

monolith, which juts up some 340 meters from the surrounding plain in the interior of the Northern Territory. This is the heart of Australia's arid outback. 27 km distant are the Olgas, an assemblage of giant rocks which hide a complex of gorges. 441 km to the north is Alice Springs. Nowadays a tourist town, the settlement originated in 1872 as a service town for the mines and cattle ranches in the region.

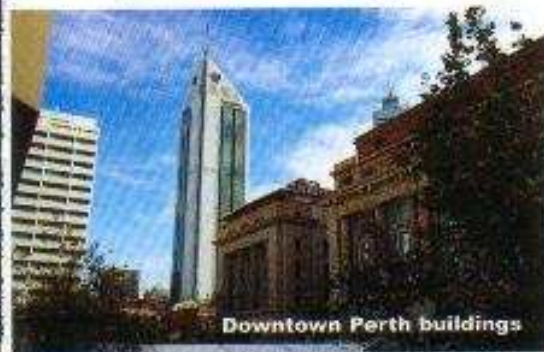
Darwin, the Northern Territory's largest city, faces extremes of weather. During the dry season lasting from May to October there are bush fires. Yet during the wet season from November to April tropical monsoons leave behind some 1,500 mm of rain annually. In



Darwin wharf

fact, in December 1974 Cyclone Tracy laid waste to nearly two-thirds of Darwin. Extremely isolated, Darwin is closer to Indonesia than it is to most Australian cities. Darwin makes an ideal base for exploring the birds and other wildlife in the nearby swamps and parks.

Dynamic but isolated Perth is situated only 16 km from the Indian Ocean port of Fremantle. Scenic Perth was built along the Swan River, and there are spectacular beaches nearby. Perth



Downtown Perth buildings

benefited from a gold rush in the 1890s and also from the development of iron ore deposits in South Australia from the 1970s onward.

Spacious Canberra, the planned national capital city featuring tree-lined streets and parks, will immediately remind the visitor of Washington, DC. It is possible to tour Canberra's most important public buildings in a single day. The Australian National Gallery contains important works of art by Australians as well as some by European and American masters.

Nearly all of the population of South Australia lives in and around Adelaide, the state capital, the park-filled grid pattern of which was laid out in 1836. Most Australian wine is produced in South Australia. The South Australian Museum with its Aboriginal and other artefacts will be of interest to the tourist.

Founded as a penal colony in 1804, Hobart, the capital of Tasmania, is the second-oldest city in Australia. Today Hobart, which faces onto the Derwent River, boasts many restored colonial-era buildings.

Practicalities:

Climate varies widely in Australia as the country is nearly the same size as the continental United States. Southern states such as Tasmania and Victoria have a temperate climate while the climate is tropical in the far north. The best months to travel in the south are from October to December or from February through April. The perfect time to visit the north is around May. April to October is a good time to visit the beaches in northern Queensland.

Because Australia is so large, a domestic air pass might well be a traveller's best bet for internal travel. An efficient circular air routing might

include some of the following segments, all measured as the crow flies: Sydney to Canberra (40 minutes/147 km); Canberra to Melbourne (55 minutes/483 km); Melbourne to Hobart (65 minutes/623 km); Melbourne to Adelaide (65 minutes/660 km); Adelaide to Alice Springs (1 hour, 55 minutes/878 km); Alice Springs to Perth (2 hours, 45 minutes/1,976 km); Alice Springs to Darwin (1 hour, 50 minutes/841 km); Alice Springs to Cairns (2 hours, 20 minutes/1,458 km); Cairns to Brisbane (2 hours, 15 minutes/1,414 km); and Brisbane to Sydney (75 minutes/775 km).

ABOUT TED COOKSON:

Egypt's most widely-travelled travel agent, Ted has been to every country in the world! He has also visited 307 of the 315 destinations on the list of the Travellers' Century Club (visit www.eptours.com and refer to World Travel Club). A travel agent in Cairo since 1986, Ted manages EGYPT PANORAMA TOURS, a full-service travel agency, at 4 Road 79 (between Roads 9 and 10, near the 'El Maadi' metro station) in Maadi. Contact Egypt Panorama Tours (open 7 days a week 9 AM-5 PM) at: Tel: 359-0200, 358-5880, 359-1301, Fax 359-1199. E-mail: ept@link.net. Web site: www.eptours.com. (Password for residents: eptcool)