



"Fair Dinkum" Facts

The continent of Australia is:

- the only nation that is a continent
- the smallest continent
- the flattest
- the driest (except for Antarctica).

Which explains why:

- less than 10 percent of the land is arable
- the largest lake, Eyre (3,600 square miles), is usually bone-dry
- where a bar will do for a billabong, Australians are the greatest consumers of alcohol in the English-speaking world.

Roughly the size of the coterminous United States at 2,966,368 square miles, Australia is also among the world's least densely populated countries, averaging only five people per square mile. Thus:

- there are ten times as many jumbucks as people
- in the arid outback, where it takes 40 acres to graze a single sheep, are the world's largest stations, including Anna Creek cattle station in South Australia, at 12,000 square miles
- Australia leads the world in the export of beef and veal—624,000 tons in 1987—and is second, after New Zealand, in mutton and lamb—293,000 tons
- wool production is 30 percent of the world's entire output.

Australia is flat, the highest peak, Kosciusko, being only 7,310 feet—but its Great Barrier Reef is the world's longest at 1,250 miles, more than half as long as its longest river system, the Murray-Darling (2,300 miles).

Elsewhere are rocks, not just any rocks, but:

- the oldest known fragments of the earth's crust, from the Jack Hills, at 4.3 billion years
- 28 percent of the free world's uranium, along with coal reserves that match Saudi Arabia's oil in potential energy
- formations that supply nearly 90 percent of Australia's oil needs
- almost all the world's opals.

Small wonder that 80 percent of Australia's 16 million people (including 200,000 Aborigines) live in cities, mainly along the fertile coast between

Brisbane and Adelaide. Sydney is the continent's "downtown" with 3,365,000 inhabitants, followed by competitor Melbourne with 2,833,000 and Brisbane with 1,150,000. Perth weighs in at 995,000, Adelaide at 978,000, and Canberra, the planned capital city, at 270,000.

In statistical terms, Australians have it better than most:

- per capita income, at \$11,200 U. S., is one of the world's highest
- life expectancy, 76 years, is one of the world's longest
- literacy is virtually 100 percent
- workers earn from four to six weeks of vacation annually
- some 70 percent own their homes
- voting is compulsory
- which may or may not explain why Australians spend twice as much on gambling as on national defense.

Aussie blokes have dinkum reasons for thinking their land is bonzer, so shout them a drink, mate, and wish them a happy anniversary.

HOW TO SPEAK STRINE

billabong—water hole

billy—container for boiling tea

bloke—man

bonzer—great, terrific

bush—country away from the city

chook—chicken

dingo—Australian wild dog

dinkum, fair dinkum—honest, genuine

dinki-di—the real thing

fossick—to prospect for gold or gems

grazier—rancher

jumbuck—sheep

make a good fist—do a good job

ocker—basic down-to-earth Aussie

outback—remote bush

pom—English person

shout—buy a round of drinks

station—sheep or cattle ranch

Strine—what Aussies speak

swag—bedroll and belongings

tucker—food

ute—utility or pickup truck

waltz matilda—carry a swag