**Australia**

The Great Barrier Reef on the coast of Queensland is a garden under the sea. There are 1,400 different kinds of fish, and more than 300 kinds of coral. Tropical fruit and flowers grow on the beautiful islands. It’s not surprising that more holiday-makers come to Queensland every year.

Tasmania, the island south of Australia, is small. It’s the same size as England. It is also very different from the other states. There are no deserts in Tasmania. It often rains, both in winter and summer. Only a half of million people live in Tasmania, and a large part of the island is still covered with wild, beautiful wild forests. These forests are full of wonderful flowers and interesting animals.

In the Northern Territory you will find the red heart of Australia. And it really is red, with red rocks, red sand, and red skies in the evening. Every year, thousands of tourists visit Ayers Rock and a strange group of huge red stones called “the Olgas”. But these places are also holy to the Aboriginals. They believe that the land itself has life.

Sydney is the best known place in New South Wales. In fact, it’s the best known place in Australia. But New South Wales has more than cities. There are, for example, the Blue Mountains. They are covered with forests of blue colored eucalyptus trees. The air above the forest contains millions of microscopic drops of eucalyptus oil. When the sun shines, the air of the Blue Mountains is a real, beautiful blue.

Less than a hundred years ago, there was nothing except sheep in Canberra. But then Australians decided to build a capital city.. The work began in 1913. Now, Canberra is an international city, full of diplomats and government offices. It’s beautiful place, with parks, lakes, big open streets and fine buildings.

Australia is sometimes called “the lucky country”. One reason is the wonderful riches under the earth: gold, silver, iron, coal and many precious metals. The Bass Strait, of the coast of Victoria, has been one of the country’s biggest oil fields for many years.

South Australia is the driest of all the states, but it does have Murrey River. The river brings greenness and life to the south-east corner. In the early of the Australian history, the Murrey River was South Australia’s main road. Before real roads and railways came, the river carried people and goods from the east up into the country. Some towns on the Murrey still keep the old river boats, and visitors can ride on them.

There are two kinds of gold in Western Australia. First, there’s real kind – the kind that comes out of the ground. Gold was found in Kalgoorlie in1893, and the “Golden Mile” was for a time the most expensive piece of land in the world. Kalgorlie still exports some gold, but new gold of Western Australia is wheat. Big farms grow millions of tones of wheat every year, and wheat has become Australia’s second biggest export.