

AUSTRALIA DAY



Australia Day is the official [national day](#) of [Australia](#). Celebrated annually on 26 January, the date commemorates the arrival of the [First Fleet](#) at Sydney Cove in 1788 and the proclamation at that time of British sovereignty over Australia.

Although it was not known as Australia Day until over a century later, records of celebrations on 26 January date back to 1808. It is an official [public holiday](#) in every [state and territory](#) of Australia. With community festivals, concerts and citizenship ceremonies the day is celebrated in large and small communities and cities around the nation. Australia Day has become the biggest annual civic event in Australia.

History

On 13 May 1787 a fleet of 11 ships, which came to be known as the [First Fleet](#), was sent by the British [Admiralty](#) from England to Australia. Under the command of [Captain Arthur Phillip](#), the fleet sought to establish a [penal colony](#) at [Botany Bay](#) on the coast of [New South Wales](#), which had been explored and [claimed](#) by Lieutenant [James Cook](#) in 1770. The settlement was seen as necessary because of the loss of the Thirteen colonies in North America. The Fleet arrived between 18 and 20 January 1788, but it was immediately apparent that Botany Bay was unsuitable.



Some days after, on 26 January, early in the morning, the captain along with a few dozen marines, officers and oarsmen, rowed ashore and took possession of the land in the name of [King George III](#).

Contemporary celebrations

Since 1988 participation in Australia Day has increased and in 1994 all States and Territories began to celebrate a unified public holiday on the actual day for the first time. Research conducted in 2007 reported that 27.6% of Australians polled attended an organised Australia Day event and a further 25.6% celebrated with family and friends making Australia Day the largest annual public event in the nation.

Outdoor concerts, community barbecues, sports competitions, festivals and fireworks are some of the many events presented in communities across Australia. These official events are presented by the [National Australia Day Council](#), an official council or committee in each state and territory, and local committees.

In Sydney, the harbour is a focus and races are held, such as a ferry race and the tall ships race. Featuring the People's March and the Voyages Concert, [Melbourne's](#) events focus strongly on the celebration of multiculturalism.



[Citizenship](#) ceremonies are also commonly held with Australia Day now the largest occasion for the acquisition of [Australian citizenship](#). On 26 January 2011, more than 300 [Citizenship Ceremonies](#) took place and 13,000 people from 143 countries took Australian Citizenship.^[28] In recent years many citizenship ceremonies have included an [affirmation](#) by existing citizens.



The [Governor-General](#) and [Prime Minister](#) both address to the nation on the eve of Australia Day each year, the Prime Minister announces the winner of the [Australian of the Year](#) award, presented to an Australian citizen who has shown a "significant contribution to the Australian community and nation", and is an "inspirational role model for the Australian community". Subcategories of the award include Young and Senior Australian of the Year, and an award for [Australia's Local Hero](#).

Various [music festivals](#) are held on Australia Day, such as the [Big Day Out](#), the [Triple J Hottest 100](#), and the [Australia Day Live Concert](#) which is televised nationally. For many years an international cricket match has been held on Australia Day at the [Adelaide Oval](#).

