

LAND & PEOPLE

chapter one

Australia is the world's largest island and its smallest continent. This is a country the size of the United States of America, spanning three time zones, yet with barely twenty-three million inhabitants. It is an ancient land, geologically one of the oldest on earth, and was first populated by the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

These original inhabitants are thought to have come south from Asia some fifty to seventy thousand years ago, when Australia was linked to Indonesia by a land bridge. In 1788 a handful



of Europeans arrived. Before 1788 Australia had been of interest to the Netherlands, Spain, and France, but after the voyages of Captain James Cook it was the British who were the colonizers. Convicts and subsequently free settlers

from Britain and Ireland arrived to establish a thriving Anglo-Celtic society.

The early Europeans brought with them epidemics of smallpox, measles, and venereal diseases, and they also, occasionally, murdered Aborigines. At the time of white settlement the estimated black population was 700,000. By 1900, this figure had shrunk to 100,000. Much has been done in recent times, and much still needs to be done, to repair the damage.



Throughout the 1800s freed convicts, explorers, and settlers spread across the continent. Wheat growing, sheep and cattle ranching, the discovery of gold, and expanding immigration all contributed to spectacular economic growth.

From 1945, after the end of the Second World War, the immigration of many of Europe's dispossessed began what was to be one of the world's greatest exercises in multiculturalism.

Convict Ancestry

Most of those Australians who can claim convict ancestry have become quite proud of it. The fact is that, although described as "felons," these convicts had committed no serious crimes by today's definition of the word. Their offenses would be better described as "misdemeanors." In those days, stealing a sheep to feed one's family was a hanging offense. Those who were sent on the long, terrible voyage to Australia were recorded to have committed such offenses as stealing a round of cheese, a loaf of bread, or some lace handkerchiefs, or even opening a letter addressed to someone else.

This has been added to in recent years by an influx of immigrants from India, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines—plus a continued stream from the UK, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Today, one quarter of Australia's population was born overseas.

In 1988 the nation of Australia celebrated its Bicentennial—the two hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the first convict ships. As with the United States and Canada, also first colonized by the British, the Europeans displaced a native population that had been there for thousands of years. And, like the United States and Canada, Australia has become a powerful, industrialized nation with a high standard of living.

Settled and populated by Europeans for the first one hundred and fifty years, Australia was traditionally tied to Europe—and in particular to the mother country, Great Britain. In the last forty years or so, nearby Asian nations have become increasingly important.

Australia has undergone a significant shift in foreign policy and trade focus from Europe to Asia, including general tariff reductions and the promotion of an Asia-Pacific free trade area by the year 2020.

This, then, is the young country we shall examine—in its transition from wild frontier land to modern industrialized nation, and in the transformation this has wrought on its people.

TERRAIN

Australia is the only nation to occupy an entire continent—albeit the smallest of the seven

continents. Surrounded by the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific, it is also an island—of 2,966,136 square miles (7,682,300 sq. km).

The island/continent lies southeast of the Asian landmass, bordered on the north by the Timor Sea, beyond which lie the islands of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia—the closest neighbors. To the east, the Coral Sea separates Australia from the island chain called the Solomon Islands, and the Tasman Sea separates it from New Zealand. On the west lies the Indian Ocean.

The sixth largest country on Earth, Australia extends approximately 2,500 miles (approximately 4,000 km) from east to west, and 1,875 miles (3,000 km) from north to south. The highest point is Mount Kosciusko, at 7,310 feet (2,228 m); the lowest point is Lake Eyre, at 39 feet (12 m) below sea level.

From east to west, Australia has four main geographical regions. The eastern lowland plain stretches from Cape York Peninsula in the north to the city of Melbourne in the south. Much of this area is forested. A few miles off the northern shore is the Great Barrier Reef, the largest coral reef in the world, which runs 1,200 miles (1,900 km) along the coast. On the southern part of the plain are the cities of Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, and Melbourne—and Hobart in Tasmania.

The Eastern Highlands is a ridge of hills and



mountains that separate the lowlands from the interior. It includes the tropical mountain hinterland of Queensland, the hills of New England, the Blue Mountains, the Australian Alps in New South Wales and Victoria, and the mountains that dominate most of Tasmania.

West of the highlands lie the central plains. This is a region of dry depressions, or basins, the largest of which, the Great Artesian Basin, extends from the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north to the mouth of the Murray River in the south—the largest inland drainage system in the world.

The Western Plateau covers the western part of the continent with rocky ridges and plains, and large, forbidding deserts (the Great Sandy, the Gibson, the Great Victoria, and the Tanami). In the north, jungle and swamps cover Arnhem Land on the shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria. In the south, the Nullarbor (meaning “no trees”) Plain borders the Great Australian Bight.

CLIMATE

Remember that Australia lies in the Southern Hemisphere, with seasons that are opposite those in the north—July is the middle of winter and January the peak of summer. Most of Australia is warm and dry, the southern part being the most comfortable, with temperatures in Melbourne averaging 48°F (9°C) in its July winter to 77°F (25°C) in January. Adelaide is similar, Perth a

warmer. Temperatures in Darwin average 77°F (25°C) in July and 86°F (30°C) in January. The interior of Australia often reaches 100°F (38°C) and can go as high as 115°F (46°C).

The largest city, Sydney, has a subtropical climate, warm to hot and wet in summer, up to 95°F (35°C) and mild, dry winters, up to 77°F (25°C). Canberra's temperatures average 68°F (20°C) in January and 42°F (6°C) in July.

Northern Australia (beyond the Tropic of Capricorn) is subject to an extreme tropical wet/dry weather pattern. What this means is that from November to April there are torrential downpours, monsoonal storms, and high humidity in the city of Darwin and the northern cities and towns of Queensland.

Rainfall is lowest in the center (about 40 percent of the continent is desert), with less than 10 inches (25 cm) per year. Sheep and cattle stations (ranches) are found on the edges of these deserts. Crops mostly grow where the rainfall exceeds 10 inches (25 cm). Rainfall is greatest in the northeast tropical rainforest areas, with upwards of 59 inches (150 cm). In the south, Tasmania and Victoria receive more than 30 inches (76 cm), Adelaide and Perth less.

There is little that is ordinary about Australia. The extremes in climate from torrential rain to disastrous drought, and the ever-present threat of bushfires, along with the isolation of the continent for fifty million years, have combined

to promote the country's rich and diverse native fauna and flora. Kangaroos of various sizes and colors, wallabies, and other oddities, such as the kookaburra, koala, platypus, echidna, galah, and many of the brightly colored parrots, are found naturally nowhere else in the world. The ubiquitous Australian gum tree, or eucalyptus, which is dependent on bushfires for its survival and propagation, has been exported for use over much of the world, generally because of its thirst: its deep tap roots help to drain swamps and marshland.



AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINES

It should be noted that Australia's Aboriginal peoples were not a single group of people. They were made up of at least six hundred widely scattered language groups. Some groups shared some beliefs, customs, and technological and cultural practices—the result of trade, intermarriage, and complex family connections—but there were also great differences between the groups. Even today, the Aboriginal population refers to itself as made up of many “peoples,” or “nations,” and it is common to talk about the Aboriginal Peoples of Australia when referring to them historically.

The Dreamtime

The Australian Aboriginal creation myths tell of “The Dreamtime,” a time before history, when legendary, totemic Ancestral Beings sang the world into existence, and in doing so created the world and everything in it—plants, animals, landscape features, humans, and the customs and laws of those humans. Stories of the Dreamtime vary greatly from tribe to tribe, and from region to region, but the notion of the totemic ancestor is remarkably persistent. Images of these are to be found on the walls of rock shelters and caves in many parts of the country—the Aborigines are responsible for what is probably the world’s greatest collection of rock art—and many different groups still use stories of the Dreamtime to explain the shape of a landform, the characteristic of a particular animal, or the existence of a particular law.

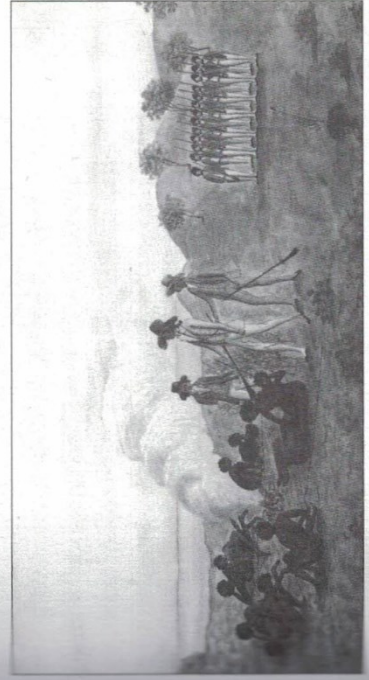
The Impact of the Settlers

At first the Aborigines showed little interest in assimilating into European society. Instead they expected the Europeans to continue their “Walkabout” and move on, or adopt the superior Aboriginal ways. But the tide rolled on, as it had done in the United States, in Canada, and wherever Europeans displaced indigenous people.

Aborigines and Europeans related to the land in completely opposing ways. The Aborigines were generally hunters and gatherers, although some

groups were engaged in agricultural practices; the Europeans were farmers, who regarded the land as theirs for the taking because it was not being cultivated. The Aborigines were simply ignored by the Europeans, who declared Australia an empty and ownerless land, “*terra nullius*.” They were, as John Pilger put it in *A Secret Country*, considered not as human but rather as “part of the fauna.” It was only in 1992 that the Australian High Court ruled that the Aborigines’ title to the land had not been extinguished. Today, Australian Aborigines drive cars, or ride in trains, over the land they once trod so carefully.

The Aborigines realized, as the settlers kept coming, that the newcomers wanted to own the land, not to share it, and that they were here to stay—along with their fences, their missionaries to convert them, their politicians to interfere with them, their Community Service bureaucrats to take their children into care, their governments to



palm them off with rather useless tracts of land, and their alcohol. Many Aborigines exchanged work for food and lodgings, particularly on farms and in rural areas. Later came unemployment payouts and other cash benefits, meaning that many Aborigines had no real need to work, and there was ready access to alcohol. Successive governments, through a lack of understanding of how to cope with the problems of Aborigines, contributed disaster along with benefit.

They had no immunity to the diseases the settlers introduced, and their numbers suffered accordingly. There were also murders. The most famous, perhaps, was the Myall Creek Massacre in 1838, when Aborigines—men, women, and children—were rounded up after some perceived wrongdoing (perhaps, as was often the case, they had taken a sheep to feed themselves), herded into a creek bed, and shot. We don't know how many there were, but there may have been hundreds. For this wanton killing of defenseless Aborigines, seven of the eleven whites accused were subsequently hanged. But such justice was not common.

From around the early 1900s a sort of cruel benevolence grew out of missionary interference and government ignorance, resulting in the white authorities' removal of Aboriginal children, particularly those of mixed blood (usually the result of white men's abuse of black women), from their families. This was an attempt to integrate them "for their own good" into white society.

Descendants from this "Stolen Generation," as it is called, were issued a national, public apology by the Prime Minister in 2008. While this was an important gesture of reconciliation, the fact remains that they are still searching for their roots, trying to discover who they really are.

There is now a great deal of concern for Aboriginal welfare. For most Australians, and for the visitor, this is a topic of great sensitivity and uncertainty. There is regret for what has been done, and for official ineptitude in the face of infant mortality rates, alcoholism, and family violence. While it is quite possible to live in Australia without getting to know any Aborigines—and, for those who live in the major cities, without actually seeing any—the problems of the Aborigines are always there.

Most Australians abhor, and are embarrassed by, the fact of a disadvantaged underclass, marginalized and living on the fringes of society despite the spending of huge sums of money by recent governments. But there is also, among the ignorant and ill informed—mostly, but not entirely, outside the cities, and particularly in the north and northwest—a small, residual, hard core of racism that the Australians themselves call "redneck" ignorance.

The Aborigines Today

Many Aboriginal communities are dynamic and self-determining. This is particularly the case

where they have made successful claims to their traditional land, and now live on that land. Some communities support internationally recognized art centers where artists produce works that sell around the world, often for thousands of dollars. Other communities manage farmland, parkland, and mining leases.

Aborigines have been very successful activists, particularly over the last forty years. In 1967 they won the right to vote in what was the most unequivocal referendum held in Australia; in 1971 Aboriginal Neville Bonner was elected to the Senate; in 1972 Tent Embassy was set up outside Parliament to advance the cause of land rights (the returning of traditional lands); in 1992 a High Court decision, known as Mabo, rejected the notion of *terra nullius* and affirmed that Aboriginal people were in possession of the land prior to 1788; in the late 1990s the notion of Reconciliation (coming to terms with wrongs of the past as related to the treatment of Aborigines) was embraced by many Australians.

There are many highly successful Aboriginal people in Australian public life. They include:

- Noel Pearson (politician and activist); Lowitja O'Donohue (activist and senior public administrator, and former Australian of the Year).
- Cathy Freeman (an Olympic medallist), Adam Goode (football player and indigenous youth

advocate); Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, winner of seven tennis grand slams and first indigenous person to win Wimbledon.

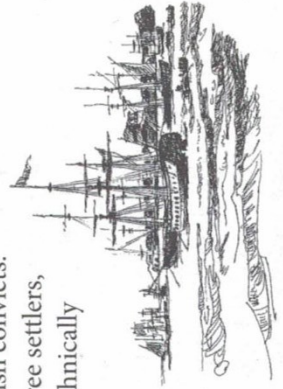
- Deborah Mailman (actor); David Gulpilil (actor); Ernie Dingo (actor and television personality).
- Singers Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu and Jessica Mauboy; and Albert Namatjira—Australia's foremost aboriginal artist.

Nevertheless, you would be well advised to approach the subject of the Aboriginal Peoples with great caution. Read about it, and try to understand. Ask questions, by all means, and listen.

THE AUSTRALIANS

The arrival of the First Fleet of eleven ships from Britain in 1788, carrying over thirteen hundred people, began the influx of different cultures to Australia. First came English seamen and soldiers, along with English and Irish convicts.

These were followed by free settlers, mostly from England—ethnically and culturally Celtic and Anglo-Saxon—and a significant number of Chinese, who arrived to try their luck on the goldfields



during the great gold rush of the 1850s. Between 1851 and 1860 the rate of immigration was fifty thousand per annum. The immigrants and the Aborigines mostly went their separate ways.

Postwar immigration brought a wide variety of Europeans from war-torn Europe—six million since 1945. Australia implemented a policy of free passage for United Kingdom residents, and assisted passage for ex-servicemen from the British Isles, the USA, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Belgium, and Denmark. From 1950 to 1960 economic and humanitarian events also opened the gates to Germany, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Chile (after Allende), and Indochina (after the Vietnam war).

Since 1960 the population of Australia has more than doubled (from 10 million in 1960 to 23 million today), mainly due to a steady influx of immigrants from over 120 countries. The top ten source countries of migrants today are, in order: India, China, the UK, the Philippines, Pakistan, Ireland (the Irish Republic), South Africa, Nepal, and Malaysia.

This mixture of ethnic and cultural origins has resulted in the most multicultural mixture of people in the world. They call themselves Australians.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Australia is divided into six states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria,



Western Australia, and Tasmania) and two territories (the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory—in which is

located the Federal Capital, Canberra).

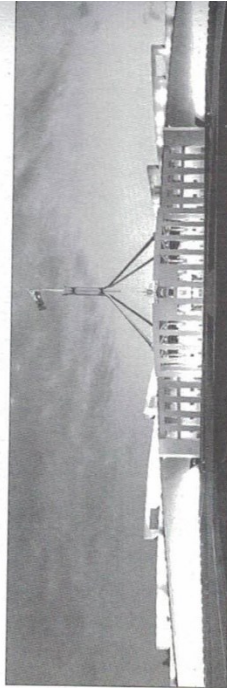
Until late in the nineteenth century, these areas were separately governed British colonies. In the late 1800s, Australians realized the advantages to be gained by becoming one unified nation. A constitution was drawn up and approved by the British Parliament in 1901, reflecting the country's British origin and based on the Westminster system of government.

The King or Queen of England is the official head of state, and has formal power but little direct authority over Australian laws and government. The Governor-General is the monarch's representative.

As in the UK and Canada, the Prime Minister is the leader of the party that has the most members elected to the parliament, which is divided into upper and lower houses. The lower house, the House of Representatives, has 150 members elected for a three-year term and is essentially the legislative body. Only this house can propose and pass bills that affect government money and spending. The upper house, the Senate, has seventy-six members—twelve from each state and two from each territory. Those

from states serve six-year terms; those from territories serve three-year terms.

There are several political parties in Australia, each embracing a political philosophy different from the others. This difference is actually more noticeable between minor parties, such as the Greens, Family First, and the Shooters and Fishers Party, and the Democrats, and between them and



the two main parties, than between the two main parties. These are the Labor Party (with a history arising from its roots in trade unions and blue-collar workers), and the Liberal/National Country Party coalition (with a history arising from roots in the farming community and industrialists and white-collar workers). Voting for these two tends to be within the range of 47 to 53 percent. They have become close in ideology. Some of the smaller parties have a narrow agenda and, despite being a motley crew, have in recent years held the important balance of power in minority OR coalition governments.

Politics is the subject of much discussion in Australia, at least in part because voting is

compulsory, but it is interesting to note that it is not the voting that is compulsory, but visiting the polling booth to have your name crossed off. What this means, of course, is that a person can simply attend, and then either fail to fill out a voting form or provide a “donkey vote” (mark the paper in a humorous or even obscene way). The important thing is that the number of donkey votes is insignificant. Australians take their voting seriously, and in the main know exactly what they are voting for.

“Talk-back” radio is bigger in Australia, perhaps, than anywhere else in the world, and many people listen avidly; particularly people in regional areas, workers who can have the radio on in factories, garages, offices, and stay-at-home parents. Listeners are kept very much up to date on current affairs and politics.

Regarding political debate, as a visitor you would be well advised to question and listen, but you should, of course, be careful when expressing opinions on local politics. Where you can make a contribution is in a discussion of the politics of your own country. You might be surprised by how much Australians know about world affairs. The news in Australia, in the newspapers, on the radio, and on television, and particularly through SBS—Special Broadcasting Services—contains much more overseas news than is generally found in other countries. The Australians like to keep up with what is going on.

Historical Snapshot

- 1770** Captain Cook lands at Botany Bay, and calls the eastern coastline New South Wales.
- 1788** Captain Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet arrive, with convicts.
- 1793** The first free settlers arrive.
- 1803** Matthew Flinders circumnavigates the mainland.
- 1840** Abolition of convict transportation to New South Wales.
- 1851** Gold discovered in Victoria and New South Wales.
- 1897–8** New and separate Australian Constitution prepared.
- 1899** Constitution approved by ballot of the people.
- 1900** Federation of Australian Colonies—British approval. Melbourne becomes temporary capital of the new nation.
- 1901** January 1: Australia declared an independent Commonwealth within the British Empire. Local voting for local parliament.
- 1908** Canberra (midway between Melbourne and Sydney) chosen as the permanent Federal Capital.
- 1914** Australia enters First World War.
- 1915** More than 8,000 Australian soldiers lost in battle of Gallipoli in Turkey; 62,000 Australian lives lost in the First World War.
- 1920** QANTAS (Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services) founded.
- 1928** Royal Flying Doctor Service established.
- 1939** Australia enters the Second World War.
- 1942** Darwin bombed by the Japanese on February 19, 1943.
- 1947** Australian government buys all shares in QANTAS.
- 1956** Olympic Games held in Melbourne.
- 1965** Australian soldiers sent to the Vietnam conflict.
- 1967** Referendum sees 90 percent of Australians say “yes” to the right of Aborigines to vote.
- 1973** Opening of the Sydney Opera House.
- 1975** Governor-General John Kerr sacks Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

- 1983** Australia II wins the America’s Cup yacht race.
- 1993** Native Title Act passed to help Aborigines press land claims.
- 1996** A Liberal–National Coalition Government led by John Howard won the general election and was re-elected in 1998, 2001 and 2004, enacting several reforms, including changes in the taxation and industrial relations systems.
- 2000** Olympic Games held in Sydney.
- 2001** Australian forces are deployed in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf.
- 2002** Bombs detonated near popular tourist nightclubs in Bali by Islamist terrorists kill 202, including 88 Australians.
- 2003** Australia provides combat forces to support the USA invasion of Iraq.
- 2004** Australia and the USA sign a Free Trade Agreement.
- 2006** Australian Forces are deployed to East Timor.
- 2007** The Labor Party led by Kevin Rudd was elected with an agenda to reform.
- Australia’s industrial relations system, climate change policies, and health and education sectors.
- 2008** Australia ends combat operations in Iraq.
- 2009** Bushfires in the state of Victoria claim over 200 lives. The withdrawal of Australian forces from Iraq is completed.
- 2010** Julia Gillard replaces Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister following a Labor Party leadership tussle.
- China overtakes the USA as Australia’s largest export partner for trade.
- 2013** Tony Abbott, leader of the Liberal/National Coalition becomes Prime Minister after his party wins the general election.
- 2014** Australia signs Free Trade Agreements with Japan and South Korea.

TIME OUT

FOOD AND DRINK

Thanks to the Greek god Dionysus, and the Roman Bacchus, for the changes the Greeks and Italians made to Anglo influenced Australian cuisine (at that time really an oxymoron) from the 1950s. Thanks to all the later immigrants who brought with them their wonderful varieties of food and cooking styles, and to the six generations of wine makers that have established a place for Australian red and white wines internationally and on the wine lists of some of the most sophisticated restaurants in Paris, New York, and Beijing.

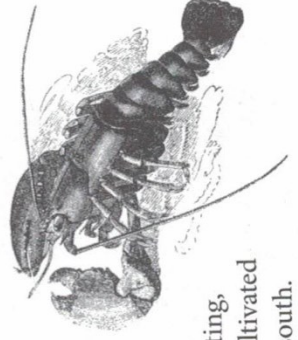
And thanks to the Lebanese, Vietnamese, Indonesians, Indians, French, Thais, Chinese, Africans, Japanese, Brazilians, and Chileans for contributing to what has become one of the most varied international culinary scenes. Indeed, apart from the plethora of specialty ethnic restaurants to be found in the major cities, Australian “foodies” excel in blending their excellent home produced fish, meat, vegetables and fruit with Asian, South American, or North African influences to produce “fusion” food—definitely the best of all culinary worlds!

Fresh Food

Australia's great varieties of climate, from the tropics in the north, through irrigated plains and mountains, to coasts with Mediterranean climates, mean that a multitude of fresh ingredients are readily available—from paw-paw (papaya), bananas, pineapples, avocados, and mangoes in the north to nectarines, peaches, apricots, strawberries, raspberries, and apples in the south. Immigrants have given Australia lemongrass, eggplant (aubergine), zucchini, garlic, basil, coriander, artichoke, bok choy, shiitake mushroom, and on and on and on—all fresh daily in your local supermarket or vegetable market.

Australian beef is good enough to be exported to the USA. The lamb is nearly as good as New Zealand lamb. The pork is rich (and a little fatty, which gives it taste, unlike much European pork).

And the fish! Because of the length of Australia's coastline, from warm tropical waters off the Queensland coast to cold waters off southern Australia, you can sample barramundi, mud crabs, and coral trout from the north; prawns and world-famous oysters from New South Wales, Tasmania, and South Australia; deep-sea whiting, crayfish, lobster, and cultivated Atlantic salmon in the south.



Some Australian old time-favorites

Anzac biscuits

Biscuits made from rolled oats and honey. As sent to the Anzac troops at Gallipoli during World War I.

Balmain bugs (and Moreton Bay Bugs)

A type of small, saltwater crayfish.

Chiko rolls

Deep-fried rolls filled with savory vegetables.

Damper

A flat bread made with flour and water and baked in the embers of a fire.

Finger buns

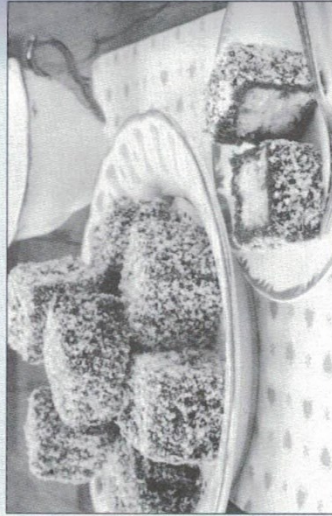
Long, narrow yeast buns covered with pink icing.

Floater

A meat pie floating in mashed potato, gravy, and mushy green peas.

Lamington

A sponge cake square, covered with a thin layer of chocolate and desiccated coconut.



Pavlova

A meringue base piled high with fruit and cream, named after the lightness of the famous ballerina.

Sausage rolls

Sausage meat wrapped in pastry.

Vegemite

Australia's most famous and much loved spread, made from yeast extract.

Violet Crumble Bar

Made by Hoadleys, a revered confection made from honeycomb covered with chocolate.

Yabbies

Small, freshwater crayfish.



Wines

Australians enjoy a drink, but their palates and choices are becoming more sophisticated. Although beer is still the most widely consumed beverage by volume, Australia is these days also a wine-drinking nation. Australia not only produces some of the best wine in the world, but it drinks home-grown as well, with 85 percent of Australia's wine consumption being a robust Aussie red or a cheeky sav blanc. While Australia represents just 4 percent of global production, it is now the sixth largest producer and one of the top four exporters of wine in the world. Australia sells more wine in the UK than in any other country, satisfies China's new thirst for red wine, and in 'coals to Newcastle' credibility coup actually sells wine to France! Australia's wine industry has suffered in recent years along with its overseas competitors, as global wine production has expanded faster than demand—resulting in a decline in world

wine prices and declining profit margins for Australia's winemakers.

While not good for the industry, it means that your "favorite drop" may be very reasonably priced if you buy carefully (see next page for advice). And there's always BYO!

For any wine-loving visitor, an hour's drive from most capital cities will have you sitting in a cellar-door tasting room, sipping some of the world's finest wine. Many of these vineyards are in beautiful countryside, have top notch restaurants, and can be visited as part of a conducted wine tour. It's well worth signing up for a bus tour of one of the wine regions, as it affords you special access to organised group tasting sessions, and, apart from anything else, avoids you running foul of Australia's strictly enforced drinking and driving regulations (a blood alcohol level of over .05 percent could lead to a fine and loss of driver's license).

The advantage of a tour is that most of the approximately 1,500 vineyards are clustered in distinct regions, and it is relatively easy to make visits to different vineyards and be back in the city for dinner. Examples of these are the Mornington Peninsula, south of Melbourne; the Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale or the Barossa Valley outside of Adelaide; the Hunter Valley (90 minutes north of Sydney) and Margaret River, south of Perth. You can get further information and descriptions

BYO—BRING YOUR OWN

This concept, which is very common in Australia, means that you can take your own wine to many restaurants. Imagine the savings! Buy your wine at a good price in one of the many bottle shops you will find dotted around cities and suburbs (somewhat similar to USA liquor stores and UK off licenses, they offer a very wide choice of wines)—and take it to the restaurant you fancy.

You should note that most restaurants that accept BYO will state the fact in the window, on the menu, and in their advertisements. Others that have liquor licenses will allow you to bring your wine and will supply glasses, but will charge you corkage—perhaps a couple of dollars for each drinker. Even so, you will save considerably by buying at a bottle shop. More sophisticated, expensive restaurants are fully licensed and do not allow BYO. So make sure to enquire before making a reservation. Then you can decide whether or not you wish to pay the extra for what might well be superior food and drink. You can also avoid the embarrassment of finding that the restaurant is BYO, that all your friends have turned up toting bottles of wine, and that you have turned up empty-handed!

of individual wineries from the websites of state tourist offices.

Almost half of Australia's total grape harvest is produced in the state of South Australia, with about half of the state's wine production coming from the Riverland, a region irrigated by two of Australia's largest rivers, the Murray and the Darling, which merge near the borders of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. Further breaking down total wine production by State, about a third is produced in New South Wales, about 15 percent comes from Victoria, with the rest being produced by the cooler soils of Tasmania and the higher altitudes and rich volcanic soils of Queensland's inland ranges. Social convention dictates that bottles of wine are opened for visitors and at dinner parties—and you are judged by your choice of wine. Remember, too, that it is polite to open wine brought by a guest—unless the hosts have carefully selected wines to pair with their dinner menu.

Buying Wines

- Price is a guide to quality, but it is also advisable to read the wine reviews online or in newspapers for tips on the good wines currently available. Buy from major liquor outlets rather than from pubs/hotels.
- Perfectly acceptable wine to take to friends can be bought for under \$20–25 a bottle.
- Good wines probably cost over \$30 a bottle, exceptional wines over \$60.

- As the roughest of guides to grape and district, try the following. (Australian labels are tightly controlled by the Trade Practices Act, accurately describing origin, contents, year, and alcoholic content; and you can read the label.)

Red Wines

- Shiraz (claret from the Rhône) from McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, or Central Victoria.
- Cabernet Sauvignon (the great grape of Bordeaux) from Coonawarra, Barossa Valley, or Margaret River.
- Cabernet/Shiraz from any of the above areas.
- Merlot from Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, or Central Victoria.
- Pinot Noir (original grape from Burgundy) from Tasmania, Yarra Valley, or Mornington Peninsula.

White Wines

- Chardonnay from anywhere—said to be “a promiscuous grape—grows anywhere.”
- Riesling (originally Rhine Riesling) from the Clare Valley, Coonawarra, Tasmania.
- Semillon (a Bordeaux grape) from the Hunter Valley (must be a few years old); or South Australia or Goulburn Valley (to drink now).

If you have a real interest in wines, and you have not been to New Zealand, try some of their white wines from Cloudy Bay or the Marlborough region, readily available in Australia.

RESTAURANTS

As has been said, Australia offers perhaps the greatest variety of ethnic cuisines anywhere in the world, from Moroccan to Chinese in its many forms—the ubiquitous Chinese restaurants are today the purveyors of Cantonese, Pekingese, Szechuan (Szechwan), Hakka, and Shanghai food, cooked by people from the place of origin. Many city and suburban shopping centers, and other locations such as Chinatown and Darling Harbour in Sydney, have this wide variety, offered from many small outlets, side by side. “Take out Thai” is competing on the high street as the post-pub “filler”, replacing Greek kebabs, which, in turn, had replaced fish and chips a few decades ago as the traditional late night takeaway of choice.

Special Occasion?

If you decide to eat out in an expensive or very popular restaurant, it might be best to go on a Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday night—in that order of preference. A Saturday night is likely to be busier, noisier, and more difficult to get a table reservation.

TABLE MANNERS

Table manners generally follow the British tradition. If the food does not need to be cut with a knife, it is quite correct just to use a fork in the

right hand; but otherwise Australians do not cut up their food and then put the knife down and eat with a fork in the American way. The knife should be held (with the handle covered by your hand, not like a pencil), while the fork (facing down) lifts the food. It is polite to put them both down on the plate while you chew your mouthful or converse with your table companions.

At the end of the course the knife and fork are placed together in the center of the plate, with the fork facing upward, so that the waiter or your hostess will know that you have finished eating; but the table will be cleared only when everyone has finished. Knife and fork laid separately on a plate on which there is still some food indicates to the waiter that you have not finished.

The bill for a group of people is usually divided and shared, singles (men and women) paying their single share and the couple paying double.

As a visitor—particularly to Australia’s “red center”—you may well be encouraged by a tour guide to try some kind of “bush tucker.” Interest in this has grown recently, since new Australians have come to appreciate that Aborigines survived healthily on local food for centuries before white man’s food was introduced—in the very early days this was all imported.

You might be offered witchetty grubs, either cooked or raw and live. These are the larvae of wood-boring moths found in holes in tree trunks, and visitors find them fascinating in a way that

is certainly not shared by most locals. If you do accept an offer to try this delicacy (or another, the honey ant—a fat ant which stores a honeylike substance in its abdomen), remember to hold them by the head and eat the rest, or bite the head off first.

Kangaroo, camel, crocodile, emu and other delicacies have also found their way on to some restaurant menus as chefs

experiment with the lean protein and robust flavors offered by Australia's home-grown form of "game."

It is worth noting that unlike restaurants in the US, the word "entrée" means (as it should) the starter, or first course.



THE "BARBIE," OR "BAR-B-QUE"

Not much needs to be said about a "barbie." The old typical party scenario, in which the guys stayed around the beer keg or esky (cold bottle carrier) while the women made the salads and prepared the nibbles in the kitchen is thankfully long gone. These days, the barbecue fare is more creative and the planning and cooking process is very much an equal opportunity activity! However, in some domains, old habits

TIPPING

Perhaps because of the egalitarian spirit in Australia, tipping is not the problem it can be in other countries. Australians tend to feel that a waiter or waitress should earn a tip through extra or very friendly service. Given that, they are recognized as not being well paid and most Australians will "share the wealth" (pass on some of their money to help another) by paying a little more than the bill requires. Typically private customers tip about 10 percent, and businessmen 15 percent. The GST (Goods and Services Tax) will be shown on the bill. In more casual coffee shops and restaurants patrons may just "round up" the bill and leave a few gold coins (\$1 and \$2) rather than rigidly sticking to the 10 percent calculation.

and traditional roles die hard—and on arrival the men may huddle around the grill to flex their barbecue muscle and weigh in on the best cooking technique—to turn or not to turn? Frequently, there will be one designated cook who's allowed to brandish the barbecue tongs—surrounded by ten expert consultants whose advice—liberally laced with good-natured sarcasm and insults—will come thick and fast and not infrequently in direct proportion to the amount of beer and wine consumed.

If invited to a barbecue, it is customary to ask if you can bring something. In fact (except among close friends—who might all pitch in with appetizers, salads, and desserts) this offer is usually refused. But do take a good bottle of wine.

TAKEAWAYS

One of the less fortunate types of food import has been American-style fast food. Overeating of Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald's burgers and French fries, and the like, has brought about a weight revolution, and many Australians have joined their American cousins in their obesity problem. Some 60 percent of Australian adults and 25 percent of children are now classified as technically overweight or obese—an increase of 5 percent over the past twenty years. In recent years, however, there has been a backlash, driven mainly by general concern about children growing up unfit and with a “junk-food mentality.” As a result, Australians are now much more health-food conscious—learning to eschew sugar-laden processed foods and drinks.

For you, the tourist, the deep-fried foods are there—everywhere—if you want them. And you might just try some of the best fish and chips to be had, battered and salted, along with fried calamari and potato scallops (like a hash brown). However, wander into the local fish and chip shop, and you'll find a wonderful array of fresh fish that's grilled or