

Down Under By Bill Bryson

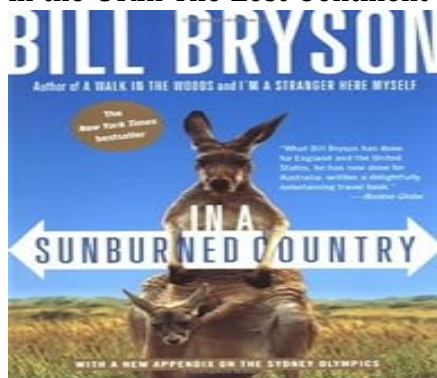
Having travelled briefly through parts of Queensland and New South Wales several years ago I'd been waiting to catch up with Bryson's book ever since I now wish I'd read it before I travelled or even during the trip itself. It's full of interesting information and ideas for places to visit and gave me loads of laughs. A really good read whether you're planning a trip or just looking to enjoy BB's hilariously entertaining anecdotes. I've read a few of his books in the past and I do find him to be an interesting companion as I've travelled with him. His books on visits to the UK in particular are great fun even if he pokes fun at some places quite close to my heart. I'm not sure how accurate some of his adventures are they seem a bit tuned for laughs to me but that's ok it's what you pick up a book like this for. I think I'd recommend this book to anyone thinking about a trip to Oz or readers who just enjoy tales of travel and amusing things that can happen when you're in the hands of a natural raconteur. 335 pages. Whatever subject Bill Bryson writes about he has the ability to turn it into first class entertainment. This book was all the more enjoyable for me as it brought back memories of the year I spent in Australia. A country I became very fond of. With a country like Australia which is known as the land down under with its inverted seasons, unique wild life and history of convict settlement, Bryson never lacks for material. He visits the major cities and even travels the Australian outback on the Indian Pacific train. I had contemplated that journey but didn't quite undertake it. His trademark commentary on each place he visits is delightful. Particularly enjoyed his humorous description of Canberra, the capital where I lived. Bryson also has a fair bit to say about all the deadly creatures that inhabit Australia such as the Box Jellyfish, snakes etc. I remained blissfully unaware of those in the pre internet days and read Bryson's book a long time after returning from down under. Also missed visiting Uluru, Ayer's Rock and Bryson's description made me wish I had after going so near. Most of Bryson's travel books are very interesting but this one is among his best along with the delightful *A Walk in the Woods*. 335 pages. As expected this was a mix of fun facts and a companion travel piece. Being Australian I'm sure I enjoyed this more than the average non Australian reader but I could see that some parts especially the parts about politics and cricket could bore a few readers who aren't already familiar with our peculiar sports and politicians. I enjoyed the read and found it fun when injected with Bryson's humorous anecdotes along the way. I also realised how very little I've seen of my own ridiculously large country. Makes me want to pack up the car and go for a road trip and see something other than the East Coast of Australia and the main cities. It's always a shame when tourists see of my own country than I have. 335 pages. Bill Bryson is on a short list of go to writers when I need a thoughtful but not too taxing book. His travel works seem to follow the Bryson formula: 1 Bryson travels around a country and gets drunk in hotel bars 2 Bryson gets pissed off at rude and stupid people but is usually forgiving and self depreciating 3 Bryson assiduously researches the locales beforehand and integrates history into his itineraries and narratives 4 Bryson writes with impeccable skill 5 Bryson balances mundane details with broader musings about wherever he's visiting. Bryson makes travel writing look easy but I don't undervalue his talent. He's funny often than not like when he describes the joys of tacky roadside attractions and his decision to trespass through a suburban backyard when he thinks a dog is chasing him through a park. He keeps the text moving and harmonizes the personal and cultural with respect but without sanctimony. Bryson maintains a willingness to criticize and even mock a culture when well the culture deserves criticism or mockery. Bryson doesn't look or sound like one might expect from a travel writer; he's a fat middle aged guy who grew up in Iowa not some tanned and overtly fit mountain climber with flowing locks and a beard styled to look un styled. He can dispense with all pretense of coolness and write about his travels from a laid back perspective. 6 In *A Sunburned Country* outlines four central messages about Australia: 1 The country is so huge and varied that comprehending all the disparate elements as representative of one cohesive nation is very difficult 2 The rest of the world kind of forgets about Australia most of the time except for New Year's Eve or whenever there's reason to show fireworks over the Sydney Opera House 3 You can get killed in many interesting ways there 4 While many white Australians are preternaturally friendly the country still shits on the Aborigines. Bryson faces a

curious paradox when addressing Australia. When describing the country's expanse and diversity he runs the risk of repeating himself. He seems to get a little frustrated with the idea that for example while he doesn't have the space or time to describe all the nuances of the huge barren bush country that comprises much of non-coastal Australia he's essentially describing you know the bush country over and over again. You can say "we are way out in the middle of nowhere" but communicating exactly what that means is difficult than one can expect from even the best travel writer. Bryson does his best by adding key details eg describing how much he hates the ocean and fears jellyfish and his best is damn good. He also avoids the clichés never once mentioning Vegemite or Men at Work. I liked *In a Sunburned Country* and I don't want to downplay Bryson's hard work and excellent narratives. His humility is admirable and I think he's underrated possibly because he's so damn uncool. And I'd rather drive around Australia with someone uncool but courteous and appreciative of decent hotel rooms than a guy who wants to mine the trip for hipster stories he can tell at coffee shops back home. Bryson delivers with *In a Sunburned Country*. The next time my brain is slightly fried I'll work through the next book in his catalog and be happy I imagine I did 335 pages. I love Australia even though I have never been there. It has amazing wilderness and is the setting of beautiful movies; it exports talented actors, actresses and directors; it has that Great Barrier Reef thingy which is apparently so wonderful that it is a Natural Wonder of the World; and it is home to the stunning Sydney Opera House. And oh yeah Aussies gave us UGGs. So we have a lot to thank them for. Bill Bryson also loved Australia so much so that he spent months touring its cities and the Outback. Bryson employed his usual humor in this travelogue and numerous sections had me laughing out loud sometimes embarrassingly so. But he would also wax rhapsodic about how amazing the land was. There was no place in the world like it. There still isn't. Eighty percent of all that lives in Australia plant and animal exists nowhere else. More than this it exists in an abundance that seems incompatible with the harshness of the environment. Australia is the driest flattest hottest most desiccated infertile and climatically aggressive of all the inhabited continents. Only Antarctica is hostile to life. This is a place so inert that even the soil is technically speaking a fossil. And yet it teems with life in numbers unaccounted for. For insects alone scientists haven't the faintest idea whether the total number of species is 100,000 or than twice that. As many as a third of those species remain entirely unknown to science. For spiders the proportion rises to 80 percent. This is a country that is at once staggeringly empty and yet packed with stuff. Interesting stuff ancient stuff stuff not readily explained. Stuff yet to be found. Trust me this is an interesting place. Bryson gets into his fair share of scrapes during his Australian journey and at one point he and his traveling companion are in danger of running out of both fuel and water while in the Outback. Luckily no serious harm was done. Another close encounter was with a bluebottle jellyfish. Bryson and his guide Deirdre were boogie boarding at Freshwater Beach near Manly when Deirdre suddenly grabbed Bryson's arm and stopped him from advancing toward the bluey as Deirdre called it. At the time Bryson didn't know what she meant by bluey. Is it dangerous I asked. Now before we hear Deirdre's response to me as I stood there vulnerable and abraded shivering nearly naked and half drowned let me just quote from her subsequent article in the Herald's weekend magazine. While the photographer shoots Bryson and his boogie board are dragged 40 meters down the beach in a rip. The shore rip runs south to north unlike the rip further out which runs north to south. Bryson doesn't know this. He didn't read the warning sign on the beach. Nor does he know about the bluebottle being blown in his direction — now less than a meter away — a swollen stinger that could give him 20 minutes of agony and if he's unlucky an unsightly allergic reaction to carry on his torso for his life. Dangerous. No. Deirdre replied now as we stood gawping at the bluebottle. But don't brush against it. Why not? Might be a bit uncomfortable. I looked at her with an expression of interest bordering on admiration. Long bus journeys are uncomfortable. Slatted wooden benches are uncomfortable. Lulls in conversations are uncomfortable. The sting of a Portuguese man of war — even Iowans know this — is agony. It occurred to me that Australians are so surrounded with danger that they have evolved an entirely new vocabulary to deal with it. Footnote: The statement is inarguable. However the author would like the record to show that he did not have his glasses on; he trusted his hosts; he was scanning a large

area of ocean for sharks; and he was endeavoring throughout not to excrete a large house brick into his pantsHAHAHA Bryson is a hoot you guys There is so much great stuff in this book and I could type out pages of other funny stories but I shall leave you to discover it for yourself Like all of his travelogues he shares interesting historical details about the places he visits and he's good at making fun of himself and his bumbling ways I enjoyed this so much and I laughed so hard and so often that this has become one of my favorite Bryson books If you like audiobooks I highly recommend listening to Bryson narrate this It's marvelous My rating 4.5 stars rounded up to 5 335 pages Bill Bryson never seems to use the same approach to each of his books Is this book going to be snarky Bill Is this going to be funny Bill Is this going to be funny yet informative Bill Is this going to be snarky yet informative Bill I could go on but my hands would start to cramp up with the unlimited combinationsThis one is reverential informative and mostly self effacing humor Bill Bill loves Australians but he hates the fact that the country is over run with hordes of killer species and there's a big hot assed desert in the middle of the continentAustralians are lovely people The one's I've known were incredibly friendly and generous I worked with a couple who were touring the United States and working at odd jobs along the way When they were leaving they gave me their contact information and invited me to visit at any time If they are reading this my family will be down under in a week or so and plan to stay for about a month We don't eat much beyond shrimp and steak and don't wish to try vegemite so thanks and keep that stuff to yourself So good on ya mates and crikey and stuffAlthough it's a topic that needs examining Bryson's writing on the treatment of Aborigines seems out of place and shrill compared with the Australian lovefest and repeated warnings about deadly jelly fish killer spiders and gun toting snakesThis was a buddy read with la doyenne of non fiction buddy reads Le Trish 335 pages I love Bill Bryson Yep it's a full blown one sided bromance Bryson could write a book about the history of the individual rooms within the typical house and I would love it he did and I did So when I discovered he'd written about his experiences while traveling Australia I knew I'd found my next good read In a Sunburned Country takes in the Land Down Under from today traveling all the way back to its earliest historical findings You expect and get a look at modern Australia its UK convict days Sydney and other cities the bush the outback and the plight trials and importance of the aborigines All of the above also comes with a healthy dose of Bryson humor It's self deprecating it's consciously delusional for comedy's sake it's honest and it gives me the chuckles I appreciate that he puts himself in awkward situations and really enjoy his description of scenes in which he is a participating victim Australia has countless ways to kill a person what with all its deadly animals so there's plenty of opportunity for hair raising hilarity especially considering Bryson's the sort of guy who could get himself savaged by a hedgehog Fun is fun and all but in the end this book is about the knowledge so if you have an interest in learning about Australia I couldn't recommend another book highly The author is a full on philomath and he loves this country so the reader is treated to a veritable love fest spewed all over the pages of In a Sunburned Country 335 pages I developed a taste for Bill Bryson last year when I read his Short History of Nearly Everything an ambitious attempt to trace the history of life the universe and everything in just 574 pages While many of the scientific discoveries outlined in the book were a little beyond me I thoroughly enjoyed Bryson's descriptions of the larger than life personalities behind the discoveries which really brought the science described to life So when I found out that he had also written a travelogue of a journey across the country I may soon call home Australia I simply had to read itAustralia for those of you who have never been there is one of the most colourful places on earth It has a history so bizarre that it makes China's seem normal by comparison It has insane expanses of the most arid desert imaginable as well as some of the world's most beautiful beaches where unfortunately you can't swim due to the prevalence of sharks crocs box jellyfish stingrays and murderous rip currents It houses beyond a shadow of a doubt the world's most interesting flora and fauna including twelve foot earthworms and living fossils And you thought kangaroos were exotic Ha And if all that weren't interesting enough the locals are slightly mad They eat meat pies floating in pea soup are crazy about cricket and consider shorts and knee length socks proper attire for middle aged bus drivers In short it's a unieue place and I love it I look forward to

moving there in a few months' time Bill Bryson also loves Australia and it shows While he likes to remind his readers of the country's amazing collection of deathly animals over and over again and poke fun at the locals and their weird habits his affection for the place shines through in every chapter and it's uite infectious By describing his own travels and those of early settlers explorers and naturalists he provides the reader with an appreciation for how vast and unwelcoming the country is and how utterly uniuue He provides background information on events of which few non Australians will have heard such as the fact that a nuclear bomb may have been detonated in the outback without anyone noticing and that an Australian Prime Minister once vanished never to be seen again waxes lyrical on trees and animals so bizarre that you'll want to hop on the first plane to Australia to check them out for yourself again kangaroos are only the beginning explains why you should go and see Ayers Rock even if you've already seen hundreds of photos of it and intersperses all this useful information with a winning combination of self deprecating humour bizarre anecdotes absurd dialogue and entertaining accounts of encounters with fellow travellers and locals The resulting book is not only completely recognisable to anyone who has visited Australia but hugely appealing to anyone who hasn't I doubt anyone can read this book without wishing to book a flight to Oz immediately afterwards If I have any complaint about Down Under it is that there is too little of it While Bryson's writing is entertaining and informative his choice of places to visit and describe seems rather random and limited I wish he had done travelling gone further into the interior of the country and left all traces of luxury behind him for a while so as to emulate the pioneers and explorers whose exploits he relates with such gusto I also think the book would have benefited from slightly rigorous editing as parts of it seem rather hastily written For all its small flaws though Down Under released in the US as In a Sunburned Country is a fascinating read which has whetted my appetite for Bryson travelogues And for a return to Oz but that's another story 335 pages Ok First of all I'm here to tell you that non fiction is normally not my bag I think I got this book because I forgot to send in the do not send notice in a book club That said I'm soooo happy that I didn't and I made myself read this OMG I lost track of how many times I laughed until there were tears running down my cheeks and how many smiles and chuckles it rang out of me This is a book about Bryson's trips I believe he combines a few trips to Oz into this one book to the really undiscovered island of Australia and his impressions of what he sees and who he meets There is history wonderfully funny and horribly gruesome and sad stories lodging and traveling tips and a long list of places there that I really now want to see His wit and sarcastic humor is what did it for me I will look for of his books and hope that he goes on journeys to share with his reading audience 335 pages Lovely little adventure a la Bill Bryson No one knows incidentally why Australia's spiders are so extravagantly toxic; capturing small insects and injecting them with enough poison to drop a horse would appear to be the most literal case of overkill Still it does mean that everyone gives them lots of space What an absolutely stunning endorsement As with his other traveling books Bill Bryson hip hops his way across a country visiting monuments and interviewing natives We meet uirky characters and Australian wildlife galore from the poisonous snakes to the brutal kookaburra Incidentally did you know that the kookaburra likes to bash its prey until their bones have been pulverized Apparently its easier to digest that way lovely He also has uite a lot to say about Australians They spend half of any conversation insisting that the country's dangers are vastly overrated and that there's nothing to worry about and the other half telling you how six months ago their Uncle Bob was driving to Mudgee when a tiger snake slid out from under the dashboard and bit him on the groin but that it's okay now because he's off the life support machine and they've discovered he can communicate with eye blinks To be fair Bill Bryson does have plenty of good things to say about Australia As he goes from town to town he describes delicious sounding dishes and has a way with describing the atmosphere such that you feel like you are really there About halfway through the book I did start to get a bit bored this book became a bit samey samey with every town he visited That being said I did enjoy reading this somewhat unusual trek through Australia Audiobook Comments Nothing too special was well read if a bit bland in tone inflection YouTube | Blog | Instagram | Twitter | Facebook | Snapchat mirandareads 335 pages William McGuire Bill Bryson OBE FRS was born in Des Moines

Iowa in 1951 He settled in England in 1977 and worked in journalism until he became a full time writer He lived for many years with his English wife and four children in North Yorkshire He and his family then moved to New Hampshire in America for a few years but they have now returned to live in the UK In The Lost Continent Bil



A CLASSIC FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF ONE SUMMER 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 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 Down Under.

#heading[2]