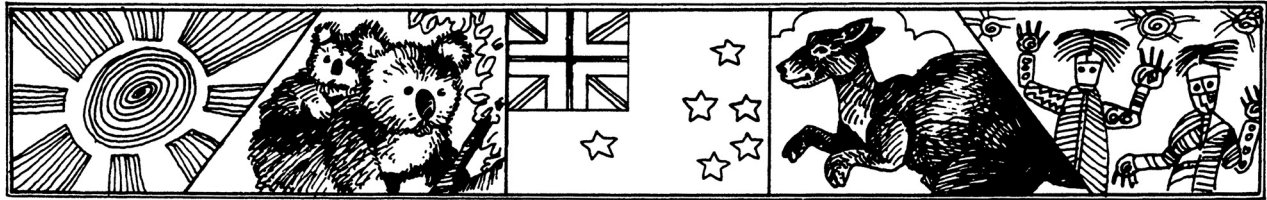


Table of Contents

Australia	1
A History of Australia	4
Daily Life	6
Foods	7
Language Expressions and Storytelling	10
Creative Arts.....	14
Games.....	17
Celebrations	19
Additional Resources.....	21

AUSTRALIA





Australia

The first Australians were the Aborigines (first settlers) who came to this island continent many thousands of years ago. The European settlement of Australia was established over 200 years ago, primarily by the British. Australia is similar to many European cultures, but due to its remote geographical location, it is sufficiently different to be considered another culture—a culture that children can readily relate to and learn from.

Area—2,967,741 square miles, the sixth largest country in the world, stretching 2,500 miles from east to west and 2,000 miles from north to south.

Population—20,090,437 (July 2005 estimate).

Races—Aboriginal, European, and Asian. There are 140 ethnic peoples represented in Australia.

Language—English is the most widely spoken and is the official language. Aborigines have their own languages. People in the many immigrant communities also speak their native languages, such as Italian, Greek, and Vietnamese. Ninety different languages are heard in Australia today.

Religion—Australia is predominately Christian, but a variety of other religions were brought to Australia by the diverse peoples who migrated there. Approximately eighty different religious groups exist in the country.

Physical Features

Australia is unique in many ways. It is the only country that occupies an entire continent. The country is completely surrounded by water and could be considered the world's largest island. In fact, Australia is referred to as the "Island Continent." The land masses of Australia and Antarctica were once connected, as indicated by the common fossil records of both continents. Australia is an old land; it is heavily eroded and has no significant mountains.

Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere. Therefore, the stars in the night sky appear in different positions than the stars seen in North America. Some stars seen in North America can't be seen in Australia, such as Polaris, the North Star. And some stars seen in Australia can't be seen in North America, such as those found in a constellation called the Southern Cross, which has been incorporated into the design of the Australian flag.

Australia's location in the Southern Hemisphere also has an effect on the seasons. While countries in the Northern Hemisphere are experiencing winter, Australia is experiencing its summer; thus, Christmas in Australia is in the middle of summer. The Australian winter months are June, July, and August.

While the southern part of Australia has a temperate climate with distinct winters and summers, the northern part of Australia is semi-tropical or tropical, like the Caribbean. Much of the Australian interior is desert or semi-arid. The largest reef in the world, the Great Barrier Reef, stretches more than 1,500 miles along the northeast coast of Australia.

Australia is on the east side of the International Date Line that stretches from north to south across the Pacific Ocean. Sydney and Melbourne, the two largest cities in Australia, are about 15 hours ahead of Toronto, making Australia almost a day ahead of North American countries. When travellers go from North America to Australia, they lose a day as they cross the International Date Line. Of course they gain a day when they return.

Australia is sometimes referred to as "down under" which means that it is below Europe and North America. Of course the earth is round and can be viewed from any perspective. Europeans historically thought of themselves as being "on top." So when they drew maps of the world they put Europe at the top of the map and Africa, South America, and Australia at the bottom of the map.

In Your Classroom:

Bring a world map and a globe to the classroom and let the children explore them. Introduce basic geographical concepts—equator, Northern and Southern Hemispheres, International Date Line, oceans, and landforms. Try putting south at the top and viewing the world from this perspective.

