

Biodiversity

"The creature was greyish in colour and large-tailed – which moved with the grace and speed of a greyhound, not on all fours but on its hind legs in gigantic leaps."

Crew member on Captain Cook's first voyage to Australia, after seeing a kangaroo for the first time.

The first Europeans to visit Australia were immediately struck by its extraordinary wildlife. Even Sir Joseph Banks, who was a seasoned naturalist, was fascinated by kangaroos and wrote: "What to liken him to I could not tell. Nothing certainly that I have seen at all resembles him." Today people, both Australians and overseas visitors, still marvel at the strange wonder of kangaroos, koalas and platypuses.

The rock - the reef - and the rainforest

When people think of the Australian environment they think of a clean and

beautiful – often spectacular – natural environment and unique plants and animals. It's little wonder with such superb natural features that Australia was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the World Heritage Convention in 1974. There are no less than 14 Australian areas on the World Heritage List, the most famous of which are the Rock, the Reef, and the Rainforest.

The rock

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is a spectacular area in the centre of Australia. Almost 10 km around the base and 340 metres high, Uluru has had great religious, economic, territorial and cultural significance for Aboriginal people for thousands of years.



on holiday

The reef

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is a 2000km long living treasure. With its rich biodiversity – among the greatest in the world – the reef is home to 1500 species of fish, 300 species of hard corals, more than 4000 mollusc species and more than 400 species of sponges.

The rainforest

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area includes the Daintree rainforest. Here grows the oldest rainforest in the world and the highest concentration of ancient flowering plants found anywhere. It is one of only a few places in the world where the rainforest grows down to meet the coral reef and is home to the rare giant Cassowary bird.

How to protect biodiversity on holiday

- Leave an area cleaner than you find it.
- Travel by your own muscle power where possible.
- Stay on the path, or if in a car, stick to the roads.
- Take only pictures to remember the places visited.
- Be careful not to introduce exotic plants, animals and diseases – take out all fruit peelings.
- Don't take pets into natural areas.
- Familiarise yourself with local regulations, especially when fishing.
- Don't use soaps or detergents in rivers and creeks and don't drop plastic bags overboard.
- Drive carefully at dusk to avoid hitting nocturnal animals such as kangaroos and

People making a difference

Sometimes zoos can make an important contribution to protecting biodiversity. Healesville Sanctuary outside Melbourne features the largest collection of Australian wildlife in the world. More than 200 species of native birds, mammals and reptiles – some endangered – are kept and bred at the zoo. Healesville is now showing visitors the Australian orange bellied parrot, one of the rarest birds in the world with only 200 individuals left in the wild.

Environmental Tourism Information
www.aussie.net.au

