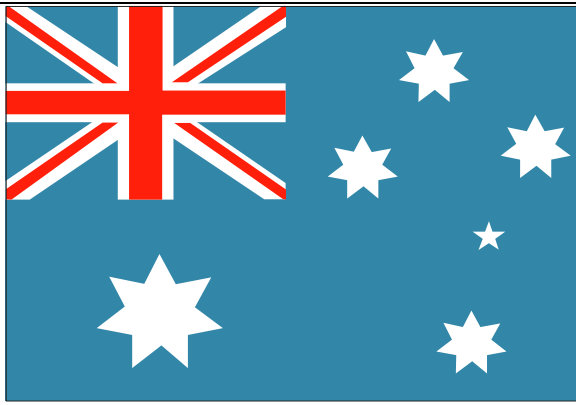


Category: Natural World
Briefing Sheet: BS/N007

AUSTRALIA

Related Themes:- COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD (N06)
NIGHT AT THE MOVIES (A04)

From the European point of view, despite its dubious beginnings as a penal colony, Australia has always been a place of fascination: Stunning, picturesque scenery, unique animals with weird names (Duck-billed Platypus & Wombat, for instance) and a population in seemingly permanent carefree mode. Unfortunately the country has been most newsworthy recent because of its devastating bush fires. There are other darker sides, like the treatment of the indigenous aboriginal population, but Australia has good potential for a popular party theme - including a Christmas party in mid-summer!



FOOD & DRINK

As Aussies are seemingly famous for barbie's and tinnies, there should be few problems. Other native delicacies include:

Biscuits:- Aside from the legendary Tim Tams (below), favourite Aussie biscuits include Full-o-fruit, Cadbury's Squiggle Tops, Glengarry Macadamia Shortbread and Iced Vo-Vo's.

Bundaberg Rum ('Bundy').

Pavlova ('Pav'):- Dessert of meringue, cream and fruit.

Peach Melba:- Peach and ice-cream dessert named after Dame Nellie Melba.

Sweets:- Eucalyptus Drops and Snakes Alive in bags, Timtam Fingers and Timtam Chunky, Butter Menthol 10s.

Tim Tams:- Chocolate biscuits available in a number of flavours: Original; Mocha and Chewy Caramel.

Vegemite:- Popular spread similar to Marmite.

Yabbie:- Crayfish.

Aussie-derived lager (**Castlemaine & Fosters**) is easily available, as are the many highly rated Australian wines.

Capital: Canberra (in the Australian Capital Territory)
States: New South Wales (Cap: Sydney)
Northern Territory (Cap: Darwin)
Queensland (Cap: Brisbane)
South Australia (Cap: Adelaide)
Tasmania (Cap: Hobart)
Victoria (Cap: Melbourne)

Anthem: 'Advance Australia Fair'

Colours: Red, Blue and White

FILMS

Despite its obvious scenic opportunities, Australian film has taken some time to come into its own. Aside from the sample films mentioned below, Baz Luhrmann (Moulin Rouge) and Peter Jackson (Lord of the Rings) are leading directors. Russell Crowe, Mel Gibson and Nicole Kidman are leading stars. Sydney film studios is home to the making of the Matrix films.

Crocodile Dundee:- First half of the film shows Australia as outsiders like to imagine it, both in scenery and population terms, before the action switches to America. The sequel reverses the order and finishes in Australia.

Gallipoli:- Film about the WWI ANZAC fiasco, which gave Mel Gibson a wider platform for his talents.

Mad Max films:- Post-Apocalyptic action with Mel Gibson in the Australian outback.

Muriel's Wedding:- Girl leaves provincial Porpoise Spit town for Sydney to find a better life (to an Abba soundtrack).

On The Beach:- Nevil Shute's tale of Aussies after the nuclear bomb.

Picnic at Hanging Rock:- Eerie tale of disappearing students at Ayers Rock in the 1900s.

Romper Stomper:- Early Russell Crowe film featuring him as a leader of a neo-nazi skinhead gang, terrorising Asian immigrants.

Strictly Ballroom:- Early Baz Luhrmann film on the cut, thrust and competition of regional ballroom dancing.

Walkabout:- Young aborigine helps two children who become lost in the Outback, after an unexpected parental suicide.

Character & Costume Suggestions

Aussie Soap Star:- A major Aussie export and debatable cultural influence, recent British TV history is littered with Aussie soaps - Home & Away, Neighbours, The Sullivans, etc..

Backpacker:- Standard camper/hiker gear. Though the rucksack/back-pack may be unwieldy at a party, at least they will be well equipped and near self-sufficient!

Barbie-Girl:- A version of Lara Croft/Tomb Raider using barbecue tools instead of guns, a bandolier and/or belt with barbie food such as snags (sausages), shrimps etc., shades (sunglasses) and a corked hat (or similar).

Bunyip:- Mythical creature of the Outback. According to aboriginal folklore, a man-eating bellowing monster, which dragged victims to the bottom of the swamp or waterhole it inhabited.

Thus an Aussie version of the 'Creature from the Black Lagoon'.

Bushranger:- Smarter version of Crocodile Dundee.

Captain James Cook:- Explorer, sea-captain and effective father of modern Australia.

Cricketer:- Fairly self-explanatory, using either traditional cricket whites and gear, or today's more defensive protective gear (Helmet, face-guard, etc.).

Crocodile Dundee:- The tale of Mick Dundee, Outback hero extraordinaire, first hit the cinema screens in 1986. He was played by Paul Hogan, who became a major cinema star of the Nineteen-Eighties.

Dame Edna Everidge:- Alter-ego of Barry Humphries, Dame Edna is a TV megastar and TV icon like no other.

Dame Nellie Melba:- Famous opera singer after whom the Peach Melba was named. Operatic diva carrying said dessert, is the obvious interpretation.

Flying Doctor:- Vital resource of the Outback. Doctor with a cardboard plane (or wings) may work.

Kangaroo:- For such a popular creature, it is surprising more manufacturers do not produce a kangaroo costume. A boxing kangaroo is a variation.

Koala Bear:- Australia's version of the teddy bear, the Koala is a well-loved symbol of the country, even if they seem half asleep (they have to conserve energy!), and are temperamental little creatures.

Kylie Minogue:- Aussie soap star turned pop star of the Nineteen-Eighties/Nineties, now reinvented as a major club diva, and fashion style icon.

Lifeguard:- Essential to Bondai beach. Costume involves Speedo swimsuit (or similar), rubberised swim cap and the float container for rescue equipment.

Miss Australia:- This can be either played 'straight', as a beauty queen, but may alternatively involve other elements such as those for *Barbie-girl*.

Edward "Ned" Kelly:- Australian Bushranger condemned as a killer, but seen by his peers as a folk-hero and latter-day Robin Hood. He actually wore a home-made suit of steel armour.

Rolf Harris Impression:- One of Australia's most famous human exports, Rolf has a number of facets - the chart-topping singer ('Sun Arise'; 'Two Little Boys'; 'Stairway To Heaven'), the artist ('Can you tell what it is yet?') or the TV presenter of Animal Hospital.

Sheep:- There are many more sheep than people in Australia and thus the sheep is a potential costume choice for the gregarious party goer. (Access to a Newcastle football shirt might also give rise to a Sheep-Shearer!).

Surfer:- Simple costume, although the board may become a liability unless it's a beach party!

Tasmanian Devil:- Probably best known from the Warner Bros. cartoon character 'Taz', which also offers the best costume. Available in both child and adult sizes.

Expressions (see also *Strine below*)

Barbie

Cobber

Dreamtime?

Fair Dinkum

Go Walkabout

Sheila

Associated with Australia

Billabong

Bondai Beach

Boomerangs

Coolaba Tree

Cork Hats

Duck-billed Platypus

Kangaroo

Outback

Sheep Shearing

Surfing

Swag Bag

Sydney Harbour Bridge

Sydney Opera House

Wallaby

Wombat

Australian Places

Adelaide

Alice Springs

Darwin

Hobart (Tasmania)

Melbourne

Outback

Perth

Sydney

Uluru (Ayers Rock)

Sketches

Bruce Sketch - Monty Python

Dame Edna & Moony Ponds

Other work by Barry

Humphries

Strine

Strine is Australian slang, and aside from such well-known Aussie-isms as Pom (English person), Sheila (a woman) and barbie (barbecue), most outsiders best experience of Strine is from the song 'Waltzing Matilda' e.g.. 'Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong...'; A Matilda is a bedroll (or 'swag'), a swagman is a travelling casual labourer and a billabong is a waterhole. Beyond this though, Strine offers its own version of rhyming slang (Joe Blake/Snake; a Captain Cook/Look; Noah's Ark/Shark) and some quaint terms for the 'neighbours': (Apple Islander - Tasmanian; Banana Bender - Queenslander; Kiwi - New Zealander; Mexican - someone from a state south of where you are; Sandgroper - Someone from Western Australia; Sneaky crow-eater - Someone from South Australia; Taswegian - Tasmanian).

There are also several words (Drongo, Dill, Dingbat, Dork) and phrases ('A few kangaroos loose in the top paddock', 'A stubbie short of a six-pack'; 'A Snag short of a barbie') for idiocy or incompetence. The rich antipodean culture also yields a range of colourful phrases: 'Dunny' - 'Outside toilet'; 'Dunny budgie' - 'A fly'; 'Dead marine' - 'Empty beer bottle'; 'Awning over the toy shop' - 'Man's beer belly'; 'Take a cut lunch and a water-bottle' - 'You've a long trip ahead'. And you only put a shrimp on the barbie for tourists - Australians put snags (sausages) or mystery bags (sausages with uncertain content) on their barbies.