

Australia

Australia is known as the land down under because it is below the equator. It is one of the seven continents of the world. It is also a country.

The first people to live in Australia were Aborigines. Aboriginal means first.

Australia is made up of six states and two territories. About 23 million people live here. Canberra is the capital of Australia.

The middle part of the country is called the outback. The outback does not get very much rain and is very dry. Not very many people live in the outback.

In the outback, there are some sheep and cattle ranches. There are about ten times more sheep than people in Australia. Sheep are raised for wool and for meat. In Australia a *ranch* is known as a **station**. Stations are very big. Some stations are so big they have to use planes to keep track of the animals.

There are not many schools in the outback. Children who live on stations and cannot get to school use a radio to hear their teachers' lessons.

The most famous animals in Australia are marsupials. A marsupial is a mammal that has a pouch to carry its young. Some kangaroos can jump 9 meters. The koala sometimes stays in the same tree for days and is endangered.

There are many other interesting animals in Australia. When the kookaburra calls, it sounds like a laugh.

The Great Barrier Reef is also in Australia. It is made up of coral and algae. Coral are tiny invertebrate animals. The Great Barrier Reef is about 2,000 kilometres long. There is a channel of water that separates the reef from the Queensland coast. It is the largest deposit of coral in the world. It is also the world's largest living structure.



Captain James Cook claimed Australia for England in 1770. It was first used as a prison colony by the English. The first free settlers landed in Sydney in 1793. Today Sydney is Australia's largest city. The Sydney Opera House is one of the most unique buildings in the world.

Cricket is a popular Australian sport. Cricket is played with eleven players. Australia won the Cricket World Cup in 1999 and 2003. Another favourite sport in Australia is Australian Rules Football. It is a little bit like soccer and rugby. Rugby and soccer are also extremely popular. Australia is also famous for the boomerang. The aborigines used the boomerang as a weapon. Today, children use it as a toy.



Australia Quiz

1. Australia is called the land _____.
2. The first people to live in Australia were _____.
3. Australia has six _____ and two _____.
4. The middle part of the country is called the _____.
5. Australia has about ten times more _____ than people.
6. A ranch is known as a _____ in Australia.
7. A marsupial is an animal that carries its young in a _____.
8. The Great Barrier Reef has the world's largest deposit of _____.
9. Australia was first used as a _____ colony by the English.
10. The aborigines used the _____ as a weapon.