



PROGRAM COUNTRY: AUSTRALIA



STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world



Australia is the country “down under”, famous for its vast open spaces, desert areas, rainforests, wonderful white sand beaches and unique animal life. Take the chance to experience this exciting continent and its people! There is something for everyone in Australia. Exchange students coming to Australia can expect to take part in a relaxed and laid-back lifestyle full of new and exciting opportunities. Cities and rural areas both offer unique experiences.

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COUNTRY INFORMATION

The continent of Australia is the smallest and driest of the seven continents and is divided into eight different states: The Northern Territory (capital city Darwin and home of Uluru/Ayers Rock), New South Wales (capital city Sydney), Queensland (capital city Brisbane and home of the Great Barrier Reef), South Australia (capital city Adelaide), Western Australia (capital city Perth, the most isolated city in the world), Canberra (capital of Australia), Victoria (capital city Melbourne and home of the Great Ocean Road) and Tasmania (capital city Hobart). Australia offers very diverse landscapes from famous Uluru/Ayers Rock in the Red Centre to the magnificent tropical forests in the north, and managed to preserve many national parks throughout the country, where you can wander around in the wilderness.

Australia's climate varies due to its size. The northern states including Queensland have a tropical climate, mostly hot and humid. In the Australian outback hot days and cold nights are common, whilst the southern states experience a temperate climate closer to a southern European climate. Being in the Southern Hemisphere, Australia's summer is from December to February, autumn (fall) from March to May, winter from June to August and spring from September to November.

The land Down Under is one of the most sparsely populated in the world with an average population of two persons per square kilometer. Most of its 20 million people live and work in cities on the coast, making it one of the most urbanized countries in the world.

Australia is a relatively new country, having only been discovered by Europeans in the late 17th century. There were people living

in Australia for more than 40,000 years before the Europeans arrived. They are called the Aboriginals, which means “from the beginning”. As there is no written history of the Aboriginals, their past can only be understood through their dreamtime stories, cave paintings, rock carvings and through their songs and dances. The arrival of the European settlers had a great destructive impact on the native population. It is only in the last few decades that their rich and complex culture has been revealed and recognized.

Australia has one of the most multicultural societies in the world, with immigrants mainly from Europe at first and from Asia and the Middle East later on. One in every four Australians has been born overseas or has at least one parent born overseas. Australians, called “Aussies”, are open, friendly and sincere. They lead a relaxed lifestyle and they enjoy talking to newcomers about their country.

Australia is a federal monarchy and an independent state part of the British Commonwealth. The National day, also called Australia Day, is celebrated on January 26 in memory of the first British convicts arriving in 1788. The National Anthem is “Advance Australia Fair”. As Australia belongs to the Commonwealth with its Titular Head in Britain, “God save the Queen” is also played when the Queen of England or a member of the Royal Family is visiting.

Since Australia is an isolated island continent, its flora and fauna are quite unique. The Eucalyptus or Gumtree is the most commonly known native Australian tree. Most of Australia's forests are located in its high rainfall areas, with the main rain forest located in Queensland. Australia is also the home of world unique fauna, including the famous kangaroo, koala, platypus, wombat, echidna and many species of lizards, snakes and spiders.

SCHOOL LIFE

The Australian school year starts at the end of January and ends in the middle of December. Overseas students often find it strange to have Christmas and summer holidays at the same time! The school year consists of two semesters, each divided into two terms (except for Tasmania with a school year divided into three terms). The education system varies from state to state, including the times and even lengths of the holiday breaks.



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Australia has two educational systems – the state system and the private system. Every third young Australian attends a private school. While private schools are mainly boys-only or girls-only schools, nearly all state schools are co-educational. They all have strict disciplinary and uniform codes. Most Australians spend 12 years in school for their primary and secondary education. They start primary school at the age of five or six and enter high school at the age of 11. Exchange students are usually placed into Year 11 and can choose their subjects of studies. English is the only compulsory subject. Other subjects can be physics, chemistry, biology, geography, ancient history, modern history, art, commerce, drama, music, foreign language, computer science, media, marine studies etc. Students can decide to which level they want to study their subjects, each one being divided into units.

The school day usually begins at 9 am and ends at 3 pm. At least one afternoon of the week is dedicated to sport activities. Each school organizes annual athletic and swimming carnivals. Inter-school sport competitions are also very common. Generally students have lunch at school, which they bring from home, but most schools offer canteen facilities as well.

HOST FAMILY LIFE

Australian families generally live in a single home in a residential or rural area. Most homes have three to four bedrooms and a swimming pool for some of them. Also most Australian families have pets. More and more of our host families live in the countryside, offering to our students the real experience of the Australian outback, as well as the friendliness and warmth of country people. Country schools are very welcoming to our students, who often become popular very quickly within their school community.

Australian families are active people who enjoy spending time together. They are outgoing and kind with a good sense of humour. Australians like to tease and can laugh at themselves; they are quite straightforward and very open-hearted. However Australian parents are generally stricter than European parents. They expect to be informed of their teenage children's whereabouts at all times.

Many teenagers work part time at fast food restaurants or at the local supermarket. It is quite common for teenagers to work to earn money for clothes and activities. Australian teenagers have chores and are expected to clean their own room, help out with the dishes and other household chores.

Spare time: The generally warm climate all year around allows Australians to spend most of their leisure time outdoors. The outdoor barbeque ("Barbie" or "BBQ" in Aussie) is the most common social activity for Australians. Some big warehouses are selling nothing but barbeques of all sizes and prices and picnic equipment. Often the BBQ will be a family dinner in the backyard. But on a sunny weekend many Australians will head off with their portable BBQ to a local beach or park. Australians like "having a good time". They enjoy dinner parties, going to the movies, dancing and eating out. The great ethnic diversity has brought a myriad of differ-

ent kinds of cuisine and reasonably priced restaurants to choose from. Australians have also eagerly adopted the American style of "takeaways" for lunch or dinner.

The size of the country and the spread of the population have made long distance travel quite common for Australians, even if only to enjoy sport games or hobbies. As public transport is not available in all areas, especially in country areas, Australians rely heavily on cars as their mean of transport. Most families own at least two cars, making the country one of the greatest car owners in the world.

Australians are active people, and sport in general is very popular in Australia. There are thousands of sporting clubs and associations throughout the country. Sport is also very much encouraged at school. The Australians are very proud of their many world champions in all kinds of sports, the main ones being swimming and surfing. Some of the most popular sports are rugby league, rugby union, Australian Rules football, cricket, swimming, surfing, soccer, tennis, squash. Fitness centers are common in most cities and towns. Most local communities also offer aerobics and dance/jazz classes. In Australian winter you can even ski or snowboard in Victoria and New South Wales!

PROGRAM EXTRAS

In addition to the semester and year exchange programs, we offer STS Experience OZ – 2 to 3 month programs, in New South Wales (Sydney area) and Queensland (Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast or Cairns) over the European summer. We also offer semester and year international student programs in Queensland, allowing students to choose their school and location. Please see separate information sheets for more details.

STS Safari Tour

Australia really is a natural wonder. If you are not quite convinced you might be surprised to learn that there are currently 15 natural World Heritage-listed sites around the country. The STS Safari Tour takes the students from Sydney to Melbourne and to the Great Ocean Road, through the famous Australian outback to the Red Centre and the world heritage-listed Uluru/Ayers Rock, then flies them to the tropical Queensland, where they discover one of the world's most beautiful coastline, white sand beaches and of course the world heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef. The tour is fully supervised by experienced leaders. The cost is approximately AUD2,900 and includes all transport and accommodation costs from and to Sydney, most meals and activities.



All information is subject to change.

