

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

AUSTRALIA

Geography

Australia is a **continent country**. It is located between the **Pacific Ocean** and the **Indian Ocean**. The closest countries to Australia are **Indonesia, Papua New Guinea** and **New Zealand**. Australia is very large. It is the **seventh largest country** in the world. It is bigger than the whole European Union. The population of Australia is about **23 million people**. Most of these people live **on the coast** in the east and in the south of Australia. Australia consists of **6 states** and **2 territories**. The island of Tasmania is part of Australia.

The highest mountain in Australia is **Mount Kosciuszko** /koščuško or koziuskou/. It is more than 2,000 high. A large part of Australia is **very dry** but there are **tropical rainforests** in the northeast of the continent. The longest river in Australia is the **Murray** river. The capital city of Australia is **Canberra**. The largest cities in Australia are **Sydney** and **Melbourne**. Other large Australian cities are **Brisbane, Perth**, and **Adelaide**.

Australia is home to many **unusual animals**. These animals live only in Australia and nowhere else. Many of them are **marsupials**, for example **kangaroos, koalas, or wombats**. These animals are **mammals** but they carry their babies **in a pouch**. In Tasmania, there lives an animal called the **Tasmanian devil**. It is a very small animal but it has a very loud voice. There are also some **mammals that lay eggs**. The most famous of these animals is the **platypus**. Australia is also the home of the **emu**. It is the second largest bird in the world (after the ostrich). There are also a lot of **poisonous spiders and snakes** in Australia.

History

The first people came to Australia from Asia about **50,000 years ago**. They are called the **Aborigines**. When the Europeans came, there were many different groups of Aborigines. They had an interesting mythology. They believed that the world was created by people and animals a very long time ago. They called this time the **dreamtime**.

The first Europeans who saw Australia were **Dutch sailors**. In 1770, the British captain **James Cook** landed in Australia and made it a **British colony**. Many of the first British people who came to live in Australia were **criminals**. The British state sent them there instead of sending them to prison. There were five men for every woman. The British very soon started **fighting against the Aborigines** because they wanted their land.

The population of Australia grew. Land was cheap there so people came there to become **farmers**. In 1851, **gold** was discovered in some parts of Australia and many people came there to look for it. They came not only from Britain but also from many other countries, for example from China. In 1901, the different parts of Australia **became one country**. It remained part of the British Empire and later it became part of the Commonwealth. Australia **fought in both World Wars alongside Great Britain**.

During the 20th century, many **immigrants** came to Australia. The country welcomed them because it needed more workers and soldiers. At first, they came mostly from Europe because the **Australian government said that only white people could come there**. Most people came from **Britain, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Poland**. In 1973, the Australian government **stopped caring about the nationality of the immigrants and started choosing people by their jobs and skills**. Many people from other countries, for example **China or Vietnam**, started coming.

Economy

Australia is a **highly developed country**. It is one of the richest countries in the world. It **exports natural resources, energy, and food**. Most Australians work in services, followed by industry. Only about 4 % of Australians work in agriculture. The most important farm animal in Australia is the **sheep**. The Australian currency is the **Australian dollar**.

Symbols

The flag of Australia is **red, white, and blue**. There is a small British flag in the top left corner. Below the British flag, there is a large white star. It has seven points – six for the six Australian states and one for the Australian territories. Then there are five smaller stars on the right. They look like the **Southern Cross** – one of the brightest constellations in the southern sky.

The national animal of Australia is the **kangaroo**. The national bird of Australia is the **emu**. The national anthem of Australia is **Advance, Australia Fair**.

Political institutions

Australia is part of the **Commonwealth**. The Commonwealth is a group of states that were part of the British Empire and that still have many things in common and cooperate. The official head of Australia is the **British king or queen**. He or she is represented by the governor. The really important decisions are made by the government and the parliament. The head of the government is the **Prime Minister**.

Water sports

Water sports are very common in Australia because there are a lot of great beaches. **Swimming, surfing, diving, jet skiing and other water sports** are all very popular.

Famous places

The outback

The outback is the **dry central part of Australia**. It is very large but **very few people** live there. A lot of interesting animals live there, including wild camels (camels were brought to Australia in the 19th century). Exploring the outback is a great adventure but it **can be very dangerous**. If you get lost and run out of water, you die.

Uluru

Uluru is a **big red rock** in the middle of the outback, not very far from Alice Springs. It is also called Ayers Rock. It is a popular place for tourists. It changes colours at the sunset. For the Aborigines, it was a holy place.

Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is **the largest coral reef in the world**. It is more than 2,000 kilometres long and it is probably the most popular tourist attraction in Australia. People like to **go diving** there and **see the fish and other animals** that live there.

Kangaroo Island

Kangaroo Island is located in **southern Australia**. The closest big city to Kangaroo Island is Adelaide. Many interesting animals live on this island – not just kangaroos but also koalas, seals, pelicans and other birds. There is a **luxurious hotel** called Southern Ocean Lodge. You can try local seafood there.

Barossa Valley

Barossa Valley is located close to Adelaide. It is famous for its **wine**.

Sydney

Sydney is **the largest city** in Australia. About **5 million people** live there. It is the capital of New South Wales. The most famous building in Sydney is the **Sydney Opera House**. It was built in 1973 and it looks like a ship. Other popular places to visit in Sydney include the **Sydney Harbour Bridge** and the **Sydney Zoo**. The **Bondi Beach** is one of the most famous and popular beaches in the world.

Melbourne

Melbourne is **the second largest city** in Australia. Almost **5 million people** live there. It is the capital of Victoria. The original name of Melbourne was Batmania because one of the people who founded it was called John Batman. Melbourne's **Chinatown** is one of the oldest in the world. You can also make a trip to the **Twelve Apostles** from Melbourne. The Twelve Apostles is a group of rocks in the sea next to the coast.

Famous people

Ian Thorpe

Ian Thorpe is an Australian **swimmer**. He won five Olympic gold medals, three silver medals and one bronze medal.

Cathy Freeman

Cathy Freeman is an Australian **athlete**. Her best discipline was **400 metres**. She was the first Aboriginal athlete who won an individual gold medal in the Olympic games. She won it in Sydney in the year 2,000.

Terence Tao

Terence Tao is an Australian **mathematician**. He has won the Fields Medal which is something like the Nobel Prize for mathematicians.

Nicole Kidman

Nicole Kidman is a famous **actress** from Australia. There are many other famous actresses and singers from Australia, for example **Cate Blanchet** and **Kylie Minogue**.

Ewonne Goolagong

Ewonne Goolagong is an Australian **tennis player**. She comes from an Aboriginal family. She was one of the best players in the 1970s and in the early 1980s. She won the Wimbledon twice.

NEW ZEALAND

Geography

New Zealand is an **island country**. It consists of two islands – the **North Island** and the **South Island**. The South Island is bigger but the North Island is more populous. Its nearest neighbour is **Australia**. It is more than 1,500 kilometres away from New Zealand. New Zealand is about as big as Great Britain but its population is much smaller – only about **four and a half million people** live there.

The highest mountain range in New Zealand are the **Southern Alps**. The highest mountain is **Aoraki / Mount Cook**. There are more than 50 active volcanos in New Zealand. The longest river in New Zealand is the **Waikato River**. The capital city of New Zealand is **Wellington** but the biggest city is **Auckland**.

There are many animals that live only in New Zealand and nowhere else. Originally, there were no mammals except for bats. Nearly all the land animals were birds. One of the most famous New Zealand birds is the **kiwi**. It is a small bird that cannot fly. It is one of the symbols of New Zealand and New Zealanders are sometimes called "Kiwis". Another animal that lives only in New Zealand is the **tuatara**. It is a big lizard. There are also a lot of kinds of insects in New Zealand.

History

The first people who came to New Zealand were the **Maori**. They came there about **800 years ago** from the Polynesian islands. They called the country **Aotearoa**, which means "The Land of the Long White Cloud".

The first European who visited New Zealand was a Dutch sailor called **Abel Tasman**. Later, the country was visited by **James Cook**. The British started coming in the 19th century. There was fighting between them and the Maori because the British wanted the land for their farms.

The British won the wars and New Zealand **became part of the British Empire**. In 1893, it became **the first country in the world that gave women the right to vote**. New Zealand fought alongside Great Britain in both world wars. In the second half of the 20th century, more people started coming to New Zealand from countries other than Great Britain – for example from **China, India, or the Pacific Islands**.

Symbols

The Flag of New Zealand looks a lot like the flag of Australia. It **red, white, and blue**. The blue is darker than the blue on the Australian flag. There is a small British flag in the top left corner but there is no star below it. On the left, there are four stars in the shape of the **Southern Cross**.

The national bird of New Zealand is the **kiwi**. The national plant of New Zealand is the **silver fern**. The national anthem of New Zealand is **God Defend New Zealand**. It has also a Maori version which is called **Aotearoa**.

Economy

New Zealand is a **developed country**. Most people work in services, followed by industry. Agriculture is very important but not many people work in it – only about 5 %. **Tourism** is very important for New Zealand. Top trading partners of New Zealand are **Australia, China, the EU, the USA, Japan, South Korea**, and other countries. There are a lot of **sheep** in New Zealand so it exports wool. It also exports wine and other food.

Government

New Zealand is part of the **Commonwealth**. The Commonwealth is a group of states that were part of the British Empire and that still have many things in common and cooperate. The official head of New Zealand is **the British king or queen**. He or she is represented by the governor. The really important decisions are made by the government and the parliament. The head of the government is the **Prime Minister**.

Sports

Rugby is one of the most popular sports in New Zealand. The New Zealand rugby team is called **All Blacks**. They are one of the best rugby teams in the world. Before matches, they perform a Maori war dance called the **haka**. New Zealand is also the home of **bungee jumping**. This extreme sport was invented in New Zealand. Water sports are popular in New Zealand as well.

Famous places

Wellington

Wellington is the **capital city** of New Zealand. It is located in the southern end of the North Island. About 200,000 people live there. It is the home of the Royal New Zealand Ballet and the National Symphony Orchestra. There is a zoo and a botanical garden.

Auckland

Auckland is **the largest city** in New Zealand. It is located in the north of the North Island. The population of Auckland is almost one and a half million people. One of the symbols of Auckland is the **Sky Tower**. It is the tallest building in New Zealand. It is 328 metres tall.

Milford Sound

Milford Sound is a **fjord** in the southwest of the South Island. It was made by glaciers during the last Ice Age. There are mountains and waterfalls around it.

Waitomo Glowworm Caves

The Waitomo Glowworm Caves are located in the North Island. There are **thousands of glowworms on the ceiling** of the cave and they make it look like the night sky. You can take a boat ride through the caves.

The Hobbiton

New Zealand is the place where *The Lord of the Rings* was filmed. When the filming ended, the village of Hobbiton stayed there and became a famous tourist attraction. It is located in the North Island.

Famous people

Peter Jackson

Peter Jackson is a famous **director** from New Zealand. He directed The Lord of the Rings trilogy and The Hobbit trilogy.

Ernest Rutherford

Ernest Rutherford was a famous **physicist** from New Zealand. He won the **Nobel Prize** for physics and he was the first person who **split the atom**.

Edmund Hilary

Edmund Hilary was a famous **mountain climber** from New Zealand. He and Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay were the first people who **climbed Mount Everest** and returned alive.

The overview is largely based on the following sources:

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