

Country of the Week: Australia

Australia is the only country that is also a continent.

BASIC

This week, we are looking at a very interesting country. **Who can name it?** (*Australia.*) Australia is the only country that is also a continent. It is also the sixth largest country in the world. Australia is in the southern half of the world. Its seasons are the opposite of the seasons in the United States. **What season is it there now?** (*Spring.*) Most of Australia is taken up with a dry desert called the outback. That is why most of its people live in cities and towns in the east, where there is more rain.

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GENERAL

This week, we look at Australia. **Where in the world is Australia?** (*In the Southern Hemisphere, meaning the southern half of the world, near Southeast Asia.*) In Australia, the seasons are the opposite of the seasons in North America. **What season is it in Australia now?** (*Spring.*) Australia is the only country that is also a continent. Continents are the largest landmasses on Earth. **How many continents can you name?** (*North America, South America, Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia.*) Australia is the smallest continent, but it is the sixth largest country in the world. Most of Australia is a region of very dry desert land called the outback. It is hard to live in this area, which is why most of the people live in the cities along the country's eastern coast.

ADVANCED

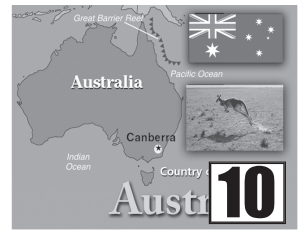
This week, NewsCurrents is looking at Australia, the only nation in the world that is also a continent. Australia is the smallest of the seven continents with an area of less than 3 million square miles, but it is the sixth-largest country on Earth.

Most of Australia is very dry and thinly populated. About 85 percent of the land is a region made up of desert and dry grassland. **What is this area called?** (*The outback.*) Much of this land is used for grazing cattle and sheep. But most of Australia's population lives in cities and towns along the east coast, where the climate is sub-tropical. But Australia is perhaps best-known for a region that is not even on land — a 1,250-mile-long natural feature located underwater off its northeast

live only in Australia. One is shown here.

Who can name this animal? (*A kangaroo.*)

Other Australian animals are the koala, the dingo, and the duck-billed platypus. **What do you know about any of these animals? Have you seen any in zoos?** One of the most famous parts of Australia is the Great Barrier Reef, where coral and other sea creatures live. **Have you ever been to Australia? Would you like to visit there? Why or why not?** NEXT



There are many kinds of animals that live only in Australia. **What kind of animal is shown here?** (*A kangaroo.*) Other animals found only in Australia are the koala, the dingo, and the duck-billed platypus. **Have you ever seen any of these animals in a zoo? What else do you know about them?**

The most famous place in Australia may be the 1,250-foot-long Great Barrier Reef, located off the northeast coast of the continent. This is an underwater structure made up of the skeletons of tiny, soft-bodied animals called coral. The Great Barrier Reef is home to more than 400 kinds of coral, 1,500 kinds of fish, and hundreds of other life forms. **Would you like to scuba dive and see the Great Barrier Reef for yourself?** NEXT

coast. **Who can name this feature?** (*The Great Barrier Reef.*) It is actually made up of nearly 3,000 smaller reefs strung together. It is home not only to 400 different kinds of coral, but 1,500 varieties of fish and hundreds of other life forms. It is Australia's top tourist attraction and a natural destination for scuba divers from all over the world. **Would you like to visit Australia? Why or why not?**

Most scientists believe all the continents were once one giant landmass, and that Australia separated from it about 200 million years ago. Because of this, much of Australia's wildlife is unique to the continent. **What are some examples of this unique wildlife?** (*The kangaroo, the koala, the dingo, and the platypus, to name a few.*) NEXT