

WELCOME TO AUSTRALIA : TEXTS.

1)

Australia is situated in the southern hemisphere under the equator. That's why it is nicknamed "The Land Down Under". Australia is one of the largest countries in the world, but it is also the smallest continent. Australia is the flattest, most arid, and least populated of the inhabited continents. The interior of the country is a vast, dry area where few people live. It is known as the Outback, or "bush." Because Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere, summer starts in December, and winter starts in June. Australia contains **six states**: New South Wales (South east of Australia), Victoria (the smallest state), Queensland (North east), Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania (a small island). The country also includes **two internal territories**: the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory (a small land in New South Wales), which contains **Canberra**, the country's capital.

There are 24 million inhabitants in Australia and 85% of the population live in big cities.

Hobart is the capital city of Tasmania and **Lauceston** is on the north coast of this small island. **Melbourne** is the main city of Victoria and **Alice Springs** is right in the middle of the country in the Northern Territory.

Perth, which is famous for its beautiful beaches, is in Western Australia. **Brisbane** is in Queensland as well as **Cairns**, which is on the north coast. **Adelaide** is in South Australia and **Darwin** is in the north of the Northern Territory.

Sydney is between Canberra and Brisbane.

Source: adapted from Kids Britannica

2)

Australians are called "AUSSIES".

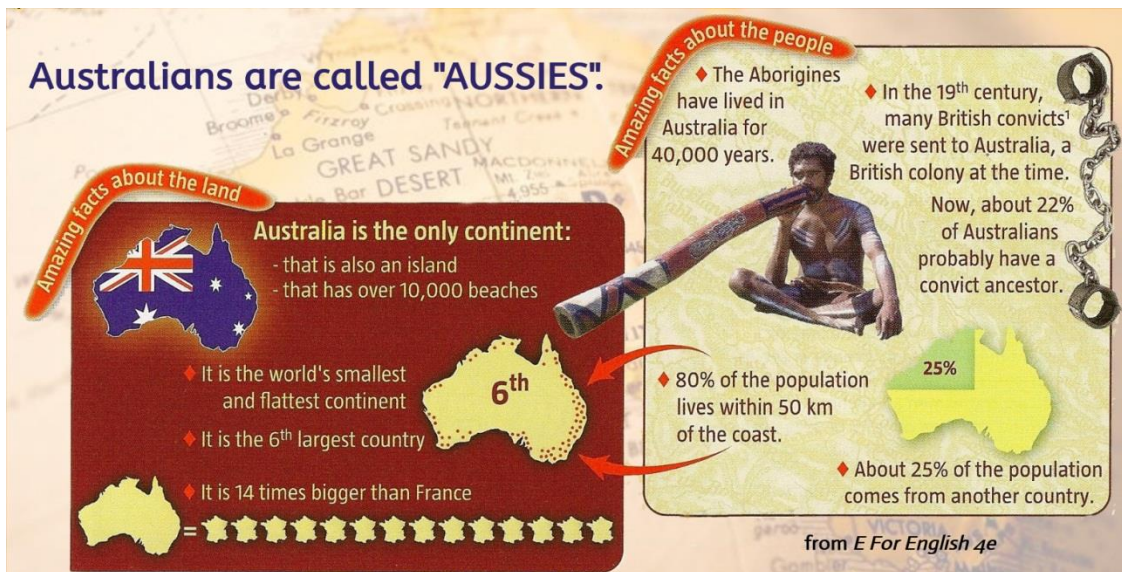
Amazing facts about the land

- ◆ Australia is the only continent:
 - that is also an island
 - that has over 10,000 beaches
- ◆ It is the world's smallest and flattest continent
- ◆ It is the 6th largest country
- ◆ It is 14 times bigger than France

Amazing facts about the people

- ◆ The Aborigines have lived in Australia for 40,000 years.
- ◆ In the 19th century, many British convicts¹ were sent to Australia, a British colony at the time. Now, about 22% of Australians probably have a convict ancestor.
- ◆ 80% of the population lives within 50 km of the coast.
- ◆ About 25% of the population comes from another country.

from E For English 4e

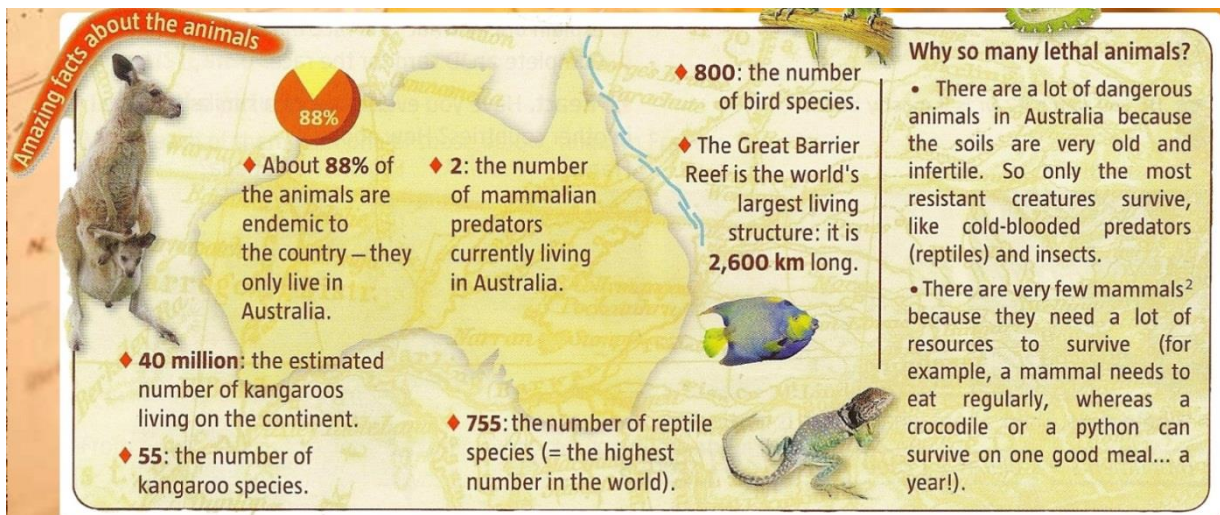


Amazing facts about the animals

- ◆ **88%** of the animals are endemic to the country – they only live in Australia.
- ◆ **40 million**: the estimated number of kangaroos living on the continent.
- ◆ **55**: the number of kangaroo species.
- ◆ **2**: the number of mammalian predators currently living in Australia.
- ◆ **755**: the number of reptile species (= the highest number in the world).
- ◆ **800**: the number of bird species.
- ◆ The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest living structure: it is **2,600 km** long.

Why so many lethal animals?

- There are a lot of dangerous animals in Australia because the soils are very old and infertile. So only the most resistant creatures survive, like cold-blooded predators (reptiles) and insects.
- There are very few mammals² because they need a lot of resources to survive (for example, a mammal needs to eat regularly, whereas a crocodile or a python can survive on one good meal... a year!).



3)

The first inhabitants of Australia were **The Aborigines**, who lived there for at least 40,000 years before Europeans arrived.

In the 1600's, several **Dutch explorers** reached the continent.

In 1644, the Dutch named the continent New Holland, but they didn't settle there.

In 1770, **Captain James Cook**, who was a British explorer and cartographer, became the first Englishman to discover Australia. He landed in the southeastern part of the continent and named the region New South Wales. He thought Australia was a good place to start a **colony**. At the time, there were too many criminals in England's prisons, so the English government decided to send **prisoners** to Australia in order to live there. They cleared land and established farms.

In 1851, the discovery of **gold** attracted thousands of new immigrants to Australia.

Today, Australia is no longer a British colony. It became **independent in 1901** and is part of the **British Commonwealth**.

from *Britannica Kids*

4)

The Aborigines, or **Aboriginals**, are the **native** people of Australia. They have lived on the continent for more than 50,000 years. They are **one of the oldest** living civilizations in the world. Before British settlers arrived, there were about 600 different groups of Aboriginals and they spoke their own language (there were more than 200 Aboriginal languages!). Scientists think that the Aborigines originally came from **Asia**.

The Aborigines were **nomadic** and **hunters**. In general men hunted large animal such as kangaroos, emus and reptiles whereas women hunted smaller animals (lizards) and collected honey, insects and plant foods. They used **boomerangs** to hunt and fish. Aboriginal art, music and dance are linked with spiritual life and nature. Aborigines of northern Australia invented the **didjeridu** (or **didgeridoo**), a long wooden flute which is from 1 to 3m long.

They also used **Dot painting** to tell stories and teach.

The Aborigines' lives changed when Europeans arrived in Australia more than 200 years ago. The Europeans forced the Aborigines to move off their land and to change their way of life. Many Aborigines died defending their land. Many others died from diseases brought by the Europeans. Today, the Aborigines represent only 2,7% of the population in Australia!

from *Britannica Kids*

DREAMTIME

The Aborigines believe that everything on earth was created by Ancestor Spirits a long time ago, during the Dreamtime. The Spirits made the rivers, rocks, plants, animals, and gave the Aborigines their hunting tools.

In traditional ceremonies, people tell these creation stories with songs, dances, body paintings and pictures called "Dreamings". The traditional colours used are yellow (the sun), brown (the earth), red (the desert sand), and white (clouds and the sky).

