

ABORIGINES

When the white people first came to Australia, about 300.000 Australian Aborigines were living there, in about 600 different groups or tribes. They came to Australia 100.000 years ago, at that time the land was joined to New Guinea in the north.

The Aborigines spoke many different languages, told wonderful stories about the "DREAMTIME" and painted pictures of them on the walls of caves.

They lived in small family groups, hunting and trying to find things to eat, but they never took all of it because the Aborigines understood and loved their land. The women looked for plants and small animals to eat, and the men hunted larger animals, like kangaroos and possums.

But the dream ended, when the Europeans wanted land, and so they pushed the Aborigines out of their way. Many of them were poisoned or shot. Many more died from white men's illnesses, like smallpox.

White Australians had no interest in the Aborigines and did nothing to help them.

But the Aborigines will not let them forget. They want to use their own laws.

They want to keep their holy lands back. Some places, like Ayers Rock were very holy to them. Ayers Rock is called Uluru by the Aborigines who own the National Park. This stoneblock is one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the world. It is out of sandstone, six miles around, more than one mile and a half long and 1100 feet high.

Since 1970 the Ayers Rock is owned by the aborigines, but the most of their land belongs to the white men. So they had lost most of their culture and lots of the Aborigines became alcoholic.

Now the Aborigines make up about 1.5 percent of Australian's population.

From the 1970s on a lot of money was spent to give a better education and health care to them. So some of their land was given back, like the National Park. It is in the northern Australia, about two hours by car from Darwin. The park is 6.000 square km and there are a lot of animals to find, like very huge and dangerous crocodiles. But you can also find cave paintings which are maybe more than 20.000 years old. If you want you can look for different birds and if you are lucky, you are able to see many coloured parrots and the biggest cackatoo, which is all black except for a red beak. Or you can take a photo of a big goanna licking the toes of a frightened tourist resting at one of the many pools or waterfalls.