

## Posterior Aspect of the Skull

The posterior aspect of the skull, or **occiput** (L. back of head), is typically ovoid or round in outline (Fig. 7.3A). It is formed by the occipital bone, parts of the parietal bones, and mastoid parts of the temporal bones. The **external occipital protuberance** (also known as the **inion**) is usually an easily palpable elevation in the median plane; however, occasionally (especially in females) it may be inconspicuous. The **external occipital crest** descends from the external occipital protuberance toward the **foramen magnum**—the large opening in the basal part of the occipital bone (Figs. 7.1B and 7.3B). The **superior nuchal line**, marking the superior limit of the neck, extends laterally from each side of the external occipital protuberance; the inferior nuchal line is less distinct. In the center of the occiput, the **lambda** indicates the junction of the sagittal and lambdoid sutures (Fig. 7.3A, Table 7.1). The lambda can sometimes be felt as a depression. One or more *sutural bones* (accessory bones) may be located at the lambda or near the mastoid process of the temporal bone (Fig. 7.2B).