

## The First Fleet – Facts for Students

Australia has a fascinating history spanning millions of years, but it was in 1788 that European settlers arrived. Here is some interesting information about the First Fleet.

On May 13, 1787 Captain Arthur Phillip led a fleet of 11 ships on a 252-day journey halfway around the world from Portsmouth, England, to New South Wales. They were heading to the recently discovered land of Australia to create a new penal colony. The convoy, which later became known as the 'First Fleet', carried over 1500 passengers including officers, crew, marines and their families, and convicts.

The Fleet arrived in Botany Bay on January 18, 1788. Captain Phillip had been told, by Sir Joseph Banks, that this area would be perfect for a new settlement. However, this was not the case as it did not have fresh water, the soil was of poor quality, the water was too shallow for the ships to get close to shore and there was nowhere to shelter. They needed to find somewhere more suitable.

The Fleet moved on to Sydney Cove in Port Jackson on January 26, 1788. This location had everything the settlers needed, including deep water close to the shore, shelter, fresh water and good soil. Sydney Cove was named after Lord Sydney the British Home Secretary. Australia Day is celebrated on January 26 each year and marks the beginning of European settlement.

