



# Australia

## Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette

### Australian Society & Culture

#### Aussie Modesty

Australians are very down to earth and always mindful of not giving the impression that they think they are better than anyone else.

They value authenticity, sincerity, and loathe pretentiousness.

Australians prefer people who are modest, humble, self-deprecating and with a sense of humour.

They do not draw attention to their academic or other achievements and tend to distrust people who do.

Australians place a high value on relationships.



**Capital city:** Canberra

**Main Cities:** Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth

**Population:** 23.13 million

**Size:** 7.692 million sq. km (2.97 million sq. miles)

**Major Religion:** Christianity

**Main Language:** English

**Climate:** Australia's seasons are at opposite times to those in the northern hemisphere.

December to February is summer; March to May is autumn; June to August is winter; and

September to November is spring.

**Life Expectancy:** 82 years

**Dialling Code:** +61

**Emergency Numbers:** 000 (mobile phone secondary emergency numbers are 112 & 106)

**Currency:** Australian dollar

**Symbols:** \$ or A\$

**Code:** AUD

**Denominations:** Notes: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100. Coins: 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c. \$1, \$2.  
Most retail outlets accept cards and phone apps for payment.

## Local culture

The culture of Australia is a Western culture derived primarily from Britain but also influenced by the unique geography of the Australian continent, the diverse input of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and other Oceania people.



The oldest surviving cultural traditions in Australia (which are actually some of the oldest surviving traditions on earth) – are those of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Their ancestors inhabited Australia for between 40,000 and 60,000 years and they lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. The boomerang and didgeridoo, which were invented by Aborigines, are to this day iconic symbols of the country.

Australians are generally laid back, open and direct. They say what they mean and are generally more individual and outgoing than other cultures. More than three quarters of Australians live in cities and urban centres, mainly along the coast.

## A Multi-Cultural Society

The initial population of Australia was made up of Aborigines and people of British and Irish descent.

After World War II there was heavy migration from Europe, especially from Greece, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Turkey.

This was in response to the Australian policy of proactively trying to attract immigrants to boost the population and work force.

In the last thirty years, Australia has liberalised its immigration policy and opened its borders to South East Asia.

This has caused a real shift in self-perception as Australians begin to re-define themselves as a multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

## **Clothing**

Australian local dress styles are different from Australia's fashions. Dress has been influenced by the experience of living in rugged countryside as well as participating in modern leisure activities such as swimming, surfing and beach culture. This is reflected in different fabrics, such as moleskin and drill cotton, developed for more practical wear.

Today, lifesavers wear long-sleeved tops or wetsuits and sun hats, as do children, as protection from the sun. In response to the beach experience, board shorts, singlets, colourful shirts and thongs have been adopted as part of a national dress code by both males and females.

## **The Australian Language**

Australian English is the country's official language and is the first language of the majority of the population. Australian English differs from other varieties of English in vocabulary, accent, pronunciation, grammar and spelling.

## **Etiquette & customs**

Australians are generally not formal, so greetings, even initial greetings, are casual and laid back. It's common to shake hands and Australians would normally just use first names to introduce people.

Gifts are exchanged at birthdays and Christmas. Gifts are usually opened when they are received, in front of the gift giver.

It's hard to picture the Australian life without thinking about the good old Aussie BBQ and holding a nice cold drink in your hand!

When invited to someone's house, it's polite to phone head to see if the host or hostess would like you to bring anything else. Always arrive on time if invited to dinner.

Table manners are western - hold the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating. Indicate you have finished eating by laying your knife and fork parallel on your plate with the handles facing to the right. Keep your elbows off the table and your hands above the table when eating.



## **Religion**

While Australia has a strong tradition of secular government, religious organisations have played a significant role in public life. Christian churches, in particular, have played an integral role in the development of education, health and welfare services. While less than a quarter of Christians attend church weekly, around a quarter of all school students attend church-affiliated schools and the Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas are public holidays. The Roman Catholic Church is by far the largest non-government provider of health and education services in Australia.

## **First Meetings**

It is polite in Australia to shake someone's right hand when you meet him or her for the first time.

Australians tend to be fairly informal in their everyday interactions and it is common practice to call someone by their first name only. You can address someone by their title and their family name, but this is considered unnecessary and overly formal for most situations. People do, however, tend to be more formal in business and professional situations.

## **Names**

Naming in Australia follows this format; first name, optional middle name(s) and last name.

Traditionally, Australian children have taken their father's last name and most married parents still opt for this convention; but it's not imperative to do this.

Under the various State name registration guidelines, a child born to unmarried parents will be registered with the mother's surname, unless both parents agree to the child being registered with the father's surname.