The **First Fleet** was the 11 [ships](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_sail) that departed from Portsmouth, England, on 13 May 1787 to found the [penal colony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penal_colony) that became the first European settlement in [Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia). The Fleet consisted of two [Royal Navy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Navy) vessels, three store ships and six [convict transports](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penal_transportation), carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 [convicts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convicts_in_Australia), [marines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marines), [seamen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailor), [civil officers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_service) and free people (accounts differ on the numbers), and a large quantity of stores. From England, the Fleet sailed southwest to [Rio de Janeiro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rio_de_Janeiro), then east to [Cape Town](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Town) and via the [Great Southern Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Southern_Ocean) to [Botany Bay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botany_Bay), arriving over the period of 18 to 20 January 1788, taking 250 to 252 days from departure to final arrival.