
I. THE COUNTRY

Area and Geography

Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It has an area of 7 682 300 km² (2 966 368 square miles) and with an average elevation of less than 300 metres (984 ft.), it is the flattest continent. The country's interior is arid or semi-arid, while coastal areas are generally fertile. One-third of the country is uninhabited and it is the only continent occupied by a single nation.

Climate

About 40 per cent of Australia's total area lies within the tropics. The remainder is located in the temperate zone where most of the population is concentrated. Throughout the country, summer temperatures frequently exceed 37.8°C (100°F), although humidity is relatively low in many places.

From November to March, the coastal cities of Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Hobart and the inland city of Canberra usually have dry summer heat, while Darwin, Sydney and Brisbane have subtropical climates with damp heat from mid-December to mid-March. These cities have mild winters with no snow, while in the interior the climate is more extreme.

Local Time

There is a 14-hour time difference between Ottawa and the east coast of Australia from April to October. For example, when it is 5:00 p.m. (eastern standard time) in Ottawa, it is 7:00 a.m. the following day in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne (standard time) and 5:00 a.m. (western standard time) in Perth, on the west coast. At other times of the year, the difference between Ottawa and Sydney/Melbourne is 15 or 16 hours depending upon the date. Except for Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory, the country is on daylight saving time from late October to late February. (Additional time differences are listed in the Time Conversion Chart in Appendix I.)