful underwater garden.

Today, the reef is a national park which millions of tourists visit every year. But there are also many problems. Oil companies have found oil in this part of the ocean and want to start **drilling**, but the **government** is working hard to **protect** it.

Sydney Opera House

The Sydney Opera House is the most famous building in the city. It has two roofs that look like sails. A **masterpiece** of architecture, it stands on a **peninsula** that reaches into Sydney Harbour. More than 6,000 people can visit concerts, operas, theatre **performances** and other events. The Opera House was opened in 1973.



Sydney Opera House

Image: [Bernard Gagnon, CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via
Wikimedia Commons

Ayers Rock - Uluru

Ayers Rock is a big rock that rises over 300 metres high from the **plains** of the Northern Territory. It is about 2.4 km long and 1.6 km wide and it takes you almost 2 hours to walk around it. The rock is often called "Uluru", an **aboriginal** name.

The rock is made out of **sandstone** and glows red during **sunrise** and **sunset**. The Aborigines **worship** the rock and **decorated** the **caves** in it with paintings. Today, the land around Ayers Rock is a national park but is **owned** by the Aborigines.

Kakadu National Park

Kakadu National Park lies in Australia's Northern Territory and covers about 20,000 square km. It is a **wetland** with over 200 kinds of birds and 1,000 plant **species**. It is also the home of Australian crocodiles.



Timeline

1770

James Cook **explores** the eastern coast of Australia and names it New South Wales.

1778

Great Britain turns New South Wales into a colony for **prisoners**.

1851

Gold is **discovered** in New South Wales and Victoria.

1901

Australia becomes an **independent** country with Melbourne as its **capital**.

1927

Canberra becomes the new capital of Australia.

1967

The Australian **government** passes **laws** to help the Aborigines and starts giving them back their land.

1999

In a **referendum**, Australia's population votes to stay a **monarchy**.
Elisabeth II **remains** the Head of State.

2000

Sydney is **host** city of the 2000 Summer Olympics.

2008

Australia officially **apologizes** to the Aborigines for **crimes** committed against them.