

Australia

Capital:	Canberra
Religion:	Latest census information reveals approximately 74% of the population are Christians: Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, or Church of Christ. An estimated 1% of the population are Muslim, 0.5% Jewish, and 1% Buddhist. A significant proportion of Australians (almost 13%) claim no religious affiliation.
Government:	A democratic federal state system. As an independent member of the Commonwealth, Australia's head of state is the Queen of Australia, the British sovereign, represented by a governor-general. Legislative authority lies with a bicameral parliament consisting on an elected 76-member Senate (elected for six years), and 147-member House of Representatives (elected for three years).
Ethnic Groups:	One of the world's most multicultural societies. Approximately 77% of the population are native born (including 265,000 Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islanders), and 23% foreign born. Of the 4 million Australians born overseas, 1.2 million came from the UK and Ireland, 1.5 million from continental Europe, 560,000 from Asia, and 288,000 from New Zealand.
Language:	The official language is English. 196,000 Australians speak other languages including native Aboriginal dialects.
Currency:	The Australian dollar.

- Australia derives its name from the Latin 'australis', meaning southern. The sixth largest country on earth, Australia is located between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is divided into six states and two territories, and most of the population are concentrated on the southern and eastern coasts. Australia has one of the world's highest urbanisation rates, with 85% of its population living in cities.
- Archaeological evidence indicates that Aborigines were living in Australia at least 40,000 years ago. In 1973 a skeleton was found at Lake Mungo in New South Wales, dating back at least 28,000 years. Australian Aboriginal languages comprise a group of 260 interrelated tongues, the vast majority of which are now extinct. Of the surviving languages, Mabinag (the language of the Western Torres Strait Islanders) and Western Desert Language are the most widely spoken.
- In 1770, Captain Cook took formal control of Australia for Britain. Soon after, Australian penal colonies were established; thus the first settlers of the country were convicts and soldiers. Free settlers arrived later when word spread of the opportunities available 'down under'. The numbers greatly increased when gold was discovered in 1851.



- Australia became a member of the British Commonwealth in 1901. British authority was finally removed in 1986.

Business and Social Etiquette

- The Australian need to deflate people who put on airs is very strong. Referred to as 'cutting down the tall poppy', this habit grew out of the nation's origin as a British penal colony and the Australian prisoners' hatred for their high-class British overseers.
- Australians are friendly and easy to get to know. They do not have the British reserve of their ancestors. It is acceptable for visitors to introduce themselves in social situations. Your best approach is to be friendly, relaxed, modest, and unpretentious. The usual advice is 'just be yourself' when dealing with Australians. However if your usual demeanour is wired, nervous, officious, or self-important, you should downplay those aspects of your personality.
- Australians greet each other with 'hello' or an informal 'g'day'. Full names are used for initial greetings, and 'sir' is an address of respect. Australians are quick to go to a first name basis. Wait for them to initiate this as a cue for you to do the same.
- It is the custom to shake hands at the beginning and end of a meeting. Women don't usually shake hands with one another, but will often give a kiss on the cheek in greeting.
- It is appropriate to present a business card at an introduction, but don't be surprised if you do not get one in return since many Australians do not have them.
- Business dress is conservative. Men may wear a dark suit and tie. Women may wear a skirt and blouse, or a dress.
- Australians do not generally give gifts in a business context. If you are invited to a home for dinner, however, you may want to bring a small gift of flowers, wine, or chocolates.

