

Australia: Take Only Memories, Leave Only Footprints [C1]

Il proverbio attribuito alle popolazioni indigene dell'Australia è un'ispirazione per i visitatori di questa affascinante nazione insulare, la cui ricchezza e diversità non hanno paragoni.

Visiting Australia takes time, but the experience is unforgettable. The world's smallest continental land mass is also its largest island, and at 7.7 million square kilometres, it is a vast and incredibly [diverse](#) landscape of deserts, [wetlands](#) and [rainforests](#) as well as farming lands, beaches, [coral reefs](#) and open oceans. A popular tourist destination, Australia's excellent infrastructure and safety record impress American visitors, while Europeans are enamoured of its space and informality.

ETHNICALLY DIVERSE

Australia is one of the most ethnically [diverse](#) places on Earth. Its Indigenous people are the traditional custodians of the land, having inhabited Australia for some eighty thousand years. It was a British penal colony in the late 18th century, then, in the 19th century, nearly two hundred thousand free [settlers](#) migrated there from Europe, attracted by the prospect of gold in the 1850s [gold rushes](#) or looking to escape adverse social conditions at home. [South Sea Islanders](#) were recruited to work on sugar plantations, Afghan cameleers helped explore the country's arid interior, and Japanese [divers](#) helped develop the pearling industry. In the 20th century, the two World Wars and the Vietnam War in the 1970s brought more people from Europe and Asia.

AUSSIE CHARACTER

Australians are famed for their resilience, courage and compassion. More than 80 per cent of its twenty-six million population live within the coastal zone. Big cities such as Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth are both beautiful and lively. The good weather, beaches and parks [harbour](#) a surf and café culture. Australians love the [outdoors](#) the 'Bush' refers to the rural areas around cities; the Outback is the remote, vast and [sparsely](#) populated area that stretches across Australia. The [Outback](#) ingrained in Australia's [heritage](#), history and folklore, has a number of climatic zones, including tropical climates in northern areas, arid areas in the centre, and temperate climates in the south. More than 80 per cent of plants,

[mammals](#), reptiles and frogs are unique to the continent. Well-known examples include kangaroos, dingos, wallabies and wombats, as well as koalas and [platypus](#).

G'DAY MATE!

Aussies speak English, but their informality stretches to language, too. There is a tendency to abbreviate or [blend](#) words: 'G'day' is a composite of 'good day', an old-fashioned way of saying 'hello'. The Aboriginals have their own languages: 'Wominjeka' is 'hello' in the Kulin language, while in the Noongar language it is 'Kaya'. To find out more about Australia and its people, Speak Up contacted Greg Esnouf, president of Tour Guides Australia. As he explained, you need a few months to really get a feel of the country, which takes three to four days to cross by car. However, given that the country's transport system, comprised of planes, trains and buses, is excellent, with proper planning it is possible to go for shorter periods, as Esnouf explains. **Greg Esnouf (Australian accent):** You [cut the cloth to suit](#) the time you've got. So if you've got a week, the real number one highlight for me is the Great Barrier Reef. That's just [stunning](#). So the Great Barrier Reef and probably Cairns or Port Douglas... Sydney as a city is absolutely beautiful. So as a [gateway](#) city to come into, it's good. Once you start [to peel off](#) from that, Uluru and Kakadu probably are the next obvious choices. Uluru and next door is a place that's got a new name, that's got its Aboriginal name, but I can't remember what it is [Kata Tjuta], but it was the Olgas in the old days... they're both magnificent rock formations that you can walk around Uluru, spending some time in the desert. Kakadu is just magnificent, in terms of being a tropical wetland. And then if you've got three to four weeks then come down to the South, see Melbourne, perhaps see Tasmania and stuff like that.

PLANNING

The best times to visit the country are springtime, September to November, or autumn, March to May, although it really depends on where you're going, says Esnouf. **Greg Esnouf:** Depends on which part you want to go to. So in the South, the best time to visit in Melbourne, for example, would be sometime between November and March. But the best time to go to the Great Barrier Reef is before the wet season comes in in November when it gets too hot and you get all the tropical storms. Same with Kakadu, even in October, Kakadu can be 38°C and raining at the same time. So that's that humid, tropical atmospheres. So in the north, the best time to go is sort of August, September or October, and as the season migrates down to the South, it's better to go in December, January and February when you're down in the southern parts

INFORMALITY

The majority of Australians are of British [heritage](#) and the influence of English culture is [ever-present](#). However, Aussie culture has its own proud conventions.

Greg Esnouf: You'll get a bit of that here because we've got a lot of English Heritage, but we don't have tea time and we're very relaxed in that sort of way. You'll generally just get people [who] will say "G'Day" and "How are you?", that sort of stuff. They're not really actually wanting to hear how you are, that's just an opening statement, the way of starting a conversation. And meal times are flexible, we'll shake hands, openly. We call each other 'mates' so you can get quite confused because in America a mate is your partner or your wife or your husband, and in Australia a mate is just anyone.

HARSH HISTORIES

Australia is still coming to terms with its violent colonial past. European [settlers](#) forcibly displaced Indigenous people from their lands, or killed them in their tens of thousands. Esnouf talks more about this. **Greg Esnouf:** Like most colonial countries that have had a period of colonisation [in] our past, we're not proud of it at all. Disease was brought in, there was dispossession, movement of people. And that went right up into the 1950s and 1960s. So we really only started to see a change in attitudes in the 1960s. But there has been a major change: most organisations and the government, when they're having meetings, will have an Acknowledgement of Country before every meeting, the Aboriginal flag, which was developed in the 1970s to symbolise Aboriginal people, has proudly flown on every government building along with the Australian flag.

Glossary

- **ever-present** = sempre presente
- **settlers** = coloni
- **gold rushes** = corse all'oro
- **platypus** = ornitorinco
- **blend** = mischiare
- **cut the cloth to suit** = adattarsi a
- **gateway** = entrata
- **to peel off** = rimuovere
- **harbour** = ospitare
- **outdoors** = aria aperta
- **Bush** = arbusto
- **ingrained in** = inculcato, radicato
- **mammals** = mammiferi
- **South Sea Islanders** = abitanti delle isole del Pacifico meridionale
- **sparsely** = scarsamente
- **stunning** = sbalorditivo
- **heritage** = eredità
- **wetlands** = terreni acquitrinosi
- **rainforests** = foreste pluviali
- **coral reefs** = barriere coralline
- **divers** = subacquei
- **Outback** = entroterra