



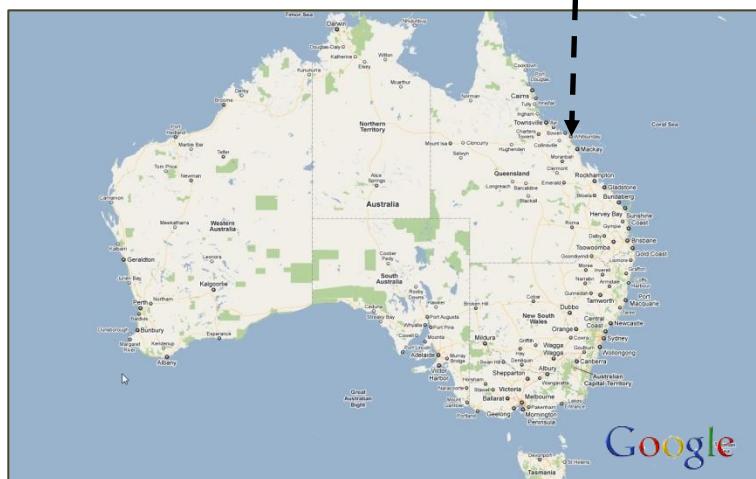
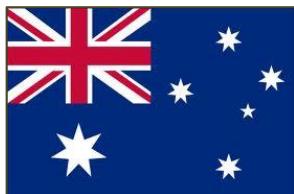
Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in the Whitsunday Islands, Australia, located at 20° S and 148° E.
- We have traveled approximately 14,103 miles (22,697 kilometers) from our starting point in California.





People and Culture

- The Whitsunday Islands and the Great Barrier Reef are located in the Australian state of Queensland. It is Australia's second largest in area and third most populated state.
- Darwin, located in the Northern Territory of Australia, was named for evolutionist Charles Darwin. The first settlement was established in 1869.
- A telegraph link to southern Australia was constructed through Darwin in 1871. The Overland Telegraph connected what is now Indonesia with Europe and London. Darwin grew because of this link and mining discoveries in the area.
- During World War II, Darwin was the only Australian capital city to be attacked. Sixty-four Japanese air raids destroyed much of the city. In 1974, 70% of the city was leveled by a cyclone. So the city has been rebuilt twice.
- Today, Darwin has a population of about 120,000 people. About 25% of Darwin residents descend from Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders (Torres Strait is located above Australia's northeastern Cape York Peninsula).



February 1942 World War II bombing of Darwin (source: AustralianGeographic.com.au)

Did you know?

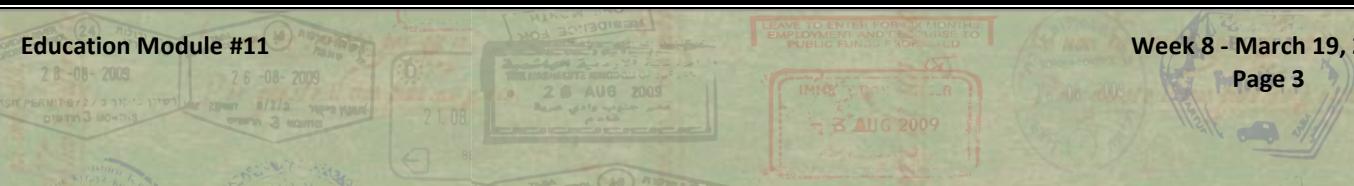
Darwin is located in an area of Australia known as the "Top End". It is remote when compared to other areas of Australia. For example:

- Darwin is closer to Jakarta, Indonesia than to Sydney
- Darwin is closer to Singapore than to Melbourne
- The major highway linking Darwin with the rest of Australia was not paved until 1987
- A train line to Darwin was not completed until 2004

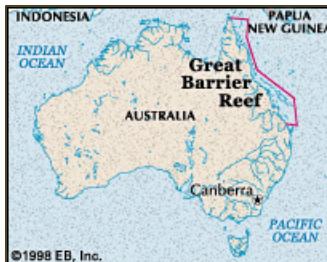
sources: MarketAustralia.info, Enjoy-Darwin.com, Squidoo.com



The Stuart Highway, linking northern and southern Australia



*Great Barrier Reef aerial view and map
(sources: WondersoftheWorld.com, Spressivo.com)*



Saltwater Crocs

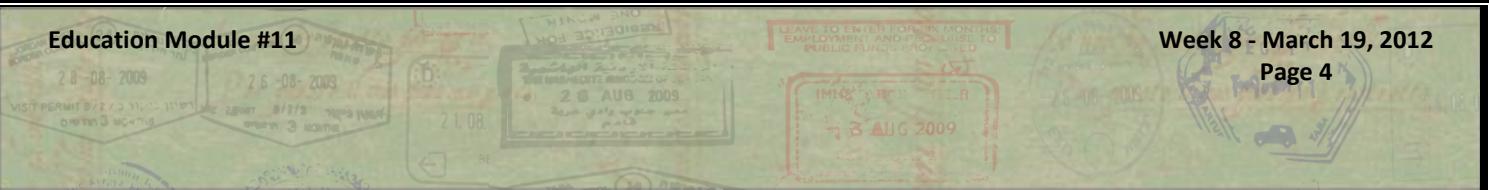
"Salties" as the Australians call them, are the most dangerous animals in Australia. Found in the northern "Top End", these are the largest of the living reptiles and can be as much as 18 feet (5.5 meters) long. They live both along coastlines and in freshwater rivers. There are estimated to be 150,000 in the wild. They are aggressive animals and kill an average of one to two people a year!

sources: Outback-Australia-Travel-Secrets.com, Wikipedia.org



Nature and Environment

- Australia has over 8,000 islands. The state of Queensland contains almost 2,000 of them, second only to the state of Western Australia.
- The Great Barrier Reef is more than 1,800 miles (3,000 kilometers) long. The world's largest reef, it is an area half the size of Texas and larger than England.
- There are over 2,900 individual reefs and 1,500 species of fish located in the Great Barrier Reef.
- The Great Barrier Reef ecosystem is fragile, relying on warm (69 to 84F / 20C to 29C) and shallow (60 to 100 feet / 18 to 30 meters) water to maintain its balance.
- Environmental threats to the Great Barrier Reef include:
 - Rising ocean temperatures
 - Crown-of-thorns starfish, which is a predator that eats coral polyps
 - Overfishing
 - Tourism
 - Shipping accidents and spills



Our Plans

- We plan to visit the Great Barrier Reef and do some snorkeling. Do you know that there is actually a mail box at the reef and a postcard can be mailed from there?
- In Darwin we will visit some history museums and learn more about this interesting place.
- This is the end of our time in Australia, the longest period we will spend in any one country on our entire journey. Now it is on to the continent of Asia!
- Thanks for all the comments and questions so far. Please contact us with what you'd like us to ask while we are in Asia and we will try to include it in a further update.

More Information

- <http://www.kidzworld.com/article/165-travel-australia>
- <http://www.greatbarrierreef.org/about.php>
- http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/00/earthpulse/reef/reef1_flash-feature.html
- <http://www.islandsofaustralia.com/>
- <http://terrax.org/teacher/lessons/australia/reef/reeffacts.aspx>
- <http://www.workincairns.com/great-barrier-reef/environmental-threats.asp>
- <http://www.outback-australia-travel-secrets.com/city-of-darwin.html>



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The Koala - Symbol of Australia

These iconic animals are found in the eastern and southern coastal areas of Australia. They are not bears but marsupials and related to kangaroos. A few quick facts:

- The word "koala" is aboriginal for "no drink". Koalas get their water from the food they eat
- When afraid, they scream like a baby
- Koalas sleep 18 to 19 hours a day and are nocturnal
- They can climb 150 feet and leap from tree to tree



sources: Wikipedia.org, TheJungleStore.com

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