

The Journey of the First Fleet

The First Fleet departed Portsmouth, England, on 13 May 1787 with more than 700 convicts on board. The first stop was at Santa Cruz, Tenerife on 3 June. Fresh food and water were brought aboard. A week later, the Fleet continued its journey.

The Fleet sailed southwest and reached Rio de Janeiro on 5 August where they stayed for a month. They then sailed east and arrived in Cape Town on 13 October. During these stops they made repairs to the ships and stocked up on supplies. Plants, seeds and livestock were also taken aboard in Cape Town. The Fleet left Cape Town on 12 November.

The journey was long and dangerous, with many convicts dying before reaching the new colony. Rats, lice and fleas tormented those on board.

On 18 January 1788, the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay. It was soon decided that Botany Bay was not a suitable place for the settlement due to the poor soil for crop growing, lack of fresh water and the limited protection the bay would provide. The Fleet travelled north to Port Jackson and arrived on 26 January.



1. On which date did the First Fleet make its first stop? _____
2. Which direction did the Fleet travel after stopping in Botany Bay? _____
3. On which date did the First Fleet arrive in Port Jackson? _____
4. List 3 or more reasons the First Fleet made stops along the way. _____

5. Why do you think livestock was brought aboard just before the final leg of the journey? _____

6. Approximately how long did the entire journey take? _____
7. What do you think would have been most challenging about the journey? Why? _____

