

Unit 3: Stories from Down Under

Australia

Australia, the sixth-largest country in the world. Australia is not an island, but a continent; the smallest of the seven continents. It lies between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. 97 % of Australians live on the coasts. Only 3 % percent of them live in the Outback. **The Outback** is a huge part of Australia that makes up 70 % of its land mass. Australia's capital city is **Canberra**. Australia **doesn't have an official language**, but the main language is English, and almost everybody speaks it. Australia still has some connections with Britain, which colonized it in the 18th century. That's why the **British monarch is the head of state** and the British flag is part of our flag.

Let me take you on a quick tour around Australia. Most people live along the **southeast coast**, from **Brisbane** to **Adelaide**. It's sometimes called "**the Boomerang Coast**" because of its shape. Do you know what a boomerang is? I live in **Melbourne** now, in the state of **Victoria**. Melbourne is the second-most populous city in Australia. It's a very green and very lively city. I especially love Brighton Beach with its colourful bathing boxes. Melbourne is one of the sportiest cities in the world! It hosts the Australian Open and the Formula One Australian Grand Prix. But it's not the biggest city: **Sydney** is, in the state of **New South Wales**. Who doesn't recognise its Opera House or the Harbour Bridge? If you visit Sydney, go hiking in the Blue Mountains. They are famous for their **eucalyptus forests**. Farther to the south, there is the island state of **Tasmania**. The symbol of Tasmania is the Tasmanian devil, an endangered animal which is found in the wild only in Tasmania. It's a **marsupial**. Marsupials are animals that carry their young in a pouch. The *kangaroo*, the *koala* and the *quokka* are also marsupials. In Tasmania you can also see the *duck-billed platypus*, another animal that lives only in Australia.

Let's move up to the north now. The next stop is **Queensland**, a state in the northeast. Off its coast, there is the **Great Barrier Reef**, with its corals and *tropical fish*, *turtles* and *sharks*. You can go scuba diving there. Farther to the west is Northern Territory. There you can see **Uluru**, or **Ayers Rock**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This large rock formation is a sacred place for the **Aboriginal Australians**, the first peoples of Australia. Not far from Uluru, there is Alice Springs, a town located almost in the middle of Australia. It is known as "the capital of the Outback". If you're brave, you can also check out crocodiles, who live on all the northern coasts of Australia. The biggest state in Australia is Western Australia. This is where my hometown, **Perth**, is. I was born there. If you want to visit this huge Australian state, don't forget your selfie stick to take a photo with quokkas. Their smile makes them my favourite marsupials. And we're back in the south, in the state of **South Australia**. Here, and elsewhere in Australia, you can see the *emu*, the second-largest bird in the world. It lives only in Australia, and is its unofficial national bird. And this is **Cooper Pedy**, a town famous for its underground homes. People built them to get away from the area's hot desert climate.

The last special place I would like to show you is **Kangaroo Island**, off the coast of South Australia. There you can see kangaroos, koalas, sea lions, seals and lots of species of birds.

I hope you like my country, and I hope you'll visit it someday.