

Australia

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About this guide: Little Passports has developed this guide to provide ideas, activities and resources for teachers using the World Edition subscription in the classroom.

Lesson: Discover Australia

Suggested Use: geography, social studies

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DISCOVER AUSTRALIA



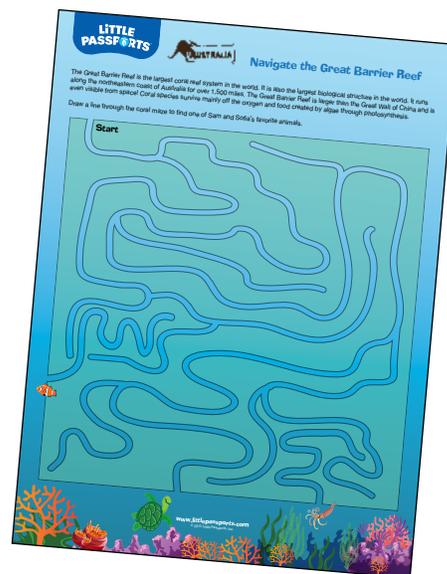
Australia Profile: Australia is one of the six largest countries on Earth, and it is the only one of those six that is completely surrounded by water. While, as a country, Australia is large, the continent of Australia is the smallest on Earth. The first Europeans to settle in Australia were the British, in 1788. But for more than 50,000 years Australia has been inhabited by its Aboriginal people groups. By the nineteenth century, Britain had six separate colonies in Australia. In 1901, these colonies were united as one independent Australian nation.

What's included in the Little Passports Australia Package?

- An adventure letter from Sam and Sofia
- 4-page activity sheet
- Souvenir scratch card kit
- Photo postcard
- Stickers to place on the suitcase, passport and map
- Luggage tag, with code to enter the online Boarding Zone

Teacher's Guide Bonus:

- Activity Sheet: "Navigate the Great Barrier Reef"

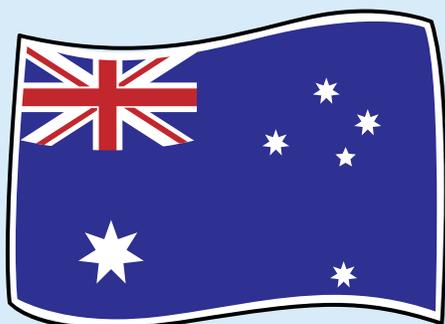


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Pop Quiz Answer Key: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-c, 5-d

Facts

- Capital City: Canberra
- Official Languages: None



Australia

Australia is unique in many ways. For example, it is the only country that covers an entire continent, and it is the lowest and flattest continent on Earth. About 70% of mainland Australia is desert, referred to as the Outback. Such a unique landscape makes Australia the ideal place for unique wildlife. The Outback is home to the greatest number of reptile species in the world. It is also home to many animals found nowhere else on Earth, like kangaroos, koalas and platypuses.

One important landmark in Australia is a place called Uluru, located in a region called the Red Center. Uluru is an enormous sandstone monolith, rising above the plains of central Australia. The site is important for several reasons: it's the ancestral home of the Pitjantjatjara (pronounced *pigeon-jarrah*) and the Yankunytjatjara (pronounced *young-kun-jarrah*) peoples who have lived there for over 30,000 years; it contains rock art dating as far back as 5,000 years ago; and it has been protected as a national park since 1950. Uluru itself is millions of years old and stands higher than the Eiffel Tower.

Another very important geographical feature in Australia is the Great Barrier Reef. The reef is the largest coral reef ecosystem in the world, as well as the largest living structure on Earth. It stretches over 1,400 miles off the coast of Queensland, which is a state in northeastern Australia. The reef contains over 400 different types of corals. Coral polyps are small sea animals that attach themselves to rocks on the sea floor and then multiply and connect to create a colony. Over thousands and even millions of years, coral colonies connect to each other, forming large limestone reefs like the Great Barrier Reef. Living among the coral polyps in the Great Barrier Reef are: more than 500 species of marine plants known as algae; about 1,500 different species of fish; over a hundred species of sharks and rays; some thirty species of whales, dolphins, and porpoises; about 5,000 species of mollusk; over 2,000 plant species; and several endangered species of sea turtles. Coral reef systems are important places for sea life to exist, but many of the world's reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, are threatened by human pollution and global warming. Scientists estimate that these factors could kill 30% of the world's coral reefs within the next thirty years.

Links:

- National Geographic Video – Australian rock art: http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/australia_rockart
- Explore the Great Barrier Reef through Google Maps street view: <https://goo.gl/maps/K6BqVh2vZXr>

CULTURE

Australia has a deeper continuous cultural history than almost any other place on Earth. Its Aboriginal people groups arrived at least 50,000 years ago, and by the time Europeans arrived in the 1700s, there were about 600 clans with hundreds of different languages spoken among them.

Dreamtime

Many different Aboriginal people groups in Australia are united through a common belief system referred to as the Dreaming, or Dreamtime. Dreamtime stories pass knowledge and cultural values down through the generations, and they explain beliefs about how the Earth was formed. In these stories, the Ancestor Spirits took human form and created the plants, animals, land features, and laws of the Earth. Then they became the trees, stars, rocks and other geographical features that many Aboriginal Australians now hold as sacred sites. The Dreaming stories are the structures around which many of Australia's indigenous societies exist; they teach how people are to behave and act, how they are to govern the land and how they are to be disciplined. In order to pass these stories down, each clan uses its own styles of painting, singing, dancing and ceremonies.



Surfing

Surfing is an ancient sport, practiced by Polynesians of the south Pacific islands for thousands of years. It is believed that people in Australia also surfed for centuries before the Europeans arrived. When European Christian missionaries arrived they outlawed surfing. It wasn't until 1914 that Duke Kahanamoku, a Hawaiian Olympic swimmer and one of the surfers who made surfing popular worldwide, reintroduced Australia to the sport. During an exhibition in which Duke rode a board made from Queensland sugar pine wood, he selected a 15-year-old girl named Isabel Letham from his audience to join him on the surfboard. Letham became

known as “the first Australian to ride a surfboard,” and since then, surfing has been a cultural hit in Australia, with surfers from around the world traveling to Australian beaches for their legendary waves. In the 1970s, Australian surfers like Peter Townend, Ian Cairns, and Wayne Bartholomew, were among the world’s first professional surfers.

Link:

- Australia Encounters Ep. 3: Isabel Letham & Duke Kahanamoku (1914): <https://www.themonthly.com.au/video/2014/july/24/1406172243/australian-encounters-03-isabel-letham-and-duke-kahanamoku-1914>

“Waltzing Matilda”

The song “Waltzing Matilda” has been recorded more than any other Australian song. It is often referred to as “The Unofficial Australian National Anthem” because it has been passed down orally and through writing for over a hundred years. The first recording of the song dates back to 1926. “Waltzing Matilda” has also been referenced and used in Australian art, literature, advertising, national events and celebrations nearly as long as the song has existed. It is part of a genre of Australian music called “bush music,” which is folk music written about early European settlers’ experiences of work and survival in the Australian bush. Traditionally, bush songs were handed down orally. “Waltzing Matilda” was written by a Queensland man named Banjo Paterson in 1895. It tells of a swagman, which was a migrant worker who carried his “swag” (possessions) in a bag slung over his back, stealing “jumbucks” (sheep) from a farmer. The term “waltzing Matilda” became an Australian slang term for carrying one’s swag from camp to camp looking for work.

Link:

- Sound clip: Peter Dawson’s version of “Waltzing Matilda” - <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/34755/20110606-1326/www.nla.gov.au/epubs/waltzingmatilda/00009216.mp3>

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. **Discuss: what are the differences between an island and a continent?**
 - a. Ask the class if they think Australia is an island or a continent.
 - b. Teach that continental crusts beneath the surface of the Earth are part of what divide continents. Australia is on its own continental crust while what many consider to be the world's largest island, Greenland, is part of the North American crust. But still, some people view Australia as the world's largest island because the rules about islands and continents are not definitive.
 - c. Discuss these differences in opinion and take a class poll on who thinks Australia is an island, a continent or both.

2. **Ask the class why they think Australia is home to so many unique species of animals that are found nowhere else on Earth.**
 - a. Discuss the isolation of Australia from the rest of the world's major landmasses.

3. **Watch the video about Tasmanian devils.**
 - <http://www.natgeotv.com.au/videos/animal-encounters-with-ben-britton/tasmanian-devil-1626.aspx>
 - a. Teach that Tasmania is its own state, but is part of the Australian continent.

4. **Activities: pass around copies of the activities from the Australia activity book.**

5. **Teach the meaning of “Aboriginal” – a people group, species of animal or species of plant that has existed in a country from the earliest times is an aboriginal inhabitant of that place.**
 - a. The Aboriginal Australian people groups are considered to be among the world's oldest living cultures, having arrived in Australia at least 50,000 years ago. They also possess the world's longest practiced religion and art forms.

6. **Watch the Australian rock art video.**
 - http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/australia_rockart
 - a. Discuss the Dreamtime belief system. Why might sites like Uluru be held sacred, based on what we know about what Aboriginal Australian people groups believe?
 - b. Discuss how art is used in our own culture to reflect what we believe. Think about music, TV shows, movies and even video games.

7. Explore the Great Barrier Reef through Google Maps street view.

- <https://goo.gl/maps/K6BqVh2vZXr>
 - a. Look out for different sea creatures – make a list on the board any time someone spots a sea animal. At the end, count how many different animals were spotted.
 - b. Discuss the importance of keeping ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef alive because of all the different forms of life they support.
 - c. Discuss conservation, both for places like the Great Barrier Reef and for important cultural sites like Uluru: what are some things that societies can do to preserve these important natural spaces? What are some things that individuals can do? What can you do?

8. Watch the video about Isabel Letham and Duke Kahanamoku.

- <https://www.themonthly.com.au/video/2014/july/24/1406176856/03-isabel-letham-and-duke-kahanamoku-1914>
 - a. Discuss: ask the class why surfing might have become such a popular cultural phenomenon in Australia. What makes it an ideal sport in a country where the majority of the population lives along the coast?

9. Listen to the sound clip of “Waltzing Matilda.”

- <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/34755/20110606-1326/www.nla.gov.au/epubs/waltzingmatilda/00009216.mp3>
 - a. Ask the students how much of the story in the lyrics they could understand. Discuss Australian slang, and how a country’s unique language dialects can play an important role in giving people identity as citizens.

10. Read Sam and Sofia’s letter from Australia to the class.

- a. Discuss: how might boomerangs be used for hunting, digging, clearing grass, and sport? How does viewing the boomerang as a useful tool in the Australian bush and Outback change your idea of it?

11. Make a class chart with the topics “Physical Geography” and “Culture.”

- a. Read out, or ask the class to give you, different facts that you learned while exploring Australia. Ask the class whether it is a fact about Australia’s physical geography or a fact about its culture, and then write the fact in its proper place on the chart.

12. Class passports: have students design their own stamp images for Australia using things they learned about, and have them draw the images in their passports.

POP QUIZ

Read each question. Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

1. Australia is the only one of the six largest countries on Earth that

- a. Speaks English as a national language
- b. Is completely surrounded by water
- c. Is in the southern hemisphere
- d. Contains deserts

2. For how long have Aboriginal Australian people groups lived in Australia?

- a. Less than 2,000 years
- b. 2.5 billion years
- c. At least 50,000 years
- d. Since 1788

3. Which of the following animals is found in the wild only in Australia?

- a. Koala
- b. Sloth
- c. Lemur
- d. Bumblebee bat

4. What are some major threats to the existence of the Great Barrier Reef today?

- a. Oceanic freezing
- b. Predators
- c. Human pollution and global warming
- d. Volcanic eruptions

5. Under which music genre is the song “Waltzing Matilda” considered to fall?

- a. Rock
- b. Jazz
- c. Bluegrass
- d. Bush music

VOCABULARY

Aboriginal - A people group, species of animal, or species of plant that has existed in a country from the earliest times is an aboriginal inhabitant of that place.

Ancestor Spirits - In Aboriginal Australian belief systems, ancestor spirits are spirits of human ancestors who helped create either parts of nature, like particular animals, rocks, trees, or creeks, or they helped create laws that people are to follow. Many natural features in the Australian landscape are considered sacred because they were either created by particular ancestor spirits, or the spirits turned into those features.

Bush - The Australian wilderness, but not as remote as the Outback.

Bush music - A type of folk music written about early European settlers' experiences of work and survival in the Australian bush.

Colony - A country or territory that is politically controlled by another country.

Continent - One of the great land masses of the Earth that sits on its own continental crust.

Coral polyp - A small sea creature, related to anemones and jellyfish, which attaches itself to rocks on the sea floor and then multiplies and connects to create a colony. Over thousands and even millions of years, coral colonies connect to each other, forming large limestone reefs like the Great Barrier Reef.

Dreamtime - A spiritual belief system of Aboriginal Australian people groups in which everything in nature, and all peoples, are connected. The Dreamtime is also a network of creation stories that provide guidelines for societies on social rules to follow and ceremonies to perform.

Great Barrier Reef - A 1,400-mile-long ecosystem of coral reefs located off the northeastern coast of Australia. It is the largest coral reef system and the largest living structure on Earth.

Indigenous - People who are native to, or originated in, a particular place, are indigenous to it.

Island - A piece of land surrounded by water, smaller than a continent.

Jumbuck - an Australian slang term for sheep.

Migrant worker - A worker who moves from place to place to find seasonal work on farms or in factories.

Outback - The vast desert region of central mainland Australia.

Swagman - An Australian slang term for a migrant worker who carries his possessions in a bag slung around his back.

Uluru - A huge sandstone rock formation in Australia's Red Center that is held sacred by Aboriginal Australian people groups.



Navigate the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef system in the world. It is also the largest biological structure in the world. It runs along the northeastern coast of Australia for over 1,500 miles. The Great Barrier Reef is larger than the Great Wall of China and is even visible from space! Coral species survive mainly off the oxygen and food created by algae through photosynthesis.

Draw a line through the coral maze to find one of Sam and Sofia's favorite animals.

