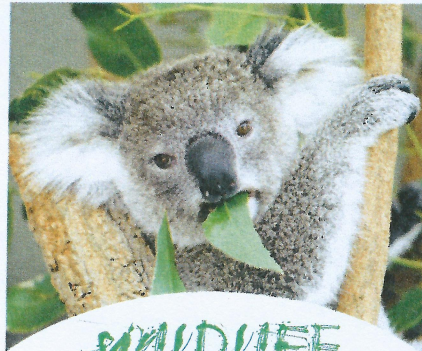


The Great Barrier Reef.

CLIMATE, LANDSCAPE AND PEOPLE

The northern part of the country has a tropical climate and the landscape consists of dense rainforest and mangrove swamps. The **Great Barrier Reef**, the largest coral reef system in the world, is an area stretching 3,000 kms along the coast of Queensland. It contains over 300 different species of coral and thousands of fish. It is considered one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

In the south-east of the country there is an alpine area with high mountains. The highest peak is Mount Kosciuszko [kɒ'ʃuːʃkɒʊ] (2,228 m), in New South Wales. Australia is one of the world's most ethnically diverse nations. Nearly a quarter of the people who live there were born in other countries. They come from Europe, but also from China, Vietnam, North Africa, and the Middle East. English is the national language and is spoken by around 80% of the population. Australian English has its own distinctive accent and vocabulary. Aboriginal languages are still spoken in Aboriginal communities.



WILDLIFE

Australia's ecosystem is unusual because of its remote location. As a result, there are many animal species that occur here and nowhere else in the world, such as the platypus, the kangaroo, the kookaburra (a very large bird), and the koala. Australia has 516 national parks to protect its unique plants and animals.



Listening



3 Listen to an Australian man talking about Christmas in his country. Circle the correct alternatives in the statements.

- 1 In Australia Christmas is celebrated in *summer/ winter*.
- 2 The shops often have fake *snow/sand* in the windows.
- 3 People dressed up as Father Christmas give out *sweets/small toys* in the street.
- 4 Chris usually spends Christmas *on the beach/in The Outback*.
- 5 At lunch time he always has a *barbeque/a traditional Christmas dinner with turkey*.
- 6 In the evening Chris always has a family celebration with *British/Italian* food.

Speaking

4 Work in pairs. You are planning a trip to Australia. Discuss the following:

- How long would you like to stay?
- What would you like to visit?
- What period of the year would you like to go?
- What would you pack?

Writing

5 Write a paragraph about how you usually spend Christmas.

Links

- 'Varieties of English', pp. 14-15
- 'The Aborigines', p. 55