

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Introduction

South Australia has boundaries with other States on the west, north and east and on the south is flanked by the Southern Ocean. It has a total area of 984,377 km², representing one eighth of the Australian continent. More than 50 per cent is pastoral land, with 6.5 per cent of the State designated as national parks and wildlife reserves. Most of the population lives in the southern coastal zones below the 32nd parallel.

South Australia is a land of generally low relief with the inland area largely covered by plains, sand and gibber deserts. The coastline has a south-easterly north-westerly trend, interrupted by two major indentations, Spencer Gulf between Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas, and Gulf St Vincent between Yorke Peninsula and the Fleurieu Peninsula. To the south of Gulf St Vincent is Kangaroo Island, about 480km in circumference. It is the largest of the 100 or so islands on the South Australian coastline.

The most important mountains are the Mt Lofty-Flinders Ranges system, which extends north about 800 km from Cape Jervis to the northern end of Lake Torrens. In the south, the Mt Lofty Ranges are of comparatively low altitude, the highest peak being Mt Lofty at 727m. To the north, the Flinders Ranges are of greater height, with St Mary's Peak the highest point at 1166m. The Flinders Ranges contain unusual basins, of which Wilpena Pound is the best known.

The River Murray, which drains about one seventh of Australia, enters the sea in South Australia and is the state's only major river. For 216km to Overland Corner, the river occupies a wide valley, then passes through a narrow,

steep-sided valley to Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert at its heavily silted mouth.

Surrounding the northern Flinders Ranges is a series of vast lakes which fill only after heavy rain, normally appearing as shallow depressions with salt or clay encrusted surfaces. The largest of these, Lake Eyre, is 15m below sea level and is fed by intermittent rivers flowing from the north-east, creating one of the largest areas of internal drainage in the world. Lakes Gardiner, Frome and Torrens are to the south of Lake Eyre.

Climate

South Australian enjoys hot dry summers with relatively mild nights and cool winters, with most rainfall occurring during May to August. Adelaide's average daily maximum temperature in January is 29C, and in July 15C. South Australia is the driest of the Australian States and Territories. Its average annual rainfall is 528mm, but just over 80 per cent of the State receives an average of less than 250mm of rain a year.

Population

South Australia has a population of around 1.5 million, of which some 73 per cent live in Adelaide, the capital. Whyalla and Mount Gambier, each with over 20,000 people, are the two largest centres outside Adelaide, followed by Port Augusta, Port Pirie and Gawler.

One in five South Australians was either born or has a parent born overseas in a non-English-speaking country. Many others are descendants of earlier

immigrants from outside Britain and Ireland. About one per cent of the population is of Aboriginal descent.

Agriculture

Most of South Australia is arid or semi-arid. Only four per cent of the State receives more than 500mm of rain each year, with only nine per cent of farm and pastoral area under cropping or permanent improved pasture. Despite the harsh climate, the State contributes more than 10 per cent of the gross value of Australian agriculture. Farmers have developed a highly productive agricultural system based largely on the integration of cereal and livestock.

Cereal crops of wheat, barley and oats grown for grain comprise 90 per cent of the area sown to crops. Wheat is the main cereal crop, with average yields of 1.4 tonnes a hectare. South Australia grows about 13 per cent of Australia's wheat and about a third of its barley, including high-quality malting barley. Most of the oat crop is used for supplementary livestock feed, but a small proportion of high milling quality is grown. Cereal crop yields depend on the adequacy of seasonal rains and can fluctuate dramatically.

About 42 per cent of Australia's vineyards are in South Australia and most of the grapes are used for wine making, with a small proportion used for dried fruit. In 1991-92, 25,800 hectares were planted and 218,083 tonnes of wine were produced. Principal varieties include shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, riesling, chardonnay, grenache, sultana and muscat gordo blanco.

A wide range of temperate vegetable and orchard crops are grown in the Adelaide Hills, the northern Adelaide Plains, the south east and the Riverland.

Vegetable crops include potatoes, onions, carrots, tomatoes, cauliflowers and peas. Fruit crops include oranges, peaches, apricots and apples; South Australia is the major apricot-producing region, with most of the crop being dried. A large proportion of Australia's almonds are produced in South Australia while avocados, cherries, pears, plums and prunes, and strawberries are other important crops. A range of other field crops including oilseed and grain legume crops are grown in the south east and northern agricultural districts.

Livestock

South Australia produces about 11 per cent of the nation's sheep, in all districts except the far north. Merinos account for 90 per cent of the State's total flock of some 17 million and local sheep breeders have developed a large framed type of merino suited to Australia's drier conditions. These South Australian merinos produce an exceptionally heavy fleece, typically 5.1kg of medium to strong quality wool. Other major sheep breeds include Corriedale and Polwarths, which are dual-purpose breeds for meat and wool production.

Cattle are produced mainly in the Adelaide Hills, the lower south east and far north pastoral districts. Dairying is important in the Adelaide, lower south east and lower Murray districts. South Australia has about 990,000 cattle, or four per cent of the nation's total. Pigs and poultry are also farmed.

Fishing

Commercial fishing is undertaken along the entire South Australian coastline. In the sheltered waters of the gulfs and west coast bays, operators take prawns or marine scale fish, while in offshore waters southern bluefin tuna and shark are caught. Rock lobster is caught along the more exposed parts of the coast, and abalone is dived for in most areas. A small quantity of freshwater fish is caught in the River Murray and associated lakes.

The most commercially valuable species are rock lobsters and prawns, with tuna, abalone, shark and whiting also making significant contributions. South Australia's commercial fisheries produce is worth more than \$133 million a year.

Mining

South Australia has a well developed mineral industry and in recent years crude oil and natural gas have surpassed coal and iron ore as the major products. It also has important reserves of industrial minerals. In 1988 production began at Roxby Downs, in the mid north, which holds potentially the world's largest copper and uranium mine, with some gold.

The Cooper Basin in the north-east supplies Adelaide and Sydney with natural gas and is Australia's major on-shore natural gas source. Hydrocarbon liquids are piped from the same area several hundred kilometres to Port Bonython, where they are processed for export and domestic use. Natural gas was discovered near Penola in the south east in 1988. Supplies are

probably enough for local use and with further drilling may prove sufficient to supplement Adelaide's needs.

Significant amounts of iron and steel are produced at Whyalla, most of which is exported. More than 180 million tonnes of iron ore have been mined since 1900. South Australia also mines more than two thirds of Australia's opals, from centres such as Coober Pedy and Andamooka.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing forms an important part of South Australia's economy with the motor vehicle industry the largest single sector. Other major manufacturing industries include electrical appliances and equipment and base and fabricated metal products. The State leads the country in wine and brandy production and is a significant supplier of meat, wood, printing, cement and concrete products, iron and steel, and appliances and electrical equipment.

Science

CSIRO, Australia's national science and research organisation, employs more than 300 staff in South Australia, working on horticulture, human nutrition, manufacturing technology, soils, applied physics, mathematics and statistics, water resources, entomology and plantation research.

The Defence Science and Technology Organisation is the research and development arm of the Australian Department of Defence and its complex in South Australia is the nation's largest research centre, specialising in electronics and surveillance.

The Australian Wine Research Institute is based in Adelaide, and promotes research and other scientific work for the wine industry.

South Australia's Technology Development Corporation manages two research parks - Technology Park Adelaide and Science Park Adelaide - both providing a supportive environment for research, development and commercialisation of new technology.

Transport

South Australia has more than 95,000km of roads, of which about 25,000km are sealed. More than 2400km are classified as national highways. Railways are operated by the Federal and the State governments. This includes part of the Trans Australia Railway from Kalgoorlie (Western Australia) to Broken Hill (New South Wales); the Tarcoola (South Australia) to Alice Springs (Northern Territory) line; and other lines including the isolated Eyre Peninsula system.

Trade

South Australia's total value of exports in 1991-92 was \$3.5 billion. Wheat and wool were the most valuable commodities with exports to Japan worth \$542 million. In 1991-92, South Australia exported wheat worth \$346 million, wool worth \$341 million, barley worth \$169 million, and meat and meat preparations worth \$270 million.

Adelaide

Adelaide, the capital, has a population of more than one million. It is a major centre of commerce and industry and living expenses are low by national standards. Residential areas are well served by sports and health facilities and schools are usually within walking distance of home. All educational centres, from universities to trade schools, offer innovative curricula and low student-to-teacher ratios. Sandy beaches and scenic rural areas are within easy access of the city.

Tourism

South Australia is a State of contrasts - rugged outback wilderness, scenic mountain ranges, an extensive coastline, offshore islands and a large, meandering river. Adelaide is a convenient base for touring regions such as the Barossa Valley and Southern Vales wine areas, the southern beaches and the tranquil Adelaide Hills.

The Adelaide Festival Centre is South Australia's major performing arts venue and is the focal point for the biennial Adelaide Festival of the Art. The festival presents a three-week program of more than 2000 artists from many countries, drawing attendances of more than 700,000. The Adelaide casino is also a popular tourist destination.

The State has a unique and well-preserved heritage. Major historical themes include the German settlement of the Barossa Valley and the Adelaide Hills; the Cornish and Welsh settlement of the mining towns of Moonta, Burra and

Willunga; and the maritime history of Port Adelaide and Robe.

The River Murray is Australia's longest river and its lakes are a major asset offering luxury cruise vessels, self-skippered houseboats and recreational pursuits. The Flinders Ranges and northern outback areas are only five hours from Adelaide. The Flinders has some of Australia's most rugged scenery and the traditional outback flavour. The opal mining centre of Coober Pedy is a popular destination for Australian and international tourists. The rugged coastal scenery of the far West Coast, southern Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island provide excellent fishing opportunities and uncrowded beaches.

Australia's unique wildlife is a feature of Cleland wildlife reserve and the Warrawong sanctuary in the Adelaide Hills, only 30 minutes from Adelaide; and the Flinders Chase National Park on Kangaroo Island. The Coorong National Park in the Upper South East is a unique waterway providing a haven for water birds.

Lifestyle

South Australia's Mediterranean climate is ideal for those who enjoy the outdoor life. Sport is played widely at all levels and supported vigorously in the community. More than 150 forms of recreation, sport and social entertainment are available.

Education

Schooling is compulsory between the ages of six and 15. There are more than 880 schools, with a total enrolment of nearly 250,000, including junior

primary, primary, secondary, area, special, rural and Aboriginal schools. There are two intensive English-as-a-second-language schools. The South Australian Correspondence School provides tuition to children in remote areas.

Post-school education is offered in a variety of institutions. These include the University of Adelaide, Flinders University, South Australian College of Advanced Education, Roseworthy Agricultural College and the South Australian Institute of Technology.

The Department of Employment and Technical and Further Education is the largest single provider of tertiary education and training. Every year, about 10 per cent of the South Australian population past school age undertake courses in TAFE through the state's 20 TAFE colleges.

Government

South Australia was the first of the Australian states to give voting rights to women, in April 1896. Today it has 13 members in the Federal House of Representatives and 12 members in the Senate. At the State level, there is a 22-member Legislative Council and a 47-member House of Assembly.

Source: DFAT