

Factsheet for teachers

This factsheet will support teachers with subject knowledge related to the module as a whole, as well as important facts related to the key questions and ideas for each lesson.

Lesson one: Locating Australia

Australia is both a country and a continent. It is a large land mass like Africa and South America although it contains only one country. At its widest point it is 4100km wide which is slightly more than about four lengths of the UK. Australia is the sixth largest country in the world, and the smallest continent in the world. It is almost located at the opposite side of the Earth to where the UK is, in the Southern Hemisphere. It is located southeast of Asia, between the Pacific and Indian Oceans and is an island surrounded by ocean expanses. Australia has a total coastline of 25,760 km.

Australia is slightly smaller than the United States, with a total area of around 7.7 million km². The five mainland states are New South Wales (801,600 km²), Queensland (1,727,200 km²), South Australia (984,000 km²), Victoria (227,600 km²) and Western Australia, (2,525,500 km²). The island state of Tasmania has an area of 67,800 km²; the Northern Territory, 1,346,200 km² and the Australian Capital Territory, 2,400 km².

Neighboring countries are: Papua New Guinea to the north, New Zealand to the southeast, and Indonesia to the northwest. Australia's capital city, Canberra, is located in the southeastern part of the country.

Location of Australia



Source: Wikipedia Commons

Lesson two: Australia's Diverse Landscape

Australia is a large country, so the landscape is very varied. There are rivers, beaches, cliffs, mountains, rainforests and deserts as well as many cities and towns. The lesson itself includes a lot of information related to the different landscape regions of Australia, and the information below includes further details of some of Australia's most famous landscapes.

The biggest river system in Australia is the Murray Darling Basin. The largest area of highland is The Great Dividing Range; it is a long highland area that runs parallel to the coast in the south eastern part of the country. Australia has some very important natural landscapes such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree Rainforest and Ayers Rock (Uluru), which is located exactly in the centre of the country and is of great cultural significance to the indigenous population.

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the seven wonders of the natural world and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is the world's largest coral reef. The reef contains an abundance of marine life and comprises of over 3000 individual reef systems and hundreds of tropical islands. The Great Barrier Reef has become one of the worlds most visited tourist destinations and is an area of outstanding beauty. Visitors can enjoy a huge range of activities: snorkeling, scuba diving, aircraft or helicopter tours, boat trips, whale watching and swimming with dolphins.

The Great Barrier Reef



Great Barrier Reef © Su Fuidge, Flickr

The Daintree Forest

The Daintree Forest is a tropical rainforest region on the northeast coast of Queensland. It is around 1,200 km² and is the largest continuous area of tropical rainforest on the Australian continent. The tropical rainforest grows right down to the edge of the sea. The rainforest is named after Richard Daintree, an Australian geologist and photographer who lived from 1832-1878.

The area includes the Daintree National Park, some areas of State Forest, and some privately owned land, including a residential community. The Rainforest is home to a huge range of species of plants and animals. It contains 3% of the frog, reptile and marsupial species in Australia, and 90% of Australia's bat and butterfly species. There are also over 12,000 species of insects in the rainforest. For more information to explore with pupils, go to <http://www.daintreerainforest.net.au/>

Location of the Daintree Rainforest



Ayers Rock/ Uluru

Ayers Rock (Uluru) is a large sandstone rock formation in the southern part of the Northern Territory in central Australia. Uluru is a major feature of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. It is sacred to the Anangu, the Aboriginal people of the area. The area around Uluru has many springs, waterholes, rock caves, and ancient paintings. Uluru is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Location of Ayers Rock/ Uluru



Source: Britannica.com

Wildlife in Australia

Australia has very unique animals, many of which are marsupials. These include: koalas, wombats, wallabies, possums and bandicoots. Non-marsupials include the platypus, the echidna and the dingo. Australia also has a range of western animals such as sheep and cattle along with wild camel and wild horses.

There is a story told in Australia about how the kangaroo got its name: when European explorers first saw these strange hopping animals they asked a native Australian (aborigine) what they were called. He replied "kangaroo" meaning "I don't understand" your question. The explorers thought this was the animal's name, and that's how the kangaroo got its name.

Kangaroo in New South Wales, Australia



Kangaroo with joey inside the pouch © Tatters, Flickr

Australia also has a number of dangerous and poisonous sea creatures, animals, snakes and spiders, such as the Great White shark, the Box Jellyfish, Cone shells, the Saltwater Crocodile, the Indian Taipan snake and the Funnel Web spider.

Lesson three: Weather and Climate

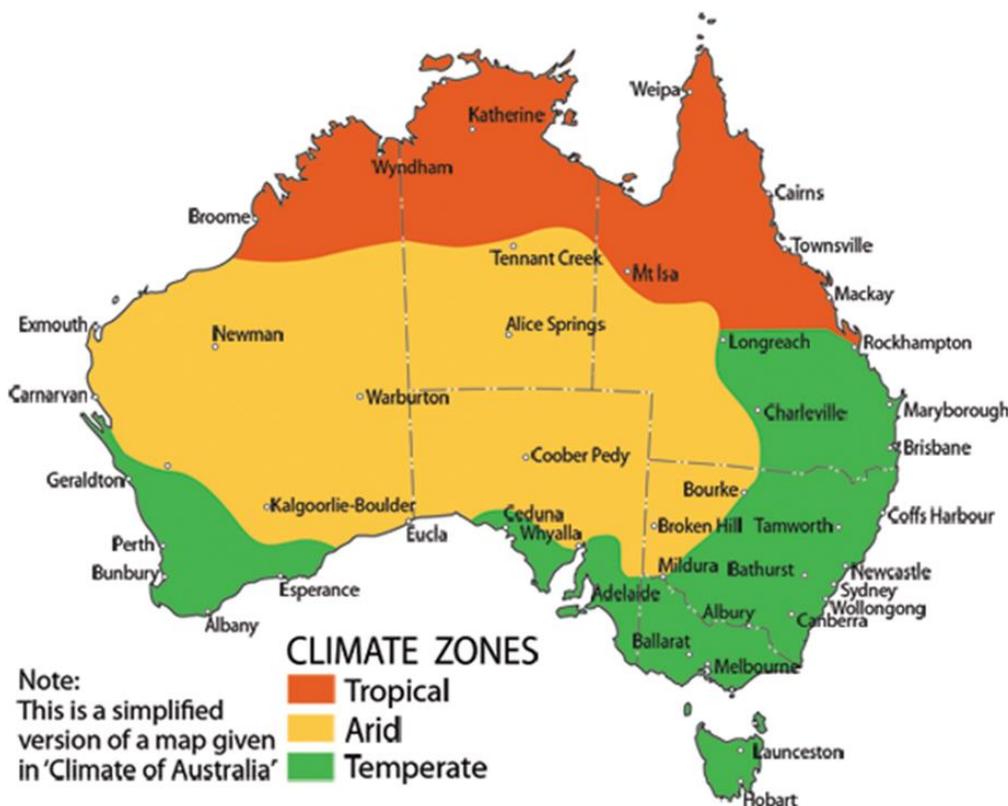
Australia lies on the Tropic of Capricorn and is in the Southern Hemisphere. The seasons are the opposite of those in the Northern Hemisphere. When it is summer in the Northern Hemisphere (including the UK), it is winter south of the Equator. December and January are the hottest months in Australia, July and August the coldest. Australia experiences extreme weather from flooding, drought, and destruction from wind, and bush fires.

Australia's climate varies by location due to the size of the continent. Australia has three main climate zones: temperate, arid and tropical. In the mountainous regions in the southeast, the winter can be very harsh, and the highest peaks are usually covered by snow year-round.

Most rain falls in the Northeastern coastal areas of Australia, for example the city of Darwin which has an annual average rainfall of 100 inches and more. Sometimes extreme weather can occur in the northern coastal areas in the form of tropical cyclones, causing heavy wind and rainstorms. These events usually occur during the Australian summer months between November and April.

The weather conditions in the desert and bush ("outback") areas in inland Australia are very to the coastal areas; the temperature reaches sometimes 50°C and more, and rain may not fall for years, resulting in drought and water shortages. The climate in these areas is arid, and Australia as a whole is one of the driest continents on earth.

Climate Zones of Australia



Extreme Weather Events in Australia

The term **bushfire** is unique to Australia and New Zealand; elsewhere in the world similar events are known as wildfires or forest fires. In Australia, bushfires can occur year-round. In south east Australia, larger and more destructive events occur during the summer and autumn months (December-March), whilst in northern Australia bushfires are more prevalent during the dry season (April-September). Bushfires are a natural phenomenon, yet human activity has caused fire to be more intense and destructive. Human influence has altered the natural fire regime, and humans have been credited for igniting several recent fires, for example by leaving a BBQ unattended or not putting out a cigarette properly. Bushfires can also start from lightning strikes. More intense and frequent fires are expected to occur as the dry season lengthens due to climate change.

Bushfires are fought by trained volunteers and firefighters. It is a very dangerous pursuit, and most loss of life occurs due to sudden changes of wind at the fire front (the leading edge of a moving fire), by dehydration or asphyxiation. The Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria occurred between the 7 Feb 2009 – 14 March 2009 (Southeast Australia) were the worst fires experienced in Australia, costing \$1 billion and with 173 losses of life. In order to prevent such extreme and large fires, controlled burning instead of fire suppression (preventing fires from occurring) is now as a mitigation technique.

Firefighters tackling a bushfire



Source: SBS AU

Tropical cyclones in Australia form over the ocean in the area around the equator. These are spinning, whirlwind storms, known as hurricanes in North America and typhoons in Asia. Cyclones spin clockwise in the southern hemisphere, whilst hurricanes and typhoons spin anti-clockwise in the northern hemisphere. To become a cyclone, the storm must be travelling at speeds over 119km/h. Cyclones are incredibly destructive, usually leading to flooding from the heavy rain they bring.

Cyclones are named from a list of around 104 names, chosen in sequence before returning to the start of the list. The list alternates between male and female names. For particularly destructive events, the name will be removed from the list as a mark of respect. The most severe cyclone in Australia's history was Cyclone Tracy, which destroyed large parts of the northern city of Darwin from Christmas Eve to Christmas day 1974 and killed 74 people.

Satellite image of Australia with a cyclone over the Queensland Coast



Source: Australian Geographic

Lesson four: Who are Australians and where do they live?

Australia is a part of the Commonwealth and is very influenced by the UK, for example following the same legal and political systems. Like the UK, the political leader of the country is called the Prime Minister; the current Prime Minister of Australia is Tony Abbot.

The Prime Minister of Australia: Tony Abbot



Source: Wikipedia

Country Emblem of Australia



Queen Elizabeth II of England is also the Queen of Australia. The Australian flag has a Union Jack in the top left hand corner and a picture of the Southern Cross constellation on it plus another star called the Federal star. The country emblem has a coat of arms that features the Emu and the Kangaroo and the National Anthem is Advance Australia Fair. In Australia, people use dollars and cents as currency. Interestingly, Australian 'paper' money is actually made from plastic.

Indigenous Australians

The Australian population is made up of many people who have come from different parts of the world along with the indigenous Australian Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The Indigenous Australians existed in Australia and surrounding islands prior to European colonisation. Today there are around 23 million people living in Australia with around 600,000 being indigenous peoples of Australia.

Population of Indigenous Australians: 669,881 (2011)

3% of Australia's total population

Population distribution by state/territory

| | |
|---|-----------------|
|  <u>New South Wales</u> | 208,476 (2.89%) |
|  <u>Queensland</u> | 188,954 (4.22%) |
|  <u>Western Australia</u> | 88,270 (3.75%) |
|  <u>Northern Territory</u> | 68,850 (29.77%) |
|  <u>Victoria</u> | 47,333 (0.85%) |
|  <u>South Australia</u> | 37,408 (2.28%) |
|  <u>Tasmania</u> | 24,165 (4.72%) |
|  <u>Australian Capital Territory</u> | 6,160 (1.67%) |

Source: Wikipedia Commons

Who are Australians and where do they live?

The first humans came to Australia around 40 000 years ago when man spread from Africa. White European (Dutch) explorers first sighted and landed Australia in the 1600s but it wasn't until the 1700's when the British came that a settlement was made.

Captain James Cook was sent from the UK in 1768 to do research in the Pacific and on the way back he was to explore the region in search of what was then called Terra Australis. British colonisation of Australia began with the arrival of the First Fleet in Botany Bay in 1788. Australia was settled as a penal colony to take prisoners in England for whom there was no room. Free settlers from the UK were also taken to populate and farm the country.

Over the years Australia became home to people from other locations around the world, through the process of immigration. Australia is multi-cultural; people from a range of different countries have relocated to settle in Australia. Whilst Australians do tend to be very tolerant, sometimes people from different groups don't get on very well. This can sometimes cause problems in the country. Australians mainly live around the edge of Australia in coastal cities because the inland areas are not very accessible, there are fewer jobs, and less resources and services are available.

Lesson Five: Australia's Cities

Major Cities in Australia



Source: Wikipedia Commons

Australia has political boundaries that separate the country into states and territories. There are capital cities in each state and territory. Canberra, located in the Australian Capital Territory, is Australia's national capital.

Australia's urban areas (areas of dense population) are located along Australia's coastline. These areas are most accessible for trade and travel, have the most pleasant weather conditions, and access to services and water supply. The inland areas have a significantly sparser (lower) population than the coastal areas.

Australia's most populated urban areas

| Rank | City | State/Territory | Population | % total country population |
|------|-------------------------------------|--|------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Sydney | New South Wales | 4,840,628 | 20.61% |
| 2 | Melbourne | Victoria | 4,440,328 | 18.90% |
| 3 | Brisbane | Queensland | 2,274,460 | 9.68% |
| 4 | Perth | Western Australia | 2,021,203 | 8.60% |
| 5 | Adelaide | South Australia | 1,304,631 | 5.55% |
| 6 | Gold Coast-Tweed Heads | Queensland/New South Wales | 614,379 | 2.62% |
| 7 | Newcastle-Maitland | New South Wales | 430,755 | 1.83% |
| 8 | Canberra-Queanbeyan | Australian Capital Territory/New South Wales | 422,510 | 1.80% |
| * | Australian Capital Territory | Australian Capital Territory ^a | 386,000 | 1.64% |
| 9 | Sunshine Coast | Queensland | 297,380 | 1.27% |
| 10 | Wollongong | New South Wales | 289,236 | 1.23% |
| 11 | Hobart | Tasmania | 219,200 | 0.93% |

| | | | | |
|----|------------|--------------------|---------|-------|
| 12 | Geelong | Victoria | 184,182 | 0.78% |
| 13 | Townsville | Queensland | 178,649 | 0.76% |
| 14 | Cairns | Queensland | 146,778 | 0.62% |
| 15 | Darwin | Northern Territory | 140,400 | 0.60% |

Lesson Six: Daily life in Australia

Sport and hobbies

Most people in Australia live in cities around the coast and in the south east and south west where the temperature and weather is most comfortable. Many Australians have a great love of the outdoors. Sport and outdoor activities are very important to many Australians. Cricket, rugby, football (soccer), Australian rules football, tennis, golf, swimming and surfing are all popular sports.

Industry and work

Australia went through an industrial process along with other Western countries and now many people work providing services for others in Australia and around the world. Australia still depends a lot on agriculture and mining because it is rich in resources, has good quality farming land, and lots of space for large scale farming. The number of people working in the farming and mining industries is decreasing, as more machinery does the work.

Wealth and Economy

Australia is connected to the economy of the world. Australia is in a part of the world where there are many poorer countries such as Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Australia gives much aid to these countries.

Australia is a wealthy country. This means that it enjoys lots of opportunities. It is a safe country, it has good education, good health care, and it is organised and has a stable government. Like many countries, however, fewer women are having babies and this means that the average age of the population is increasing. This will put a strain on health care and pensions in future years.

Contrasting places: Rural and Urban Australia

Urban Sydney

Lesson five includes a lot of information on the city of Sydney in the information sheet (see lesson five downloads).

Where is Sydney located?



Rural Picola

Picola is a town in northern Victoria, Australia. The town is located 246 kilometers from the state capital, Melbourne. In the 2011 census, Picola had a population of 334. It is a very small town with a very low population.

The town was once a railhead for loading of wheat, livestock and timber from the nearby Barmah National Park. Today the Picola district is an irrigated, mixed farming area. It is serviced by two return V-Line coach services on weekdays, both connecting with train services to Melbourne Southern Cross in Shepparton, a 45 min drive away.

Picola, Victoria



Source: Wikipedia

Where is Picola located?



Source: Google maps