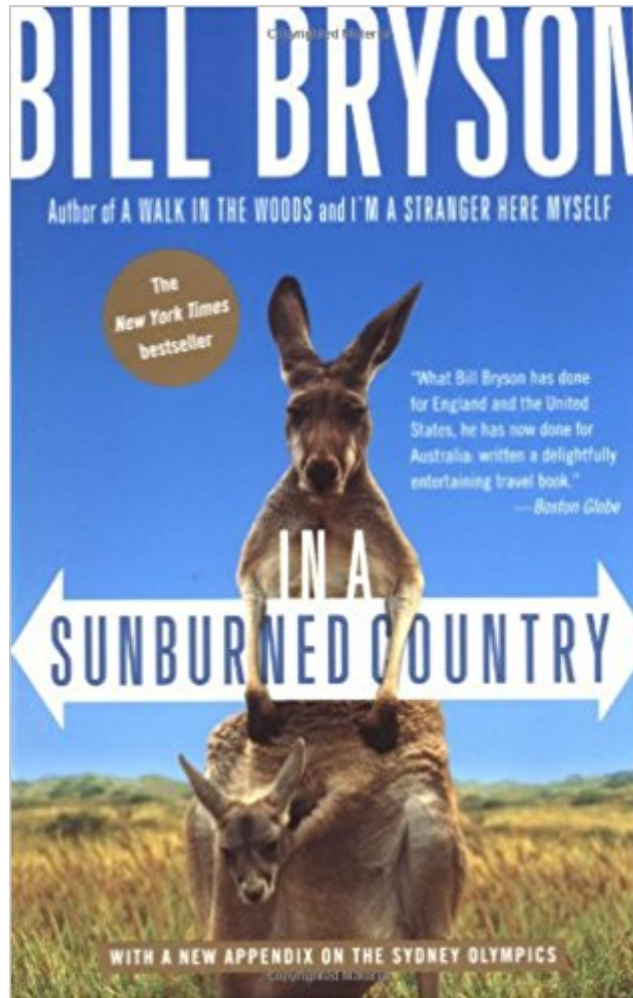




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In A Sunburned Country



Synopsis

Every time Bill Bryson walks out the door, memorable travel literature threatens to break out. His previous excursion along the Appalachian Trail resulted in the sublime national bestseller *A Walk in the Woods*. In *A Sunburned Country* is his report on what he found in an entirely different place: Australia, the country that doubles as a continent, and a place with the friendliest inhabitants, the hottest, driest weather, and the most peculiar and lethal wildlife to be found on the planet. The result is a deliciously funny, fact-filled, and adventurous performance by a writer who combines humor, wonder, and unflagging curiosity. Despite the fact that Australia harbors more things that can kill you in extremely nasty ways than anywhere else, including sharks, crocodiles, snakes, even riptides and deserts, Bill Bryson adores the place, and he takes his readers on a rollicking ride far beyond that beaten tourist path. Wherever he goes he finds Australians who are cheerful, extroverted, and unfailingly obliging, and these beaming products of land with clean, safe cities, cold beer, and constant sunshine fill the pages of this wonderful book. Australia is an immense and fortunate land, and it has found in Bill Bryson its perfect guide.

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Customer Reviews

Bill Bryson follows his Appalachian amble, *A Walk in the Woods*, with the story of his exploits in Australia, where A-bombs go off unnoticed, prime ministers disappear into the surf, and cheery citizens coexist with the world's deadliest creatures: toxic caterpillars, aggressive seashells, crocodiles, sharks, snakes, and the deadliest of them all, the dreaded box jellyfish. And that's just the beginning, as Bryson treks through sunbaked deserts and up endless coastlines, crisscrossing

the "under-discovered" Down Under in search of all things interesting. Bryson, who could make a pile of dirt compelling--and yes, Australia is mostly dirt--finds no shortage of curiosities. When he isn't dodging Portuguese man-of-wars or considering the virtues of the remarkable platypus, he visits southwest Gippsland, home of the world's largest earthworms (up to 12 feet in length). He discovers that Australia, which began nationhood as a prison, contains the longest straight stretch of railroad track in the world (297 miles), as well as the world's largest monolith (the majestic Uluru) and largest living thing (the Great Barrier Reef). He finds ridiculous place names: "Mullumbimby Ewylamartup, Jiggalong, and the supremely satisfying Tittybong," and manages to catch a cricket game on the radio, which is like listening to two men sitting in a rowboat on a large, placid lake on a day when the fish aren't biting; it's like having a nap without losing consciousness. It actually helps not to know quite what's going on. In such a rarefied world of contentment and inactivity, comprehension would become a distraction. "You see," Bryson observes, "Australia is an interesting place. It truly is. And that really is all I'm saying." Of course, Bryson--who is as much a travel writer here as a humorist, naturalist, and historian--says much more, and does so with generous amounts of wit and hilarity. Australia may be "mostly empty and a long way away," but it's a little closer now.

--Rob McDonald --This text refers to the Perfect Paperback edition.

With the Olympics approaching, books on Australia abound. Still, Bryson's lively take is a welcome recess from packaged, staid guides. The author of *A Walk in the Woods* draws readers in campfire-style, relating wacky anecdotes and random facts gathered on multiple trips down under, all the while lightening the statistics with infusions of whimsical humor. Arranged loosely by region, the book bounces between Canberra and Melbourne, the Outback and the Gold Coast, showing Bryson alone and with partners in tow. His unrelenting insistence that Australia is the most dangerous place on earth ("If you are not stung or pronged to death in some unexpected manner, you may be fatally chomped by sharks or crocodiles, or carried helplessly out to sea by irresistible currents, or left to stagger to an unhappy death in the baking outback") spins off dozens of tales involving jellyfish, spiders and the world's 10 most poisonous snakes. Pitfalls aside, Bryson revels in the beauty of this country, home to ravishing beaches and countless unique species ("80% of all that lives in Australia, plant and animal, lives nowhere else"). He glorifies the country, alternating between awe, reverence and fear, and he expresses these sentiments with frankness and candor, via truly funny prose and a conversational pace that is at once unhurried and captivating. Peppered with seemingly irrelevant (albeit amusing) yarns, this work is a delight to read, whether or not a trip to the continent is planned. First serial to *Outside* magazine; BOMC selection. (June) Copyright

My third Bill Bryson book. After "One Summer," I promoted Bryson to the role of "Whatever this guy writes, I'll read." Although "One Summer" focused on 1927, it was really a broad view of America at that time. "Sunburned" is about Australia, but in a very different way. Bryson tells us about places and experiences he had in a sweeping jaunt through the regions of Australia, from the populated east coast, to the barren interior, to the beautiful west coast. He is witty, open, and wholeheartedly sold on Australia - the people and the land. I noticed that Aussies who've reviewed the book give it very high marks, which is a good sign. Bryson has a wonderful sense of humor. In some cases, I think he embellishes the truth, i.e., he takes an experience which deals in facts, but then adds quirks that will make the scene seem even more bizarre, or amusing, or frustrating than it probably was. I know this because I sometimes resort to the same ploy. I never waver from the truth, of course, but just make it sound a little more interesting and funky. One aspect that surprised me was that occasionally Bryson throws in a smutty remark. Nothing wrong with that, except it didn't quite fit in with the general tone. Although Bryson is in love with Australia, he doesn't hesitate to criticize when he feels criticism is due. He can't stand Canberra, for example, although that's balanced by his love of Perth. His take on the outback is unexpected. While he faces certain "difficult" situations in that area, he is constantly amazed at the vastness, intrigued by the uniqueness, and enthusiastic about the "amenities" (no matter how basic they might be.) This book is not a travel guide. You won't find a list of hotels or restaurants, but you will come away with a real sense of what Australia has to offer. And what it has to offer are experiences you will not find any place else on earth. Eat your heart out, Rick Steves. (4-1/2 stars).

This is one of my favorite books, at least a top ten. If you have never read this author's books, then start with this one, it is his best. This book takes you across Australia in a way I never could have gone. It is filled with wonderful facts and tons of humor. I have read the book many times and also listened to the audio book. The audio book is great because it is narrated by the author. You will finish reading this book with tons of knowledge on Australia, lots of laughs and a wonderment that any one can survive Australia.

I generally do not read much non-fiction, but I make an exception for Bill Bryson. I enjoyed this book so much that when I reached the end, I wanted to go back and start over! I've read other Bill Bryson books (A Walk in the Woods, The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid) and while both are good

((Walk is better), I think *In A Sunburned Country* is my favorite. It is clear on every page that Bryson finds Australia and its people both fascinating, admirable, and immensely likeable and makes this contagious to the reader. Bryson strives to give readers a coherent overall portrait of a country that is not easy to describe due to sheer size and vast distances and I think he does a great job! I felt like I was a tourist having a guided tour of Australia with a good-natured friend who has an insatiable curiosity about the people and history of each place visited along with a born storyteller's ability to make it interesting and fun. Part travelogue, with a smattering of history, anthropology, geology, botany and biology thrown in, Almost like being there, but without the heat or the beer. I highly recommend it if you enjoy learning something new while you read for pleasure.

Author Bill Bryson takes readers on a walkabout through some of the most beautiful, the most dangerous, and the most breathtaking portions of Australia. Narrated by the author himself, *In a Sunburned Country* brings alive a world that many are not privileged to see in their lifetimes. Bill's enthusiasm, as well as his propensity towards mishaps, provide a charming backdrop to the interesting information and fascinating details. Whether readers are just interested in learning more about Australia, or are seriously thinking about a visit, I would definitely recommend *In a Sunburned Country* as a reference.

As usual, BB writes to entertain. Along the way, however, his incredible knowledge of actual facts get thrown in gratis. Along the way, there are innumerable eccentric characters, detailed descriptions of buildings, monuments, and vast expanses, even flora and fauna. He has a knack for describing his meals so vividly that you alternately enjoy them with him, or need to skip them when he does. I'll never get to Australia, but thanks to BB, I feel like I've come awfully close.

I have friends in Australia and this book was recommended as a good overall intro to the country, which I plan to visit for an extended time in the near future. I originally listened to it on tape, where it was read by the author and was very entertaining, but I bought the actual book both to share it with others and to keep for future reference. Bill Bryson speaks fondly of this continent and country, while pointing out some of the really strange and unique aspects of it with warmth and humor.

We've been to Australia three times and while my husband has read every guide within reasonable reach about every section of that "Land Down Under" he hadn't read this wonderful book. It had been recommended by friends and it was an excellent suggestion. I purchased this used copy from

and it is a great book filled with history and vignettes about a fascinating island. This book was published in 2000, but its timeless - filled with one interesting story after another. Bill Bryson tells stories about people, places, plants and an Aussie Prime Minister that was walking along a beach one day and plunged into the sea and was never heard from again. Really! and this happened in 1967. I only wish I had read this book before we visited Australia (three times). Maybe someday we'll return and I'll be "ready".

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