

## TERRA INCOGNITA – UNKNOWN LAND

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Australia – the smallest continent and one of the largest countries on Earth, lying between the Pacific and Indian oceans in the Southern Hemisphere. Australia's capital is Canberra, located in the southeast between the larger and more important economic and cultural centers of Sydney and Melbourne. Australia has been called “the Oldest Continent,” “the Last of Lands,” and “the Last Frontier.” These descriptions typify the world's fascination with Australia. Australia is the last of lands only in the sense that it was the last continent, apart from Antarctica, to be explored by Europeans. Australia is situated in the south-west of the Pacific Ocean. The population of the country is about 20 million people. The capital is Canberra. The population of Canberra is about 300 thousand people. The Commonwealth of Australia is a self-governing federal state. National Anthem, Flag and the Coat-of-Arms Australian national flag consists of 5 white stars of the Southern Cross and the white Commonwealth star (the large seven pointed star) on a blue background with a Union Jack in canton. The Southern Cross is the southern Crux, whose four chief stars are in the form of cross. The flag of Australia is the only one to fly over a whole continent. The small Union Jack represents the historical link with Britain, and the large seven-pointed star represents the six states and the Territories, and the small stars form the Southern Cross – a prominent feature of the southern hemisphere night sky. Australia officially adopted green and gold as its national colours in 1984. The Australia national anthem was adopted in the 1970ties. It is used on the all official and ceremonial occasions.

Only 6 percent of the island continent is above 2,000 feet (600 meters) in elevation. Its highest peak, Mount Kosciusko, rises to only 7,310 feet (2,228 meters). Australia is the arid continent. Permanently flowing rivers are found only in the eastern and southwestern regions and in Tasmania. The major exception is the Murray River. All other rivers in Australia are seasonal or intermittent in their flow. Many areas – notably the Null arbor Plain, which is underlain by limestone, and the sand ridge deserts are without surface drainage, but there are underground streams. A map of Australia can be misleading; though many “lakes” are depicted in the interior, the fact is that many of them are now salt lakes that contain no water for years on end. The distribution of climates, topography, and soils that has produced the zones and ecological variation of Australian vegetation has also been reflected in the distribution of animal life.

The mining industry accounts for a small but vital contribution to the Australian economy. However, there are several issues of concern in this sector, including unwelcome effects on the environment, rapid rates of extraction that may exhaust the reserves. In particular, concern about burning fossil fuels. Coal production is thought to be sustainable for more than three centuries, but natural gas deposits are expected to be depleted in the mid-21st century.

The waterfront of Sydney, Australia, features two distinctive landmarks, the Opera House, topped with white sail-shaped roofs, and the Harbor Bridge, one of the longest steel-arch bridges in the world.

There are a lot of Australia's zoological symbols this is a kangaroo and the koala, and the cassowary. But there is one, are well known ostrich emu. Kangaroo is found only in one corner of the globe – in Australia, which is why the kangaroo is the same symbol of the continent. It does not appear on one other animal. Tall, like a man, with a long tail, large hind

legs and the pocket on his stomach. Seeing the strange animal for the first time, the Europeans have tried to ask the local Aboriginal people, as he is called. However, in response received a Ken-gu-ru ", which translated means" I don't understand. Koala is the cute animal, living in Australia, this "teddy bear". However, in practice it turns out that koalas in general, have nothing to do with bears. Surprisingly, the word "koala" means "do not drink."It is mean that eating eucalyptus leaves, the animal receives all necessary moisture from the greens and they do not need additional water sources.

Terra Incognita(Unknown Land). It is supposed that Australia's native inhabitants, the Aborigines, arrived in Australia at least 40,000 years ago. The first Europeans visited the shores of Australia in 1606. The Spanish ship of Luis Vaes de Torres sailed through the strait which now bears his name and separates Australia and Papua New Guinea. In the same year the Dutch ship Duyfken (Little Dove) sailed into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Among later voyagers is Dirk Hartog (1616), who left an inscribed pewter plate (Australia's most famous early European relic, now in Amsterdam) in Western Australia. Abel Tasman, Dutch navigator, visited Tasmania, which he named Van Diemen's Land, in 1642. The first Englishman to visit the continent was a buccaneer, William Dampier, who landed near King Sound on the northwest coast in 1699. A second wave of immigration began in 1770, when Captain James Cook, of the British Navy, sighted the east coast of the continent. Cook had been sent to Tahiti to make astronomical observations and when his mission was completed, he sailed south in Endeavour, circumnavigated New Zealand and headed due west. On April 20, 1770, Cook sighted land near Cape Everard, in the southeast corner of Australia. He turned north, charting the coastline as he went and, 9 days later, landed at Botany Bay, which he named for the variety of botanic specimen found there. He raised the British flag and claimed New South Wales as a British Colony. It is probably due to its geographical position that Australia was the last continent to be inhabited by the white man. It was just a little over 390 years that the Australian continent was discovered.

The present Australian Capital Territory was ceded from New South Wales to become federal territory in 1911, and the future capital was named Canberra in 1913. The first Federal Parliament to meet in Canberra was opened by the Duke of York, later King George VI, on May 9, 1927. Though Australia now is an independent state, according to the Constitution the head of the state is the Monarch of Great Britain, represented by the Governor-General. His duties include assenting to bills, opening, proroguing and dissolving Parliament and commissioning the Prime Minister to form a government. Governor-General's residence Jarralumla is in Canberra.

Australia Day is a very important holiday for the Australians, another equally important holiday is called Anzac Day. In 1901 the separate colonies in Australia merged together and became the States of the Commonwealth of Australia, which acquired the status of dominion of Great Britain. The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of the 6 former colonies as states was declared to come into being on January 1, 1901.

The Commonwealth of Australia is composed of 6 states and 2 territories: the State of New South Wales with its capital in Sydney, the State of Victoria with its capital in Melbourne, the State of Queensland with its capital in Brisbane, the State of Western Australia with its capital in Perth, the State of Tasmania with its capital in Hobart, Australian Capital Territory with its Federal Capital in Canberra, and Northern Territory with its capital in Darwin.

The early part of Australian history is filled with the tales of the settlers. These bushrangers often became folk-heroes in the tradition of Robin Hood and Dick Turpin in England, and Jesse James in the United States. Many poems and songs were written about them and at one time it was a criminal offence to sing or recite these ballads which glorified crime.