

Aborigines

The worlds oldest inhabitants

The Aboriginal people were the first settlers in Australia. They arrived by sea from Asia more than 60.000 years ago. That is about 12.000 years before people appeared in Europe so they just may be the first worlds inhabitants. They quickly adapted to the climatic and

geographical conditions. They had few material possessions. Only some tools and weapons for hunting and cutting food. By 8.000 years ago Aborigines had developed the returning boomerang and the first spear.

Culture

Aborigines lived in clans. Each clan grouping occupied a defined area of land that was not something they owned but belonged to it. They had limited amounts of food because of the climatic conditions. Inland the quest for water was a life and death matter. They had to move around a lot in order to find food to survive. They learned to obtain water from trees, roots and even frogs.

Mostly they were hunters and gatherers. The men hunted animals by striking it with a spear, catching it in nets or traps and the women collected plant food and small animals.

The dreamtime

Is a mythological past. The Aborigines believe that beside present, past and future, there is also a time called »dreamtime«. We go to that time in our dreams and that is why the Aborigines believe our dreams have meaning.

Beings such as »The Great Rainbow Snake« and »Fertility Mother« survived in stories and rituals from the time long ago when only dreamtime existed and are very sacred.

Art

Art was a very important part of their life. It wasn't simply something that was decorative it also had great importance in other areas of life. They painted their bodies for ceremonies, rocks were engraved, shelters painted...

Bark painting is the most well known Aboriginal art. Pigments were made of rocks and clay. The most common colours were red, brown, black and white.

Paintings also told stories. They were a form in which the Aborigines kept a record of their life and events. They draw the animals of the area or the people they made contact with.

Music

Different tribes used different instruments including boomerangs, sticks, hollow logs, drums and of course the most well known didgeridoo. Just hand clapping was also very common.

Colonisation

The first sighting of Australia was in 1606 by a Dutch captain. He described the natives as cruel savages. In the same year a Spanish captain reported a similar description. As a result of such reports the Dutch government decided the land was not suitable for colonisation.

In the year 1642 Abel Tasman discovered Tasmania. Just a couple of years later captain James Cook declared the whole east coast as a british colony. Botany Bay became a british criminal colony. Australia was soon overrun by the new settlers.

The Europeans didn't understand the aboriginal way of life. The war between the natives and the newcomers was inevitable. Unfortunately the natives were unarmed and didn't stand a chance. Like Indians they have to live in reservations and have little rights.

