

# Australia

By Tom Kirvan

## THE LAND DOWN UNDER IS A SOUTH PACIFIC GEM

Australia, a vast island continent and the sixth-largest country in the world, is a land of stunning contrasts and remarkable diversity. With a population of about 26 million people, it is one of the least densely populated countries, offering expansive natural landscapes and vibrant urban centers. Australia's rich culture, shaped by its Indigenous heritage and multicultural influences, makes it a fascinating destination for travelers, especially those with a love for kangaroos and koalas.

Australia's geography is incredibly varied, encompassing tropical rainforests, arid deserts, mountain ranges, and extensive coastlines. The country is known for its unique flora and fauna, with many species found nowhere else on Earth. The Great Dividing Range, which runs along the eastern coast, is Australia's most substantial mountain range, providing a dramatic backdrop to the lush hinterlands and bustling cities of the east coast.

The capital city, Canberra, is a planned metropolis located in the Australian Capital Territory. Established in 1913, Canberra was designed by American architect Walter Burley Griffin and his wife, Marion Mahony Griffin. The city is known for its modernist architecture, expansive parklands, and cultural institutions, such as the Australian War Memorial and the National Gallery of Australia.

Australia's highest point is Mount Kosciuszko, standing at 7,310 feet above sea level. Located in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales, this peak offers scenic hiking trails and breathtaking views of the surrounding alpine landscape. The region is also a popular destination for skiing and snowboarding during the winter months, which, of course, are opposite to those in the Northern Hemisphere.

### Top 5 Must-See Tourist Destinations

- **Sydney:** As Australia's largest city, Sydney is renowned for its iconic landmarks, such as the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The city's stunning harbor, beautiful beaches like Bondi and Manly, and vibrant cultural scene make it a must-visit destination. Visitors can explore historic neighborhoods, enjoy world-class dining, and take in the breathtaking views from the Sydney Tower Eye.
- **Great Barrier Reef:** The world's largest coral reef system, the Great Barrier Reef is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Australia's most famous natural wonders. Stretching more than 1,430 miles along the Queensland coast, the reef is home to an incredible



## Fast Facts

Capital: Canberra  
Population: 26 million  
Language: English  
Religion: Christianity  
Must-see Attraction: Great Barrier Reef  
Wildlife Symbol: Red Kangaroo

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Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers is a full-service law firm based in Sydney.



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diversity of marine life. Snorkeling and diving in the crystal-clear waters offer unforgettable encounters with colorful corals, countless tropical fish, and majestic sea turtles.

- **Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park:** Located in the heart of the Northern Territory, Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) is a massive sandstone monolith that holds great cultural significance for the local Anangu people. The park also features the striking rock formations of Kata Tjuta (the Olgas). Visitors can experience the awe-inspiring beauty of Uluru at sunrise or sunset, explore the cultural center, and learn about the rich Indigenous heritage of the area.
- **Melbourne:** Known for its eclectic art scene, diverse culinary offerings, and enchanting neighborhoods, Melbourne is a cultural hub of Australia. The city's laneways are famous for their street art, boutique shops, and hidden cafes. Melbourne is also home to major sporting events, such as the Australian Open (tennis) and the Melbourne Cup (thoroughbred horse race). The Royal Botanic Gardens, Federation Square, and the Queen Victoria Market are among the city's top attractions.
- **Tasmania:** The island state of Tasmania boasts pristine wilderness areas, rugged coastlines, and historic towns. Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park offers breathtaking landscapes, including alpine peaks and ancient rainforests. The capital city, Hobart, features the bustling Salamanca Market and the fascinating Museum of Old and New Art (MONA). Tasmania's gourmet food and wine scene, along with its stunning natural beauty, make it a unique destination.

European exploration of the continent began in the 17th century, with the Dutch and later the British mapping parts of the coastline. In 1788, the First Fleet of British ships arrived, establishing a penal colony in New South Wales. This marked the beginning of British colonization, which had profound impacts on Indigenous populations.

Australia became a federated nation on January 1, 1901, when six colonies united to form the Commonwealth of Australia. The country has since evolved into a multicultural society with a strong economy and a commitment to environmental conservation.

