

# *Around Australia*

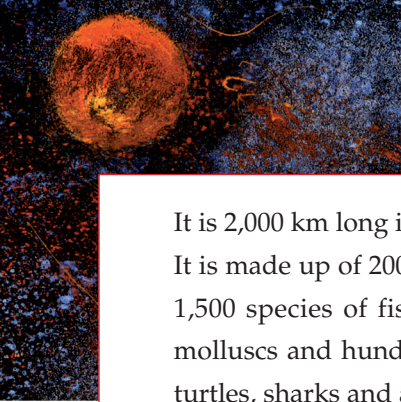
Every year, more than 50,000 students take a 'gap year' between finishing school and starting university. Like Claire, Lisa and Amy, many students use this 12-month period to go travelling.

Staying in youth hostels, 'backpacking', is a cheap way of seeing different places and also a great way to meet new people from all over the world.

A popular route in Australia starts at Cairns, close to the Great Barrier Reef in the north, down, through the 'Outback' to Ayers Rock in the centre, until finally reaching Sydney in the south.

The Great Barrier Reef is in Queensland, in the north-east of Australia.





It is 2,000 km long is at least 500 million years old.

It is made up of 200 islands and 2,500 separate reefs that are home to 1,500 species of fish, 350 different kinds of coral, 4,000 species of molluscs and hundreds of species of algae. There are also dolphins, turtles, sharks and at particular times of the year, it is also possible to see whales.

The warm, clear waters make it popular for snorkelling and scuba diving. Swimming amongst the multi-coloured tropical fish is the only way to really appreciate the Great Barrier Reef's beauty.

### Did you know?

The Great Barrier Reef is the only life form on earth that is visible from the moon. It is twice the length of Great Britain!

The outback is another symbolic image of Australia.

Few people live in these remote, inland regions. While travelling on the long outback roads, you probably won't see any other cars or people at all.

But if you want to see Ayers Rock, the world's largest monolith,<sup>1</sup> then a short journey through the outback is unavoidable.<sup>2</sup>

## Ayers Rock is in the centre of Australia

It attracts more than half a million people each year, firstly because of its size. Ayers Rock is huge; over two miles long, one and a half miles wide and 348 metres high. But it is also famous because it changes colour, especially at dawn and when the sun sets in the evening.

It is possible to climb Ayers Rock, and many visitors make the difficult two-hour climb to the top. But the Aboriginal people don't

1. **monolith** : a monolith is a large block of stone standing by itself.
2. **unavoidable** : impossible to miss.



**Did you know?**  
Ayers Rock is naturally grey, but the rock contains iron which rusts.<sup>2</sup> This is why it is red.

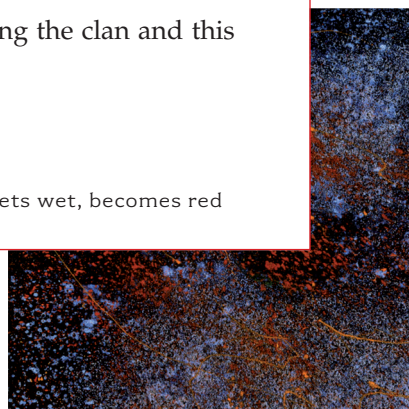
like this. They consider it to be a spiritual site of cultural and ritual importance.

The Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for at least 50,000 years.

Each clan<sup>1</sup> has a particular place which has spiritual importance for them. 'Uluru', (the Aboriginal name for Ayers Rock) is sacred to the 'Anangu' clan.

The Anangu believe that when they die, their spirit will return to Uluru. Their spirit will protect the living members of the clan. But if these spirits are offended, they will stop protecting the clan and this could cause serious problems.

1. **clan** : group of families which are related.
2. **iron which rusts** : iron is a metal that, when it gets wet, becomes red in colour (rust).





- 1 Complete the following information on Ayers Rock.

## AYERS ROCK

Aboriginal name \_\_\_\_\_

Length \_\_\_\_\_

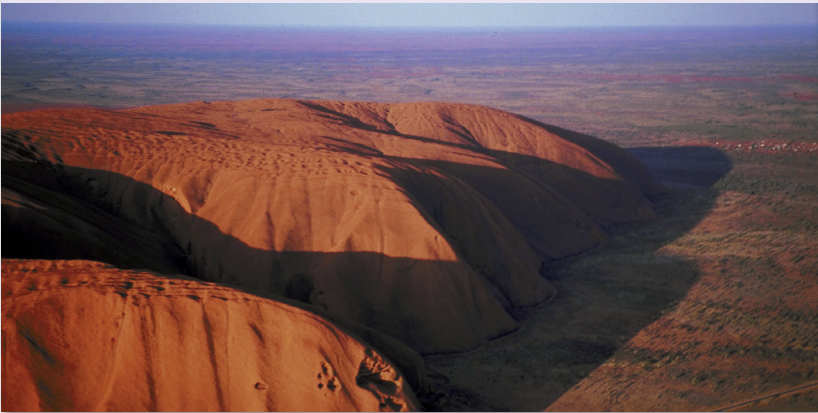
Height \_\_\_\_\_

Width \_\_\_\_\_

Colour \_\_\_\_\_

Number of visitors per year \_\_\_\_\_

Significance to Aborigines \_\_\_\_\_



- 2 Work with a partner. Imagine that you are going backpacking together for a year. Decide:

- which countries to go to
- which route to take
- which tourist attractions to visit
- what to take with you
- how much money the trip is going to cost

- 3 Now change partner and tell your new partner about your plans for your trip.