

# Speaking Card 24 – Basic Facts about Australia and New Zealand

## ● Can you tell me some basic facts about Australia?

Australia is a very large island and it is both a country and a continent. It is located south of Asia, between the Indian and Pacific oceans. About 23 million people live there. The language of Australia is English. Australia is made up of six states and two territories (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia plus the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory).

## ● What do you know about the history of Australia?

The first people to live in Australia were the Aboriginals. They started to live there about 50,000 years ago. There were many different groups of Aboriginals. The Dutch were the first Europeans to go to Australia, in the 17th century. James Cook travelled to Australia from Britain in 1770. After that, Australia became a British colony. The British decided to send criminals to Australia and in 1788, the first prisoners were sent. Australia became independent from Britain in 1901, but the British Queen is still the Queen of Australia, too.

## ● Could you tell me about the geography of Australia?

The centre of Australia is very hot and dry. It is mostly desert. Most people in Australia live in cities near the sea. There are many beautiful beaches. In the north there are tropical areas with lots of rain, and in the south they have hot summers with colder winters. In the middle of Australia there is a very large rock called Ayers Rock, or Uluru. It is 348 metres high. The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef in the world. It is in the sea off the coast of Queensland. The highest mountain in Australia is Mount Kosciuszko; it is 2,228 metres high.

## ● What can you tell me about Australian cities?

The capital city of Australia is Canberra, which is in the south-east. However, the biggest city is Sydney, which has about 4.8 million inhabitants. There are many different nationalities and languages in Sydney. It is famous for its opera house and the

Sydney Harbour Bridge. The second-biggest city is Melbourne. It is called the cultural capital of Australia and is famous for theatre, music and street art. Other Australian cities include Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide.

## ● What do you know about Australian animals?

Many of the animals in Australia do not live anywhere else in the world. The most famous Australian animal is the kangaroo. Kangaroos travel by jumping and can move at 70km/h. The koala is another well known Australian animal. They eat leaves from the eucalyptus tree and can sleep for 20 hours a day! Other Australian animals include the wombat (= vombat), the echidna (= ježura) and the platypus (= ptakopysk).

## ● What are some basic facts about New Zealand?

New Zealand is a country about 1,500 kilometres east of Australia. It is made up of two big islands, the North Island and the South Island, and many other small islands. The first people in New Zealand were the Maoris. Europeans first came to New Zealand in 1642 when Abel Tasman from the Netherlands discovered it. In 1840 it became a British colony. About 4.5 million people live there today. There are two main languages: English and Maori. The capital of New Zealand is Wellington and Auckland is the biggest city.

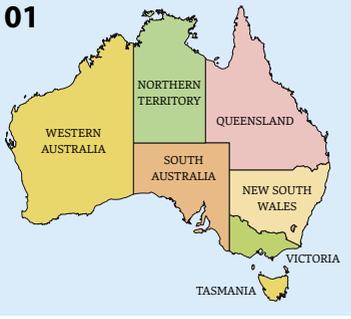
## ● Can you tell me about the geography of New Zealand?

New Zealand is a very beautiful country with many mountains, lakes and rivers. The highest mountain is Mount Cook, or Aoraki, which is 3,724 metres high. The biggest lake is Lake Taupo and the longest river is the Waikato River. The weather is not as hot as Australia's and there is often snow in the winter.

## ● And what about animals in New Zealand?

The most famous animal is the kiwi. The kiwi is a small bird that cannot fly. People from New Zealand call themselves "kiwis". The biggest insect in the world lives in New Zealand. It is called the giant weta. Many whales and dolphins live in New Zealand's waters and there are more types of penguins there than anywhere else in the world.

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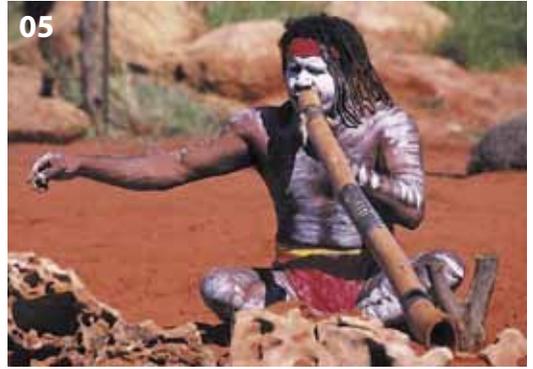
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Auckland Sky Tower

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