

## CANADA

Canada occupies the northern part of North America (with the exception of Alaska) and many islands. With its area of almost 10 million sq. km it is the second largest country in the world (after Russia). It borders on the U.S.A. in the Northwest (Alaska) and in the South.

Great Lakes on the southern U.S.-Canada border make up the biggest reservoir of fresh water in the world. The largest of them is Lake Superior; between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario there are famous Niagara Falls; the remaining two are called Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. But you can find other big and beautiful lakes in Canada – such as Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake or Lake Winnipeg. The longest river is the Mackenzie flowing into the Arctic Ocean; the most important river is St. Lawrence River in the East.

The countryside and especially the climate of Canada are very varied. There are high mountains – the Cordilleras - in the West. The highest peak (Mount Logan near Alaska) is about 6,000 metres high. In the rest of the territory there are mostly lowlands. The climate varies from the Arctic climate in the North (winter temperatures sometimes drop to 50 °C below zero) to the moderate climate.

Canada has a population of only about 41 million, which means that the density belongs to the lowest in the world. About 90% of the country has no permanent population. Most people live in large cities near the southern border. The majority is of European origin (mostly British and French), the rest are Inuit (Eskimos) and Indians.

Official languages are English and French, which is a result of the historical development: Canada was originally a French colony called New France. The first settlers started arriving from Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and built their settlements in the St. Lawrence valley. But in 1763 France was defeated by Britain and Canada became a British colony. During the War of Independence the Canadians remained loyal to Britain but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a strong independence movement. That is why in 1867 Canada became the first British dominion.

It is a constitutional monarchy. The head of the state is the British King Charles III. He is represented in Canada (as well as in other dominions) by the Governor-General. But in fact, Canada is an independent country with a parliamentary system. The most powerful person in the country is the Prime Minister.

Since 1964 Canada has its own national flag. It is well known: It is red and in the centre there is a white square with a red maple leaf. Red colour symbolizes the blood of Canadians who died in WWI; white represents the snow of the Canadian North.

The capital is Ottawa but there are bigger cities there - e.g., Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

Canada is divided into 10 provinces and 3 territories. The largest and most developed province is Quebec. It is also the only province where most people speak French. That is why from time to time some people try to separate Quebec from the rest of Canada.

## **AUSTRALIA**

Australia is the smallest continent (7.7 million sq. km), situated on the southern hemisphere between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans.

The countryside is mostly flat. The highest mountains can be found along the eastern coast: The best known are the Great Dividing Range and the Australian Alps with the highest mountain in the whole continent – Mt. Kosciusko (2,200 m high). Especially in central Australia there are deserts (e.g. the Great Sandy Desert, the Gibson Desert, the Great Victoria Desert), the Northwest and the North are arid and hot too. In other parts of the continent you can find savannas and tropic forests. The longest rivers are the Murray and the Darling in the South. Many rivers and lakes in Australia become dry in dry seasons.

Thanks to its isolation in the past, Australia has some animals, which cannot be seen in the rest of the world (kangaroo, koala bear, dingo etc.). Sheep and rabbits on the other hand were brought from Britain. Rabbits grew wild, there are many of them and that is why they are quite a big danger for Australian farmers.

Australia has a population of about 27 million, which means that the density is very low. Most people live in urban areas mainly along the southeast coast; many areas are uninhabited. Most people are of European (mostly British) origin, the second-biggest group are people of Asian origin; there are some aborigines left. The official language is Australian English.

Europeans (the Dutch) discovered Australia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first British immigrants arrived here in the 18<sup>th</sup> century - most of them were prisoners.

Since 1901 the official name of the country is The Commonwealth of Australia. It consists of 6 states and 2 territories (one of them is Australian Capital Territory). It is a British dominion. That is why the Governor-General represents the head of the state - the British King Charles III. But it is an independent country with a parliamentary system. The most important person in the country is the Prime Minister. The capital - Canberra - was built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The biggest cities are Sydney and Melbourne.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

is said to be one of the most beautiful countries in the world. It consists of two large different islands and several small ones. It is situated on the southern hemisphere, in the Pacific Ocean.

Although there are several lowlands around the New Zealand coast, the country is mostly hilly. In the centre of the North Island there are several active volcanoes. In the mountains of the South Island there is the highest peak - Mt. Cook (almost 3,800 m).

Just like Australia, New Zealand is home to several kinds of animals, which cannot be found anywhere else in the world. One of them is the kiwi, a flightless bird. New Zealanders are often called Kiwis after it.

The population of New Zealand is about 5 million (that is why the density is much higher than in Australia). The official language is New Zealand English; the aborigines speak Maori.

The political system is the same as in Canada and Australia - it is a dominion of the UK. The capital Wellington as well as the biggest town Auckland are situated on the North Island.

## QUESTIONS

- 1) Where is Canada situated? What do you know about its area and borders?
- 2) Are there any important lakes and rivers in Canada?
- 3) Characterize the countryside and the climate of Canada.
- 4) What do you know about Canada's population (how many people, the density, where do most people live, ethnic groups, official languages)?
- 5) Speak about the historical development of Canada.
- 6) Describe the political system in Canada.
- 7) What do you know about Canadian national flag?
- 8) Enumerate the most important cities in Canada.
- 9) What administrative units is Canada divided into?
- 10) Where is Australia situated, what is its area?
- 11) What do you know about Australia's countryside?
- 12) What is special about Australia's animals?
- 13) Characterize the population of Australia (how many people, the density, where do most people live, ethnic groups, official languages).
- 14) What do you know about the history of Australia?
- 15) What is the official name of Australia; describe its political system.
- 16) Enumerate the biggest cities in Australia and the administrative units.
- 17) What does New Zealand consist of, where is it situated?
- 18) Describe New Zealand's countryside.
- 19) What is special about New Zealand's animals?
- 20) What do you know about the population of New Zealand?
- 21) Say a few words about the political system of the country.
- 22) Give the names of the most important cities in New Zealand.