**Where in the World Is Australia?**

Australia is located south of Asia, sitting in between the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Southern Ocean. That last one might be new to you; the **Southern Ocean** can be considered the ocean that surrounds Antarctica, around the globe. You can narrow down your search further by looking for the only continent that is completely in the Southern Hemisphere.

Since Australia is surrounded by water, it is, technically, an island. But, because of its size - just a little smaller than the United States - it is also considered a continent and a country. So, it is the world's smallest continent, but the world's 6th largest country. It is also the flattest and driest continent. But, as we will discuss below, that does not mean there is any shortage of incredible geography in Australia.

**Geographical Regions**

Because of where Australia is in the South Pacific, it has a wide range of geography and climate. This part of Australia is practically desolate with hardly any population centers and hundreds of miles between towns or cities.

Surrounding the vast deserts of Australia are the grasslands where more human and animal life can be found. The light reds and yellows are the grasslands, where flat deserts give way to rolling hills with more moisture and cooler temperatures that allow for more plant life.

The greens on the north and east coasts of Australia are the rainforests. The most popular landmarks here are the Gold Coast and the Daintree Rainforest, which is a World Heritage Site. In fact, the northeast coast of Australia is the only place in the

world where two World Heritage Sites border each other, side by side. Here, the Great Barrier Reef borders the Daintree Rainforest. We will learn more about those two amazing sites in a few minutes.

Finally, the blues along the southern and southeastern coasts of Australia represent the temperate coastal geography, much like the southeastern coast of the United States, with warm summers and cool winters. Most of the Australian population lives in this area, located in cities with rolling hills, grasses, and Joshua trees.

**Geographic Highlights of Australia**

Likely the most popular geographic feature of Australia is what was once called Ayers Rock but has been renamed **Uluru** - the name it was given by the original inhabitants of Australia. More than 550 million years old, this sandstone statue in the middle of a completely flat desert is something the native people of Australia worship and geologists find amazing. It is the remnants of what was essentially a sandbar in a large inland ocean, but how it maintained its form while the rest of the ocean floor turned into desert continues to amaze tourists.

Another often visited and famous geographical area of Australia is the Gold Coast and, as we mentioned earlier, the **Daintree Rainforest**. Daintree is Australia's largest rainforest at just over 800 square miles and is unique because it can literally grow right up to the edge of the ocean in some places. A white sandy beach separates Daintree from one of the most beautiful underwater geological features of Australia - the Great Barrier Reef.

Quite possibly, one of the first things you think about when you imagine Australia is the **Great Barrier Reef**. It covers over 130,000 square miles and includes almost 3,000 individual reef systems. There are 900 islands in the area and because

of the ecology of a reef system, it is the largest ecological system that is built by living organisms in the planet.

Finally, the Great Barrier Reef leads us to another incredible geographic fact about Australia. While we may think of Australia as one big island that is a small continent, but a big country, the reality is that just beyond the beautiful beaches of Southern Australia, Sydney, and the Great Barrier Reef, thousands more 'pieces' of Australia exist. There are more than 20,000 islands within the borders of Australia. The majority are uninhabitable, but they are still all part of an incredible country

**Australia Great Barrier Reef Video**