

L'Australie transcript

Today I'm taking you on a trip to a country far from France, see if you can guess which country I'm talking about? I'll give you a few clues.

First, we will be landing in the capital city where you can find an island called Heirisson island. Then, we will be heading to the D'Entrecasteaux National Park followed by Cape Le Grand and Esperance and further North to Lesueur and Francois Peron National Parks. After all that travelling round, we'd eventually go and rest by the sea in Geographe Bay.

So, can you guess which country this is? I know you are thinking it must be a French-speaking country, aren't you, like Canada? You think we're going to French-speaking Quebec? Well actually, the country I'm talking about is in the Southern Hemisphere and is an English-speaking country, the place we're going to is Western Australia.

Now, let me tell you why there are so many French place names in this part of the world, it's fascinating. Between the 16th and 19th Century about twenty expeditions were organised by the kingdom of France to check whether terra australis incognita really existed, but also in the hope of collecting specimens from exotic plants and animals.

All these French explorers, like Lapérouse, Baudin, Hamelin, Entrecasteaux et Saint Aloüarn are the reason why you can find so many French names along the coast of Australia.

Now, you will ask, how come France didn't end up colonising Australia? This is a very good question. In Western Australia Historians have recently found a bottle containing two old French coins as well as a parchment revealing that this territory had been claimed by the French King Louis XV, this parchment is proof that in the year 1772 the French explorer, Saint Aloüarn, sailed into the Baie des Chiens-Marins now renamed 'Shark Bay' and proclaimed French sovereignty over terra australis incognita. The reason why Australia didn't become French is that unfortunately Saint Aloüarn didn't survive the journey back to France and was therefore unable to tell the tale of his fantastic discovery.

The Kings, Louis XV followed by Louis XVI assumed that this new land people were talking about was worthless.

Subsequently, in 1829, the British came to take possession of Western Australia, now you know why people don't speak French in Perth, Australia.