

# Overview of australia

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The place was first inhabited by the Aboriginals and Torres Straits Islanders, a hunting-gathering people, arrived about 40, 000 years ago. Their technical culture remained static--depending on wood, bone, and stone tools and weapons but their spiritual and social life was highly complex. They spoke several languages, and confederacies sometimes linked widely scattered tribal groups. Aboriginal population density ranged from 1 person per square mile along the coasts to 1 person per 35 square miles in the arid interior.

In 1770, Englishman Lieutenant James Cook charted the Australian east coast and reached Botany Bay and sailed N to Cape York, claiming the coast for Great Britain. Lieutenant James Cook claimed the east coast under instruction from King George III of England on 22 August 1770 at Possession Island, naming eastern Australia 'New South Wales'. The coast of Australia, featuring Tasmania as a separate island, was mapped in detail by the English mariners and navigators Bass and Flinders, and the French mariner, Baudin.

A nearly completed map of the coastline was published by Flinders in 1814. Six colonies were created in the late 18th and 19th centuries; they federated and became the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. The new country took advantage of its natural resources to rapidly develop agricultural and manufacturing industries and to make a major contribution to the British effort in World Wars I and II. In recent decades, Australia has transformed itself into an internationally competitive, advanced market economy.

Geography Australia is located at Oceania, continent between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean with a geographic coordinates 27 00 S, 133 00 E. The climate is characterized as arid and semi-arid: the center is desert and much agricultural land is poor quality by the standards of <https://assignbuster.com/overview-of-australia/>

continents with richer soil. Temperate in south and east; tropical in north and the terrain is mostly low plateau with deserts; fertile plain in southeast. The temperatures get hot during the day, and then drop considerably at night.

It is prone to severe drought and water restrictions are currently in place in some areas. The topographical characteristics of the continent are divided into four main land areas. The first main land is called Coastal Plain; it is a strip of land down the eastern coast, around the southeast corner of the continent, and in the southwest. It ranges from lush tropical areas to drier sandy plains. It is relatively well-watered. Because of the warm, moist climate and rich farmland, this is where most Australians live.

The second is Eastern Highlands which run like a backbone down the eastern and southeastern sides of the continent and into Tasmania. Australians call them the Great Dividing Range. Third is the Central-Eastern Lowlands that reaches from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the eastern coast of the Great Australian Bight. The best land for farming lies in the area formed by the Murray and Darling Rivers. Lastly the fourth main land is The Great Western Plateau which makes up more than half of the country. This region includes the vast desert areas of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Some of this dry interior of Australia is carved into large beef cattle stations (ranches), often the size of small countries. This is the area generally known as the Outback. Australia is currently considered as the world's smallest continent but sixth-largest country; the invigorating sea breeze known as the "Fremantle Doctor" affects the city of Perth on the west coast, and is one of the most consistent winds in the world. People of European descent make up 95 percent of Australia's inhabitants.

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The majority has a British or Irish heritage, but about 18 percent of the total populations have other European origins. Asians, including Middle Easterners, account for 4 percent of the population. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders make up 1 percent of the population. Immigration provides an essential development to Australia since the beginning of European settlement in 1788. Majority of settlers came from the British Isles, and the people of Australia are still predominantly of British or Irish origin, with a culture and outlook similar to those of Americans.

Australia's population characteristics were growing at 0.9 percent annually in 2000. Some 85 percent of the population lives in cities, about two-thirds in cities with 100,000 or more residents which resulted to a heavy urbanization of the country. Surfing is one of the known recreations of Australians. Thousands of Australians regularly journey to the coastline to surf some of the world's best-known breaks. Surfing originated in the Oceania region, and Australia was among the first countries to develop the sport.

The indigenous population, the Australian aborigines, estimated to number as many as 350,000 at the time of the Europeans' arrival, was numbered at 366,429 in 2001. Tribal aborigines lead a settled traditional life in remote areas of northern, central and western sides of the country. Nearly 2,500 Tiwi people one of the many indigenous groups of Australia settled in the Bathurst and Melville Islands, which make up the Tiwi Islands. Tiwi's art and language are distinct from those of nearby Arnhem Land. Compared with Arnhem Land art, Tiwi art are abstract, geometric, considered very attractive and highly collectable.

Another treasured practice of the Tiwi is the dancing or yoi as they call it, is a part of everyday life. Tiwi inherit their totemic dance from their mother it is narrative dances that are performed to depict everyday life or historical events. Government Australia is a Constitutional Monarchy. 'Constitutional' because the powers and procedures of the Commonwealth Government are defined by a written constitution and 'Monarchy' because Australia's Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II. It is divided into three branches: executive, legislative and judicial.

Executive branch is the sovereign, whose executive power is exercisable by the Governor-General, the Prime Minister, Ministers and their Departments. The Chief of State is Queen of Australia Elizabeth II since February 6, 1952 and represented by Governor General Maj. Gen. (Ret. ) Michael Jeffery since 11 August 11, 2003. The head of government is Prime Minister Kevin Rudd since December 3, 2007 and the Deputy Prime is Minister Julia Gillard since December 3, 2007. Legislative branch is Parliament of Australia or Commonwealth Parliament whose is principal function is to pass laws, or legislation.

The upper house is Bicameral Federal Parliament consists of the Senate which has 76 seats; 12 members from each of the six states and 2 from each of the two mainland territories; one-half of state members are elected every three years by popular vote to serve six-year terms while all territory members are elected every three years. The lower house is called House of Representatives which has 150 seats; members elected by popular preferential vote to serve terms of up to three-years; no state can have

fewer than 5 representatives. Judicial branch is composed of judiciary whose main function is to interpret the laws.

Judges are appointed by the Prime Minister, acting through the Governor-General. It is made up a hierarchy of courts that range from the local to the federal level. Each court has a set jurisdiction, which means that each court has been granted specific power to only deal with certain types of legal matters. There are two main arms of the Australian Court System; The State Court and Commonwealth or Federal Courts. Economy Australia has a characteristic of a prosperous Western-style capitalist economy, with a per capita GDP on par with the four dominant West European economies.

Rising output in the domestic economy has been offsetting the global slump, and business and consumer confidence remains robust. Most of the rich farmland and good ports are in the east and particularly the southeast, except for the area around Perth in Western Australia. Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and Adelaide are the leading industrial and commercial cities. The Federal government's emphasis on reform is another factor behind the economy's strength. There was considerable industrial development in the last two decades of the 20th century.

Australia is highly industrialized and manufactured goods account for most of the gross domestic product. It has valuable mineral resources, including coal, iron, bauxite, copper, tin, gold, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, lead, zinc, natural gas, and petroleum; the country is an important producer of opals and diamonds. The country is also self-sufficient in food, and the raising of sheep and cattle and the production of grain have long been staple occupations. Agriculture Products are wheat, barley, sugarcane, <https://assignbuster.com/overview-of-australia/>

fruits; cattle, sheep, poultry and there are numerous vineyards and dairy and tobacco farms.

Sometime drought affects every agricultural industry based in the country—from shepherding, the other mainstay in the dusty land, to the cultivation of wine grapes, the fastest-growing crop, with that expansion often coming at the expense of rice. For a long time, the country manages to maintain a favorable balance of trade. Most of its export commodities are metals, minerals, coal, wool, beef, mutton, cereals, and manufactured products. While the leading imports goods are machinery, transportation and telecommunications equipment, computers and office machines, crude oil, and petroleum products.

Australia's economic ties with Asia and the Pacific Rim have become increasingly important, with Japan, China, and the United States being its main trading partners. Rare Species The break up of Gondwana, which is also included South America, Africa, India and Antarctica, 140 million years ago and resulted to the establishment and evolution of the present-day fauna. Such geologic and climatic events of Australia cause the species of the country unique. Study shows that 85% of flowering plants, 84% of mammals, more than 45% of birds, and 89% of in-shore, temperate-zone fish are endemic.

Most Australian woody plant species are evergreen which have characteristics to adapt fire and drought, including many eucalypts and acacias. The tropical rainforests of Queensland are also home to quite a few endemic species of Proteaceae, but these show a different pattern of relationships. These species are relics of groups that were more widespread

when rainforests covered much of Australia more than 15 million years ago. The gradual drying of the continent over the last few million years has reduced the habitats of such species to a small refuge in the wettest part of Australia.

According to the some studies the most common vegetation types in Australia are those that are adapted to arid conditions which make them different from other part of the globe. The unique fauna that originated in Gondwana consists of a huge variety of unique animals inhabit the continent which considered as endemic to Australia. This high level of endemism can be attributed to the continent's long geographic isolation, tectonic stability, and the effects of an unusual pattern of climate change on the soil and fauna over geological time.

A unique characteristic of Australia's fauna is that a group of mammals that raise their young in a pouch, including the macropods, possums and dasyuromorphs. Uniquely, Australia has more venomous than non-venomous species of snakes. Many Australian species that are currently threatened or endangered such as night parrot, banded hare-wallaby, Norfolk Island green parrot, Golden bandicoot, desert rat kangaroo, northern hopping mouse, northern hairy-nosed, wombat and Brush tailed Rock-wallaby.