

● What basic facts do you know about Australia?

Australia is both the world's largest island and smallest continent. It is the only continent which is a single country. It is located south of Asia between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Australia is made up of / comprises six states and two territories (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, and Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory). The main and official language of Australia is English. There are about 20 million people. / About 20 million people live there.

● What can you tell me about the Australian system of government?

Australia is a federal state / a federation of self-governing / independent states. Its official title is the Commonwealth of Australia. Formally, the head of state is the monarch / king / queen of the United Kingdom, currently Queen Elizabeth II. Her representative... at the federal / national level is the Governor General... at the state level it is the governor. The real / everyday power is in the government. The federal government is led by the prime minister. The government in individual states is led by the premier. The federal legislative body, the parliament, has its seat in the capital, Canberra. It has two chambers / houses; the Senate and the House of Representatives. Voting is compulsory in Australia. If a voter does not give a satisfactory reason for not taking part in an election (e.g. illness), he/she is fined.

● What do you know about Australian history?

Australia was settled by Aborigines / indigenous Australians about 50,000 years ago. Aboriginal culture was mostly hunter-gatherer and about 250 languages were spoken in Australia at the time. The Dutch were the first Europeans to discover Australia in the 17th century. James Cook, the British explorer, claimed Australia for Britain in 1770. In 1788 the first colony was established in today's Sydney Harbour. Australia was originally settled as a penal / prison colony. In the 1850s gold was discovered and many people moved to Australia. Australia became an independent nation in 1901 when the six colonies agreed to become a federation. Canberra was declared as the national / federal capital in 1927.

● Could you describe some of Australia's geographical features?

Australia has a hot / dry / arid centre... the centre is mostly desert... there are tropical regions in the north with heavy rain... the south is milder with hot summers and cool winters. Bushfires / droughts are a common feature in the Australian environment. The most famous landform is Uluru / Ayers Rock in the centre of the country... the Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef. It is found / lies along the

coast of Queensland... Australia's tallest mountain is Mount Kosciuszko, which is 2,228 metres high... Australia's longest river is the Murray River.

● What do you know about Australian flora and fauna?

Thanks to the climate and geographical isolation of the continent there are unique animals / animal species in Australia such as marsupials like the kangaroo / the koala bear / the Tasmanian devil or the platypus, which is an egg-laying mammal. Typical Australian vegetation is grass and eucalyptus trees.

● Could you tell me something specific about the individual states and cities?

New South Wales is the oldest and most populous state. Sydney, Australia's largest city, is found here. Tasmania is an island and also the smallest state. It is much colder than the rest of Australia. Western Australia is the largest state. It has a lot of natural resources (e.g. iron ore, diamonds, coal). Victoria is quite a small state but it has many people / many people live there. Melbourne, the capital of Victoria, is the second largest Australian city... it is Australia's cultural centre. The state South Australia is quite dry and famous for its wines.

● What are some typical Australian sports and pastimes?

Cricket is the most popular summer sport. It is a bat-and-ball game. Other sports played in Australia are rugby, popular in the eastern states, and Australian rules football, played in the rest of the country. The games are quite different; one similarity is that they both have an egg-shaped / oval ball. Soccer is also quite popular. Australia has ideal conditions for divers and surfers too.

● Who are some famous Australians?

Some famous Australians are... Patrick White, the first Australian to win the Nobel Prize for literature... Peter Carey, an internationally successful novelist... Sidney Nolan and Brett Whiteley are two well-known Australian painters... Peter Garrett was once the lead singer of Midnight Oil and is now a politician... Kylie Minogue is a world famous singer... Nicole Kidman, Russell Crowe and Mel Gibson are prominent Australian actors... Cathy Freeman (sprinter) and Ian Thorpe (swimmer) are two of Australia's most successful Olympic athletes.

● Would you like to go to Australia?

Absolutely / sure / yes. I love Australian culture / lifestyle. I think that people living there are more easy-going / friendly than in the Czech Republic. It must be a very interesting place. Australia is a wealthy / prosperous country / nation... I could find a good job there. I would like to go there to learn English and make some money. No / No way... it's too faraway / I am afraid to fly so far... it's too hot.