



AUDLEY AUSTRALIA

TAILOR-MADE JOURNEYS



DEAR TRAVELLER

I thought I knew a great deal about Australia. I'd swum in the warm waters of its Pacific beaches, enjoyed Sydney by day and by night, and like everyone I was familiar with the sport and barbecue stereotypes. But once our Australia team had infected me with their passion for the country, I realised what I hadn't quite grasped until then - that this is a land of inexhaustible travel opportunities.

Twice as large as the EU, with a fraction of the population, most of the country is virtually unpopulated and pristine. The national character of optimism and a 'can do' attitude makes travelling there a real pleasure, whether it's reflected in ambitious conversions of historic buildings into wonderful guesthouses or the enthusiasm of an Outback station's owner to share the wide open spaces of his lands.

There's a plethora of travel companies offering travel to Australia, many little more than flight and hotel booking services. Our approach is very different, our Australia specialists regularly travel to the continent to track down the most authentic experiences and seek out special places to stay that are part of the travel experience. So whether you are thinking of going 'Down Under' for the first time or are planning a return trip, we hope this brochure captures some of the wonderful places we have personally discovered to complement the unmissable sights of Uluru, Sydney Harbour and the Great Barrier Reef.

We look forward to helping you arrange your trip.

C Burkinshaw

Craig Burkinshaw
Managing Director



AUDLEY TRAVEL

Audley Travel was established by Craig Burkinshaw with the simple philosophy of offering clients the best possible travel experience. Craig recognised that the only way of achieving this was to have detailed, in-depth knowledge of each country and its people, and rigorously search out the finest sights, guides and accommodation. Audley Travel now offers a comprehensive range of programmes throughout Australia, Asia, Africa, Latin America, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE AND CAREFUL PLANNING

Our Australia specialists have all travelled extensively throughout the country and in some cases have even lived there: you can rely on their first-hand knowledge. We also insist that they regularly visit Australia, meticulously inspect hotels and keep abreast of all aspects of travel. We believe this approach is unique to Audley and ultimately ensures that you will have the best possible travel experience. They have a boundless enthusiasm for Australia and take an honest 'tell it how it is' approach to planning an itinerary, suggesting sights, selecting hotels and discussing the practicalities of travel.

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

The joy of tailor-made travel is that your complete trip is designed around your requirements, so you are not tied to the set itinerary of a group. This allows you to explore your own interests and select your own style of accommodation, backed by our specialist advice. Throughout the brochure you will find suggested itineraries, designed to be the best travel options to suit most travellers. They can be adjusted to accommodate your tastes and interests, or completely re-planned to match your requirements.

A JOURNEY TO SUIT YOU

You may wish to travel for all sorts of reasons, whether to explore the culture and history, enjoy spectacular scenery, discover the wildlife or simply to relax. For many Audley clients it is a combination of all these, while others have more specialised interests, such as walking, photography or the desire to watch specific sports; we can use our detailed knowledge to plan your ideal itinerary. If you wish to travel with a group of friends, maybe with a shared special interest, we will be happy to help and can make all the arrangements. Please call us to discuss your plans.





HOW TO PLAN YOUR JOURNEY WITH AUDLEY

We suggest that you read through the brochure to obtain a feel for the wealth of travel possibilities. Once you have an idea of the type of trip you want to take, or want some general guidance, call one of our Australia specialists on 01869 276 345. Should you wish to discuss your travel arrangements in person we welcome personal visits, although we suggest that you do call in advance. Our offices are located in rural Oxfordshire with easy access from the M40. Our specialists will answer any questions you have and discuss your travel plans and ideas in detail, making suggestions where appropriate. We will then send you a detailed itinerary complete with maps, accommodation information, colour photographs and a price quote. Once you have read through the itinerary we will refine your trip until you are totally satisfied. The booking process starts when we receive your deposit and booking form, at which point we can confirm all the services. From start to finish, the same person will be handling your travel arrangements: feel free to call them at anytime.

WWW.AUDLEYTRAVEL.COM

Complementing this brochure is our website, which offers extra information such as exclusive offers, travel advice, photographic galleries and travel ideas. There is also the opportunity to register to receive our e-news updates, meet our team of specialists and submit a detailed on-line itinerary and quotation request.



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ACCOMMODATION

The range of accommodation in Australia is as diverse as the landscape itself. In the big cities you can stay in boutique properties, often in restored historic buildings, luxury hotels with iconic views, bed & breakfast guesthouses tucked away in unlikely city centre locations or charming small establishments well away from the hustle and bustle. Farmstays are perfect for those keen to taste rural Australian lifestyles, while Outback Stations in the country's most remote and beautiful locations let you spot the unique native wildlife, muster cattle or explore rock art with an Aboriginal guide. There are permanent tented camps for those in search of pristine locations, while the Great Barrier Reef is a paradise for snorkelling, diving, cruising or just spoiling yourself. Throughout the brochure you will find some of our favourite places to stay, these are just a taste of the many available.

CLIMATE

In the southern half of Australia the seasons are usually the opposite of those in the northern hemisphere: spring comes in September, summer is from December to February, autumn runs from March to May, and winter begins in June. In contrast, the tropical climate of the north coast is more clearly divided into a wet season from November to April and a dry season - possibly the best time to travel - from May to September. The Northern Territory's Top End has a distinct wet season between January and March, and although this can be spectacular the build up to the rains can be uncomfortably humid. Central Australia, which has little heavy rain at any time of year, is hottest from November to February and at its best between March and May, when days are warm and evenings cool.

TOURING

Often it is more relaxing for someone else to do the driving to cover Australia's vast distances, and we can arrange coach travel between the major cities for those who prefer not to fly. We also explore a number of different areas on small-group, guided itineraries using luxury minivans fitted out for your comfort. With a skilled guide on hand trained in local history and flora and fauna, these are often the best way to get Australia to reveal its finest secrets. Whether touring the Outback on foot, the Daintree Rainforest by 4WD vehicle or canoe, or the Blue Mountains by light aircraft you can be assured that the best touring companies in Australia will enhance your understanding and enjoyment.

GUIDES

Australia is home to so many natural wonders and historical curiosities that a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide can add immeasurably to the experience. We pride ourselves on using only the best guides, all highly trained and aware of ecological, environmental and cultural sensitivities. In many cases they have ecological accreditations from the Australian government and operate only on a private or small group basis, minimising the impact on the sites visited and avoiding the crowds.



Prairie Hotel, Flinders Ranges



Guided safaris



Driving through the Goldfields

GETTING AROUND

There are many options for getting around Australia, but the sheer distances involved often make it best to combine air and ground travel. Whilst these sections may help you make your decisions, the best thing to do is call one of our specialists as they will use their on-the-ground knowledge to tailor-make an itinerary that best fits your wishes and requirements.

RAIL

Australia has some spectacular rail journeys, including the epic Indian Pacific (Perth to Sydney) and The Ghan (Adelaide to Darwin) - page 56. Both trains offer sleeper carriages for a comfortable, stylish journey. A good network of railway lines extends up along the entire east coast, with the spectacular thousand mile route between Brisbane and Cairns being covered by the advanced Tilt Train, offering business class seating with airline-style entertainment systems and restaurant car dining. Australia's trains are an excellent way to cover great distances without taking to the air and it is well worth making a rail journey part of your visit.



SELF-DRIVE

Driving is a pleasure on Australia's scenic, safe and uncrowded roads. We usually arrange for you to be met at the airport and taken to your hotel, where a hire car will be delivered. Self-drive combines well with internal flights: we ensure a car is waiting so you can be on the road as soon as you land. We will book all of your accommodation in advance and provide you with clear driving instructions and a good road atlas, leaving you to enjoy the drive. Some roads may be worse than they look on the map and car insurance is invalid in certain areas so we recommend discussing routes and drive times with our Australia specialists.

MOTORHOMES

The freedom to explore at your own pace and stop wherever you want make motorhomes a perfect way to see Australia. We have details of the many options, including size of van, insurance cover options and suggested itineraries. It is worth remembering that you do not need to commit yourself to motorhome hire throughout your trip: it can be a good option for a week touring the Margaret River area or the Great Ocean Road, while in other parts of the country you may wish to drive a conventional car or consider other transport options. Our specialists can talk you through the choices and practicalities but the one essential, especially in high season, is to book in advance.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

We are passionate about the countries we specialise in and naturally take a responsible approach to the way we operate in these regions, and try to maximise the benefits that tourism can bring to the local community. We are working with AITO's Responsible Tourism team and other organisations to ensure that our own policies and commitments are effective. We have been awarded three stars, the maximum achievable, by AITO in recognition of our responsible tourism policies. We have drawn up a comprehensive 'Responsible Tourism' policy which summarises our commitments and actions, with more details available on our website or on request. If you are interested in visiting a community tourism project or a local charity, please contact your specialist, who will be happy to try to fit it into your itinerary. Many people find that a trip to a small community tourism project is a good way of getting off the beaten track and really learning something about the country and its people.

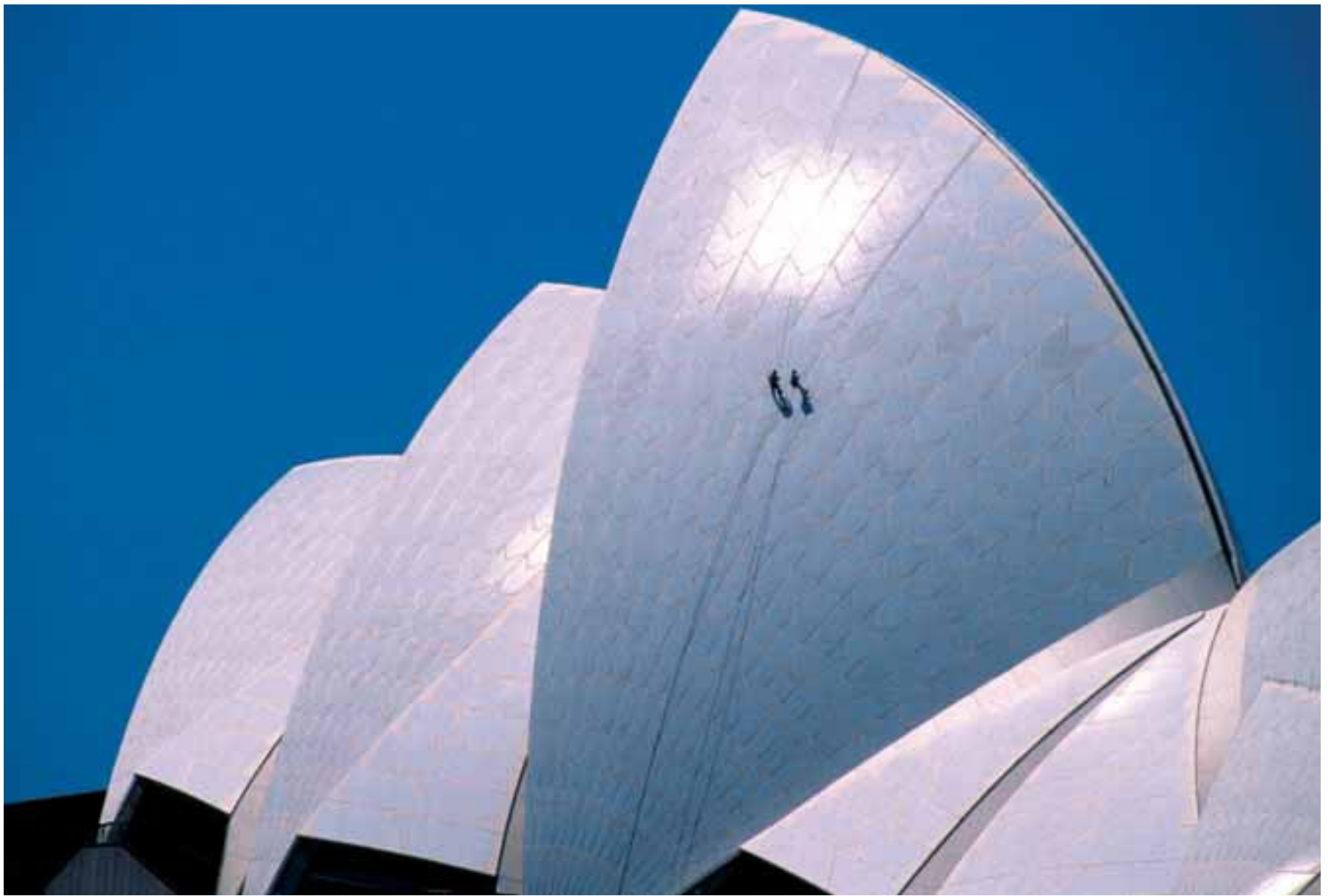
FINANCIAL SECURITY

You can book with us in confidence, knowing that we are fully bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority and hold an Air Tour Operators License (ATOL 4817). This fully covers all holidays that involve air travel. If you are using Audley to arrange the 'land only' part of your trip then you will be protected by our Travel Organisers Failure Cover insurance policy.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS, AND TRAVEL INSURANCE

Your booking is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Audley Travel, which are detailed in a separate leaflet. It is vital that you have adequate travel insurance and we are able to offer a number of policies either for the duration of your trip or on an annual basis.





Audley in Australia

Australia is so massive and varied a country that it is not possible to see all of it at once. The guides to the states on these pages are designed to give you a flavour of what there is to see and do. The suggested itineraries are there to give you a feel of how they link together into facinating, but achievable journeys. They have been designed to appeal to first-time visitors and returning travellers alike.



Cairns

NEW SOUTH WALES

This superb introduction to 'The Lucky Country' is a land of rolling farmlands and beautiful national parks with surf beaches extending along a coast centred on the beautiful harbour of its capital, Sydney. Public transport is a good way to get around Sydney, with the Manly Ferry a cheap way to take a tour of the bridge and harbour. You can also explore the waters by luxury yacht, helicopter or seaplane flights, or take a walking tour and Harbour Bridge climb. The Blue Mountains or the wineries of the Hunter Valley lie close by, but we also suggest less-visited places such as Kangaroo Valley and Port Stephens. Stay in the city and daytrip out to surrounding areas, or find a more rural location and zip in to see Sydney's sights. There are rewarding self-drive routes including a loop through Port Stephens, the Blue Mountains and the Hunter Valley, the drive to Brisbane via the Hunter Valley and famous surf beaches, or to Melbourne. New South Wales can be visited year-round as the winter is mild, spring and autumn are ideal and the summer suits those who like the heat.

QUEENSLAND

This huge, dramatically beautiful state extends from its temperate border with New South Wales up into the tropical north, much of it still barely explored or settled. The capital is Brisbane, Australia's fastest-growing city and a dynamic urban centre basking in 300 sunny days each year and within easy reach of the Gold Coast beaches and Lamington National Park. Most of the state's great attractions are up along the coast: the huge Daintree Rainforest, the Outback oases of the Atherton Tablelands and the kaleidoscopic colours of the Great Barrier Reef. Palm Cove and Port Douglas make excellent bases, with small-boat cruises exploring the reef, or you can head into the mountains that hug the coastline. There are also luxury resorts on a few Great Barrier Reef islands and character accommodation in the heart of the rainforest. It is worth taking time to explore the Outback, with a few nights on a station giving a flavour of this pioneer world. Brisbane and the south are glorious all year round, while in the tropical north, the wet season runs from January to April, drenching the countryside daily.



Garma festival, Arnhem Land

THE TOP END, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Australia's Top End plays host to some of its most intriguing wildlife and Aboriginal heritage. Darwin is a vibrant, hot city with an undeniable dynamism whose surrounding countryside of monsoon rainforest, Outback escarpments and remote billabongs shelter an array of wildlife from crocodiles and kangaroos to sea eagles and Jesus birds. Though you can glimpse the natural world through daytrips we believe it takes longer to explore the vast wilderness: we reach often overlooked areas including Kakadu, Lichfield National Park, the Tiwi Islands, Arnhem Land and the Coburg Peninsula with its Seven Spirit Bay. We offer small-group tours that sensitively visit Aboriginal communities and experience Outback farming life with visits to remote stations. The extreme seasons of the Top End may affect your travel plans, the best time to visit is the dry season, from April to October. After this the weather gets very hot and humid until the 'wet', from November to March, washes out roads and turns plains into swamps.



Queensland

THE RED CENTRE, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Marooned amongst the Red Centre's vast scrubland lies Uluru/Ayers Rock and Kata Tjuta/The Olgas, two of Australia's awesome icons whose colours change with the shifting desert light. The nearby desert outpost of Alice Springs is an important stop for the Ghan Railway on its journey across the continent, a centre for the Flying Doctor Service and a vital supply point for the scattered residents who call this unforgiving region home. To ensure you get the most out of Uluru and Kata Tjuta we use Aboriginal guides to explain the landscape's spiritual significance, and further the experience by meeting the Aboriginal community of Gunya Titjikala, south of Alice Springs, taking the Larapinta Trail, exploring the East and West McDonnell ranges and experiencing the Outback at its best at Ooraminna Homestead on Deep Well Station. The best time to visit is from July to September, with warm days, cool nights and fewest flies.

AUSTRALIA UNCOVERED

A first time trip to Australia would not be complete without visiting, 'Sydney, Rock and Reef'. Let us take you there, but include Outback life and Aboriginal experiences and the stunning scenery of the Top End. Get the most out of your stay with a judicious mix of self-driving and small group guided touring.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Sydney, head for Circular Quay and enjoy a sail around the harbour.
- Day 2:** Discover the history of Sydney through a walking tour of the historical Rocks.
- Day 3:** Spend the day at leisure; perhaps take a sea plane flight over the city.
- Day 4:** Drive to the Hunter Valley and drop in on one or two of the local wineries.
- Day 5:** Rise early and take a hot air balloon flight before enjoying a relaxing long lunch.
- Day 6:** Take a drive to the Blue Mountains.
- Day 7:** Spend the day walking through the Jamison Valley.
- Day 8:** Return to Sydney, fly to Cairns and drive the short distance to Palm Cove.
- Day 9:** Spend the day soaking up Palm Cove's village atmosphere.
- Day 10:** Discover the underwater world of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Day 11:** Drive to the rainforest area of the Atherton Tablelands.
- Day 12:** Explore this region's famed waterfalls.
- Day 13:** Fly to Alice Springs.
- Day 14:** Join a specialist small group tour of the Red Centre and drive to Kings Canyon.
- Day 15:** Walk around the base of Uluru and witness the spectacular sunset.
- Day 16:** Take a walking tour through the domes of Kata Tjuta.
- Day 17:** Return to Alice Springs.
- Day 18:** Take the late afternoon train to Darwin.
- Day 19:** Stop at Katherine and enjoy a short tour of Katherine Gorge. Continue to Darwin.
- Day 20:** Spend the day at leisure in Darwin.
- Day 21:** Explore Litchfield National Park.
- Day 22:** Join a small group tour of Kakadu and Arnhem Land to discover rock art sites accompanied by an Aboriginal guide.
- Day 23:** Head further in to Arnhem Land and meet with local Aboriginal communities.
- Day 24:** Return to Darwin later in the day.
- Day 25:** Leave Darwin.

EXTENSIONS

Unwind on a Great Barrier Reef island or spend time soaking up the atmosphere on a sprawling Outback station, or for those with an adventurous streak, drive along the Gibb River Road to Broome.

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

All our travel arrangements are on a private, individual basis to offer you complete freedom of choice. The itineraries and accommodation options throughout the brochure are designed to give you a flavour of what is possible and can be tailor-made to suit your preferences. Prices vary according to selected accommodation and season. Please call our Australia specialists on 01869 276 345 to discuss your individual requirements.



The Remarkable Rocks, Kangaroo Island



The Block Arcade, Melbourne

VICTORIA

Temperate Victoria presents an endless variety with 'four seasons in one day' blowing in from the Southern Ocean. Melbourne is relaxed and civilised, with excellent restaurants, galleries and a cultural vibe. Drive out to discover excellent wildlife, with fairy penguins along the coast and an array of native wildflower species bursting into life each spring amongst the caves and rock art sites of the Grampians; this route can also take in the Yarra Valley vineyards, a selection of spas in Daylesford and the arts scene of the Mornington Peninsula. Alternatively, head west along the Great Ocean Road, tracking the dramatic coastline towards Adelaide. Though most people rush along this route, it is worth taking longer to explore the historic towns and national parks along the way. Walhalla, Wilson's Promontory and Lakes Entrance are among the state's more secret highlights. Less humid than the other states, Victoria is hot and dry in the summer, fresh and beautiful in spring and autumn, and damp in winter.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Driest of all Australia's states, South Australia has an easy-going capital city, temperate national parks, dramatic deserts and quirky, remote communities. Adelaide is a friendly, bookish place ideally explored on foot, nearby Kangaroo Island is one of the country's most significant wildlife reserves, while the coast is dotted with national parks including Coorong's magnificent waterbird haven, the orchids, ferns, bandicoots and whales of the Fleurieu Peninsula, and the sealions, koalas, echidnas and platypus of Baird Bay. Head inland and - unless you get no further than the Barossa or Clare Valley wineries - the landscape dries into the little-visited but spectacular Gawler and Flinders ranges, the strange opal-mining town of Coober Pedy and vast Outback stations. The summer from November to March is the best time to visit the coast, though the Outback will be hot and fly-blown, while cool winter months can see rain along the coast but a more comfortable and relaxed Outback.



Perth

TASMANIA

Compact and unspoiled, Tasmania is often overlooked by travellers but offers stunning landscapes, diverse wildlife and some of Australia's finest trekking. The main city, Hobart, is a sleepy place, rich in convict settler history and Victorian architecture, but bursts into life for the December yacht race from Sydney before subsiding again into a somnolent charm. From here it is easy to reach superb national parks including Freycinet, Cradle Mountain, the Bay of Fires and Maria Island, with terrain ranging from glaciated mountains to dense forest teeming with wallabies, echidnas, Tasmanian Devils and quolls, while seals and dolphins frolic offshore. Small settler towns are ideal hubs to explore the natural world, with heritage cruises or four and eight-day guided walks for breaths of Tasmania's cool clear air. The best - but busiest - time to visit is through the Austral summer: the climate is almost British, so spring and autumn can be beautiful but winter days are short and chilly.



Cradle Mountain, Tasmania

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This is Australia's largest state, but much of it is unpopulated. A vast landscape inhabited only by a scatter of residents stretching up to the north. The state capital is Perth, a friendly oasis of sophistication where gleaming skyscrapers overlook quiet colonial suburbs on the banks of the Swan River. A short drive to the west is the restored port town of Fremantle and a chain of beautiful surf beaches, but it is a long drive to the next settlement inland - the gold-mining town of Kalgoorlie. The Margaret River area has beautiful national parks, friendly wineries and deserted beaches, cooling towards temperate forest regions and the remote southern coast. Go north and you pass the weird rock formations of the Pinnacles, the visiting dolphins of Shark Bay and the pearl farms of Broome. We know the best places to visit: the whales that track past Albany from May to October, the remote Kimberley and the awesome wilderness of Cape Leveque. Perth and the south west can be visited year-round, though it can be chilly from June to August. The north is best in the 'dry', from April to October, as the 'wet' can be very humid even if not always wet.



Tasmanian Devil

THE BOOMERANG

If you are returning to Australia for a second or third time then this trip includes a wealth of highlights that you may have initially missed. Consisting of self-driving, private touring and train travel, this journey can be tailored to your preferences.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Perth. Spend the day at leisure.
- Day 2:** Full day to enjoy the heritage sights, perhaps take a cruise along the Swan River to Fremantle.
- Day 3:** Drive south to Margaret River passing through the lively port of Bunbury.
- Day 4:** Spend the day in Margaret River, explore the vineyards and beaches for which the area is renowned.
- Day 5:** Head east into the karri forests that surround the charming town of Pemberton.
- Day 6:** Take the 'Valley of the Giants' treetop walk before heading to Albany.
- Day 7:** Explore the lovely Albany coastline.
- Day 8:** Return to Perth.
- Day 9:** Depart Perth aboard the Indian Pacific.
- Day 10:** Cross the Nullarbor Plain into South Australia.
- Day 11:** Arrive into Adelaide, spend the rest of the day at leisure.
- Day 12:** Fly to Angkorichina Station in the Flinders Ranges. Join Ian Fargher on a tour of this vast Outback station.
- Day 13:** Tour the station in the company of one of the local Aboriginal people.
- Day 14:** Return to Adelaide and fly to Kangaroo Island, joining a tour of this wildlife haven.
- Day 15:** Explore Seal Bay Conservation Park and the famed Remarkable Rocks.
- Day 16:** Return to Adelaide and fly to Melbourne.
- Day 17:** Spend the day exploring and later dine in one of the countless fine restaurants for which this cosmopolitan city is known.
- Day 18:** Explore the Mornington Peninsula and its thriving arts and craft scene.
- Day 19:** Fly to Hobart. Spend the day at leisure.
- Day 20:** Enjoy a guided tour of Port Arthur.
- Day 21:** Drive to Freycinet National Park.
- Day 22:** Spend the day exploring Wineglass Bay.
- Day 23:** Drive to Launceston and explore the Tamar wine region.
- Day 24:** Depart Launceston.

EXTENSIONS

Extend your trip and drive from Adelaide to Melbourne along the Great Ocean Road, or fly at the start of your journey to Broome and take a tour to the tip of Cape Leveque.

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

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Experience Australia

Australia offers the traveller a friendly, hospitable welcome, great food, wine, superb accommodation and a wealth of travel options at any time of year, be they discovering the immense Outback, experiencing Aboriginal culture, encountering the continent's somewhat quirky wildlife or exploring the cosmopolitan cities. Most of this brochure is organised geographically, however, over the following pages we have highlighted the main experiences: recent history, modern Australia and the Aboriginal people as well as a staggering array of landscapes and wildlife. Many people's trip to Australia includes staying with family or friends who have emigrated there. We can design your trip around your time with them and, if you wish we can include them in your travel plans.



MEETING THE PAST

From the moment the first settlers appeared at Botany Bay and convicts arrived in Tasmania, to the goldrush fever that grew new towns in the desert, Australia's tales are of pioneering, rugged adventures in an inhospitable land and stories of survival against the odds shaping the country we see today. Australians take their history very seriously, and guides effortlessly bring the colourful past to life.

CONVICT HISTORY

Skilled raconteurs outline the personal tales of those serving out prison sentences in a strange new world and both Tasmania's Port Arthur (page 75) and Sarah Island penal colonies provide chilling reminders of the hardship faced by convicts. The wonderful architecture built on the back of convict labour in areas such as Sydney's Rocks (page 15) and Fremantle (page 47) in the 19th century now form the modern hubs of the cities' leisure areas.



Port Arthur, Tasmania

SETTLER HISTORY

Guided walks around the city centres of Hobart, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Sydney recount the adventures of the early settlers and the creation of distinctive societies in each of the principal states. As adventurers took their first tentative steps into Australia's interior, individual explorers and prospectors shaped the development of this mysterious continent. This history can be woven into your trip: we have sought out accommodation in converted mines close to the Atherton Tablelands (page 27), adapted prison cells in the port of Fremantle and underground cave hotels in the opal-mining belt of Coober Pedy (page 64). As well as these, there are hundreds of charming 19th century properties that are blessed with old world charm. We follow the trails of the Afghan cameleers (page 56) who forged a telegraph route through the country's Red Centre, tour the Barossa vineyards established by persecuted Lutheran minorities (page 62) and stay on fifth-generation Outback stations such as Bullo River Station (page 40), some larger than many European countries.

To get a taste of Australia's rich heritage, you need only look around you as you travel through the diverse and enchanting environment. If you are interested in lingering over the more fascinating areas we can help you plan the best trip to really gain an insight into their history.



Melbourne

MODERN AUSTRALIA

Australia's breezy lifestyle is perhaps its most enthralling and exhilarating draw and the reason so many visitors return time after time. Australia is a social experience and wherever you go, whether dining in the cities, watching sport, relaxing on the beach or exploring the Outback you will find a warmhearted welcome and a willingness to share.

THE OUTBACK

Although most of Australia's population lives in the narrow coastal regions, many of the real characters inhabit the dusty interior of the Outback. As the roads head away from the major cities the trappings of sophistication fall away, and it is in the Outback stations where jackaroos herd cattle by motorbike and helicopter that you can still feel awe at the expansive horizons and wild beauty that seduced the first settlers. Exploring the Outback is best done by 4WD vehicle and a sample of highlights include the remote red sands of Cape Leveque and the Kimberley in Western Australia (page 53), the salt pans of the Gawler Ranges in South Australia (page 65) and the open expanses of the Northern Territory (page 40).

CITIES

Australia's cities are sophisticated, with an outdoor café lifestyle that blends the cultures of the world into an easy society. Sydney's gorgeous views of the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge and its wonderful beaches make it an integral part of anyone's first visit to Australia. Melbourne is equally enticing to those in the know, fuelling the generations' old rivalry between these two cities. Elegant Adelaide is charming and surrounded by some of Australia's best wine regions as well as having the wonderful Kangaroo Island on its doorstep. As the hub of Western Australia, Perth is surrounded by a plethora of attractions, from the beautiful beaches to the historical architecture of Fremantle and the rolling wine regions of the Swan Valley.

FOOD & DRINK

Though Australians gravitate naturally to the barbecue, their cuisine has come a long way over the last few years. The influences of immigrants from the Mediterranean, spices from neighbours in the Pacific and Asia, and an abundance of homegrown produce have evolved into Australia's fashionable 'fusion' cuisine. Each of the southern states take considerable pride in their wines, many of world-class quality and all eminently drinkable. Australia's key growing areas include the Hunter Valley (page 17) in New South Wales, the Yarra Valley (page 68) on the outskirts of Melbourne, Clare and Barossa valleys (page 62) in South Australia and the Margaret River (page 48) in Western Australia. Once you reach the Outback, however, you are more likely to celebrate Australia's long-lived culinary achievements: the ice-cold beer and the hot meat pie.



BEACH LIFE

You don't need a surfboard to appreciate the endless white sands that ring Australia. In Sydney you can choose from the sheltered Sydney Harbour or the hustle of Bondi or Manly beach. Follow the coast north or south and different atmospheres make every beach distinctive, from the somewhat hippy flavour of Byron Bay to the seclusion of Jervis Bay. Between Melbourne and Adelaide lies the Great Ocean Road with the Twelve Apostles, thriving seal colonies and the famous Bells Beach. Baird Bay lies west of Adelaide with wildlife in abundance, while on the West Coast are some of Australia's most majestic, sweeping, white sand beaches facing the Indian Ocean, from remote Cape Leveque in the north to Perth's city beaches. Probably the most idyllic shores are those found in Queensland, from the blistering white crushed coral of Whitehaven beach in the Whitsunday Islands and the secluded bays of some of the remote Great Barrier Reef islands to the rainforest that creeps along the sands of Cape Tribulation.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Australia does not take sport seriously; it is completely obsessive about it and attending a sporting event certainly gives you an insight into the country's psyche. Do not limit yourself to international sports such as cricket and rugby: perhaps the best game to come out of Australia is 'Aussie Rules', a rough and fast game somewhere between rugby and Gaelic football. There are numerous events taking place in Australia throughout the year so why not take one in during your visit? Melbourne hosts the Melbourne Cup, Australia's Grand National, in November and then the Grand Prix in March. Broome sees the Shinju Matsuri Pearl Festival with its dragon boat racing on the last weekend of August and Alice Springs witnesses the bizarre, dryland boat races of the Henley-on-Todd Regatta in early October. Whatever your interests just ask our specialists for details of events taking place during your visit.



Garma festival, Arnhem Land

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

Fascinating but now threatened, Aboriginal people trod lightly on the land for 40,000 years, nomadic communities speaking a rainbow of different languages, few of which have ever been recorded or researched. Their lives changed forever 200 years ago with the arrival of European settlers. In Tasmania they were virtually wiped out, while in the major cities today - despite many possibly well-meaning attempts at integration - Aboriginal communities remain largely marginalised. Only in the past few years has recognition of their art and culture begun to surface in Australia.



BELIEFS

Aboriginal beliefs are tied to the land, with the concept of 'Dreaming' linked to when Ancestral Beings created the world, infusing every hillock and dip, every animal and plant with a spiritual significance. The spirits that created the land infuse the present, and the stories from the past dictate the rules and social practices that carry through to the present day. The Aboriginal way of life was ill-equipped to survive the strong materialist values of the convicts and economic migrants who flooded into the country, and you have to search to discover Australia's true Aboriginal heritage. Pockets of Aboriginal culture do remain in the cities, but most strongly in the Outback, in lands too remote to be reached by the tarmac tentacles of modern Australia, and we take every opportunity to carefully and sensitively introduce our travellers to this ancient culture.



EXPERIENCE ABORIGINAL CULTURE

A third of the people of the Northern Territory are Aboriginal and we have chosen to work primarily with guides and Aboriginal groups who take small numbers of visitors into areas that would otherwise be inaccessible, where learning of their values and creation stories will add another layer to this already remarkable territory. The most astounding rock art sites in Arnhem Land are protected by the regional Aboriginal Elders and our local partner, Sab Lord Safaris (page 39), is granted exclusive access to many of them. At the Red Centre, you can visit the Gunya Titjikala Community (page 43), who allow small groups of visitors to stay and enjoy traditional food, dancing and storytelling, giving an authentic experience. Aboriginal culture can also be experienced in other parts of Australia and again, where possible, we use Aboriginal guides such as Arthur at Angorichina Station (page 63) or Willie at Mungumby Lodge (page 29) who will introduce you to sacred sites, rock art and give you an insight in to this ancient culture. At Cape Leveque in Western Australia you can stay at Aboriginal-owned Kooljaman camp (page 53) and we can even offer the chance to travel back in time to the untouched islands of the Torres Straits (page 29), where few visitors are permitted and the lifestyle of the islanders survives relatively unchanged.

Throughout our operations in Australia, we take care to include the continent's original inhabitants and use operators who support organisations such as the Mutitjulu Foundation, which works to relieve poverty and enhance healthcare amongst Aboriginal communities. In the national parks we are aware of the Dreamtime beliefs that permeate every feature of the landscape, and sensitively search out the rare sites of Aboriginal art that remain.



Aboriginal rock art



Kakadu

NATURAL AUSTRALIA

Australia's landscapes include a huge variety of habitats, including tropical rainforests, deserts, rivers, mountain ranges and marine systems. Having followed their own evolutionary paths during 50 million years of isolation, an overwhelming variety of strange, unique plant and animal life throngs the continent, especially in the country's 500 national parks and 16 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, while spectacular geological formations shape the terrain.

WETLANDS

Arnhem Land, Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks in the Northern Territory's 'Top End' (page 38) are wetland landscapes filled with red escarpment cliffs, waterfalls, crocodile-filled billabongs and flood plains. They encompass dramatic scenery and wildlife as well as great galleries of Aboriginal rock art. The area is best visited between April and November to avoid the rains and humidity.

RAINFORESTS

Australia's rainforests are amongst the oldest in the world and Northern Queensland is one of the last great untouched wilderness areas, covering an area the size of Britain. The Daintree Rainforest (page 28) is home to half of Australia's extravagant birdlife and around 30 percent of its marsupial species. This marvellous tree canopy can be experienced by cable car or through a range of day or night walks. The area is best visited from May to November, avoiding the rain and humidity. Visitors who wish to experience rainforest outside of these months can visit Lamington National Park (page 23), famous for its wonderful birdlife, or Fraser Island (page 23) with its abundant wildlife.

THE OUTBACK & DESERT

Though they teem with a multitude of snakes and reptiles such as the thorny devil, the Outback's ancient landscapes may not see rain for years on end, creating red rock monoliths, ochre plains and endless horizons. Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon lie in the Red Centre, while to the north is the red sandstone of Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park, the Nullarbor Plain extends to the west and to the south is the opal capital of Coober Pedy, all of which you may visit by The Ghan or Indian Pacific trains (page 56). Western Australia's Outback is home to 8,000 species of wildflower blooming from July to November, and the cooler months from March to November are the best time to visit Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungle) and the Aboriginal rock art of the north west's Kimberley region (page 55).



TEMPERATE WILDERNESS

Vast swathes of wild temperate forests are perhaps not one of the first images that come to mind in Australia, but it is certainly one of the most stunning and rewarding for the visitor. Endless miles of eucalypt trees are found in Tasmania (page 74) and the Blue Mountains (page 16) of New South Wales, both World Heritage Sites. Kangaroo Island's (page 60) woodland is less dense, but here too you will find a plethora of wildlife, from wallabies and kangaroos to echidnas and platypus to cockatoos - the variety is overwhelming. With a rather north European climate, Tasmania is best visited in the warmer months from October to April. The Blue Mountains of New South Wales, however, can be comfortably visited at any time of year and the winter months are likely to give better visibility for extensive views.

REEFS & OCEANS

The kaleidoscopic colours of the fish and corals that inhabit the world's largest offshore reef, the Great Barrier Reef (page 30) to the east, and the world's largest fringing reef, Ningaloo Reef (page 51) to the west are a must-see. Off most Australian shores you can meet dolphins face to face at Shark Bay (page 50) and some of the best locations for whale watching include New South Wales, Victoria's Shipwreck Coast (page 70) and Western Australia's Albany (page 48) between May and November. The country's southern coast looks from rugged cliffs and sweeping beaches over the crystal-clear waters of the Southern Ocean, playground to sealions (page 65) and more. Diving is superb throughout Australia (page 34 & 35), with operators maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and safety.



New South Wales

Whether it is the magic of an Outback sunset, trying your luck with a fishing line, wandering through a World Heritage National Park and marvelling at sacred aboriginal sites or exploring the thrilling waterfront of its capital city Sydney, New South Wales is a state of contrasts. With its sweeping Pacific coast stretching from the subtropical Tweed Heads, to temperate Eden in the south, fringed with brilliantly squeaky white sand and clear waters heaving with fish, you can experience the sensational water-based lifestyle that is part of everyday Aussie life. 'Go bush', tootle through picture-postcard scenery as you savour a food and wine trail, take a hot air balloon adventure, climb mountains, follow ancient rainforest tracks and absorb the intoxicating smell of the eucalyptus and seek out the habitat of wombats, wallabies, koalas and echidnas, or just take the simple pleasures of relaxation.

SYDNEY

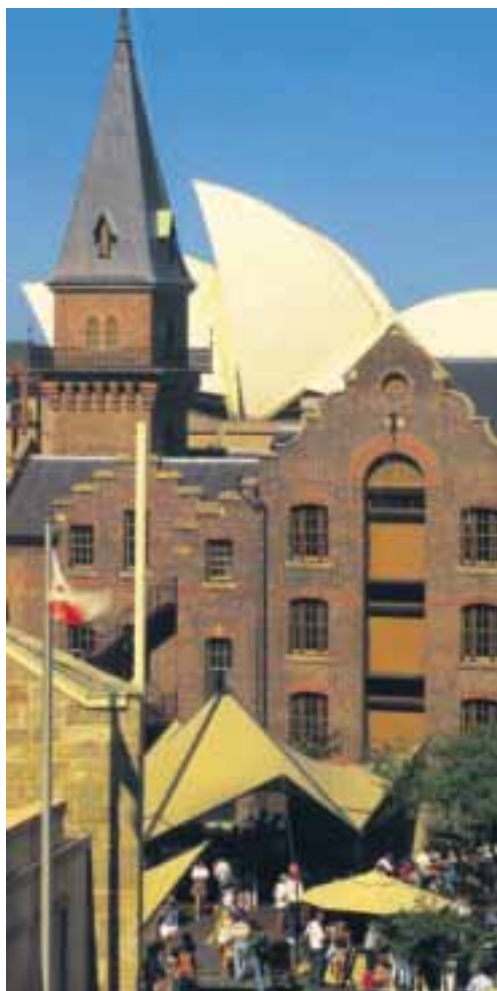
Defined and dominated by water, the city of Sydney curves, coils and loops along the shoreline of its sparkling centre piece, one of the world's finest harbours. Sculptured sandstone cliffs edge the water, topped with magnificent homes and etched by the elements into bays, coves and beaches washed by clear Pacific waters. The city had a somewhat insalubrious start. The first ship discharged its load of convicts and their jailers in 1788, and they immediately clashed with the local Aborigines: an uproar ensued for weeks. Today this famous landing point, Circular Quay, is just as lively but is now filled with visitors and entertainers, a natural starting point for any tour of the city. Until recently the Rocks was an infested slum: now it is one of the city's smartest areas, scrubbed, polished and rich in colonial history and a hive of artistic and cultural activity. The best way to learn about the region's colourful history is through one of the guided walking tours - spectacular by day and ghostly at night - that introduce the colourful characters and incidents that have shaped the city.

To experience the Aboriginal culture of past and present you can take a walk escorted by an Aboriginal Koori guide who will introduce the world's oldest living culture through an array of art sites that range from the whale engraving at Bondi to the Manly Scenic Walkway that links ancient rock carvings. The city is dominated by Sydney Harbour Bridge, dubbed 'the Coat Hanger': once you've seen it in the view you can take the experience further by climbing to its summit or flying close in a seaplane or helicopter. The archetypal Aussie pastime of 'catching a wave' is seen at its best in Sydney, with Bondi, Bronte and Coogee beaches amongst the most popular surfing centres. Away from the water, colourful areas such as Potts Point, Darlinghurst and Paddington support thriving and colourful café cultures, their wrought-iron latticed Victorian terraces contrasting sharply with the sky-scrapers of the centre. Harmoniously blending races and influences from all over the world, Sydney's enthusiastic residents generate an unmistakable buzz, energised by their spectacular setting, easy lifestyle and ideal climate.



🏠 Bed and Breakfast Sydney Harbour, Sydney

Discreetly nestled at the foot of towering international hotels is this enchanting bed and breakfast, a recent Audley 'find'. The fully restored building offers visitors the rare experience of genuine warm hospitality whilst occupying a great position in the heart of the Rocks. There is a selection of delightful rooms, each furnished with hand crafted furniture and ensuite or private bathroom. Despite the central location it is very quiet; the only noise comes from the resident kookaburras occupying the lovely courtyard garden where breakfast is served.



The Rocks, Sydney

🏠 InterContinental Hotel Sydney

A fusion of colonial and contemporary architecture; a heritage-listed, vaulted courtyard encased by a high-rise modern tower. Modern décor, elegant guestrooms and individual dining options complete the five star picture. For a limited number of guests access is granted to a stunning rooftop guest lounge complete with an exterior observation deck offering a bird's-eye view of the Opera House, Harbour Bridge and the harbour, way, way out to the Heads. We suggest you take a seat on the deck, pour yourself a glass of complimentary wine and marvel at the view.



Doyleys at Watson Bay

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

A gothic church, orange segments or inspiration gleaned from the architect's father, a yacht designer? Wherever your imagination takes you, the Sydney Opera House is a breathtakingly familiar sight. Take the Manly ferry, and for a few dollars you can putt slowly out of Circular Quay and around Bennelong Point to view this almost floating icon from every angle. If you are not content to just gape from the outside, attend an evening performance; wandering outside during the interval, lights glittering on the inky waters, you may just forget to return for the second half. Small groups of early risers can take a look behind the scenes, explore restricted areas, view the architect's original plans and perhaps even 'tread the boards'. Your pick of how you explore this distinctive emblem of Sydney is as varied as your funds permit.



InterContinental Hotel Sydney

🏠 Park Hyatt, Sydney

Twisting out from under the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the sails of the famous Sydney Opera House dominate the scene; this is one of the best located hotels in the world. Not content with occupying a prime position, the Park Hyatt offers the epitome of service complete with a 24-hour butler service. Dine at the waterfront setting of 'HarbourKitchen&bar', mouth-watering seafood, just one of the specialties, chomp on a cigar whilst supping a cognac in the traditional Club Bar or splash around in the rooftop pool: the Harbour Bridge to one side, the Opera House the other. The spacious guestrooms leave no comfort to chance and most have a balcony providing you with a private view of Sydney's icon.

🏠 The Grace, Sydney

An excellent example of 1920s art deco architecture, The Grace has a somewhat chequered history; originally the flagship store for the Grace Brothers store impresarios, commandeered by the Australian Government in 1942 for the use of General Macarthur during the Second World War, and its latest incarnation as an elegant heritage hotel. Meticulously restored, the hotel fronts three of Sydney's most prestigious streets - York, King and Clarence - and is just a short walk from the attractions of the city. Original light fittings, high pressed-metal ceilings, marble floors, wide hallways and elegant decorative ironwork complement the stylish guestrooms.



Three Sisters and Jamison Valley

BLUE MOUNTAINS AND THE HUNTER AIR SAFARI

Should you wish to use Sydney as your base, but want to experience the grandeur of the Blue Mountains, tickle your taste buds with a glass of Hunter wine and see life on an Outback sheep and cattle station, then this is the perfect way. From the city you fly low over the Blue Mountains and head north, landing in a paddock at Middlebrook sheep and cattle station where your education of Outback life begins. A stroll through the bush is taken in company of wild kangaroos and Hendo, the station owner, who will happily recount stories of life on the station whilst a traditional Aussie barbecue is prepared at the homestead. Back in the air, the Hunter is the next stop where you will drop in on a couple of boutique wineries and enjoy a private 'behind the scenes' tour. Culminating at twilight with a coastal flight back to Sydney, you will soar over Palm Beach, Manly, the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House gaining a totally different perspective of this remarkable water-dominated city.



Blue Mountains

Lilianfels, Katoomba

Hugging the edge of the Jamison Valley this historic country house hotel offers endless panoramas of this famous valley and allows the smell of gum trees to flood the air. The spacious ensuite guestrooms are traditionally decorated and the large guest lounge with open fireplaces and cosy reading room is a lovely retreat. An original part of the house, built in 1889 now houses Darley's restaurant which has a national reputation that rivals the view, creating a memorable experience that we feel, is quite simply, hard to beat.



Hendo, Middlebrook Station

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

A bluish mist fills the air of this magnificent World Heritage National Park, whilst light reflects from the fine droplets of oil that smother the Eucalyptus forests hugging the outlandish valleys that have been fashioned by wind and water. Wentworth Falls is one of the best areas for bushwalking and the trails that meander along the cliff tops provide rousing lookouts across unbroken miles of forest that descend deep into the valley and the blue gum groves. At the main town of Katoomba, aptly named by the Aboriginal people meaning "shiny, tumbling water", mountain streams topple over escarpments in spectacular waterfalls. Here, the craggy outcrop of the 'Three Sisters' stare out towards grand Mount Solitary, a sight that certainly doesn't disappoint. From Govett's Leap the Grose Valley stretches into the distance, and make sure you take the walk to Pearson's Lookout for the unforgettable view of Capertee Valley, the widest canyon in the world. Yellow-tailed black cockatoos are a spectacular sight throughout the whole region, while crimson rosella and gang-gang cockatoos provide a flash of colour and quite a racket as they dart through the trees. Although it is possible to visit in a day trip, as the region can be reached in less than two hours from Sydney, there is so much to see that it is worth spending a few days exploring, if only to see the mobs of grey kangaroos grazing at dusk and dawn. It is an easy detour whether you are travelling north or south, and is the perfect combination with a visit to the Hunter Valley.



Whispering Pines

Whispering Pines, Wentworth Falls

At the end of Falls Road is the Wentworth Falls Reserve, the starting point for rambles to the spectacular Wentworth Falls. Teetering on an escarpment, imposing pines and bursts of flowers create a feeling of an English park in the four acres of gardens that surround this grand guesthouse. Wonderfully remote, yet only an hour and a half from Sydney, Whispering Pines occupies a first class location. Each of the four suites has private facilities, and your hosts blend comfort, privacy and quiet hospitality in a significant heritage property.



Vineyard sales

HUNTER VALLEY

Think of the Hunter Valley and a vision is conjured of a day spent amongst the vineyards enjoying a tasting or two, then relaxing fireside with a premium wine from the day's outing. Delve into the wineries of Pokolbin, one of the main vineyard areas, and take a backstage tour to learn the secrets of winemaking. You can hire a bike in Pokolbin to explore, take a horse-drawn carriage, or early risers can drift gently over the vines in a hot air balloon. Wine is in abundance, yet there is more on the menu than you may think: ripe cheeses, sculptures, flawlessly landscaped gardens crammed with blooming flowers and historical townships just perfect for an afternoon of exploring. You can meander through Maitland's elegant heritage precincts or visit historic Morpeth, Australia's oldest river port. The small country township of Barrington Tops, featuring rugged mountains, gorges and dense forest, is a lure for horseback riders, bushwalkers and off-road touring - all reached in less than two hours from Sydney.



Tower Lodge

Tower Lodge, Pokolbin

Secluded and luxurious, the 'Spanish Mission' style exterior refutes what lies within the walls and the 100-year old French Coach House doors provide an impressive entrance. Furnished with treasures, rich fabrics and recycled timbers; a favourite spot is the library, tucked next to the dining room, vault-like and tranquil, the shelves crammed with old classic editions and novels. An enormous fireplace in the lounge room is crowned with a huge paua shell-encrusted mirror which typifies the nicely eccentric touches that feature throughout. The portico passageways bordering the courtyard lead to twelve oversized guestrooms, each crammed with their own special charm. An enclosed compound houses a pool, sauna and massage room. Tower Estate Winery is a stroll away as is Roberts Restaurant, the recipient of rave reviews.

Peppers Guesthouse, Pokolbin

Surrounded by beautiful country gardens and overlooking vineyards and bushland, this guesthouse is a perfect escape. Unwind with a drink in the bar by the fire, visit one of the 80 wineries, or perhaps enjoy one of life's greatest indulgences of simply doing nothing at all. A stay here, including deluxe guestrooms and cuisine from the one of the Hunter's most awarded restaurants, Chez Pok, has guests returning year after year.



Peppers Guesthouse

VALLEY AND VINES

Starting in the stunning city of Sydney, this itinerary explores the premier wine region of the Hunter Valley, where you will find an extensive array of cellar door sales. From here you head to the breathtaking Blue Mountains before returning to Sydney.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Sydney and enjoy the afternoon sightseeing.
- Day 2:** Take a half day city sites tour through the Rocks and the exclusive eastern suburbs, and spend the afternoon relaxing.
- Day 3:** Enjoy a scenic flight up to the Northern Beaches and across the harbour.
- Day 4:** Leave Sydney in the morning and take a leisurely drive to the Hunter Valley.
- Day 5:** Spend the day exploring the vineyards.
- Day 6:** Take the scenic drive to the Blue Mountains.
- Day 7:** Spend the day discovering The Blue Mountains, The Three Sisters or the Jenolan Caves.
- Day 8:** Return to Sydney.

EXTENSIONS

For those with a little more time, head further south and spend two nights exploring the enchanting Kangaroo Valley, an area surrounded by rolling hills, numerous waterfalls and stunning escarpments, ideal to explore by car or on foot.



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Jervis Bay

KANGAROO VALLEY

A couple of hours south of Sydney, nestled between Shoalhaven and the Southern Highlands is this curious village. Set in to a mountain pocket it plays host to morning mists and a mix of birdlife and offers the perfect break on a coastal drive. With its quirky collection of country-style boutiques and fragrant fruit orchards it is a wonderful place to explore; take a stroll to see Hampden Bridge, a charming sandstone suspension bridge built in the 1890s, and visit the local pioneer farm museum for a glimpse into the colourful regional history and finally quench your thirst with a cool 'stubbie' in the original stone pub. Make sure you take time to experience the grand views from the peak of Cambewarra Mountain, twenty minutes west of neighbouring Nowra, before heading north to Sydney, or south to Victoria.

Crystal Creek Meadows, Kangaroo Valley

This elegant bed & breakfast, recently discovered on one of our research visits, is set in the heart of great Australian farm vistas, surrounded by undulating green paddocks. Combining country charm with friendly hospitality, your hosts Christopher and Sophie have worked hard to create a stylish retreat for the independent traveller. Choose from two self-contained cottages; Rose Cottage with a contemporary, vivid interior and the added treat of your own spa, or Fleur Farm Cottage offering rustic charm. Sample fruit from the Edible Garden and drink in the views of the fields and distant Barrengarry Mountains on your private veranda as your dinner sizzles on the barbecue.



Crystal Creek Meadows

JERVIS BAY

A couple of hours drive south, or a seaplane flight from Sydney, is the gem of Jervis Bay. Home to a colonial port which once rivalled Sydney's Port Jackson, and the dramatic ruins of a bold, beautiful lighthouse, there is significant cultural heritage to discover. It is the perfect place to stop for a couple of nights on a coastal journey between Sydney and Melbourne. Take a walk with an Aboriginal guide through the reserve of Booderee National Park or you may like to take a night walk to witness the habitats of nocturnal creatures, or perhaps canoe the creeks or rent a bike and cycle the bush trails. The Botanic Gardens offer further stretches of bushwalking trails and perfect picnic spots to take time out, or you can spend a sunny afternoon at Green Patch Beach, famed for its clear waters and white sands; the glistening waters are home to pods of dolphins. Make sure you also keep an eye out for clouds of spray and swirls as humpback and southern right whales pass close to the shore between July and October on their annual migration.

Paper Bark Camp, Jervis Bay

Set on the outskirts of Jervis Bay amongst rugged wilderness, a leafy tunnel of overhanging trees with powder-white peeling bark lines the path to a your African safari-inspired tent. A unique 'camping' experience which combines style, character and the occasional inquisitive possum, with eco-sensitivity; it gives you a chance to get close to nature without sacrificing comfort. Your private tent, raised on a platform, is spacious and light beneath the canvas drapes. Queen-sized beds, simple yet elegant bush furnishings and an open-air ensuite bathroom gives you everything you need. Early evening, mosey up to the 'Gunyah' - Aboriginal for meeting place - and you will find the hub of camp activity; enjoy a delicious dinner, take time out in the camp library or just catch the sea-breeze.



Paper Bark Camp



The Bega Valley

SAPPHIRE COAST

Named after the sparkling colour of the sea, this region offers much for fans of the great outdoors and stretches from Eden near the Victorian border to Bermagui, just six hours south of Sydney. The Bega Valley, famous for its rich dairy farming, is the main hub and has a softly rolling landscape which cradles many small villages. Merimbula has miles of white sands and a beautiful lake lagoon and is an ideal stop for a night or two. In Tilba Tilba time appears to have stood still and as well as being an area renowned for cheese, there are a number of craft workshops to be explored. The reserve of Montague Island is a sanctuary for sea birds, seals and penguins and is easily reached from Tilba Tilba on a guided cruise. The town of Eden, on Twofold Bay, has a deep and long relationship with whales and the skeleton of the legendary Orca, 'Old Tom', lies in The Killer Whale Museum. Whale, dolphin, seal and penguin watching are high on the agenda as this coast is one of the best places for viewing.



Sapphire Coast

Robyn's Nest, Merimbula

Warm timbers, grand cathedral ceilings and open fireplaces inside a colonial-style stone manor house with a sprinkling of guest cottages set in the grounds sums up Robyn's Nest. Sailing, fishing, bushwalking or bird-watching, whatever you choose, can be combined with this lake-front setting. Meander to nearby Merimbula for dinner and you will pass kangaroos and wallabies contentedly grazing. Robyn's Nest is the perfect spot to rest before either turning inland towards Canberra, continuing north to Sydney or south to Victoria.

Green Gables, Tilba Tilba

Once a flourishing gold mining area, the twin towns of Tilba Tilba and Central Tilba are classified by the National Trust as heritage sites. Nestled in a beautiful valley, between the mountains and the coast, Tilba Tilba is particularly delightful. Hosts Stuart and Philip have transformed what was once the town's meeting hall into Green Gables, a charming bed & breakfast. Three guestrooms are decorated with simple country charm whilst a lounge area, complete with music and books, invites guests to relax and unwind. Tilba Tilba offers a wonderful combination of heritage trails, bush walks and galleries and craft centres, it provides a perfect break inland, on the journey along the coast.

Bannisters Point, Mollymook

With a stunning coastline for miles, the easy three hour drive from Sydney to Mollymook is a treat in itself with plenty of photo opportunities and breaks for fresh air and a stroll. From the moment you arrive it is clear that this is a special place, its fantastic cliff-top position ensures you views to write home about. With 26 rooms, each with a private balcony, there is a distinctly intimate ambience coupled with personalised service at this elegant property. Relax by the rejuvenating salt-water pool or take to Mollymook beach for leisurely beach and bush walks, scuba diving or horse-riding.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Linking Sydney and Melbourne by a path less travelled, this route takes in some of Australia's most magnificent coastal scenery and stunning national parks. Staying in small, friendly towns in southern New South Wales and eastern Victoria, this route is highly recommended for those who have perhaps visited Australia before.

- Day 1:** Drive from Sydney to Kangaroo Valley, spend the day exploring the valley and discovering the delights of the village.
- Day 2:** Drive to Jervis Bay, make sure you stop off and take in the view from Cambewarra Mountain.
- Day 3:** Spend the morning exploring the Booderee National Park.
- Day 4:** Drive to Tilba Tilba and spend the afternoon enjoying the heritage of this picturesque village.
- Day 5:** Join a morning cruise to Montague Island's seal and bird colonies. This afternoon drive to Merimbula.
- Day 6:** Cross the state border to Metung and spend the afternoon exploring.
- Day 7:** Take a cruise on one of the area's stunning lakes or perhaps a fishing trip.
- Day 8:** Drive to Wilson's Promontory National Park, spend the rest of the day relaxing and enjoy the views.
- Day 9:** Enjoy one of the marked walking trails.
- Day 10:** Drive to Walhalla, take a trip on the old steam train.
- Day 11:** Join a morning tour of one of the old gold mines. Continue to Melbourne.

EXTENSIONS

An alternative is to take the inland road, through the capital city of Canberra, across the Kosciuszko National Park (the Snowy Mountains) crossing the Murray River and the goldfields to Melbourne.



Gold digger, Walhalla, Victoria

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Pelicans

COFFS COAST

Although famous for its bunches of bananas there is far more to this region that stretches from Nambucca Heads to Woolgoolga with Coffs Harbour sandwiched in between. From the high headlands and bluffs that dot this coast you may see migrating humpbacks passing close to the shore with Boambee Heads offering one of the best vantage points. Pacific rollers wash the string of golden beaches and local seafood is a highlight from a dining extravaganza to that 'just caught' taste coupled with piping hot chips and a wedge of lemon down at the harbour. Bellingen is a relaxed, alternative town with a bias towards arts and crafts, and the lovely renovated dairy displays the works of some of the local artisans. This coastline, between the stunning hinterland forests of the Great Dividing Range is definitely worth a stop.

🏡 Lily Pily, Bellingen

This simple yet stylish country house offers a secluded stay in beautiful surrounds. Home-baked teas welcome you on arrival and each of the three rooms has a private balcony overlooking the river and mountains. Bellingen and its thriving arts scene are a short drive away. The guest lounge has comfortable sofas and an extensive selection of books and is an ideal place to while away the hours. A gourmet breakfast is served until midday, and private dinners are available.

PORT STEPHENS

The delightful sheltered bay of Port Stephens offers coastal scenery typified by volcanic peaks and clear bays fringed with near-deserted beaches and calm blue waters. At Nelson's Bay you will find one of the most perfect places to experience dolphins in their natural habitat. Unspoilt Broughton Island, half an hour by boat from Nelson, provides a wealth of incredible Australian flora and fauna. It is perfect for both naturalists and sun lovers alike as it boasts secluded beaches and fascinating bird and marine life. Take a leisurely stroll along the banks of Tillgerry Creek and spot napping koalas or, for those that want something a little more exhilarating you can take a 4WD tour of the largest sand dune system in Australia.

🏡 Peppers Anchorage, Port Stephens

Perched on the edge of the quaint marina, Peppers Anchorage occupies a superb position offering lovely views across the brightly coloured fishing boats that dot the bay. Built in the style of a fishing village, the property has a nautical feel and the interlinked guesthouses line the pontoon's edge. Each of the lovely guestrooms has a private balcony or veranda to make full use of sunlight and views; you are bound to feel that traditional seaside excitement that is brought to mind by the feel of the sun and crisp salty breeze on your face as you look out across the sea.



Jacaranda tree



Peppers Anchorage



Lord Howe Island

THE NORTHERN RIVERS

This area stretches from the mighty Clarence River to Tweed Heads and out to the foothills of the Great Divide and offers endless beaches, rolling countryside dotted with quirky townships, rugged cattle country and deep river gorges that disappear in to the mountains. A somewhat eclectic mix of cultures has settled in this area, in Maclean you can trace the Scottish heritage of the town's founders, while in New Italy, boatloads of shipwrecked Italians established a unique enclave in the bush, and at Byron Bay artisans and the establishment have created a bohemian yet sophisticated lifestyle. At Cape Byron the striking lighthouse marks Australia's most easterly point and the many walking trails and lookouts present you with wonderful opportunities for spotting whales on their annual migration (July to October). Mount Warning, a twisted ancient volcano which Captain Cook once used as a navigational aid, rises from the Tweed Valley and provides a marvellous lookout over the patchwork of sugar, tea and tropical fruit plantations; testimony to the fertility of the soil. Tweed Heads, less flashy than its sister town of Coolangatta just a hop across the state border, symbolises the end of a journey within New South Wales and the beginning of the next in Queensland.

Victoria's on Wategos, Byron Bay

Commanding spectacular ocean views, a waterfall feature streams gently down the front of this Tuscan-styled guesthouse which is set against a flourishing forest backdrop. The sophisticated interior colours blend with fine furniture and each of the five, light guestrooms features a private balcony with either a sea or garden view. Large spa baths, four-poster beds and fragrant flowers provide more than a hint of luxury. Upon leaving the comfort of your room you will discover that you are a short stroll from some of the most legendary beaches in Australia and the diverse lifestyle of Byron Bay.

LORD HOWE ISLAND

This far-flung, volcanic treasure, two hours by air from Sydney, rises out of the ocean and curves around an aquamarine lagoon. It is one of only a handful of islands awarded World Heritage status for its collection of scarce flora, fauna and prolific marine life. Forests smother the island, from native kentia palms at sea level to luxuriant mist forest on the mountain summits. Its flawless beaches are safe and pristine and fish can be hand-fed as they congregate in the shallow waters. As visitor numbers are limited the island is never crowded - take your time and explore the many walking tracks, snorkel amongst the brilliantly coloured and bizarrely shaped coral or, simply relish the setting.

Capella Lodge, Lord Howe Island

This lodge commands dazzling lagoon and mountain views and provides a refuge from everyday hubbub. The spacious suites with their timber floors and bleached shutters create a beach-house ambience. How active you wish your day to be can be decided whilst enjoying breakfast on your veranda; bush-walking, bird-watching or perhaps a soothing massage under the shade of a kentia palm. As the sun slowly dips you can sip a chilled drink whilst dinner is served and reflect on your choice.



Capella Lodge

THE MAGNIFICENT EAST

North of Sydney is some of Australia's most beautiful coastline, home to miles of perfect beaches and friendly seaside towns. This journey also heads inland, through the vineyards of the Hunter Valley and the Dorrigo National Park, Australia's most accessible temperate rainforest.

- Day 1:** Catch a last glance of the Sydney Opera House and the glittering harbour as you leave Sydney and head north towards the Hunter Valley.
- Day 2:** The Hunter Valley produces some of Australia's best wines and today is a free day to explore the vineyards and historic towns of this region.
- Day 3:** Continue north, passing through the Myall Lakes region and Port Stephens.
- Day 4:** A free day to explore the rainforest of the Dorrigo National Park or discover some of the many glorious unspoiled beaches on this stretch of coast.
- Day 5:** After a morning drive to Byron Bay, discover the lighthouse and beach before relaxing in the bohemian atmosphere of this laid-back town.
- Day 6:** Leave Byron Bay and cross into Queensland, ending your journey in Brisbane.

EXTENSIONS

Extend your stay at either the beginning or the end with a few nights on the World Heritage island of Lord Howe - direct flights are available from both Sydney and Brisbane.



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Queensland

Drenched in colour, tropical Queensland daunted the early settlers whose plants and cattle preferred the gentler climate further south. Queensland stretches from the temperate south to the tropics and is unimaginably blessed with vast stretches of beaches, sheltered by the Great Barrier Reef in the north and rolling with surf in the south. On either side of this glorious coast are two great wonders: the kaleidoscopic underwater world of the Great Barrier Reef and the ancient rainforests that have carpeted this land since time immemorial. Around the major cities of Brisbane and Cairns, this is a region where you still appreciate Australia's great scale and beauty, but also the challenges faced by the early settlers of carving a new life on a timeless land, as small towns are dotted in a vast landscape where everything - the plants, the animals, brightly-coloured birds, even the people - are just that little bit quirky and unexpected. Add in the remote pleasures of the sparsely inhabited Whitsunday Islands and the immense pastures of inland Outback cattle stations and it's clear that Queensland can reward months of exploration.

BRISBANE

Sun-soaked Brisbane still has traces of friendly, country hospitality underneath the cultural vibe of urban life yet offers a striking city centre contained by the looping flow of the Brisbane River, housing countless restaurants, theatres and cafés that spill happily onto the streets. The rolling hills that surround the city give a number of viewpoints, while the region contains some of the country's finest tropical rainforest, reaching out to a string of glorious beaches washed by the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean. This place of week-round 'sun-days' boasts great weather, exciting sporting events, a thriving arts and cultural scene and casual, yet sophisticated dining.



Buderim White House

SUNSHINE COAST

Less than two hours north from Brisbane you will find the picture-perfect and aptly named Sunshine Coast. Tempting azure waters flank the sweeping honey beaches and thriving villages are sheltered in emerald valleys. A colourful selection of restaurants, galleries and markets provide distraction from the array of heady outdoor choices centred, naturally, on an enviable collection of beaches; the surf-perfect rolling waters of Rainbow Beach and traditional favourites such as Noosa. Venture in to some of the best-preserved subtropical rainforest at Mary Caincross for some out-of-this-world bushwalking, while a hike to the top of the volcanic crags of the Glass House Mountains rewards with a panoramic vista.

Buderim White House, Sunshine Coast

This gracious manor house is inspired with just a hint of Victorian architecture refined by a smattering of Queenslander flair - from the manicured gardens to the warm interior with traditional timbers and antiques. Four sunny, spacious guestrooms, filled with the aroma of freshly cut flowers, are beautifully furnished with king-size four poster beds. This charming property creates the perfect mood for a Sunshine Coast escape.



Fraser Island



Fraser Island

FRASER ISLAND

Fraser Island is known to the Kabi Aborigines as Gurri or K'gair, named after a beautiful woman so taken with the earth that she stayed behind after creation. Possums, dingoes and wallabies inhabit the island and you will find dugongs feeding on sea grass, turtles nesting and humpback whales using Platypus Bay as a playground. The island is awash with colour; blinding white sands flank the milky turquoise and inky blue-black lakes, the dense green centre contrasting wonderfully. Don your walking boots and climb the dramatic sand dunes and take a dip in Eli Creek or amble along Seventy-Five Mile Beach to the eerie ruins of the 'Maheno' shipwreck. Regular barges sail to the island for those planning on exploring by 4WD, or alternatively a fast ferry or a helicopter will whisk you to the island if you wish to base yourself at the resort.

Kingfisher Bay Resort, Fraser Island

Amidst sweeping tree-covered dunes, this resort teeters on the banks of the Great Sandy Strait. It would be a crime to miss any of the island's natural quirks and intriguing history and this environmental resort provides the chance to uncover the spectacle. An assortment of guestrooms offer something for everyone; from rooms overlooking native bushland, to two and three bedroom villas with private decks overlooking the lake. Guided tours on foot accompanied by a ranger, or by 4WD are on offer, to help you experience this island for yourself.

QUEENSLAND

LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK

This UNESCO World Heritage National Park lies at the foot of the McPherson Ranges and straddles some of Queensland's most impressive landscapes. Take a bushwalk and you will see an implausible array of ferns and species of orchid. There is an abundance of colourful birdlife, from the noisy pitta to the glossy black cockatoos that flit happily through the towering eucalyptus canopy. A highlight is an amazing canopy walk that meanders through the treetops. Make the climb to the crow's nest and be rewarded with a view of the Green Mountains.

O'Reilly's Guesthouse, Lamington National Park

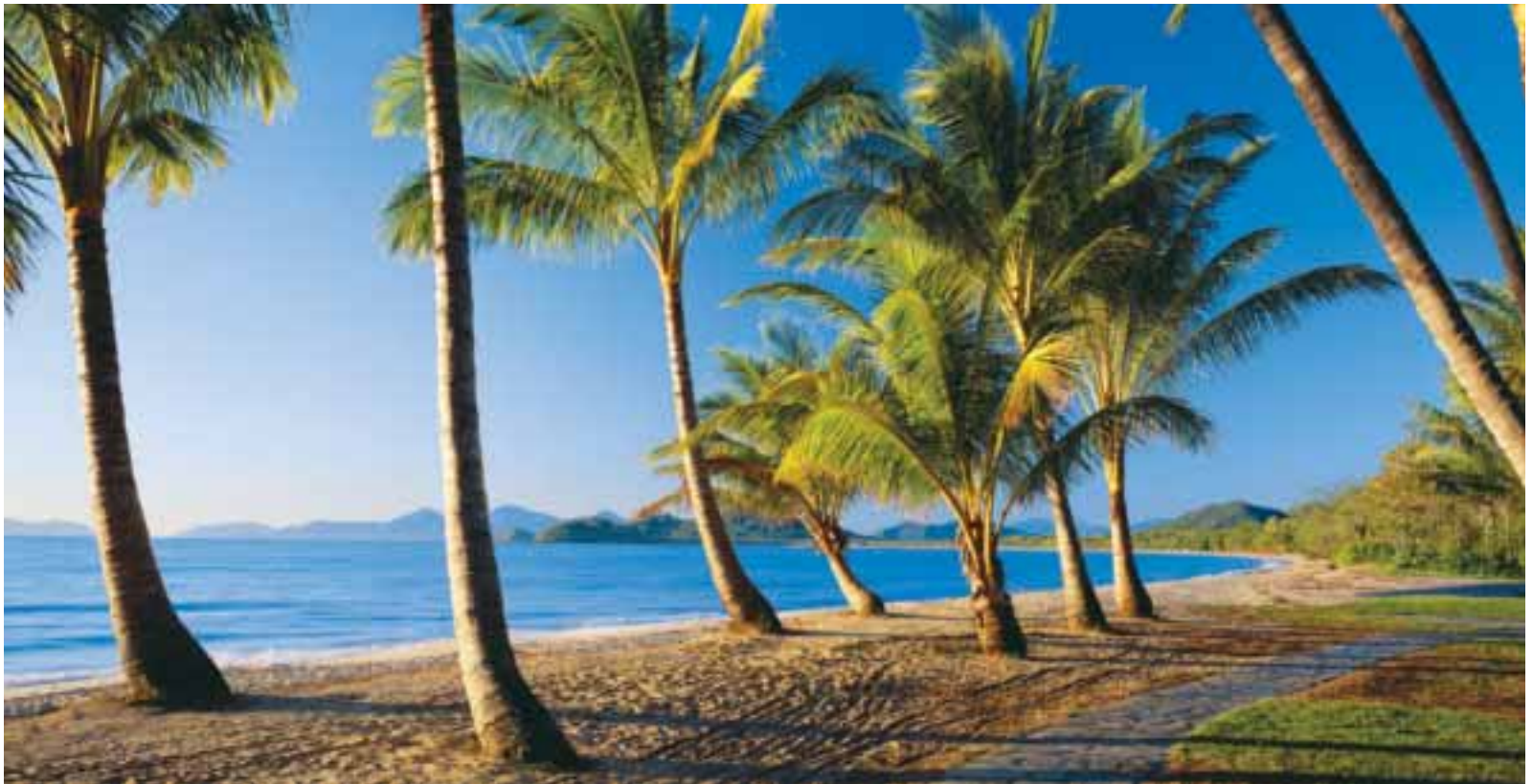
The O'Reilly family who own and run this guesthouse combine their passion and knowledge of their surroundings with friendly country hospitality. Environmentally friendly, this guesthouse commands magnificent views across mountains and valleys punctuated by waterfalls. Guestrooms range from the elegantly simple garden view rooms, with red cedar shutters, to the spectacular suites overlooking the rainforest. The family takes pride in its excellent nature discovery programme where bushwalks and 4WD tours take you through vast rainforest, past waterfalls, outlandish ferns and orchid gardens.



Regency bower bird



O'Reillys Guesthouse, Lamington National Park



Palm Cove beach

THE TROPICAL NORTH

The Tropical North of Queensland is bordered by the Coral Sea and the Great Barrier Reef to the east and the rainforest mountains that sweep from the west. At the heart of this tropical paradise is the city of Cairns, much more than a gateway with its eclectic cuisine making use of fresh seafood and tropical fruits and a vibrant nightlife. It struggles, however, to match the natural beauties on every side. Inland the land rises through virgin rainforest to the elevated Atherton Tablelands, known as the 'cool tropics': warm and sunny by day, cool and fresh by night. To the north a string of sheltered beaches, backed by tropical rainforest, become ever more remote and unspoiled as they lead to the little-visited Cape York Peninsula and finally the Torres Strait Islands. Running the full length of this coastline is the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest living structure, alive with the kaleidoscopic colours of corals and fish.



Kewarra Beach Resort

THE NORTHERN BEACHES

Less than half an hour from Cairns, Palm Cove and Kewarra Beach offer magnificent ribbons of palm-fringed, golden beaches edging the Coral Sea with picturesque Double Island and Scouts Hat Island breaking the blue horizon. Palm Cove exudes a genuine, simple tropical appeal complete with cobbled streets and colonial style buildings, whilst Kewarra has a delightfully relaxed, yet elegant feel. Take the scenic drive north for a further hour and you will discover Port Douglas with its backdrop of tropical mountains and one of the region's most beautiful beaches: 'Four Mile'. Retaining much of the original charm of its fishing-village days, the low-rise buildings of the main street of Macrossan intermingle with the original architecture and are crammed with tiny open-air cafés and restaurants. It has a laid-back atmosphere coupled with a generous touch of eccentricity. Any one of these places is an ideal base from which to discover the delights of the Great Barrier Reef, Daintree Rainforest or the Atherton Tablelands, they also make perfect retreats once you have finished exploring.

🏡 Kewarra Beach Resort, Kewarra Beach, near Palm Cove

Hidden within acres of rainforest surrounding a small lagoon and bordered by a honey-coloured beach, Kewarra offers a perfect escape without having to stray too far off the track. The central lodge has adopted the style of the Torres Strait Islands, using a spiritual wood 'Gul' from Saibai Island, coupled with Islander artwork. Individual 'Mouds', the islander word for 'small tropical house', are scattered around the grounds, each one private and spacious. Stroll through the gardens and encounter butterflies and birds or saunter along the private beach before sampling fresh modern cuisine in the Kings Restaurant - the perfect finale to an outdoor day.



Zanzoo Retreat, Cairns

🏡 Zanzoo Retreat, Cairns

Located twenty minutes from the centre of Cairns, Zanzoo Retreat is one of Queensland's oldest surviving homes. Amidst lovely gardens, this traditional 'Queenslander' home has been transformed into a delightful bed & breakfast complete with swimming pool. Large and rambling, there are two lounges, a reading room and a kitchen for guests to use. The first floor is ringed by a vast balcony, perfect for breakfast and the six guest bedrooms are beautifully decorated in soft colours.





Port Douglas marina



Sebel Reef House

🏡 Sebel Reef House, Palm Cove

In the heart of Palm Cove, this delightful white-washed, colonial-style building is just steps from the beach. Elegant and spacious, the open-plan rooms maximise daylight and catch the sea-breezes to create a calm and carefree ambience. The 'help-yourself honesty bar' makes a refreshing change, while dining beneath the majestic melaleuca trees is an indulgence to be savoured. This is the ideal place to unwind and enjoy the beach of Palm Cove, the perfect haven having spent time exploring the Tropical North.

🏡 Peninsula Boutique Hotel, Port Douglas

In the heart of Port Douglas across from the famous palm-fringed Four Mile beach, this charming property provides unsurpassed comfort and top-notch friendly service. The al fresco restaurant has wonderful views of the ocean and serves the freshest of seafood, while the landscaped pool has a waterfall and a sheltered sun deck. The one bedroom suites each have a private balcony with views out to the ocean or overlooking the pool.

🏡 Thala Beach Lodge, near Port Douglas

Tucked away atop a peninsula on the northern tip of a stretch of untouched coastline, this lodge, an Audley favourite, offers seclusion at its best. The heady concoction of dense verdant bush, native wildlife and views of the sparkling Coral Sea are a tremendous combination. Choose between rustic timber-clad tree-top cabins that share the aromatic eucalypt canopy with the birds, or the elegant bungalows where the Coral Sea fills the view - both are comfortable and spacious. Take an exploratory bushwalk through the garden trails to learn about the native flora and fauna, or stroll along the private beachfront and enjoy a picnic in a sheltered cove, returning for a dip in one of the two fresh-water free-form swimming pools. The open-air central lodge houses the renowned 'Ospreys' Restaurant and the intriguingly named, yet warmly sociable 'Masked Plover' Bar.



Thala Beach Lodge

TROPICAL NORTH DISCOVERY

Using delightful Port Douglas as your base, this trip allows you to explore a number of the breathtaking highlights of Tropical North Queensland, from the Great Barrier Reef to the huge trees of the ancient Daintree Rainforest. Thala Beach Lodge provides a luxurious and spectacular haven to return to.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Cairns and transfer to Thala Beach Lodge near Port Douglas. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy at leisure.
- Day 2:** Take a full day trip to the Great Barrier Reef onboard Synergy II.
- Day 3:** Enjoy a full day small group guided 4WD tour to Cape Tribulation.
- Day 4:** Today is yours to explore the lovely town of Port Douglas.
- Day 5:** This morning drive to the verdant Atherton Tablelands for the day before returning to Thala Beach Lodge.
- Day 6:** Morning at leisure before departing.

EXTENSIONS

The options to extend your visit to Tropical North Queensland are as varied as they are tempting. Lounge longer on pristine Lizard Island, cruise around the islands and coral systems of the Great Barrier Reef or for a real adventure hire a 4WD vehicle and follow the Bloomfield Track to Cooktown.



Cassowary

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Milla Milla Falls, Atherton Tablelands

🏠 Mount Quincan Crater Retreat, near Yungaburra

Just six stand-alone pole-framed cabins blend with the rainforest slopes of Mount Quincan's extinct volcanic crater, capitalising on panoramic views of the crater and Mount Bartle Frere. Each timber cabin is self-contained and features wood-fired stoves and double spas 'with views'. The owners, Kerry and Barb, take pride in their attention to detail, something you'll notice daily when your breakfast hamper is delivered. Set in the heart of the Atherton Tablelands there are superb bushwalks around the crater rim and the property is registered with Land for Wildlife, a local conservation organisation seeking to protect the rare Lumholtz's tree kangaroo.

🏠 Fur 'n' Feathers, Tazali, near Malanda

If you are keen to see the beautiful yet very shy cassowary then a stay here presents you with a good opportunity: a mother and her young have become frequent visitors. Set within a rainforest beside the Ithaca River, just five tree-houses offer the chance to experience wildlife in its natural habitat but from a hugely comfortable and private vantage point. The split-level houses have cosy lounge rooms complete with open fire-places, ringed by floor-to-ceiling glass windows with beautiful views, as well as large, shaded balconies. It's a great place to meet the local wildlife: there are platypus in the river below and an array of rainforest birds are likely to join you for breakfast on your balcony.



Mount Quincan Crater Retreat

ATHERTON TABLELANDS

Mountains rise inland from Cairns and the Northern Beaches to flatten out into the Atherton Tablelands, a rugged landscape of mountains and crater lakes. Once this was a hive of volcanic activity, but is now much calmer: a lush cool plateau of crystal lakes, waterfalls (including the famed Milla Milla), national parks and stunning scenery. An introduction is the spectacular railway journey which climbs and tunnels its way from Cairns to the rainforest village of Kuranda, something of a tourist mecca with a busy market beautifully set amongst the trees, but this is just a day-trip and the area is worth much more time than this. You will find some of Australia's quirky wildlife at Mount Hypipamee National Park, including red-legged pademelons, bandicoots and a diverse array of possums, and this is also a good place to spot platypus in rivers and seek out the elusive flightless cassowary. From the lively and untouristy town of Atherton the steam train to Herberton passes through magnificent scenery of rolling hills and dense forest. The Crater Lakes area is known for ancient rainforest and gigantic kauri pines whilst Yungaburra is renowned for its remarkable, parasitic curtain fig trees, still standing long after their host trees have been subsumed. Past Mount Garnet the Undara Volcanic National Park protects a matrix of lava tubes almost 200,000 years old.



Fur 'n' Feathers



Stoney Creek Falls, Atherton Tablelands



Wrotham Park Lodge

Tyrconnell, Dimbulah

Atop a seared hilltop covered with bloodwood trees and stumpy termite mounds is this once operational gold mine, just under two hours from Atherton. Andrew and Cate, the owners, renovated the mine and the result is three rustic cottages, 'Top', 'Ruby' and the larger 'Managers', all with rug-strewn polished floors, comfortable sitting rooms, ensuite bedrooms and each wrapped in shady verandas commanding magnificent views towards Mount Mulligan. Meals are taken either in the homestead, a family affair, or by candlelight in the atmospheric surroundings of the old stamper battery. There are plenty of things to occupy your days here; gold panning down at the creek, birdwatching walks to the Mareeba Wetlands or visiting George, one of the local Kuku Djungan Aboriginal people, for a didgeridoo lesson. The textures of the landscape are fantastic and the rust-covered buckets with riveted patches and corrugated iron buildings set the scene perfectly, making the mine a living piece of the past.



Tyrconnell Cottage



Tyrconnell

WROTHAM PARK STATION

Located on the Cape York Peninsula, this working cattle station is immense and craggy, and offers a wonderful opportunity to see a working station in action. The station land covers three major river systems, with the Lynd, Mitchell and Walsh rivers running through the property, and the area is blessed with an abundance of bird species, mobs of kangaroo as well as some of Australia's more unruly residents, the freshwater crocodile and the dingo. The station is reached by air from Cairns, by a guided 4WD tour or, if you're feeling bold, by hiring a 4WD vehicle and driving yourself.

Wrotham Park Lodge

This Outback lodge is part of the working station and sits high above the banks of the Mitchell River. The landscape, rugged and beautiful, is characterised by the classic big blue sky and the red earth of the Outback. A host of activities such as canoeing, walking trails and tours of the station occupy your day, whilst the evenings are communal dinner party style with meals a gourmet interpretation of traditional 'Aussie' country fare. The handful of guestrooms, 'Quarters', are based on the historic stockman quarters mixed with modern comforts: a comfy leather armchair and a shady veranda with a day bed. The lodge brings together wilderness, the rich heritage of Australia's rural history and classic Outback cattle station life with a hint of luxury.

DISCOVER THE TROPICAL NORTH

COLOURS OF QUEENSLAND

This indulgent adventure brings the classic images of Queensland to life: the sun-bronzed red of the Outback, a remote island resting on the coloured coral of the Great Barrier Reef and the tranquility of the Daintree's lush tropical rainforest.

- Day 1:** Fly from Cairns to Wrotham Park Station.
- Day 2:** Exploring the working station which covers over half a million hectares of land. In the evening, a star-gazing talk introduces the different constellations of the southern sky.
- Day 3:** Fly to Cow Bay and on to Silky Oaks Lodge on the edge of the Daintree.
- Day 4:** Relax at the lodge, maybe picnic by the river or explore by canoe.
- Day 5:** Fly to Lizard Island and take to the beach with a mask and snorkel to soak up the beauty of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Day 6:** Snorkel or dive at the 'Cod Hole', find clams more than a 100 years old, or relax on a deserted powder-white beach.
- Day 7:** Fly from Lizard Island to Cairns.

TABLELANDS & OUTBACK

North Queensland's vast contrasts come into vivid, human focus on this journey. Your Outback home is a stylish cottage set in a converted gold mine, while your rainforest experience is transformed by your pole-framed tree-house hidden within the trees.

- Day 1:** Depart from Cairns and head out through the rainforest to the rugged Outback Tyrconnell Mine.
- Day 2:** Full day at leisure to explore the goldfield and meet the locals characters.
- Day 3:** Leave Tyrconnell today for the temperate rainforests of the Atherton Tablelands and your tree-house within the forest.
- Day 4:** Spend the day exploring the Tablelands and the famous waterfall circuit.
- Day 5:** Spend the morning relaxing before driving back to Cairns.



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Honeyeater, Daintree Rainforest

DAINTREE RAINFOREST & CAPE TRIBULATION

This dense precious rainforest sports a million shades of green, outlandish fungi shining in the dark and a chorus of curious sounds. An environmental jewel that dates back 100 million years, making it the world's oldest, it reaches from Mossman through Cape Tribulation to Cooktown and plays host to a bewildering variety of plant, animal, insect, bird and reptile life. Across the Daintree River the dense forest overhangs the twisting road that leads to Cape Tribulation, named by Captain Cook in rueful acknowledgement of the trouble he experienced navigating the Great Barrier Reef. Breathtakingly beautiful with rugged mountain ranges and rainforest that tumbles down to the beach, there are endless ways to explore: kayak gently along the shoreline, rise high into the canopy on a crane giving an amazing perspective or take an interpretative walk accompanied by the guides who are only too happy to share their passion for the area. Crocodile spotting in the Daintree River is fascinating, especially at night, when the forest's nocturnal residents come into their own. The Daintree Rainforest heaves with life: butterflies flit through the trees, tropical birds squawk frantically and the ancient trees creak. Amazingly, it is all so accessible from Cairns, reached in less than a two hour drive.



Cockatoo Hill Retreat

🏡 Cockatoo Hill Retreat, Cape Tribulation

Set against the hulking green backdrop of Mount Thornton, this retreat's position is truly breathtaking: high on a rainforest ridge projecting you into the rainforest itself with wrap-around views. Immersed in a garden of palms, bougainvillea and frangipani are four shaggily-thatched bungalows providing cool enclaves of white walls and gleaming timber floors. Each king-sized bed has a mosquito net, and private balconies provide wonderful treetop views over the hillsides. The main lodge is crafted from local timbers and serves as a dining room and lounge. The swimming pool is cradled in forest and has views over the Coral Sea and your hosts, Carmen and Gilles, are friendly and welcoming.



Green tree frog



Daintree Wilderness Lodge

🏡 Daintree Wilderness Lodge, Cape Tribulation

This natural hideaway offers tranquility in the heart of the rainforest. Each of the seven simple yet comfortable guest bungalows offer privacy and are linked to the main lodge by a series of boardwalks. A swimming pool shaded by beautiful fan palms is a welcome finale after a day spent exploring the forest and the casual dining room specialises in local seafood and platters of colourful tropical fruit. The lodge offers guided rainforest night tours or if you just wish to take things at a more leisurely pace, then the beach at Cow Bay is a short drive away. The lodge supports a small community of cassowaries, and your hosts, Kerry and Peter, are part of a care group working towards protecting the habitat of this vibrant and rare flightless bird.



Silky Oaks Lodge

🏡 Silky Oaks Lodge, Mossman

This lovely lodge overlooks the Mossman River and is an idyllic and luxurious base from which to explore. There is no sense of 'roughing it' as your home is in a beautiful timber Treehouse either overlooking the river or within the rainforest. With an understated tropical style of natural tones and timbers which create a relaxed environment, huge glass doors open onto wide verandas where a hammock is perfectly positioned to make the most of the views.



Poruma Island

COOKTOWN AND SURROUNDS

The Bloomfield Track from Cape Tribulation (accessible only by 4WD vehicle) follows the rainforest as it weaves its way to Cooktown. Captain Cook spent a number of weeks here repairing the 'Endeavour' as it made its unexpected stop on the Great Barrier Reef and in the local museum you will find bits of memorabilia, including the old anchor from the vessel. A hundred years later the town became rather rowdy as gold was discovered but today it is much quieter and a superb base from which to explore. Black Mountain National Park is an area shrouded in Aboriginal legends and galleries of rock art can be found here. The deserted coast at Archers Point plays host to breeding turtles (October and February), whilst a visit to the wetlands at Keatings Lagoon offers bird watcher's an array of migrating birds. Nature is the entertainer and although there are plenty of marked walks, the region is best explored in the company of an Aboriginal guide.

Mungumby Lodge, Near Cooktown

This lodge, south of Cooktown, is on the northern edge of the Daintree Rainforest. Timber bungalows are set amongst the beautiful gardens that are crammed with a dazzling array of tropical plant and bird life. The main lodge is spacious with open living areas and overlooks Mungumby Creek. The friendly service here puts guests at ease and the hosts are happy to arrange tours to satisfy your interests.



Mungumby Lodge

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS

This string of palm islands likened to stepping stones, divides Australia and Papua New Guinea. Torres Strait Islanders are of Melanesian descent and the islands are geographically diverse, some with rocky mountain tops, others a collection of coral cays or of volcanic origin. A handful of these islands are inhabited and few permit visitors, one of which is the capital and one-time pearling hub - Thursday Island, another is Poruma. This narrow coral cay, a mile long but less than a third as wide, has just one village. With homes encased by strands of bougainvillea and hidden by pink frangipani trees this unspoilt island extends a genuinely warm welcome and an experience like no other.

Poruma Island Lodge, Torres Strait Islands

Two enormous open-plan timber lodges with lovely verandas face the island's best beach - a long sandy spit. An elevated bedroom with a soaring thatch roof ensures the air is cool and breezy and a plunge pool takes the sting out of the sun. Snorkelling here is magnificent as warm waters and few pollutants result in a perfect undersea world. Spend the day fishing with the locals, head out to one of the islands that dot the horizon, take a walk through the village or simply relax on the beach. Whatever you choose, this very different culture presents altogether another side of Australia.



Poruma Island Lodge

RAINFOREST, ISLAND & ROCK ART

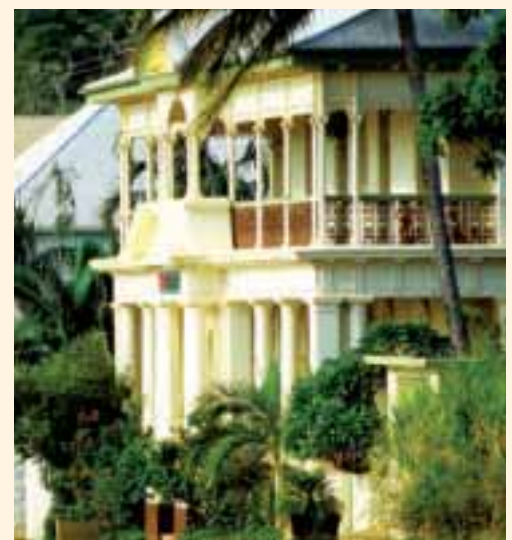
Combining the World Heritage listed Daintree Rainforest and the northernmost reaches of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, staying in some of its most stylish and secluded accommodation.

- Day 1:** Drive north from Cairns to Cape Tribulation and cross the Daintree River.
- Day 2:** Spend the day cruising, swimming and snorkeling on the magnificent Great Barrier Reef.
- Day 3:** Take a guided walk through the Daintree Rainforest and take the opportunity to learn about the many rare and protected species that inhabit the area.
- Day 4:** Fly via Horn Island to Poruma Island.
- Days 5/6/7:** Three days to do as little or as much as you please. Swimming is fantastic in the clear waters as the reef and corals brush the beach outside your lodge.
- Day 8:** Return to Cairns.

EXTENSION

This unique journey will take you to Cooktown and beyond, through areas of ancient rock art, deserted beaches and stunning coastlines.

- Day 1:** Fly to Cooktown over the sublime blue waters of the Great Barrier Reef, on arrival the rest of the day is yours to explore the area.
- Day 2:** Travel deep into Aboriginal country, viewing rock art and learning of the history and legends of this fascinating culture. Visit the deserted coastline where you may be lucky enough to see nesting turtles.
- Day 3:** Enjoy an afternoon tour of Cooktown and visit Keatings Lagoon, a favourite with migratory birds. Return to Cairns.



Cooktown

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Lizard Island

Great Barrier Reef

Sweeping from Lady Elliott in the south to beyond Haggerstone Island in the north are the islands of the Great Barrier Reef. Some are tiny specks, others little more than sandy cay swirls, crowded with seabirds, whilst several are densely vegetated and encased in rock. Dip below the surface and you'll find tufts of brilliant blue, vibrant green brain coral and swirling tentacles, the tips of which glow like lights on a Christmas tree. Washed by the warm waters of the south-west Pacific Ocean this perfect environment is considered to be in such pristine condition that it is protected by the UNESCO World Heritage Trust to ensure that its future beauty is maintained. Out of 2,000 islands less than 20 accommodate visitors, and standards range from remote luxury resorts to basic camp sites. A handful of our favourites are shown here and under the Whitsunday Islands section on pages 32 and 33. Some of the islands have been chosen for their privacy, others for the distinctive nature experience they offer, engaging you in a relaxing yet stimulating stay. Alternatively, you can visit a number of islands on a cruise or by hiring a yacht.

🏠 Lizard Island

One of the most northerly islands of the Great Barrier Reef, this is perhaps also the most exceptional. Take a picnic hamper and motorised dinghy to explore one of twenty-four superb beaches with which the island has been blessed. Anchor off a secluded beach, take a short swim and within minutes you will be floating over vivid underwater gardens where you can discover giant clams, many a metre long and more than a hundred years old. Renowned for its diving, at the famous 'Cod Hole' you'll come face to face with a massive yet curious potato cod swimming right up to inspect you with childlike curiosity. The rocky, mountainous interior is excellent for bush walking rewarding you with panoramic views from 'Cook's Look'. It was here that Captain Cook once stood trying to chart a course through the maze of reefs which confronted him. There are four different types of guestroom, from the simple yet elegantly furnished Anchor Bay rooms, set within tropical gardens, to the lavish Pavilion Suites perched high above the Coral Sea, which combine privacy with a spectacular wrap-around view of Anchor Bay, Osprey Island and Sunset Beach. A private plunge pool, day bed and secluded beach area complete the picture. The entire island is a national park and is the ultimate place in which to relax and unwind, and is considered to be one of the most beautiful hideaways in Australia.

🏠 Dunk Island

Known by its first inhabitants as 'Coonanglebah' meaning the 'Island of Peace and Plenty', Dunk Island's first name was far more apt. Whether you wish to soak up the sun on the honey-coloured beaches flanked by shady palm trees, swim in the tranquil waters or trek into the heart of the island's dense rainforest searching for colourful wildlife, the island has something to suit everyone. An abundance of activities suit families and couples alike, including a wonderful golf course, a spa and sunset cruises accompanied by the obligatory glass of wine. From the simply furnished Banfield rooms through to exclusive Bayview suites, accommodation choices are available to suit most budgets. Dunk Island is an ideal Barrier Reef base and is right to pride itself on being a spectacular tropical island.



Dunk Island



Heron Island

🏠 Heron Island

Heron Island is a true coral cay right on the Great Barrier Reef: here you can swim off the beach into an endless garden of coral and come face to face with the heaving kaleidoscope of marine life that lives just inches below the surface of the water. Heron is also one of the few places where you can take a guided reef walk to learn more about the unique ecology of the Great Barrier Reef. Green and loggerhead turtles have chosen Heron as their nesting place from February to March, when female turtles can be seen laying their eggs whilst hatchlings continue to emerge from their nests. From June to July migrating humpback whales can be spotted from the beach, and the dense pisonia forests are home to thousands of curious noddie terns. Be assured that the island's activities follow a strong ecological theme and feature a range of wildlife presentations and workshops. Take your pick from a Turtle room overlooking the gardens, to Heron beachside suites offering direct beachfront access, or for the ultimate in privacy, take the Beach House, set in a grove of trees with a private boardwalk leading directly to the beach. There is a relaxed island lifestyle that sets Heron apart, a sophisticated yet casual appeal, with an emphasis on discovering the natural attractions.



Beachfront Suite, Heron Island

🏠 Wilson Island

This tiny tropical nature lover's paradise, reached by boat from Heron Island, has captured the very essence of an island escape. As you step out of the dinghy on to a pristine beach you are greeted with a smile, a helping hand and an invitation to lose your shoes. Year-round this tiny island is a hive of wildlife activity; green and loggerhead turtles laying their eggs, humpback whales heading south with their calves and the constant arrival and departure of migratory birds. The island's tropical interior is home to an array of wildlife and your hosts are happy to take you on a guided walk through the interior or across the reef. With space for just twelve guests the luxurious walk-in tents blend into the natural landscape and are surrounded by a divine sweep of sands. The Longhouse with its 'help yourself' communal bar is the perfect place to meet like-minded travellers in a secluded patch of paradise.



Guestroom, Wilson Island



HERON AND WILSON ISLANDS

Combine the comfort and style of the sophisticated resort on magically unspoilt Heron Island with the natural beauty and seclusion of one of the Barrier Reef's most pristine and remote island hideaways of Wilson Island. The coral cays and pristine beaches are home to rare turtles and an unimaginable variety of marine and bird life, and the perfect base for snorkelling, swimming, deep dives or simply relaxing in the sun.

- Day 1:** Fly to Heron Island where you can relax for the rest of the day.
- Day 2:** Transfer to Wilson Island where you will be welcomed to your castaway island overlooking the reef.
- Day 3:** Full day on Wilson Island. Enjoy watching the sunset from the beach followed by dinner with your fellow islanders.
- Day 4:** A second day at leisure on this Great Barrier Reef Island.
- Day 5:** Spend the day on either Heron or Wilson Island, depending on the tides, then return to Heron Island for the night.
- Day 6:** Depart Heron Island.



Wilson Island

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

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THE WHITSUNDAY ISLANDS

Lightening the blue waters in the heart of the Barrier Reef, the Whitsunday Islands lie like emerald gems, ringed by untouched beaches and the pale turquoise of shallow waters, a wonderful archipelago of green islands and sandy atolls amongst the world's most spectacular coral system. The mosaics of coral platforms, turquoise lagoons and rich blue channels in this area are some of the most pristine areas of the entire Great Barrier Reef and with reef names such as Hook, Line, Sinkers and Bait you will be forgiven for thinking that you can fish to your heart's content. However, while you can't bring home the myriad of fish that inhabit the reef, you can get up close and personal through your snorkelling mask. Some 74 islands make up the Whitsunday Islands and each coral-fringed island has its own individual appeal. Many are uninhabited and are listed as national parks, however, a handful have resorts that offer a multitude of accommodation choices from budget to five-star luxury; Brampton, Hamilton, Daydream, Long and Hayman are just some. All you have to do is decide if you wish to just sink your feet into the impossibly white silica sand, swim in the temperate waters that hug the shore, hike thorough the forest and mountains, see the swirls of creamy sand and coral from a helicopter or discover a mix of these islands for yourself by chartering a yacht.



Coral Princess Cruises

🏠 Coral Princess Cruises

If you are finding the choice between each of the Great Barrier Islands a little difficult, your solution may lie in a cruise that links several of the islands and reefs. Coral Princess is a small ship cruise company who offers three, four or seven-night cruises around the unspoiled reef system between Cairns, Townsville and Lizard Island. The ships are large enough to ensure that your comfort is not compromised, yet small enough to access reef and island sites inaccessible to other boats. In the company of just 54 passengers the crew will ensure that your travels through this huge marine park are both personal and memorable. You are free to do as much, or as little as you like. Go snorkelling, take a guided rainforest walk, attend a presentation by the resident marine biologist or simply take the time to relax on deck.



Hayman

🏠 Hayman, Hayman Island

Magnificent surroundings, outstanding cuisine, chic suites and a distinctive lagoon pool overlook neatly clipped gardens, waving palms and a long, long stretch of a talcum powder beach. White-washed villas are scattered amongst the natural setting and the resort hosts a range of activities that could keep you occupied for weeks; a rejuvenating spa, water sports galore or a deserted atoll reached only by boat. In this memorable destination the 'Hayman experience' will leave you feeling fully recharged.



Peppers Palm Bay

🏠 Peppers Palm Bay, Long Island

In a secluded part of Long Island amidst a grove of tropical palms, the elegant bures of Peppers Palm Bay offer an escape far from the crowds, a laid-back haven perfected by the attention of genuinely friendly hosts. Unwind to the soothing sounds of swishing palms and the lapping lagoon. Feel the warm sand between your toes, savour fine food and wine. Swim, snorkel and explore hidden bays and rainforest trails or venture beyond the lagoon to experience the delight of the Great Barrier Reef.



Sailing around the Whitsunday Islands

SAILING ADVENTURES

Imagine standing at the helm of an immaculate yacht, the salty tang of the sea breeze in your face while overhead an expanse of brilliant white sail unfurls and fills with the wind, leaning into the breeze as it gathers pace. Sailing is at its thrilling, sunblessed best around the stunning island scenery of the Whitsundays and a spectrum of sailing adventures can be tailored to suit your experience or sense of adventure. Skilled sailors can chart their own course on a 'bareboat' yacht, while crewed charters let even beginners become part of the action on craft that range from romantic tallships to sleek ocean racers, so if you just want to island-hop, this might just be the way to go.

Windjammer Cruise

With her crisp white sails bellowing and her deep coloured hull splashed by breaking waves the 72ft 'Windjammer' recreates the golden age of ocean sailing vessels. Beautifully designed and built, it provides a unique opportunity to experience the style of travel that first opened up the world to explorers, traders and pirates, but adds little luxuries such as air-conditioned ensuite cabins. Accommodating just nine guests and three crew, she offers a friendly personalised experience, with an emphasis on good food, fun, exploration and relaxation. The three or six-day trips that set out to discover the nooks and crannies of the Whitsunday Islands are above all else truly memorable.

Bare Boat and Crewed Charters

Warm and inviting, the open waters of the Coral Sea are just made for sailing, through long sunny days or under balmy star-filled skies. Literally take the helm of this exhilarating prospect with flotillas of yachts, catamarans and motor launches to suit all budgets and levels of experience. Rest assured, daily radio contact is maintained so you can feel secure no matter what your capability may be. This inspiring alternative is perfect for those who harbour a secret desire to head for the open seas or is just the thing for a group of family or friends. For those whose idea of a holiday is simply to relax on deck as others move the scenes, a crewed charter might be a better idea, with different options for those who want to experience sailing for the first time or hone their nautical skills. So, select your boat, settle your route and set sail to explore these incredible waters.



Windjammer

GREAT BARRIER REEF CRUISE

Discover the Great Barrier Reef in style and at a pace which allows you to be a lazy beachcomber or an inquisitive adventurer at numerous exclusive reef sites and islands. Accompanied by a professional crew including a marine biologist and dive instructor you will be able to savour the hidden treasures of the less visited reefs.

- Day 1:** Depart Townsville, cruising the Coral Sea and Palm Group of Islands.
- Day 2:** Visit exclusive Pelorus Island and its magnificent fringing reef, beach and rainforest, the Hinchinbrook Channel and tropical Dunk Island.
- Day 3:** Explore Thetford and Moore Reefs for spectacular diving and snorkelling.
- Day 4:** Step onto dry land to enjoy Cairns city before returning to your vessel for champagne on deck as the sun sets.
- Day 5:** Visit one of the most remote islands in the Great Barrier Reef, enjoy a swim or a trip in the glassbottom boat then cruise on to historical Cooktown.
- Day 6:** Climb the island peak at Lizard Island and snorkel off the beach over coral cays before cruising on to Ribbon Reef.
- Day 7:** Spend the day exploring the Ribbon and Rachel Carson Reef.
- Day 8:** Cruise to Cairns today for your morning disembarkation.

EXTENSIONS

This cruise itinerary can also be taken in reverse or alternatively three and four night cruises are available from either Cairns or Townsville.



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GREAT BARRIER REEF

Acclaimed as one of the seven wonders of the natural world, Australia's Great Barrier Reef resembles a necklace along the northern coast of Queensland. Labyrinths of green and blue in irregular patterns are broken up by sand cays and lush forested islands that stretch over an expanse of 1250 miles, making this 'barrier' the most complex and extensive reef system in the world. The Great Barrier Reef is an immense area of shallow water that brushes the coast at Cape Tribulation and stretches some fifty miles from the mainland at the southern-most tip, though on average it is twenty to thirty miles offshore. Hundreds of islands and a wealth of colourful corals, fans and sponges on display just below the surface provide shelter for an astonishing array of marine life such as angel and parrot fish. Larger species such as the Napoleon wrasse and eagle rays drift just off the sloping reef walls which slip gently down to a shallow sandy bottom. Intensely fragile and blindingly beautiful, the reef is perfectly explored with a simple facemask and snorkel.

YOUR REEF ENCOUNTER

Most diving and snorkelling takes place from either islands, coral cays, secure pontoons or boats, making it accessible for people of all ages and abilities. A number of these sites can be reached from Cairns, Palm Cove, Port Douglas, Cape Tribulation and the Whitsunday Islands via day trips. Alternatively, you can stay on an island resort with the reef on your doorstep as the fringing reefs that edge the islands, which were once part of the mainland, offer safe sheltered snorkelling and diving where the waters are clean, warm and free from strong currents.

AUDLEY AND THE REEF

With a dive instructor and several qualified divers as members of our specialist Australia team, we have a wealth of Great Barrier Reef experience. Perhaps you are a beginner looking for a snorkelling day trip with just a single dive, maybe you want advice on a learn-to-dive course or you could be a qualified diver looking to discover remote dive sites or the thrill of exploring a shipwreck: you may not even want to get your feet wet and simply wish to see the reef from the air or a semi-submersible. With shared expertise gained from clocking up dives across different sites you can be assured that we will provide knowledgeable and safe advice. Our aim is to make sure you get the most out of this underwater paradise.



Gorgonian fan coral

SCENIC FLIGHTS

A wonderful way to view the grandeur and beauty of the Great Barrier Reef is by air, flying over spectacular coral formations set in a myriad of blues and greens that contrast with the white beaches and rainforest beyond. Take a seaplane and experience the thrill of take-off from the water or go by helicopter whereby you can land on a pontoon and spend the day swimming and snorkelling before returning by boat.



Seaplane landing



Snorkelling on Hardy Reef

DAY VISITS TO THE REEF

There are many operators offering days out to the Great Barrier Reef and there are three key differences to each reef operator: the type of vessel used, be it a motorboat or a large sailing catamaran, the number of visitors they take - which can vary from two to two hundred - and the locations they visit, some visit multi-level pontoons, others drop anchor near small sand cays or visit islands.



Synergy II

🏠 Synergy II, Day Trip

This luxury sailing catamaran carries a maximum of twelve people on day visits from Port Douglas. Synergy II's twin hulls make it extremely stable and ensures a smooth trip. The sail to the outer barrier reef is leisurely and guests are invited to take part in the sailing process - take the helm, trim the sails or have the intricacies of navigation explained. Your reef location depends on the day's conditions, however you will have plenty of time to explore and perhaps take an introductory dive with the on-board instructor. As the wind fills the sails for the cruise back to port, enjoy a glass or two of fine Australian wine - a perfect finale.

🏠 Odyssey H₂O, Day Trip

Departing from Cape Tribulation this trip is perfect for those looking to try snorkeling or diving for the first time or for those divers that are qualified. Taking just 30 guests, Odyssey H₂O is a powerful and well-equipped motor yacht that reaches pristine Mackay or Undine reefs in under an hour, allowing time to visit two reef sites and experience an extraordinary array of marine life and coral species. The return to Cape Tribulation is beautiful as you near the spectacular coastline, with its dense, green rainforest tumbling down to the beautiful, white sandy beaches.



DIVING ON THE REEF

Diving is one of the best ways to appreciate the Great Barrier Reef, and the region's clear warm waters and stringent safety regulations mean it is a perfect place to either learn the sport or hone your skills. The outer barrier reef, consisting of individual reefs that grow on to the edge of the continental shelf, are perfect for keen divers and a live-aboard expedition is the best way to experience them. There are some stunning sites located on the sparkling 'Ribbon Reefs' such as Pixie's Pinnacle and the Cod Hole where vertical walls plunge into the depths boasting a wealth of pelagic fish life, such as the giant potato cod. Beyond the outer reef, are the islands, sand cays and reefs of the Coral Sea, like an oasis, they rise thousands of feet from the ocean floor to just below the surface. Huge shoals of fish gather around the spectacular walls encrusted with coral, gigantic gorgonian fans and sea whips; capped with shallow coral gardens in the gin-clear water they are truly stunning.

🏠 Spirit of Freedom, Live Aboard Reef Safari

Spirit of Freedom offer a choice of three, four or seven-day diving safaris for those wanting to experience the best of the reef. At nearly forty metres she is one of Australia's largest live-aboard dive boats making her extremely stable and able to access remote and spectacular reefs in perfect comfort. With just ten ensuite cabins, delicious meals provided by a skilled chef and some of the finest diving in the world, you have the formula for a exceptional experience.

🏠 Pro Dive, Learn to Dive

This premier dive school has developed an international reputation for quality, safety and value. Using comfortable purpose built dive vessels they offer day visits, live-aboard safaris and a five day 'learn to dive' course. Their PADI dive centre is perfect for those wanting to learn to dive as well as qualified divers that wish to hone their skills, making it ideal for those travelling together who have different skill levels.



Clown fish



Northern Territory, The Top End

The deep reverberating sound of a didgeridoo, rugged sandstone cliffs etched with ancient art work, lush thick vegetation, huge wetlands and roaring waterfalls: all this and more can be found in the vast Outback landscapes of Australia's Top End. Tropical Darwin is the capital city and the essential starting point to explore the Northern Territory's national parks. The most famous is Kakadu to the east, the largest in the country: sheltering wildlife and wetlands as well as Aboriginal rock art sites dating back tens of thousands of years. Well off the tourist trail the remote Cobourg Peninsula and Garig Gunak Barlu National Park can be reached only through Aboriginal-owned Arnhem Land: well worth the journey as they are rich in wildlife. The closest park to Darwin is Litchfield National Park, rife

with natural swimming holes and waterfalls. Head south and the Nitmiluk National Park contains the stunning Katherine Gorge, carved by the Katherine River into thirteen soaring gorges, ideally explored by boat. This seductive, tropical area has two climates: an intense hot, dry season and the 'wet', which brings rivers and waterfalls to thundering life.



Aboriginal rock art

DARWIN

Thick hedges of bougainvillea and frangipani, gigantic arching rain trees and swaying palms add a tropical languor to this park-filled city that juts out on a peninsula in the Arafura Sea. Built on the traditional lands of the Larrakia Aboriginal people, the city is far closer to Asia than the rest of Australia, and this influence can be felt at every turn. Its colonial style is deceptive as it was completely flattened by Hurricane Tracey three decades ago and had to be rebuilt, but its airy architecture is coloured by the diverse influences of ethnic groups that range from Chinese to Greek and enlivened by restaurants and markets. Highlights include Mindil Beach sunset market that takes place each Thursday, the open-sided 'Tour Tub' trolleybus that tours the city sights and the Aboriginal artifacts of the Museum and Art Gallery. It is worth spending time here before dashing on to the national parks.



LITCHFIELD NATIONAL PARK

A massive sandstone plateau, scattered with pockets of verdant rainforest, impressive waterfalls and cool, crystal pools, Litchfield National Park epitomises the true beauty of the Top End. The cliffs surrounding the plateau create spectacular perennial waterfalls of which the most breathtaking, hidden in a pocket of monsoon forest, are the double Florence Falls and the stunning Tolmer Falls, home to a rare colony of orange horseshoe bats. Estuarine crocodiles skulk in some of the waters (warning signs are clearly posted where necessary) hoping to get a bite of such animals as the antelope wallaroo, and the lush growth is filled with an array of birds that are as colourful as they are noisy. One of the park's unique attractions are groups of narrow 'magnetic' termite mounds that eerily resemble bush graveyards. Constructed by millions of termites, all are precisely aligned to catch the sun and many are over a hundred years old. Reached in just under two hours from Darwin this is one of the Top End's most accessible parks.

WALLAROO ECO TOURS

This small, locally owned company operate 4WD vehicle day visits and their combination of small groups of like-minded visitors and enthusiastic, knowledgeable guides makes for a fantastic experience. Their leisurely day includes a cruise along the Adelaide River crocodile spotting, gentle interpretive bush walks, a visit to the towering magnetic termite mounds and plenty of time to swim in the fresh water pools. Your day finishes at Cullen Bay, Darwin where with a platter of fresh seafood you can watch the spectacle of a Darwin sunset.

Feathers Bed & Breakfast Sanctuary, Darwin

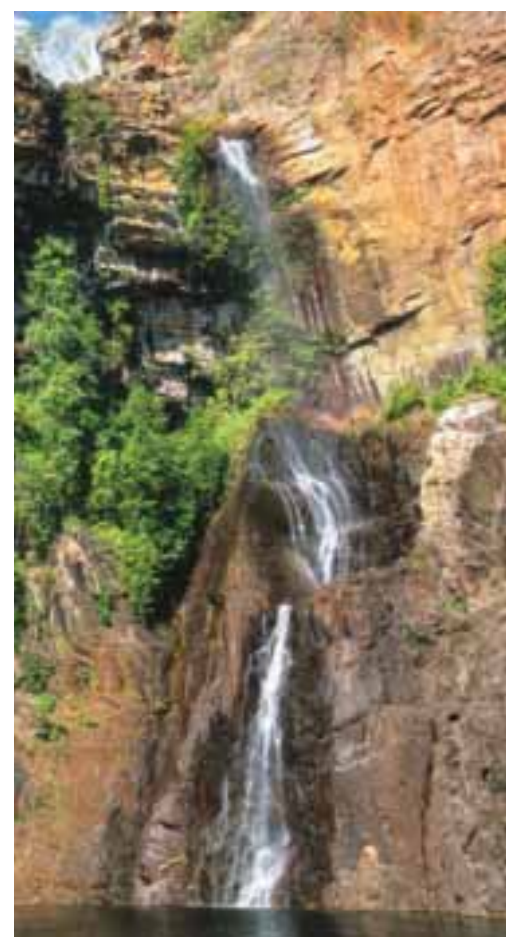
Set in the grounds of a landscaped private bird park, each of the luxurious hut-style guestrooms has an ensuite outside bathroom with a private glass atrium brightened by rare birds and sugar gliders, tiny mammals that coast from tree to tree. A highlight is to join your host after breakfast on the daily rounds of the delightful garden to feed the collection of visiting and resident birds. With the city and airport ten-minutes away, Feathers bed & breakfast combines nature with a perfect location.



Feathers Bed & Breakfast

Saville Park Suites, Darwin

In the heart of this tropical city, these award-winning suites are located on Darwin's picturesque Esplanade with views of the city and sparkling Arafura Sea. Guest accommodation ranges from simple hotel rooms to three bedroom suites, each beautifully furnished, well equipped and with sunny balconies, and friendly, efficient service makes this an ideal city-centre home. The hotel has an excellent restaurant on site, but Cullen Bay marina, with its Asian, Indian, Australian and European restaurants, is just a short drive away.



Sandy Creek Falls



Kakadu escarpment

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

Rugged stony plateaux, red escarpments riven by waterfalls, long twisting rivers and wetlands festooned with flowers and birds: add in a wealth of Aboriginal rock art sites and fauna that is more curious the closer you look and it is easy to see why this is one of the most important UNESCO World-Heritage areas. Jointly owned by three traditional Aboriginal groups, the Gagadju, Gundjehmi and the Jawoyn, a visit to this park offers a vivid insight into an ancient land. Cruise the Yellow Water, East Alligator or Mary River wetlands to see Kakadu in all its glory: crowded with lotus lilies, crocodiles resting idly on the banks, the chatter of the kookaburras puncturing the peace and swarms of parrots scattering the sky. The finest rock art sites can be found at Nourlangie, while at Ubirr Rock the rock paintings combine with heart-stopping panoramic views. A sandstone ridge worn by the two strands of Twin Falls and Jim Jim Falls: both are exquisitely tranquil during the dry season, seething maelstroms in the wet. Day visits to the park are possible but an overnight stay accompanied by a guide certainly makes for a more rewarding experience.



TOURING THE TOP END ODYSSEY TOURS & SAFARIS

Given the vastness of the Top End it makes sense to explore this captivating territory with a local. Odyssey Tours & Safaris' guides combine a love of the bush with in-depth knowledge of its flora and fauna, and are classified as Master Operators of the Savannah Guide network - the highest guiding accolade in Australia. With a programme of small-group tours of two, three, five and seven days they explore remote areas of Kakadu, Litchfield, Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Parks and Arnhem Land, with accommodation in permanent camps, scattered around secluded locations.



Aboriginal guide at Injalak Hill

🏠 Odyssey Permanent Camps

Odyssey's private camps located in Minjungari, Litchfield National Park, Gunlom in the south of Kakadu National Park and Mardugal in the park's centre, are especially designed for the tropical Outback environment. Accommodation is in safari tents set on wooden decks, with insect screens on the windows and comfortable twin beds. In addition to your guide, each site is hosted and together they will ensure that everything from your cooked breakfast to your delightful candlelit dinner is freshly prepared and contributes to your experience. For those that seek a little more adventure, you may choose to sample Outback life by sleeping out under the stars in a bushman's swag.

🏠 Gagudju Crocodile Holiday Inn, Jabiru, Kakadu National Park

This hotel, renowned for its crocodile shaped design, is situated in the small township of Jabiru. With over a hundred air-conditioned ensuite guestrooms and a shaded swimming pool it serves as a welcome base after a long day exploring the national park.



Egrets



Arnhem Land

ARNHEM LAND

This immense undisturbed swathe of land blessed with wild coastlines, monsoon rainforests and soaring escarpments is bound by Kakadu National Park, the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria. One of Australia's most powerful cultural sites is at Mount Borradaile where thousands of rock paintings chronicle everyday Aboriginal beliefs: the Rainbow Serpent painting found here is one of the most potent spiritual symbols of Aboriginal Dreamtime. Another area rich in art is the remote Oenpelli region at Injalak Hill where you can see Aboriginal artists at work. Wildlife abounds, with colourful jacana (Jesus-bird) walking daintily on the lily pads in billabongs, goannas and frill-necked lizards. Access to Arnhem Land is restricted by decree of the traditional landowners and only selected guides who have earned their trust may bring visitors.

LORD'S KAKADU AND ARNHEM LAND SAFARIS

Sab Lord, owner of Lord's Safaris, was raised in Kakadu and having grown up with local Aboriginal people he shares a mutual respect and passion for their values and land, and his guides are all drawn from the community. With exclusive access to many areas of cultural significance Sab offers a selection of day visits departing from Jabiru in Kakadu National Park, or overnight safaris where you camp out by the side of beautiful sandy billabongs, near towering waterfalls or on the wide open savannahs of a remote cattle station.



Arnhem Land wetlands

COBOURG PENINSULA, ARNHEM LAND

Accessible by an hour's scenic flight over Van Diemen's Gulf the Cobourg Peninsula is prime Australian wilderness. Its mosaic of sandy beaches, mangroves, rainforest and sea grass meadows support a rich marine life from dugongs to loggerhead and Olive Ridley turtles. Home to the Aboriginal clans of Agalda, Ngaindjagar, Madjunbalmi and Muran, the spiritual link with the land and sea is still prevalent. From Gunners Quoin headland the view over the reefs is awesome, with soaring sea eagles, crocodiles and giant manta rays cruising below. Head west along the coast and pass curiously shaped rock formations before reaching a small paper bark swamp forest where banteng cattle and wallabies come to drink. A feast for nature lovers, this peninsula offers an incredible diversity of environments.

Seven Spirit Bay Lodge, Cobourg Peninsula

This delightful lodge is just steps from the sea. Meandering paths weave their way through the woodland to clusters of tropical 'habitats'. Spacious rooms have louvered shades with screens to admit the breeze, and semi-open bathrooms, elegantly simple and with beautiful views. The main lodge is surrounded by verdant bush and overlooks the Arafura Sea on one side and a lagoon pool on the other. A selection of guided treks and 4WD vehicle safaris set out from here to explore the rock art sites and secluded bays.



Seven Spirit Bay Lodge

SECRETS OF ARNHEM LAND

With Sab Lord enjoy exclusive access to Arnhem Land, a truly untouched and wild part of Australia where you will visit ancient sacred sites and bushwalk in the company of local Aboriginal guides.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Darwin - spend day at leisure.
- Day 2:** Journey through Kakadu National Park by 4WD and spend the afternoon exploring the rock art galleries at Ubirr Rock.
- Day 3:** Bushwalk through Kakadu and see its magnificent waterfalls.
- Day 4:** Visit the Aboriginal lands of Arnhem Land, see some excellent examples of rock art at Injalak Hill. Visit the magnificent Sandbar billabong.
- Day 5:** Experience spectacular birdlife and spot the infamous saltwater crocodile on a boat trip on the Yellow Water Billabong before you return to Darwin.
- Day 6:** Day at leisure in Darwin.

EXTENSIONS

Parts of Kakadu National Park and Arnhem Land are inaccessible by road during the wet season (December to April), however the sight of brimming floodplains and raging waterfalls is amazing. Lord's Safaris work closely with Davidsons Arnhem Land Safaris and use light aircraft to reach their wilderness camp in the heart of Arnhem Land, showing the true majesty of both regions.



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NORTHERN TERRITORY



The Cascades

BULLO RIVER STATION

This far-flung, untamed station in the far reaches of Australia's wild Northern Territory is the Outback at its quintessential best. Stretching over half a million acres of grassy dust plains, crossed by bronze, twisted rivers and flecked with gnarled, leathery boab trees it is home to 8,500 Brahman-cross cattle. The station is encircled by the Victoria River, with dramatic escarpments inscribed with rock art, and waters crammed with barramundi and crocodiles. Wild buffalo, dingoes and mobs of wallabies roam the plains, whilst native and migratory birds lend colour and sound to what is already impressive country. Reaching Bullo by light aircraft from Darwin or Kununurra you fly over a panorama of jagged escarpments and rivers before landing on the station's airstrip by the homestead. For the adventurous with time to spare, you can also reach the station by road - 500 miles, mostly on dirt, with the station's driveway itself being some fifty miles long. The distances being all part of an authentic Outback experience.



Bullo River Homestead

🏡 Bullo River Homestead

Although a rugged working station, guests at the homestead are treated to plenty of Outback comforts. The twelve modern ensuite guestrooms are spacious and set in the surrounds of the family home, and you are welcome to share the sprawling homestead and small swimming pool, ideal for washing off the dust after a day outdoors. Fresh fish and prime, grass-fed beef feature prominently on the dinner menus: barramundi cooked in paperbark over hot coals is an Aboriginal speciality and something of a Bullo trademark. Marlee and Franz offer an informal, entertaining stay, recounting stories of the station life and its history, and we feel Bullo River Station certainly adds a colourful and fascinating dimension to a visit to Australia.



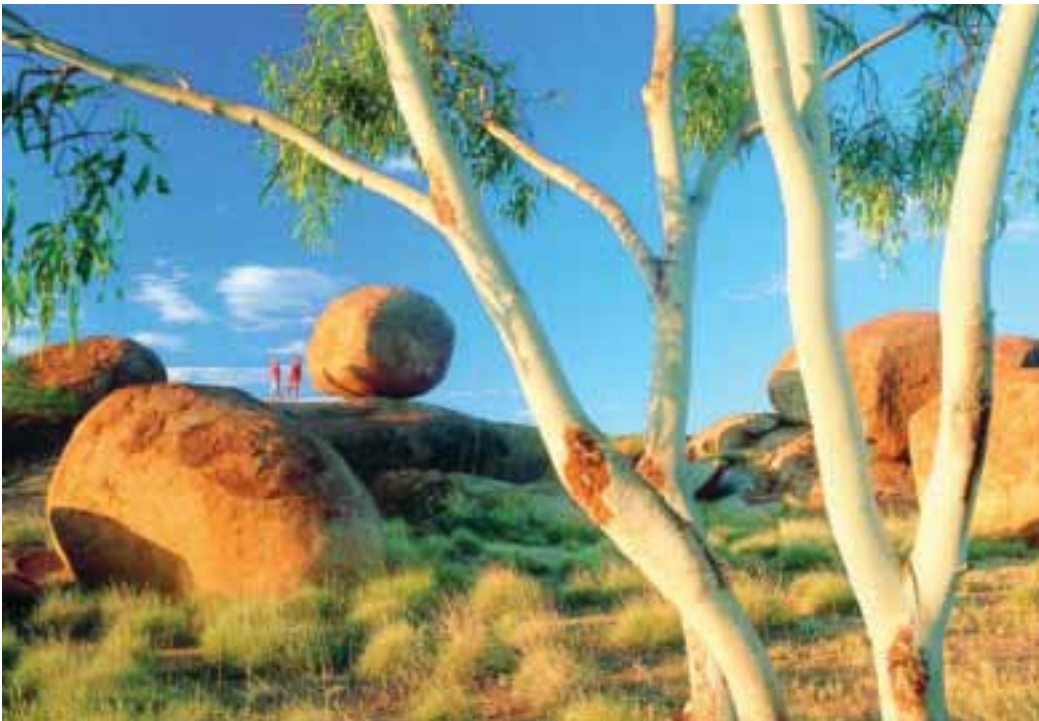
Cattle mustering

STATION LIFE

The charming hosts at Bullo River Station are Marlee, who was brought up on the farm, and her Austrian-born husband Franz. With their young children, they thrive on their life here and like nothing more than inviting guests to share in the daily home and station life. Guests at this working station gain a front-seat view, from building fences to seasonal cattle mustering, dealing with washed-away roads and wild cattle wreaking havoc. You have the option to participate as much or as little as you wish, so you may find yourself learning the Aussie bushcraft of cracking a bullwhip or helping to rope cattle. Novice fisherman are guaranteed action pitching their wits against Australia's famous fighting fish, the barramundi, or you can take a rock art cruise along the river in the company of a local guide. When Franz isn't using his helicopter to muster cattle there is perhaps the chance of an aerial view of this untouched land.



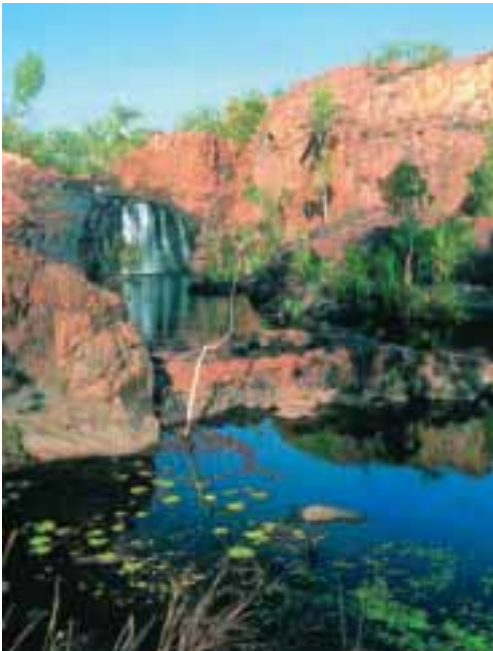
View over the Bullo River Station



The Devil's Marbles

THE EXPLORER HIGHWAY

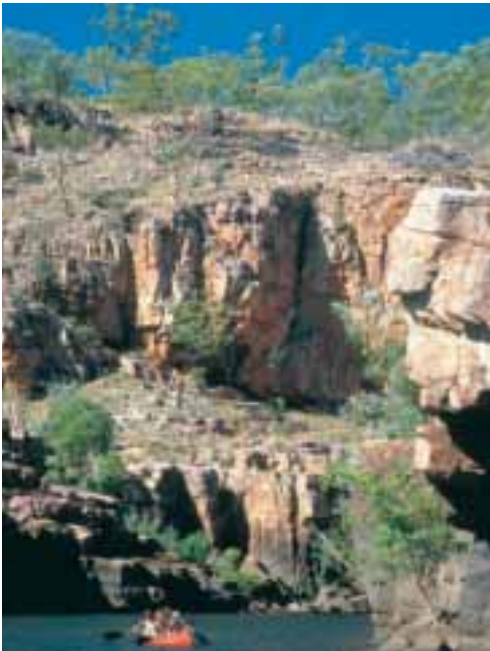
The 1,500 kilometres that separate Darwin in the Top End from Alice Springs in the Red Centre cross different climates and ways of life. Following the path created by the first pioneers and the telegraph line of 1870, this previously dusty, ragged track is now a two-lane highway through the heart of the continent. From Darwin, Katherine is a natural first stop followed by a visit to the hot springs of Mataranka in the Elsey National Park. The pub at Daly Waters has held its 'galleon licence' since 1893, and drips with memorabilia dating back to its days as an important staging post for early aviators. Tennant Creek straddles the highway, while 100 kilometres further are the Devil's Marbles - a wonderful series of granite boulders littering the highway that the Warumungu people believe to be the eggs of the Rainbow Serpent. Hotel standards are rather simple, yet visiting one of the Outback communities and staying in a typical Australian roadhouse is likely to find you engrossed in yarns spun by the locals, adding a different dimension to your experience.



Edith Falls

NITMILUK NATIONAL PARK

At the centre of this magnificent national park is Katherine Gorge. Often seen as 13 separate gorges, it is in fact one continuous fissure carved by the Katherine River, twisting and turning. The river is hemmed by craggy, vibrant orange walls adorned by rock art and the whole area is home to an abundance of birdlife as well as the occasional skulking freshwater crocodile. For solitude you can hire a canoe and paddle your way through as many of the turns as your energy allows, or there are a number of boat trips of varying length. Bushwalkers are welcomed and there are a network of walking tracks. At Leliyn, a five kilometre walk leads around a forested pool to the pretty Edith Falls which cascades into three refreshing swimming holes. For avid walkers, the 66 kilometre Jatbula Trail across the park to Edith Falls is known as one of Australia's most awesome hikes. The town of Katherine is around 30 kilometres from the park and is the ideal base from which to explore the area. The accommodation standards, however, can be somewhat limited.



Katherine Gorge

OUTBACK LIFE

From Darwin, explore lovely Litchfield National Park and then venture into the Outback by light aircraft to Bullo River Station at the edge of the Northern Territory. Discover rare Aboriginal rock art, try your hand at cattle mustering or just relax and enjoy the experience of visiting this vast Outback land.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Darwin with the rest of the day free to explore.
- Day 2:** Join a day trip into the beautiful Litchfield National Park with its waterfalls, gorges and freshwater pools.
- Day 3:** Leave Darwin on a spectacular scenic flight over remote coastline to Bullo River Station, one of Australia's largest working cattle farms.
- Day 4:** Most activities at the homestead are included, with station hands and guides happy to accompany you fishing for barramundi, spotting crocodiles in the river or searching for rock art.
- Day 5:** A further day to explore the sights.
- Day 6:** After breakfast return to Darwin.

EXTENSIONS

Explore more of the Outback by taking a helicopter from Bullo River Station to the mysterious Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park in Western Australia, join a journey along the Gibb River Road to Broome or board The Ghan train that travels from Darwin to Alice Springs through the magnificent Red Centre. For those looking for the freedom of the open road, self-drive the Explorer Highway through the heart of the continent, offering insights into remote Outback life with the chance to see Katherine Gorge and the Devil's Marbles along the way.



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Uluru

Northern Territory, The Red Centre

Contrasting sharply with the Top End, the Red Centre has an awesome, arid, craggy beauty, peppered with tufts of spinifex grass and seasonal wildflowers. The colours of its vast landscape change with the angling light, adding drama to the stories from the Aboriginal Dreamtime. In the heart of this region is the great monolith of Uluru/Ayers Rock, partnered by the ruddy coloured domes of Kata Tjuta/The Olgas and the hidden waters of Kings Canyon. Alice Springs, crouching beside the majestic MacDonnell Ranges, is no longer considered just an overnight stop en route to Uluru; its robust founders are ever-present in the form of the Royal Flying Doctors service and the Telegraph Station. The area is now more accessible than ever with the extension of The Ghan railway to Darwin, and small group tours now head out into the bush escorted by local Aboriginal people, making this a good place to learn more of this culture that has shaped Australia.

ALICE SPRINGS

'The Alice', as this town is affectionately known, has come far from its origins as a telegraph station. Founded in the 1800s and marooned in the desert it is a great place from which to explore the Red Centre. West of the town is the marvellous Desert Park where plants, animals and Aboriginal artifacts offer an opening in to the curious Australian desert. The Royal Flying Doctors and the School of the Air are fascinating examples of how people have adapted to this immense environment and as night falls the stunning landscapes are lit up by countless stars, bright in the clear Outback air.



🏠 Ooraminna Homestead, Deep Well Station

Weathered rocky outcrops, red sand hills and a profusion of plant and wildlife provide the backdrop for this historic homestead, forty kilometres south of Alice Springs. Owned by generations of one of the earliest pioneer families it offers four distinctive comfortable bush huts set amongst rocks and desert oaks, each with a veranda providing a prime spot to toast the desert sunset. Blending privacy with an insight into life on a working station there are ample opportunities to join with station activities or take 4WD vehicle tours and bushwalks. This homestead provides an accessible Outback station experience.



Ooraminna Homestead



The MacDonnell Ranges

Alice Springs Resort

On the banks of the barren Todd River this lovely resort nestles amongst the wrinkled ghost gums and overlooks the stunning MacDonnell ranges. The centre of town is only a few minutes walk away and so this is an ideal base from which to explore this Outback town. The numerous guestrooms possess all the usual modern comforts and the restaurant overlooks the swimming pool and gardens.

Gunya Titjikala, Aboriginal Community

Authentic indigenous experiences are more often advertised than offered, but this desert Aboriginal community, an hour and a half south of Alice Springs, is quite genuine. The community invites just six guests to learn of their intriguing life, allowing them to participate in gathering bush tucker and medicinal plants, and listen to Dreamtime stories told by the Elders. 'Go bush' with the traditional land owners to visit rock art and fossil sites and learn of the secrets of daily survival that have brought this ancient culture safely through the ages. Wonderful meals add an Aboriginal twist to Australian cuisine, with a 'bushtucker' chef adding wild fruits and perhaps a smattering of witchetty grubs. The three luxury safari-style tents with polished wooden floors and ensuite bathrooms provide comfort in a remote desert retreat. This project is a joint enterprise with the community so the majority of the profits go to the Titjikala Foundation, focusing on health, education and school retention initiatives.



Gunya Titjikala Camp

THE MACDONNELL RANGES

These impressive ranges tower over the plain, a natural barrier broken by gorges, cliffs and natural pools. Running east and west of Alice Springs they are easily accessible on either a day visit from the town or as a detour on the drive to Kings Canyon. In the West MacDonnells, Simpson's Gorge is the first of a series of attractive natural features, another is Standley Chasm, a slender gorge whose sides glow a marvellous red in the desert light. At Ellery Gorge, Ellery Creek Big Hole is an excellent swimming pool while Serpent Gorge, slightly further west, has a lovely walking trail leading to a lookout with a spectacular view. The Eastern MacDonnells host some Aboriginal sites of the local Aranada people and walking trails thread past quartzite cliffs and red river gums.

The Larapinta Trail

This thrilling walking trail runs for some 220 kilometres along the backbone of the West MacDonnell Ranges, with expertly guided walks presenting unequalled opportunities to take in this ancient landscape. The walks are of between three and ten days duration and are a little challenging in parts. You carry only a day pack and sleep out under the stars in a cosy bushman's swag, with drinks and delicious freshly prepared meals provided.



Aboriginal bush tucker

RED CENTRE CONTRASTS

At the geographical and spiritual heart of Australia, the Red Centre remains a sacred site to the indigenous Aboriginal people. Experience two contrasts of Australian life by spending time on a traditional Outback station and then join an Aboriginal community to learn of their ancient culture. No visit to the centre would be complete without a visit to the magnificent Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and Alice Springs.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Alice Springs and explore the township and museums.
- Day 2:** Make time for a visit to the native wildlife sanctuary of Desert Park.
- Day 3:** Head out of town for an Outback experience at Ooraminna Homestead on the working cattle station of Deep Well.
- Day 4:** Enjoy station activities and Outback hospitality.
- Day 5:** Return to Alice Springs. Travel south to Gunya Titjikala Aboriginal camp and experience life within an Aboriginal community.
- Day 6:** Hear Dreamtime stories, share in traditions and join in community activities.
- Day 7:** Return to Alice Springs.
- Day 8:** Journey to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. View the magnificent Uluru sunset.
- Day 9:** Take the Valley of the Winds walk through the domes of Kata Tjuta.
- Day 10:** Leave Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

EXTENSIONS

Fly to Cairns and onward to beautiful Lizard Island to explore the underwater beauties of the Great Barrier Reef. See page 30 for details.



Gunya Titjikala camp

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Kata Tjuta

KINGS CANYON AND WATARRKA NATIONAL PARK

Southwest of Alice Springs is Watarrka National Park, a scenic landscape of rugged ranges and gorges that serves as a refuge for an array of plants and animals. Kings Canyon is Australia's largest and most spectacular, carved into a rocky plateau with vast, sweeping views, its richly coloured sandstone walls plummeting to the 'Garden of Eden', where tranquil pools, cycads and a maze of eroded domes are sheltered from the remorseless sun overhead.

KINGS CANYON RIM WALK

The six kilometre walk around the rim of this extraordinary chasm allows you to see the canyon in all its glory. The walk is at times rocky and a little steep at the beginning, but is well within the scope of the reasonably fit and sure-footed. For the less agile, a creek walk leads along the canyon base through the wood, with plenty of waterholes for a cooling dip.



Kings Canyon Resort

Kings Canyon Resort, Watarrka National Park

Within the boundaries of the national park this modern resort has gone to great lengths to minimize the impact on its surroundings yet offers an excellent standard of accommodation. Each of the numerous guestrooms is spacious and comfortable and some have the added luxury of a spa bath with a view over the rugged desert. The resort is renowned for its 'Sounds of Firelight' dinner, served beside an open fire, against the backdrop of a star-speckled sky.



Kings Canyon

ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK

In the heart of Australia's Red Centre the stone formations of Uluru/Ayers Rock and the mystical domes of Kata Tjuta/The Olgas rise up from the dunes with a wholly unexpected beauty. These icons of Australia rest on the sacred lands of the Anangu people and form the basis of many of their Dreamtime beliefs. The park was awarded dual World Heritage status for both ancient culture and its natural attributes, and it is worthwhile for anyone visiting the park to look beyond the 'rock' and learn something of its significance. Start with a guided walk around the base, which teaches of the ancient story of the Seven Sisters, view caves filled with rock art and see permanent waterholes that feed the thriving flora and fauna and gives a taste of the rock's sheer size and majesty. No visit to Uluru is complete without the experience of its sunset, where flamboyant colours are painted over its flank, changing and moving by the second. Rising from the desert, some 30 kilometres from Uluru is Kata Tjuta, named from the Aboriginal word meaning 'many heads', its 36 rock domes creating a system of haunting gorges and valleys. Take the 'Valley of the Winds' trail and wander through the Olga Gorge that leads to an immense cliff face and lovely rock pool. Of equal spiritual significance as Uluru, Kata Tjuta perhaps holds a somewhat more serene and silent charm.



Longitude 131° and Uluru

Longitude 131°, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

Opulent, stylish and occupying an unsurpassed position in one of the most spiritual places in Australia, this marvellous wilderness camp has fifteen elevated safari-inspired tents, each one individually styled and dedicated to Australian Outback pioneers. Expansive floor to ceiling windows provide each tent with an uninterrupted view of Uluru, unveiling the sunrise and the inspirational swathes of colours which blanket the rock at sunset. These views are shared by the swimming pool and Dune House - the hub of this unique camp - with its lounge, bar and venue for hosted dinners.

LONGITUDE 131°, TOURING

Longitude 131° has captured the immense wilderness and spirituality of Uluru with a range of touring experiences that explore less travelled routes and occupy private viewing areas, escorted by guides rich with local knowledge and the ability to adapt each experience. Small groups take off on interpretative bush walks to learn of the region's ecology, walk through the Kantju Gorge as its rock walls blaze with the light of the setting sun, visit the engaging cultural centre or tour the base of the rock, viewing cave paintings and learning about the indigenous Anangu people.



Longitude 131° safari tent

Ayers Rock Resort, Yulara

Distinctive sails mark the centre of this resort set in one of the most remote wilderness regions. A wealth of accommodation options suit every taste and budget, with the Outback Pioneer Hotel offering traditional Australian hospitality, the stylishly chic Lost Camel, the Emu Walk Apartments for families or friends travelling together and the Desert Gardens with flourishing garden displays. The most luxurious part of the resort is the Sails in the Desert Hotel, with spacious rooms, fine dining restaurants and the Mulgara Gallery showing-casing Aboriginal art. Whichever accommodation you choose, the true attractions remain unchanged; the striking landscapes of Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park.



Aboriginal guide



Desert wildflowers

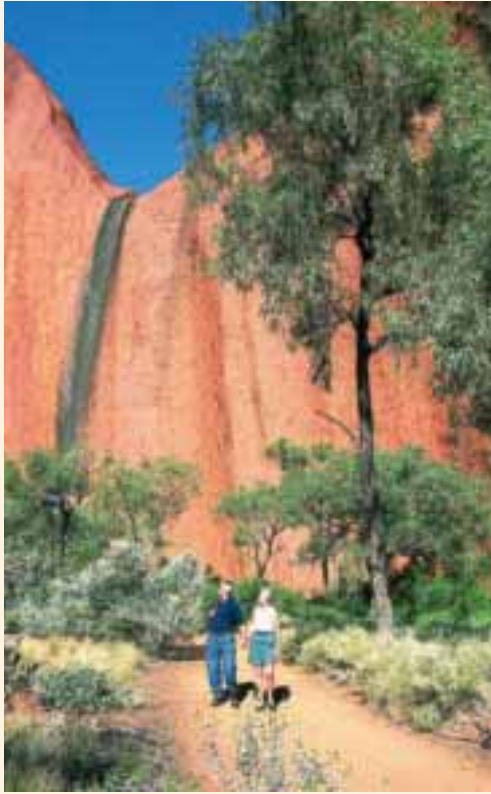
RED CENTRE UNCOVERED

This tour uses Alice Springs as a base to explore the highlights of Australia's 'Red Centre' visiting museums and exploring Kings Canyon on foot, touring Uluru, learning about its spiritual significance and appreciating its beauty.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Alice Springs.
- Day 2:** Spend the day exploring the MacDonnell Ranges and The Desert Park.
- Day 3:** Depart Alice Springs and travel to Kings Canyon. Tonight experience the desert sky and see the Outback in a different light with the 'Sounds of Firelight' dinner.
- Day 4:** Enjoy a walk around the rim of the canyon and descend into the hidden Garden of Eden. Journey on towards to Uluru, upon arrival view this awesome rock and its changing colours at sunset.
- Day 5:** Perhaps rise early for the magnificent sunrise at Uluru.
- Day 6:** Depart Uluru.

MUTITJULU FOUNDATION

Both Longitude 131° and the Ayers Rock Resort support the Mutitjulu Foundation which assists projects to relieve poverty, advance education and improve health care for the residents of the Aboriginal communities who reside within the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.



Uluru base walk

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Western Australia

Thousands of miles of pristine white sand beaches washed by the sparkling blue of the Indian Ocean, offshore reefs, a vast inland wilderness of ancient gorges, rock formations and great deserts and in a land the size of Europe with just a single city and a few small towns. In Western Australia nature is large: human achievements small and hard-won. Distances are great, but Western Australia rewards visitors like no other. In the south, the wineries of Margaret River fade out to forests of ancient timbers and a stunning coastline where two oceans collide. The city of Perth is perhaps the most charming of all Australia's cities, with the artistic port town of Fremantle close by to the east and the goldrush town of Kalgoorlie remote in the west. Head north and the temperatures rise,

with Ningaloo Reef fringing off long deserted beaches; national parks where spinifex plants shimmer in the desert heat, waiting patiently for rain before springing into colour with seasonal flowers; ancient mountain ranges, ochre soils and endless horizons. In the far north the tropics take over a land where Aboriginal beliefs predominate. The pearling community of Broome is one of the few villages clinging to the coast, an oasis of western civilisation pinned to a vast interior hinterland, much of which has still never felt the tread of settler footsteps. Cut off from the rest of Australia and also far from the rest of the world, Western Australia gives you the chance to be amongst the first to discover scenes of great natural beauty, to experience Outback life at its most untouched, charming and friendly.

PERTH

Famed for its blue skies, stunning natural setting and friendly spirited people, Perth is set around the broad reaches of the Swan River, with a high-rise city centre of gleaming new office buildings and lively regions of restored colonial gingerbread buildings packed with restaurants, bars and galleries. At its heart the leafy Kings Park is topped by Mount Eliza, with a rousing bird's eye view of the city centre skyscrapers and magnificent Swan River. Take a cruise along the river to Fremantle, Perth's delightful port on the Indian Ocean coast, drive along the pristine sandy surf beaches of Scarborough and Cottesloe, or board the ferry to Rottnest Island, where crystal clear waters heave with marine life and white sandy bays abound. Inland, the Swan Valley is dotted with wineries, quaint boutique restaurants and art galleries as it meanders gently through the Darling Ranges.



0 100 miles
0 161 kilometres



FREMANTLE

This cosmopolitan port is around half an hour's drive from Perth. A centre for the state's talented creative community, it has a lively atmosphere which spills out on to the streets with buskers and local artists vying for attention. The city's historic and impressively restored West End offers fine 19th century architecture best seen from the Round House, built in 1831 by the first settlers as a gaol, which offers panoramic views of Rottnest Island, the harbour and the town. The magnificent Maritime Museum sits at the entrance to the harbour and contains an exhibition of maritime history, which includes Australia's 1983 America's Cup success. Fishing Boat Harbour is a popular dining spot with restaurants clustered on the boardwalk.



Warden's cottage

🏠 Terrace Bed & Breakfast, Fremantle

This charming High Street bed & breakfast is situated in a colonial two-storey terrace house close to Fremantle Town Hall and the pretty port. Built by convicts in 1857 to accommodate gold rush settlers, the house has now been restored and has four lovely bedrooms. If you prefer to self-cater, the owners, Val and Ian, also have three restored stone wardens' cottages in the grounds of the old Fremantle prison with all of their period features preserved.

🏠 The Outram, Perth

In leafy west Perth, The Outram, a member of the 'Small Luxury Hotels of the World' is one of the city's leading boutique hotels. The style is chic and modern but with personal service and a relaxed ambience. The 18 guestrooms are comfortable, contemporary in style and have lovely spa bathrooms. Kings Park is close by and although the hotel's own restaurant is excellent there are countless dining options within walking distance.



The Outram



Fremantle



Fremantle Museum



Dolphin Bay, Esperance

MARGARET RIVER

Around three hours south of Perth by road, the beautiful Margaret River region is famed for its world-class wineries, many of which are family-run, offering tastings, superb lunches and cellar door sales. The natural beauty and peaceful pace of the southwest is intoxicating and there are plenty of walking trails through sprawling farm pastures. It is stunning in the wildflower season from October to November, when the landscape bursts to life in a kaleidoscope of colour. With the sophistication of the vineyards on its fringes, it's reassuring to see that the small town of Margaret River is relatively unspoilt, just a sleepy main street with a diverse range of alternative galleries and craft studios, and a few small shops to help you stock up for a picnic on the beach.



Cape Lodge, Margaret River

Sitting pretty on the edge of a private lake, this magical lodge is edged by vines and recognised as one of the finest in Australia. Of the twenty or so guestrooms, the Forest Spa suites are the most luxurious with a terrace or balcony overlooking the lake, encircled by acres of sweeping lawns and forest. The lodge's renowned restaurant, rated in some surveys as amongst the best in the world, overhangs the lake, with an extensive cellar offering the finest of the region's wines.

Basildene Manor, Margaret River

This gracious manor blends the grandeur of the past with contemporary style. In the heart of this lovely wine region, Basildene Manor is a short drive from Margaret River township, neatly tended vineyards and a range of stunning beaches. With just seventeen beautifully appointed rooms overlooking farmlands, lake and gardens it has a delightful ambience, ideal for a relaxing stay. Guests can choose between the traditional character Manor guestrooms with original features or spacious new wing suites with a private courtyard and balcony.



Basildene Manor

FORESTS AND THE GREAT SOUTH WEST

South of Margaret River the landscape changes dramatically from rolling pastures to a dense forest of towering karri trees, some over 400 years old. The sleepy town of Pemberton, originally the hub of the timber industry but now with a new reputation for boutique wineries, is tucked away in a karri valley, edged by the coast and offering walking tracks through the forest, sprinkled with the vibrant colours of seasonal wildflowers. The small town of Walpole, east of Pemberton, is entirely surrounded by national park, in an area defined by the remarkable meeting of the sea and forest. The 'Valley of the Giants' treetop walk offers the chance to venture along a suspended walkway amidst the awesome giant red tingle trees. Walpole gives way to peaceful Denmark, on the banks of the Denmark River, referred to as the 'back garden of Perth' for its sweeping landscape and lush, temperate flowers. The stunning coastal town of Albany is rich in European history and offers some delightful hidden natural gems including The Gap, Natural Bridge and beautiful Little Beach. The region is ideally explored by car as distances are relatively short and there is plenty to see and do.



Cape Lodge



Tall timber country

Peppermint Grove Retreat, Pemberton

Peppermint Grove is set amongst magnificent karri forests and vineyards 12 kilometres outside Pemberton, where you'll find restaurants specialising in fresh local marron and trout, tiny wineries and galleries. Each of the stylish spacious chalets is self-contained with your breakfast provisions provided. Large French doors open to a lovely deck with views of undulating pastures and forests dotted with kangaroo, and each chalet has its own barbeque allowing you to dine the Australian way.



Peppermint Grove Retreat

Memories of Albany, Albany

Bursting with charm this bed & breakfast is exclusive to Audley, a charming introduction to the delightful town of Albany. Your warm and friendly hosts ensure a home-from-home atmosphere that extends from the delicious fresh breakfasts served in the sunny dining room until the end of each day. There are just three delightful guest bedrooms set directly opposite a pretty park flanked by the ocean, and the town centre is a short walk away.



Memories of Albany

Chimes Spa Retreat, Karri Mia

The winding route to Karri Mia treats you to magnificent views across undulating hills, valleys peppered with native bush and glimpses over the clear waters of the Southern Ocean. This small retreat evokes a feeling of escape and peace, with a handful of spacious rooms extending an atmosphere of casual sophistication and countless hospitable touches that ensure your stay is memorable. Relax in the comfort and privacy of your room, indulge in an organic spa treatment, stroll through the beautiful tiered gardens or venture out to explore the vineyards, forests and sandy coves.



View from Karri Mia

TALL TIMBER & WINE COUNTRY

Leaving Perth the drive south is relatively easy and direct. Once out of the city you will pass through the towns of Bunbury and Bussleton, past lush rolling farmland and into some of Australia's best wine country. Driving through beautiful landscape inland from the pristine coast, you pass the limestone cave region to reach the spectacular Cape Leeuwin lighthouse where the mighty Indian and Southern Oceans meet.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Perth. Explore the city by foot or on the complimentary CAT bus system.
- Day 2:** Full day in Perth to enjoy the heritage sights and attractions including shops, museums, galleries and markets.
- Day 3:** Drive south to the Margaret River region heading towards the thriving port of Bunbury, then on to Bussleton.
- Day 4:** Full day in the Margaret River region to enjoy countless vineyards, beautiful beaches, walking or caving.
- Day 5:** Continue south towards Augusta for Cape Leeuwin lighthouse where you can witness the meeting of two great oceans. Head east into the tall timbers of the karri forests to Pemberton.
- Day 6:** Explore Pemberton's forests and take the 'Valley of the Giants' treetop walk in Walpole before heading towards Albany.
- Day 7:** Explore Albany's coast including lovely little beaches, coves, national parks, great walking and rich local heritage.
- Day 8:** Drive back to Perth on the Albany Highway, stopping at Kojonup for a visit to the heritage centre.

EXTENSIONS

Keen walkers may wish to spend an extra day or two based in Mount Barker. Just a short drive from Albany, this is an ideal base for trekking across the Porongup and Stirling Ranges. To maximise your time in the south-west a fly-drive option is available between Perth and Albany.



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Shark Bay

SHARK BAY

This UNESCO World Heritage site is famous for its blistering beaches, sparkling waters and vibrant red dunes, and is also home to an extraordinary range of aquatic life and boasts the country's longest wildflower season. Often overshadowed by the rival attraction of the visiting dolphins at Monkey Mia a few miles away, the Shark Bay Marine Park provides a far less commercial experience. A host of walking trails link rugged sea cliffs to tranquil lagoons where unspoiled environments of coral, mangrove and huge seagrass meadows support a prolific amount of sea life including nesting turtles, whales and dolphins. Scratch the surface and you will find graceful dugong and the curious living fossils of stromatolites at Hamelin Pools. At Francois Peron National Park, the Eden Initiative is working to reintroduce animals threatened with extinction.

🏠 Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort

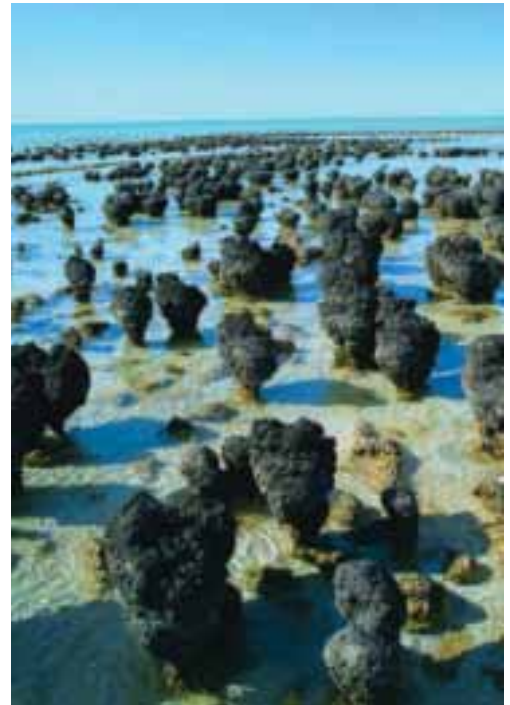
Set on lovely Dolphin Bay, itself part of Shark Bay, this is the only accommodation in the region. The resort offers guestrooms to suit everyone, from comfortable beachfront units and garden villas to backpacker rooms and camping spots. The beach here is especially known for the wild dolphins that visit the shore daily.

THE HEARTLANDS

North of Perth rolling wheat paddocks dotted with historic settlements gradually give way to desert, seasonally brightened by carpets of wildflowers, towards the eerie limestone spires of the Pinnacles that jut out of the sand by the Indian Ocean in Nambung National Park. From here driving or walking trails lead to lookouts with a stunning view of these curious pillars. South east is Hyden and marvellous Wave Rock, where erosion has shaped its granite surface to resemble a massive wave rising from the landscape. An unexpected sight is the Spanish settlement of New Norcia, established by Benedictine monks, where the church, art gallery and monastery bring touches of Hispanic architecture to the region. This area is easily accessible by pretty country roads that link heritage towns, each with their own vivid glimpses into the past and Outback life.



The Pinnacles



Stromatolites, Hamelin Pools

KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

Nestled at the mouth of the Murchison River and surrounded by a stunning coastline of soaring river gorges and bays, this park is known for its rich marine life and landscapes, carved over millions of years into dramatic sandstone cliffs. In the winter wildflowers erupt into incredible displays and there are several scenic look-outs, the best being at the Loop and Nature's Window, a natural rock arch that frames the view upstream and is the start of a walking trail along the gorge. Kalbarri makes a wonderful detour on the journey to Shark Bay.



Kalbarri National Park



Whale shark

NINGALOO MARINE PARK

This astonishing marine park is famed for its massive fringing barrier reef that stretches for 200 miles. Long white sandy beaches typify the coast and the reef almost brushes the shore, making the warm turquoise waters perfect for swimming and snorkeling. Amongst the abundance of marine life, perhaps the most distinctive is the huge, gentle whale shark, a seasonal visitor between March and June. Through carefully monitored trips it is possible to swim with these gentle giants and, as they swim near the surface, you don't even need to be a diver to join in. Humpback whales appear between June and November, whilst manta rays sashay through the waters year-round. Turtles nest on the beaches between December and March and night walks offer the chance to see these sombre creatures make their arduous journey up the beach to nest.

Ningaloo Reef Retreat

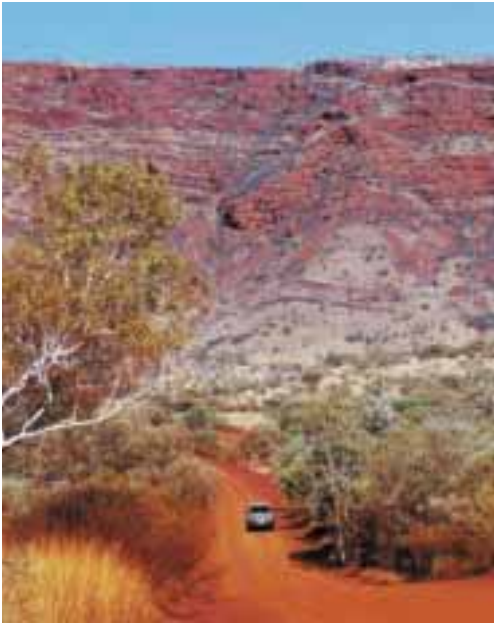
Set between the dunes of Ningaloo Marine Park and gorges of Cape Range National Park this delightful retreat offers an environmentally friendly experience. Spacious safari-style tents have raised floors, double beds and ensuite bathrooms. Dining is different: you choose your evening meal from a creative menu - think kangaroo curry with a banana and yoghurt sauce - yet the ingredients only are delivered as cooking is communal, with dining a sociable occasion under the countless stars of the southern skies.



Emu

KARIJINI NATIONAL PARK

North of Perth in the Pilbara region, Karijini is considered to be one of the state's most spectacular parks. Millions of years of erosion have created jagged mountain ranges with deep dramatic gorges carved by waterfalls that plunge into pools beside scenic walkways. At a junction of four gorges a lookout provides a striking view, best seen in the morning or late afternoon as the low light brings out the rich colours of ochre soils and shimmering spinifex plains, backed by the seemingly endless horizon.



Karijini National Park

CAPE RANGE NATIONAL PARK

This low furrowed mountain range of spectacular gorges and rocky outcrops is made up of elevated limestone. Originally part of the seabed, the rocks are littered with marine fossils and tunnelled by countless caves. Two lovely wilderness trails thread through homes of kangaroos, emus and large lizards, while at Yardie Creek the trail along the gorge cliffs takes you to a deep canyon inhabited by rock wallabies. Nearby Exmouth is an ideal base from which to explore the area, with relatively unsophisticated but sufficiently comfortable accommodation available.

GORGES, PINNACLES & REEF

Explore the wonderful coast of the Indian Ocean and three of Western Australia's best national parks: the eerie pinnacles of Numbung National Park, the natural aquarium of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shark Bay Marine Park, and the beautiful gorges of Kalbarri National Park.

- Day 1:** Leave Perth and travel north towards Numbung National Park and the limestone pillars of the Pinnacles desert.
- Day 2:** Continue with your journey, arrive at Shark Bay UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Day 3:** Meet the dolphins at Monkey Mia, discover the stromatolites at Hamelin Pools and stroll through Francois Peron National Park.
- Day 4:** Head toward Ningaloo Marine Park.
- Day 5:** Spend the next couple of days relaxing on the beach, perhaps swim with whale sharks or snorkel on Ningaloo Reef.
- Day 6:** Explore Cape Range National Park or comb the lovely beach.
- Day 7:** Start to retrace your steps south and stop at Carnavon.
- Day 8:** Continue south and stop at Kalbarri National Park to explore one of the spectacular deep red river gorges.
- Day 9:** A day to discover more of this park, taking one of the walking trails to numerous lookout points.
- Day 10:** Arrive back in Perth.



Ningaloo Reef

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Bungle Bungle Range

THE KIMBERLEY

One of the world's last unspoilt regions, this time-worn land shelters great beauty in its rugged isolation. Pristine beaches fringe the Indian Ocean and through the wet season, from November to April, mighty rivers burst to life, thundering in waterfalls and feeding pockets of lush rainforest amongst the arid desert, vast open plains, complex cave systems and ancient boab trees. The bird and wildlife here is astonishing and the local people are friendly, unpretentious and proud of their history. Broome, Derby and Kununurra are the main gateways, but outside of these areas the experience of the remote Outback is more important than the accommodation, where your choices are limited. Most roads in this area are unsealed and require a 4WD vehicle, so to explore the area you'll have to choose between travelling alone, linking up with a small convoy of vehicles led by an experienced guide or joining a small group guided tour. Our specialists will be able to advise which will best suit your interests, itinerary and experience.



Camels at sunset on Cable beach

BROOME

Oozing with colour, this exotic, laid back town was once the pearling capital of the world and drew its population from a range of nations who came on the promise of pearls. A flamboyant history has resulted in a uniquely multi-cultural atmosphere. Set on Roebuck Bay overlooking the Indian Ocean, Broome is famous for Cable Beach, a band of pure white sand, just the place for lazy days or a sunset camel ride. From here you can take pearling tours or visit Gantheaume Point where the low tide uncovers ancient dinosaur footprints.

McAlpine House, Broome

Set amidst verdant tropical gardens this former residence of a pearling master has been beautifully restored into a small hotel with just eight guestrooms. It offers a heritage setting with a wide, breezy veranda, polished timber floors and even the original 'pearling table', where master pearlmen once struck many of their deals. The personalised service, swimming pool and welcoming atmosphere make this a perfect colonial tropical retreat.

THE SAVANNAH WAY

Crossing this vast continent from west to east, this route linking the historic pearling town of Broome in Western Australia with Cairns in Tropical North Queensland is one of Australia's greatest drives: the route is easy to follow with clear signage, interpretative displays and maps along the way. Whether you explore just a section or the entire route, you will pass through an amazingly diverse and spectacular landscape of wide horizons, ancient gorges, rock pools, salt pans, hot springs and abundant wildlife. These remote Outback regions are just the place to experience true Australian hospitality, with roadhouses and Outback stations providing character accommodation.



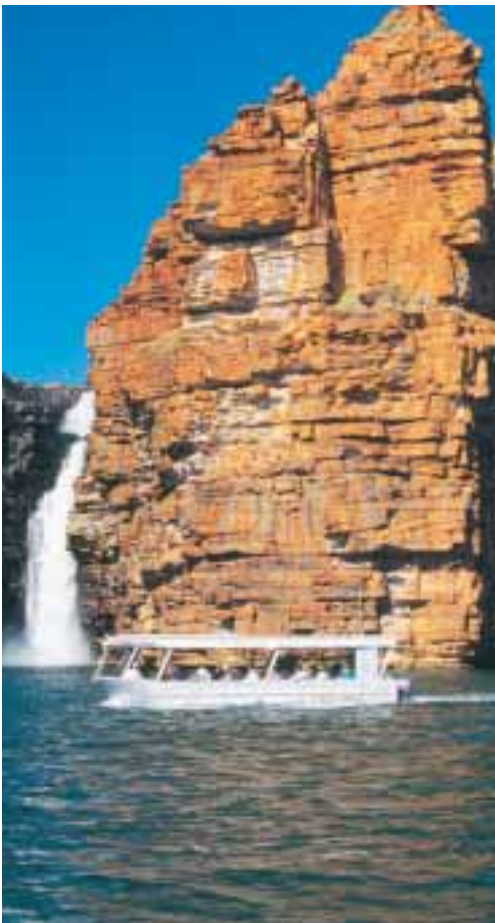
Gantheaume Point, Broome



Cape Leveque

Cruising the Outback

Although most visitors to this remarkable wilderness area travel the inland route, it is possible to cruise between the two unique frontier centres of Broome and Darwin with Coral Princess Cruises. With spacious ensuite cabins for just 50 guests, the shallow draft of this 35 metre luxury expedition catamaran makes her ideally suited to navigate the mighty rivers and scenic inlets of the Kimberley coast. Over a ten-night cruise you will explore the hundreds of islands in Buccaneer Archipelago, the tidal phenomena at Montgomery Reef and the extraordinary horizontal waterfalls near Talbot Bay. An excursion boat lets you navigate the gorges of the Mitchell, King George, Prince Regent and Hunter Rivers, and it is the abundance of bird life and native wildlife that makes this Kimberley experience exceptional.



Sightseeing with Coral Princess

CAPE LEVEQUE, DAMPIER PENINSULA

A string of deserted beaches washed by cobalt blue waters make this remote peninsula of Aboriginal land north of Broome a very special place. In this beautiful setting the resident Aboriginal communities invite visitors to experience their lifestyle and learn of their traditional fishing methods. Beagle Bay is home to the delightful Sacred Heart Church, built in 1917 by the Pallotine monks, while Middle Lagoon is one of the most beautiful secluded beaches we have seen. Teetering on the very northern tip Cape Leveque itself is resplendent, with sparkling waters that see humpback whales on their annual migration (July and October) while the sunsets blaze with colour all year round against the red pindan cliffs.

Kooljaman Camp, Cape Leveque

Blessed by some of Australia's finest views, these hilltop safari-style tents are secluded, have large balconies and an unrestricted outlook over the bay. Each tent has a double bed, ensuite bathroom and barbeque. Kooljaman is owned by two aboriginal communities, and befriending them will give you great appreciation for this beautiful slice of the Outback. Some offer tours in search of mud crabs and bush tucker while others tell of the cultural history of the area. There is a restaurant on site or you may like to barbeque your own dinner with produce supplied by the 'bush butler'. Kooljaman offers a quiet place to explore the natural beauty of the area in simple yet comfortable surroundings.



Kooljaman Camp

THE CAPE AND KIMBERLEY

Combine a small group guided tour of beautiful Cape Leveque with some of the Kimberley's more accessible gorges and waterfalls. Travelling along the Gibb River Road you will experience a fascinating insight into Outback life.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Broome with the rest of the day free to explore, strolling along Cable Beach or taking a sunset camel ride.
- Day 2:** Leave Broome and head up the Dampier Peninsula, stopping at Beagle Bay and Middle Lagoon. Arrive at Cape Leveque in time for the sunset.
- Day 3:** Explore the cape - go swimming, mud crabbing or perhaps take a scenic flight over the Buccaneer Archipelago.
- Day 4:** Return to Broome.
- Day 5:** Leave Broome and travel to Derby and the start of the Gibb River Road and Windjana Gorge National Park.
- Day 6:** Explore the national parks and the pools at Bell Gorge.
- Day 7:** Visit the Dimond Gorge and Mornington Wilderness Sanctuary.
- Day 8:** Travel to Galvans Gorge and Barnett River Gorge.
- Day 9:** At Mount Elizabeth station take a rock art tour and then head for El Questro Wilderness Park and Emma Gorge.
- Day 10:** Spend the day at El Questro Wilderness Park, admire the majestic Chamberlain Gorge. Later travel to Wyndham and take in the view of the Five Rivers Lookout and then head for Kununurra.
- Day 11:** Explore Kununurra and Lake Argyle. Take a cruise along the Ord River.
- Day 12:** Depart Kununurra.

EXTENSIONS

Extend your stay in Kununurra to take either a scenic flight over the magnificent Bungle Bungle range in Purnululu National Park, or continue along the Gibb River Road.



Fishing at Cape Leveque

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

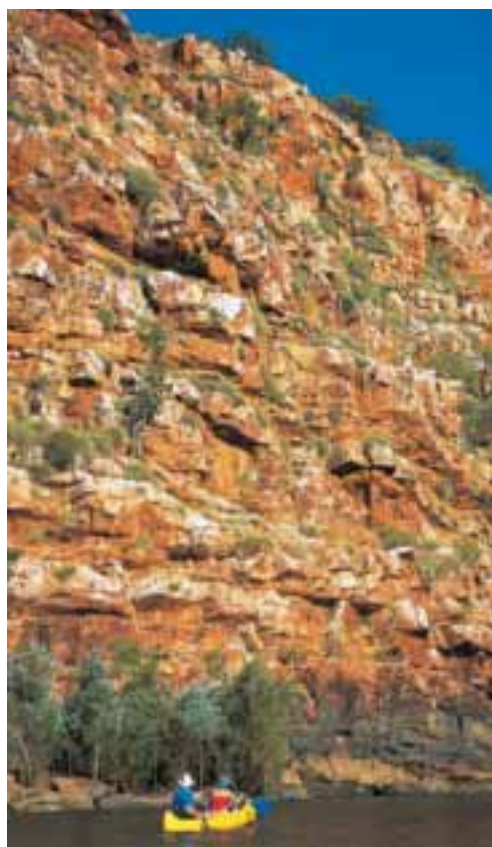
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Mitchell River National Park

DERBY AND THE GIBB RIVER ROAD

The town of Derby, set on the edge of King Sound to the northeast of Broome, is often treated simply as a provisioning point for travellers, but its streets lined with boab trees are a tempting place to relax for a few leisurely days and it is a good base from which to explore. From Derby you can take a cruise to the Buccaneer Archipelago, a series of islands replete with rugged red cliffs, cooling waterfalls and sandy beaches, or fly over the region on a scenic flight. The Gibb River Road was originally constructed to transport cattle from the surrounding stations, but today the 'Gibb' leads towards three of the region's most spectacular national parks, collectively known as the Devonian Reef National Parks. Apart from the gorges, waterfalls and rivers, it is the accommodation, in real Aussie roadhouses, cattle stations or permanent camps, that really make the experience. Although some roads are sealed many are of natural rocky earth, so a 4WD vehicle is essential.



Geikie Gorge



Gibb River Road, Cockburn Range

MITCHELL RIVER NATIONAL PARK

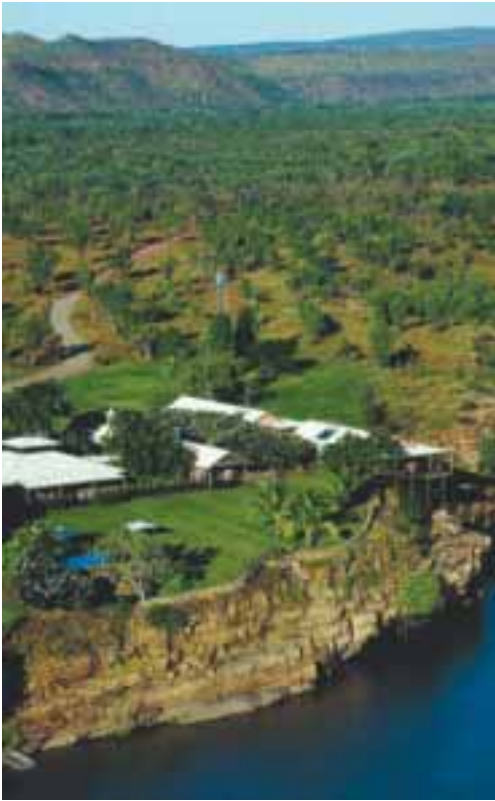
Carved into the sandstone margins of the Mitchell Plateau, these craggy wilds comprise the gorges and waterfalls formed by the Mitchell River, with striking fan palms and patches of rainforest on higher levels, open white gum woodlands in the valleys and creek beds lined with pandanus and paperbark trees. Mitchell Falls and Surveyors Pool are the two main draws, and both change character completely with the seasons: in the 'dry' the Falls plummet modestly in the centre of ancient eroded terraces, in the 'wet' they thunder spectacularly. The view from the air is awesome, but it's also worth exploring on foot, as this is an important site of Aboriginal heritage.

THE DEVONIAN REEF NATIONAL PARKS

The exposed limestone remnants of an ancient barrier reef make for a dramatic landscape now far from the sea, seen at its best in the national parks of Windjana Gorge, Tunnel Creek and Geikie Gorge. Most spectacular of all are the towering walls of Windjana Gorge, formed by the Lennard River which seasonally curves its way through the ancient limestone cliffs. The main trail leads through a limestone crevice into a wide gorge that splits the Napier Range, lined with paperbark and leichhardt trees. Tunnel Creek National Park is centred around an old tunnel that worms its way through the Napier Range that has in turn provided a hiding place for the Bunuba Aboriginal people. You can walk through the tunnel, wading through icy pools amongst stalactites and beautiful black dolorite, with light shining through collapsed parts of the roof onto Aboriginal cave paintings. Close to Fitzroy Crossing, Geikie Gorge National Park has an exquisite gorge where the river has sliced through a limestone barrier reef, the yellow and orange of the steep walls mirrored in the water. White cliffs are studded with fossil deposits and freshwater crocodiles and freshwater-adapted stingrays jostle for space in the water. Walking trails lead along the forested banks, though a cruise is a better way to appreciate the gorge.



Boab prison tree, Derby



El Questro Homestead

EL QUESTRO WILDERNESS PARK

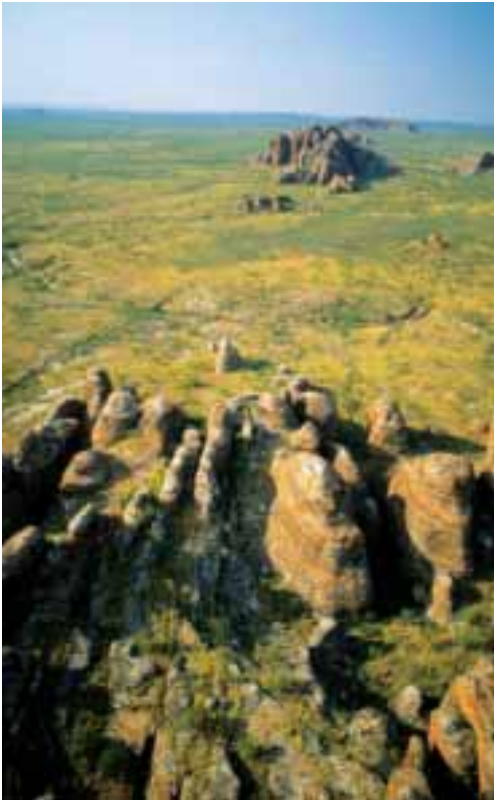
This private park contains a million acres of incredible Outback scenery characterised by cascading waterfalls, gorges, meandering rivers, thermal springs and sprawling mountainous ranges. Take a boat along Chamberlain Gorge, a fresh waterhole bounded by tropical vegetation, or visit the thermal pools of Zebedee Springs. These pools make a wonderful place to soak and relax, surrounded by dense palms, feral horses, frilled neck lizards, goannas and colourful parrots. A knowledgeable ranger is on hand to introduce you to the full spectrum of these curious creatures.

El Questro Homestead

This handsome homestead is cantilevered over the magnificent Chamberlain River and has just six stylish ensuite guestrooms, decorated with artifacts and antiques collected from Indonesia and tropical Australia and with private verandas overlooking the garden and river. Guests may dine al fresco beneath the canopy of stars in a number of quirky locations and this is the ideal place to let the massive beauty of the untamed Kimberley work its magic.

Emma Gorge Resort, El Questro Wilderness Park

Hidden within the fiery red of the Cockburn Ranges this lovely resort is shaded by palms and pandanus. Gravel paths link the tented cabins to the resort, where a swimming pool is set amongst native trees and landscaped gardens line the banks of Emma Creek. Barbecues of fresh fish and Kimberley beef are dinner specialties, all served in the open air of the main building's spacious verandas. Each of the superior tented cabins is ensuite and has a raised roof, allowing the tropical sounds and scents to permeate the air. Emma Gorge offers a great experience of Kimberley and its myriad wildlife.



Bungle Bungle National Park

PURNULULU (BUNGLE BUNGLE) NATIONAL PARK

This UNESCO World Heritage National Park south of Kununurra protects a fascinating geological landmark, the magnificent Bungle Bungle range, a unique panorama of beehive-like mounds, dyed a vivid orange and black by metallic deposits. One of the best ways to see them is from the air, giving a perspective of their massive scale. Further into the range there is a hidden world of gorges and pools where fan palms cling precariously to the dome walls. The best sites are reached on foot at Cathedral Gorge in the south and Echidna Chasm in the north. Aboriginal heritage runs deep and the area is rich in rock art and sacred burial grounds, while the plentiful birds, including rainbow bee-eaters and flocks of noisy budgerigars, are your constant companions.



Mustering at El Questro



Emma Gorge Resort

KIMBERLEY COMPLETE

This itinerary, a small group guided tour, sets out to thoroughly explore this marvellous region. Discover the gorges of the Gibb River Road, the vibrant Aboriginal culture of the Mitchell Plateau and the spectacular Bungle Bungle range at Purnululu National Park. Guided in places by Aboriginal land-owners you will stay in comfortable permanent camps in and around the main national parks as well as the lovely Emma Gorge Resort.

- Day 1:** Leave Broome and head for Derby and Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek national parks.
- Day 2:** Travel along the Gibb River Road and visit Bell Gorge.
- Day 3:** Turn off the Gibb River Road towards the Mitchell Plateau and King Edward River.
- Day 4:** Explore Mitchell Plateau and the rock art sites of Wangjina and Gwion.
- Day 5:** Take a flight over the waterfalls and a tour of the area with an Aboriginal guide.
- Day 6:** Leave the plateau and head back towards the Gibb River Road.
- Day 7:** Cross the Durack and Pentecost rivers into El Questro Wilderness Park.
- Day 8:** Explore El Questro Wilderness Park or soak in Zebedee Springs.
- Day 9:** Take a cruise on the Ord River and Lake Kununurra.
- Day 10:** Head south and enter Purnululu National Park to see the spectacular Bungle Bungle range and trek to Echidna Chasm.
- Day 11:** Trek to Cathedral Gorge and walk amongst the domes. Learn about bushtucker, bush medicine and the area's significance to the local Aboriginal people.
- Day 12:** Visit historic Halls Creek.
- Day 13:** Cruise through Geikie Gorge escorted by a traditional Bunuba Aboriginal land owner. Later, return to Broome.

EXTENSION

There are a number of different touring options available within the Kimberley, some of which start and finish in Kununurra or Darwin, making discovering this area - often presumed remote and inaccessible - a breeze. Combine your tour with a stay in Kakadu National Park, cruise back to Broome from Darwin exploring the Kimberley coast or arrange your tour to finish in Kununurra to visit the Outback cattle station of Bullo River Station.

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

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Great Rail Journeys

In a bygone age when to travel was to seek adventure, when the travelling itself was as important as getting there and the people you met along the way were a key part of the experience, the comfort and romance of rail offered the ultimate in style and speed. And though these days aircraft are the fastest way to cross Australia's great distances, two transcontinental railway lines give you the opportunity to appreciate the sheer scale and grandeur of this vast landmass. Running from Sydney to Perth the historic Indian Pacific line crosses three states and one of the world's largest deserts, while The Ghan railway heads from the temperate southern coast to the hot and humid Outback capital, Darwin, in the north. These epic journeys allow you to experience Australia's immense Outback in comfort, safety and style, and arrive at your destination with a real sense of geographical perspective.

THE INDIAN PACIFIC

As the name implies, The Indian Pacific links two oceans in one of the world's longest and greatest train journeys. Travelling from Sydney to Perth, or vice versa, it covers a distance of 2,720 miles over three nights. Starting in the spectacular Blue Mountains of New South Wales, you thread through the famous green and gold 'Sun Belt' of Australia, historic Broken Hill and Adelaide, before heading out into the treeless plains of the Nullarbor Plain on the world's longest stretch of straight railway track, travelling for 299 miles without a bend. Here you pull into a remote outpost called Cook, before heading on to gold-rich Kalgoorlie and then onwards to Perth, capital of Western Australia. On every side, unique landscapes unfold and you can spot mobs of kangaroo from the comfort of the lounge. Along the route, keep your eyes peeled for the elusive Australian wedge-tailed eagle, whose massive two-metre wingspan makes it easy to spot in a clear desert sky. The train departs twice weekly.

THE GHAN

The Ghan completed its first journey from Adelaide through the ruggedly beautiful Red Centre to Darwin in 2003, reviving a dream born in the colonial era. It follows the trail blazed by the early explorers and Afghan 'cameleers' who tirelessly supplied the Overland Telegraph stations ensuring that the remote Outback and Red Centre kept in touch with the rest of the world. The 1,850 mile two-night journey through the heart of Australia begins in Adelaide and proceeds to the Flinders Ranges before crossing the Simpson Desert and reaching Alice Springs in the Red Centre. The newest stretch of line heads across Australia's arid heartland to Katherine, famous for its stunning gorges, before tracking through the lush tropical scenery of the Top End. A twice weekly service operates the overnight journey between Adelaide and Darwin, while Adelaide to Alice Springs runs weekly. Guests boarding in Adelaide can connect with incoming train services from both Sydney and Melbourne.



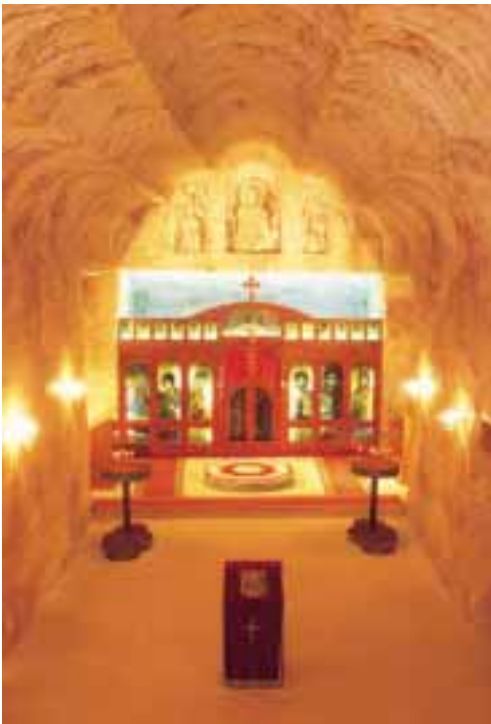
Camel train

OFF-TRAIN TOURING

On both routes, the trains make stops to refuel and take on provisions, presenting an ideal opportunity to take one of the optional off-train tours which can be purchased on board.

Ghan Gold Kangaroo Service travellers between Adelaide and Darwin enjoy a complimentary half day tour at Alice Springs which includes a visit to the Desert Wildlife Park, home to a fascinating array of Outback plants and wildlife. At Katherine, you can enjoy a boat cruise showcasing the breathtaking Katherine Gorge.

Indian Pacific travellers can explore Broken Hill, a base for the famous Royal Flying Doctor service and one of Australia's richest mining regions. A brief stop to re-water at the tiny outpost of Cook in the barren Nullarbor Plain allows guests to explore before a final stop at Kalgoorlie, with its heritage architecture, old pubs and the vast, floodlit 'superpit' renowned for being the richest square mile of gold-bearing earth in the world.



Cave church, Coober Pedy

SERVICE

There are two classes of travel available on both The Indian Pacific and The Ghan. The premium Gold Kangaroo Service offers twin and single sleeper cabins (with ensuite in twins), which are comfortable lounges during the day and convert to bunk beds at night. All meals are included in the restaurant car and there is also an exclusive Gold Kangaroo communal lounge car. Red Kangaroo Service offers comfortable, reclining 'Daynighter' seats and shared bathroom facilities at the end of each carriage. Travellers also have access to the Red Kangaroo Lounge & Diner where meals and drinks can be purchased.

FLEXIBLE FARES

Neither The Indian Pacific nor The Ghan need to be booked in their entirety if shorter journeys suit your travel plans and the 'Flexifare' allows travellers to break their journey in order to explore places in more depth. Indian Pacific passengers can take a break of a few days at Adelaide and perhaps visit Kangaroo Island with its astounding wildlife. The Ghan passengers can stop at Alice Springs for several days and explore Kings Canyon, Kata Tjuta and Uluru. Southbound passengers can take a novel visit to the Opal Capital and troglodyte town of Coober Pedy, disembarking in the evening at Manguri to a glass of bubbly by the trackside as the sun sets and then transferring to the Desert Caves Hotel in the centre of town.



Desert peas

CLASSIC RAIL JOURNEYS

THE GHAN

After exploring the delights of the Red Centre and the magnificent Uluru, Kata Tjuta and the MacDonnell Ranges you board The Ghan on Wednesday morning in Alice Springs and head south. Instead of heading directly to Adelaide you will make a fascinating stop in the middle of the Outback in the opal mining town of Coober Pedy.

- Day 1:** The train departs in the morning and you disembark in the evening at Manguri where you will be met by the side of the railway track and driven to your hotel in Coober Pedy.
- Day 2:** Spend the day exploring the fascinating Moon Plains and Painted Desert as well as the underground buildings of the town.
- Day 3:** You have another day to explore this quirky town.
- Day 4:** The train will stop to collect you in the evening at Manguri and will then continue on overnight to Adelaide.
- Day 5:** Arrive in to Adelaide.

THE INDIAN PACIFIC

Take advantage of the 'flexifare' available on both The Indian Pacific and The Ghan and travel from Sydney to Adelaide, via historic Broken Hill. In Adelaide take a short flight to Kangaroo Island and enjoy the island's wildlife. You can then rejoin the train and continue to the Outback town of Kalgoorlie and on to Perth.

- Day 1:** Depart Sydney on Wednesday afternoon on The Indian Pacific.
- Day 2:** Arrive early in the morning at Broken Hill where you enjoy a tour learning of the town's mining history as well as visiting the Flying Doctor base.
- Day 3:** You have a full day of wildlife viewing from a 4WD vehicle with a knowledgeable local guide.
- Day 4:** Today you have another day of exploring before flying back to Adelaide.
- Day 5:** Visit some of cosmopolitan Adelaide's attractions before re-boarding the train.
- Day 6:** Arrive in Kalgoorlie to see the floodlit 'superpit' goldmine and the heritage architecture. The train departs later in the evening.
- Day 7:** Your train arrives in Perth in the morning.

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South Australia

The beaches and cliffs of South Australia's southern coastline shelter a green landscape that quickly fades into the Outback at its most remote, peppered with quirky outposts of western civilisation and suffused with the myths and legends of Aboriginal Dreamtime. The state's original settlers established Adelaide as the world's first planned city and German Lutherans arrived ten years later to do the same to the landscape, planting neat vineyards in the Barossa Valley, but a wave of Italian immigration in the 1950s brought espresso and a certain Latin flair. Whether in its capital, Adelaide, its small rural market towns or remote opal mining and farming communities, character shines through the dramatic landscapes that fade towards the arid expanse of the Nullarbor Plain and the Red Centre. Wildlife viewing here is second to none, with Kangaroo Island and the rugged Gawler Ranges on the mainland, and southern seas patrolled by whales, where swimming with sealions is a once-in-a-lifetime highlight, little wonder they call South Australia the country's best kept secret.

ADELAIDE

Edged by the Mount Lofty ranges and the long white sands of the Gulf of St Vincent, the style of the city, influenced by Australia's first free settlers, is still very much in evidence as gracious stone buildings pepper the streets and you will never stray far from open green parkland. A great charm, and indeed calm, infuses the city and it can be easily explored on foot. The cultural centre lies in a string of commanding public buildings that run between the grand, old tree-lined North Terrace and the River Torrens, while the north of the city is a lattice of blue stone cottages and thriving al fresco restaurants. The gorgeous Adelaide Hills, draped in steep vineyards amidst acres of bushland and bustling upcountry towns, are less than half an hour by car from the city and offer a superb alternative to a stay in the centre itself. Glenelg, reached by a vintage tramline, is a cheerful seaside resort where open-air cafés are set around a lovely swimming beach and is the ideal place to while away time. The city prides itself on being the artistic capital of Australia, especially at the time of the acclaimed Adelaide Festival, and the Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery houses an extensive collection of artefacts and artworks.

Adelaide Heritage Cottages

This selection of delightful character properties scattered around the charming streets of North Adelaide are all within walking distance of O'Connell Street with its diverse collection of restaurants. The jewel in the crown of the group is the 'Bishop's Garden', formerly the Bishop of Adelaide's residence. Just around the corner is Buxton Manor, a rambling mansion that houses four apartments of which Musica Viva and the Garden Loft are our favourites. For something less conventional, stay in the Old Fire Station, complete with 1930s fire engine, or the Friendly Meeting Chapel, both somewhat quirky, but no less comfortable.



Buxton Manor, Adelaide Heritage Cottages



ROBE

Located on South Australia's magnificent Limestone coast, Robe was one of the first settlements in South Australia. But while other settlements grew into cities, Robe simply relaxed in its glorious coastal isolation, and today you will find a charming seaside village and fishing port where the main preoccupation is lobster: fishing for lobster, preparing it in a variety of ways, choosing the wines to complement each dish, then talking about what to do with the next day's catch. The lovely main street leads to Guichen Bay which reveals stunning ocean views. Robe is a small town with a unique and friendly atmosphere - the perfect place to break your journey.

Grey Masts, Robe

This delightful heritage-listed building has been restored to offer distinctive accommodation in the heart of Robe. The property has a somewhat maritime feel, with polished floorboards taken from the ballast of a shipwreck artfully melded with modern furnishings to create luxuriously comfortable rooms. Your view overlooks beautiful Guichen Bay and you are just a stroll from the fine restaurants for which this haven has become famous.



Apple Tree Cottage, Adelaide Hills Country Cottages

Adelaide Hills Country Cottages

Less than half an hour from the city, these five delightful country cottages are hidden in the Adelaide Hills. Each is a self-contained, distinctively decorated retreat set in seclusion overlooking the lake or the orchards. The Adelaide Hills are the perfect city alternative from which to explore the city itself as well as the enchanting regions of the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale. Your hosts, Steve and Mandy, will ensure that your stay is memorable.



Port Nurlunga, Adelaide



Grey Masts

TOURABOUT ADELAIDE

Armed with a wealth of knowledge and perhaps more importantly, a love of all things South Australian, a Tourabout Adelaide guide will design a day to suit you and your individual interests. A walking tour of the compact city centre, built on a level floodplain, will enable you to discover the history, culture and cuisine of one of Australia's most tranquil cities without struggling up any hills. Additionally guides are also quite happy to take to the road to show you the best of the Barossa Valley, the McLaren Vale, or the quaint Adelaide Hills.



Adelaide



FLEURIEU PENINSULA

Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula is the hopping off point for the ferry crossing to Kangaroo Island. Known for its wineries, lovely coastline, scenic hinterland and fresh local produce, this region and its close proximity to Adelaide makes it a popular getaway. The remote southern coast is lined with rugged headlands and bubbling creeks that cut deep into the rock and offer clifftop views to Kangaroo Island. The western coastline on Gulf St Vincent is just as spectacular with many beaches and the holiday towns of Normanville and Aldinga Beach. Some of the villages scattered on the peninsula date back 160 years and McLaren Vale, at the heart of the wine region, produces olives and fine wines.



Fleurieu Peninsula

COORONG NATIONAL PARK

A chain of stunning, shallow lagoons are delicately separated from the Southern Ocean by a narrow sandy dune peninsula almost a hundred miles long in this beautiful park. The fragile ecology is fed by the rich waters of the Murray River and supports an array of bird life from pelicans to migratory waders and other waterfowl. This area is of tremendous spiritual significance to the local Ngarrindjeri people and there are a number of fascinating Dreamtime sites well worth exploring. It is a delightful deviation from the road on your journey between Melbourne and Adelaide and there are half or full-day cruises available aboard the sleek and powerful 'Spirit of the Coorong' - an excellent way to explore.

KANGAROO ISLAND

Revelling in a thriving wildlife population, encircled by a coastline of towering cliffs and sheltered beaches washed by turquoise seas and rocks aptly named 'Remarkable' for the extraordinary shapes they have been fashioned into. Mix this with acres of dense bush and forest covering the red interior and it is clear why Kangaroo Island is considered to be Australia's finest natural reserve. At the western end of the island Flinders Chase National Park preserves some of the finest areas of scrub and tall forest, with a resident population of koalas, echidnas, possums, and platypus which, if you are lucky and patient, can be seen in abundance. Ravine des Casoars has a lovely walking trail, the wild and towering cliffs of remote Cape du Couedic are topped by a lighthouse from which you can walk to the naturally formed 'Admirals Arch' where New Zealand seals nurse their pups. There are also hundreds of sealions at Seal Bay, southwest of the main town of Kingscote, who seem to enjoy meeting their human visitors. Although day visits from Adelaide are popular the majority of birds and animals feed at dawn and dusk so staying overnight is highly recommended.



Kangaroo Island



Kangaroo Island

Life Time Private Retreats

These three secluded and beautiful havens teeter on rugged cliffs overlooking dramatic empty beaches, visited only by dolphins and seals. The rich curves of the Cliff House encourage complete surrender to relaxation, with a glass-walled tower bedroom filled by stunning ocean vistas. The Sky House, with its private stone courtyard and star-gazers bed, is dangerously romantic, as the coastline recedes to the horizon on every side. Breakfast and dinner are included in your stay and served either under the boughs of a 150-year-old fig tree or in the character setting of a restored shearing shed, cobbled together from iron bark trees and corrugated iron.



Wallaby



The Sky House, Life Time Private Retreats

ADVENTURE CHARTERS OF KANGAROO ISLAND

Much of Kangaroo Island is preserved in National or Conservation Parks, allowing wildlife species to thrive, and many of the plants and animals here have been isolated on the island for over 10,000 years. Adventure Charters is owned by Craig Wickham, a conservationist who operates environmentally sensitive small group tours that focus on wildlife, heritage and contemporary Australian lifestyles. Scheduled and customised itineraries include wildlife, bird watching, hiking and photographic safaris, but travelling is in modern 4WD vehicles and meals are of the highest quality, with food and wine served in exclusive locations. This experience allows visitors an in-depth view of Kangaroo Island, its wildlife and its people.

Stranraer Homestead, Kangaroo Island

A 3,000 acre property in the sheep pastureland of Kangaroo Island may not be where you expect to find stylish and sophisticated accommodation, but Stranraer Homestead is an unusual haven. Dating back to the 1920s, Stranraer has been fully restored into an elegant retreat, especially welcome after a day spent touring the island. There are four guestrooms, each with a cosy log fire, and the delicious, dinner prepared by your hosts Lynne and Graham is a glorious highlight to end each day.



Stranraer Homestead

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL WONDERS

Explore the carefully preserved wilderness and wildlife of Kangaroo Island with a professional small-group tour onboard a luxury 4WD vehicle, specially designed to take you off the beaten track for a personal experience of the unique wild animals and wonderful landscapes of this unspoilt island.

- Day 1:** Venture down to Seal Bay Conservation Park and walk amongst a colony of sea-lions. Visit the spectacular sand dunes of Little Sahara before heading to Pardana Wildlife Park and the Northern beaches for a nature walk.
- Day 2:** Visit Rocky River and watch kangaroos hopping about amongst flocks of grazing Cape Barren geese. Explore this coast's stunning limestone formations and the and famed Remarkable Rocks.
- Day 3:** Look out for pelicans and the glossy black cockatoo at America River, climb the oldest lighthouse in South Australia and have cameras at the ready for picturesque Pennington Bay.

EXTENSIONS

If you have a particular interest in wildlife or photography, a private charter can help you get the most from your visit. Keen divers can spend an extra day on the island to venture below the surface: unforgettable dives often see leafy sea dragons, meet dolphins and presents the chance to swim with sealions.



TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

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Clare Valley

BAROSSA VALLEY

Set in a gentle hollow amidst rolling wheat fields and vines, the Barossa Valley was originally settled by German Lutherans whose small townships and church spires still survive today. Vineyards, often with names such as 'Kaiser Stuhl', are set amongst delicatessens whose shelves groan under Germanic delicacies. Wine is showcased in more than 50 local cellars, but the valley holds a special appeal that extends into stately homes, seasoned by meals in restaurants where European traditions are leavened with modern-day cuisine. Less than an hour's drive from Adelaide, the Barossa Valley can be explored on a tour or in your own car.



Abbotsford Country House

Abbotsford Country House, Barossa Valley

In the corner of the valley surrounded by acres of farmland this colonial Georgian-style homestead is blessed with magnificent views of the vineyards, framed by sun-baked ranges. Eight guest suites reflect Australian country style, uniquely decorated and furnished with antiques, where each is as individual as its prominent Barossa family namesake. Owners Jane and Julian are excellent hosts, and idyllic days end with a game of croquet on the sunken lawn, a glass of wine on the veranda and supper, beautifully prepared from local produce.



Kangaroos at the edge of the Murray River

MURRAY RIVER

The Murray River is Australia's Mississippi, with paddle-steamers passing riverside towns such as Swan Reach, with its clifftop views, and Mannun, with its relics of the pioneer days. The first river crossing was made at Murray Bridge, which is where many cruises start. Aboriginal legends surround this treasured water supply, which attracts a wealth of wildlife including yellow-billed spoonbills, fat-tailed dunnarts and possums. Walking trails line the banks and disappear deep in to the bush. An array of cruising options - from cruises to rental houseboats - enable you to meander along the river amongst the red gums which line its banks.



Thorn Park

Thorn Park, Clare Valley

This gracious 1850s homestead with mellow stone walls and shady verandas is set in lovely landscaped gardens amidst acres of majestic countryside - elegant country living at its best. Your hosts, Michael and David, have a nationwide reputation for lavish breakfasts and exquisite dinners, accompanied by a wonderful selection of fine local wines. The warm, spacious, ensuite guestrooms continue the tradition of charm and if you are looking for privacy, two suites are available in the converted 'Old Barn' and the 'Coachhouse'.



Odyssey River Cruise

Odyssey Murray River Cruising

Cruise the river in style onboard a delightful small craft where a friendly and knowledgeable crew entertain a maximum of eight guests on three or four day cruises, or longer private charters. This is a comfortable way to get upstream to explore ancient limestone cliffs, deep lagoons and the prolific array of wildlife that inhabits the area. Sunset and sunrise presents nature at its best, and frequent stops allow you to delve into the bush in the company of a crew member, scratching the surface of the tranquil Australian bush at a relaxed, gentle pace.



Wilpena Pound, Flinders Ranges

North Bundaleer, Jamestown

Just forty minutes past the vines of Clare is North Bundaleer, secluded amongst olive groves and farmland. Lovingly restored by owners Marianne and Malcolm, the property has undergone a dramatic transformation from a ramshackle homestead into a grand, gracious property that still retains its settler roots. Baltic pine floors and period furnishings combine with sublime meals and samples from the cellar to create a relaxed, yet luxurious stay. The library and elegant drawing room are surrounded by shady verandas, ideal for drinking in the views.



North Bundaleer

FLINDERS RANGES

Spectacular gorges, abundant wildlife and Aboriginal art - the Flinders Ranges shelter some of the world's oldest landscapes and capture the essence of Australia. The flat, barren plains and undulating ranges include the Mount Remarkable National Park and stretch from Crystal Brook just north of the Clare Valley far into the Outback, an area renowned for wildflowers, wildlife and walking trails. The trail at Brachina Gorge uncovers millions of years of evolution, where the changing terrain unveils a tangible geological history, while the Wilpena Pound, encased by quartzite hills, is a natural amphitheatre created by nature at its most ambitious. The Flinders Ranges are best seen by 4WD tour or on foot in the company of a guide: this is Australia at its pristine best.

Angorichina Station, Flinders Ranges

Angorichina Station offers a unique opportunity to taste Outback life on a working sheep farm, one of the earliest pastoral properties to be established in Australia. Set amongst sandstone mountain ranges hundreds of miles from their nearest neighbour, your hosts here are Ian and Di Fargher, fourth-generation owners with a wealth of local knowledge, colourfully expressed in countless spellbinding anecdotes that accompany guided excursions by 4WD or air, and Di's delicious meals. Mustering here is by motorbike and light aircraft, with the daily 'water run' giving you a chance to appreciate the sheer size of the farm. For a quieter insight, Arthur Coulthard, a charismatic member of the local Adnyamathanha people, will take you on an interpretive journey through the surrounding bush. Guestrooms are either in the main homestead or in the charming converted school house, where the family's children once learnt via the 'school of the air'.



Angorichina Station guestroom

WOOL AND WINE

Some Australian sheep stations are superbly comfortable, with fine wine and cuisine an unexpected flourish in remote, spectacular Outback homes. This itinerary explores Adelaide's famed vineyards and continues to experience Outback life on a working sheep station on the rugged edges of the Flinders Ranges.

- Day 1:** Leave Adelaide today and enter the Clare Valley, whose rolling hills and lowlands are home to many boutique wineries.
- Day 2:** Spend the day exploring little villages and enjoying the fine Rieslings which have made Clare famous.
- Day 3:** Continue on to Angorichina Station in the heart of the remarkable Flinders Ranges.
- Day 4:** Join Ian Fargher on his light aircraft for a tour of the property or try your hand at station activities.
- Day 5:** Venture out to see some of the world's oldest landscapes in the company of one of the local Aboriginal people.
- Day 6:** Leaving Angorichina Station head for North Bundaleer in the farming town of Jamestown.
- Day 7:** Continue on to Adelaide.

EXTENSIONS

For those whose sense of adventure is limited by time, a privately chartered light aircraft from Adelaide can drop you directly at Angorichina and collect you when required.



Ian Fargher of Angorichina Station

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The 'Painted Desert', Coober Pedy

COOBER PEDY

Australia's underground city is half way between Alice Springs and Adelaide, a mining community where the people are as colourful as the town's famous opals. Taking its name from the Aboriginal phrase 'Kupa Piti' (meaning 'white man's hole in the ground'), Coober Pedy is a bizarrely fascinating town where many residents escape the harsh desert climate by living underground: the soft opal-bearing earth is ideal for digging out your own des res. A tour of the opal mines is a good prelude to exploring the stunning and aptly named Painted Desert, but to get a real taste of the area join the Outback Mail Run that links Coober Pedy, Oodnadatta and a number of Outback stations. Coober Pedy can be reached by car, by train to Manguri or combined with a tour of the Flinders Ranges.

Desert Caves Hotel, Coober Pedy

Continuing the intriguing underground theme, this hotel offers you the chance to sample subterranean living. The guestrooms are both above and below ground and the usual hotel facilities are found here amongst cool stone walls and soft lighting. Relax at the underground café, enjoy a refreshing drink at the underground bar or shop for exquisite rough or cut opals at a number of local shops. For those without vehicles the owner of the hotel will also collect travellers arriving by rail at Manguri train station.



Desert Caves Hotel



Sealions, Baird Bay

ANDAMOOKA

On the edge of Lake Torrens National Park the small town of Andamooka was originally the hub of a thriving opal mining industry, a sparse white gravel landscape populated by beehive type hillocks and scattered shacks. Andamooka still reflects its pioneering heritage and the traditional Aussie pub here, Duke's Beehive Bottle House, is made from 10,000 brown glass empties and the High Street is lined with tiny clay houses preserved in their original state.

Wirraminna Station, near Andamooka

Close to the magnificent salt pan of Lake Hart is the working sheep station of Wirraminna, where you can sample authentic Australian Outback living. Michael and Julie are your hosts in a farm sprawling across some 125,000 acres, where you can share their home and participate in station tasks. Take a peek into the local schoolhouse for a glimpse of the innovative 'school of the air' that provides an education to Outback children. Converted 'Jackaroo' quarters offer modern, comfortable accommodation close to the main homestead: breakfast provisions are supplied, while home-cooked dinners can be prepared on request.



EYRE PENINSULA

Hills smothered in wild flowers edged by a craggy coast, the Eyre Peninsula stretches from the vast landscape of the South Australian Outback to the ocean. To the north are the Gawler Ranges, rich with wildlife, while at the natural harbour of Port Lincoln sealions and dolphins roam. Overlooking the Great Australian Bight to the west, Baird Bay is abundant with sealions and from June to October, with migrating southern right whales. Regular flights from Adelaide arrive at Port Lincoln, the hub of many off-the-beaten track encounters on small-group 4WD vehicle tours.

Baird Bay Lodge, Eyre Peninsula

On the shallow western arm of Anxious Bay are two rammed-earth lodges that provide wonderfully spacious accommodation. Each is equipped to the highest standard with comfortable bedrooms, open plan lounge and fully equipped kitchen. Boat charters are available for fishing expeditions and day trips to swim with the sealions. Your hosts Alan and Trish have an infectious passion and sensitivity to the natural environment which leaves a long lasting impression on all those who visit.



Lake Gardiner

SWIMMING WITH SEALIONS

Sitting in the middle of a channel and guarding the approaches to Baird Bay, Jones Island hosts a colony of Australian sealions. Take to the shallow waters and you will soon be joined by a handful of these wondrous creatures, which swim up close and make elegant tumble turns, stare inquisitively into your mask and tickle you with their whiskers. This amazing encounter is possible for those staying at Baird Bay Lodge, or as part of a Gawler Ranges Safari.

THE GAWLER RANGES NATIONAL PARK

Crowning the Eyre Peninsula the Gawler Ranges rear up from the wheat and barley-fields around Wudinna, changing from level countryside into ancient eroded hills, dramatic rocky outcrops and volcanic rock formations. Fringing the region are immense areas of savannah which for much of the year are covered in deep red soil and spinifex grass, but are transformed each spring as a blanket of wildflowers sets the area ablaze with colour. The dazzling Lake Gardiner, a glistening salt pan amid the surrounding red soil, resembles a piece of Antarctica whilst the immense 'Organ Pipes' amphitheatre makes a natural stage for the local wildlife. The park is home to some of Australia's oldest landscapes, whose colourful and unusual rock formations have been baffling geologists for years.



Guide in the Gawler Ranges

GAWLER RANGES SAFARIS

Lacking sealed roads - or even marked trails - the wisest (indeed only) way to access this area is by guided 4WD tour, and the best operator is Gawler Ranges Safaris. This small and locally-owned company has been running tours for groups of two to six visitors for nearly two decades. Hard to beat for their enthusiasm and knowledge, they offer three and four-day itineraries, longer tours on request, and will tailor an itinerary to your specific interests if you wish. Accommodation is in comfortable walk-in safari tents set on raised decks and you are certain to see plenty of kangaroo, emu and wombat. Many tours culminate in a visit to the rugged seaside village of Baird Bay for the wonderful opportunity to swim with playful Australian sealions.

🏠 Kangaluna Camp, Gawler Ranges

The permanent camp of Kangaluna has been created in stark contrast to its surroundings. Spacious safari tents each contain two beautiful beds crafted from local woods and you have your own private shower and toilet. Each tent has been thoughtfully positioned in a pretty bush setting, a good distance apart, but for even more privacy you can opt for a 'Wild Camp' experience, where you are set up with a comfy bushman swag in the bush, star-lit all night long. Following dinner you either can put your feet up or strike out into the surrounding bush for a nocturnal wildlife walk.



Kangaluna Camp

OUTBACK & SEALION ENCOUNTER

This tour of South Australia's arid heartland experiences rural hospitality on a working sheep station, discovers charismatic Outback towns, and explores the deep red sands, crisp white salt lakes, mountain ranges and striking rock formations.

- Day 1:** Depart Adelaide bound for Olympic Dam where your friendly hosts will take you to Wirraminna Outback station.
- Day 2:** Explore Roxby Downs and Woomera where you can join a mining tour and learn about the chequered past and present of these townships.
- Day 3:** Depart Wirraminna bound for Andamooka opal town where you will join your Gawler Ranges 4WD safari and head to your Outback tented accommodation.
- Day 4:** Venture off-road into the Gawler Ranges and up to Lake Gardiner salt lake to see the flora and fauna of the south.
- Day 5:** Head towards Baird Bay for a wildlife cruise to see dolphins and the sealion colony. A delightful coastal drive south will take you to Port Lincoln for your flight back to Adelaide.

EXTENSIONS

Linger longer in the wonderful beach-house at Baird Bay and savour the natural environment or contrast your Outback experience with a few extra nights in Adelaide, a sophisticated city but with all the friendly hospitality of a small town.



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SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Victoria

A vibrant capital city, historic towns, dramatic coastlines pounded by barrel-sized ocean waves, lofty mountains and iconic national parks - despite being pocket-sized, Victoria certainly packs a powerful punch. Within half an hour of its capital, Melbourne, you could be taking in mist-laden mountain ranges and ferny gullies, in an hour lying in a sheltered bay or surfing the Southern Ocean off a rugged coast. To the west of Melbourne, a cool temperate rainforest unravels its way along the Great Ocean Road, on the east the land falls away into a series of peninsulas and islands, tea-coloured rivers and beaches strewn with rusty boulders. On the city's doorstep is the amber-hued Yarra Valley with its famous cool-climate wines. Climb into the High Country to winter snowfields or a carpet of spring wildflowers whilst the treasured Grampians are a living gallery of flora, fauna and Aboriginal rock art, latticed by excellent bushwalking trails. In a country where distances are often huge, Victoria's highlights are compact and accessible.

MELBOURNE

Priding itself on being a great city it is hardly surprising, with such a spectacular combination of old and new architecture. Here lavish parks, elegant streetscapes showcasing Georgian masterpieces disappear into buzzing laneways and tucked away arcades. Add Australia's best eating, an excellent if quirky tram system and a packed events calendar and you have one of Australia's most enlightened cities. Lively banter surrounds Victoria's climate, yet locals embrace the outdoor lifestyle and the city possesses a charm that quietly bewitches many. Though it is obvious Melbourne was planned, with a tidy, balanced grid of neatly angled streets, beneath this sense of 'everything in its place' restraint a creative energy pushes back at the city's apparent conservatism. The city centre is made up of precincts, each with their own flavour and character: some are just a lane or two, while others cover the banks of the Yarra River, a new Docklands area or an entire street. Distinct inner suburbs extend around Port Phillip Bay: St Kilda with its diverse café and music scene, Asian-influenced Richmond and Lygon Street with its pizza, gelato and Italian style. Each area, in its way, showcases yet another side of Australia.

THE EVENTS AND CULTURE STATE

Victoria's calendar bursts with some of Australia's biggest and innovative cultural festivals and world-class sporting events, from Grand Slam tennis to celebrations of food and wine. The quintessentially Australian pastimes of surfing and Aussie Rules Football reach their dramatic climax here, but you can also spend your time listening to jazz, roaming world-class arts festivals or chuckling at the comedy festival. Whatever your interests just ask one of our specialists when best to visit: Victoria's events are sure to enhance your stay no end.



Luna Park, St Kilda



Fountain Terrace

🏠 Fountain Terrace, St Kilda

Set on a tree-lined avenue moments from the beach and St Kilda's colourful cafés is this grand freestanding Victorian terrace. Like many of the old properties in St Kilda it has had a somewhat colourful and bawdy past. Beautifully restored, this warm and friendly bed & breakfast has seven lovely rooms, each stylish and comfortable and two with private verandas. A wonderful breakfast prepared by the host, Heikki, is served around the pretty refectory table and is a perfect start to each day.

🏠 Langham Hotel, Melbourne

Occupying an exceptional position on the Yarra River's bustling south bank, the Langham Hotel (formerly the Sheraton Southgate), is just a few minutes stroll from a parade of thriving al fresco restaurants, Federation Square and the National Gallery of Victoria. The hotel is styled on a Victorian mansion with imaginative touches, such as a mesmerising water feature in the foyer that leads you up to the graceful reception area. The classically designed bedrooms are elegant and spacious and the Melba Brasserie has sweeping views over the river towards the city.

🏠 Hotel Charsfield, Melbourne

This classic hotel is listed with the Australian National Trust and is a fine example of Victorian architecture. Perfectly located just minutes by tram from the dynamic centre of Melbourne, trams rumble by linking you with the bay at St Kilda and the cafés and eateries of South Yarra. The beautiful botanic gardens are a stroll away and behind the property is Albert Park Lake. Room styles range from deluxe to premier spa, and each are traditionally, but individually decorated. Although in this location you are spoilt for dining options, the hotel's own restaurant offers innovative Australian fusion cuisine.



Hotel Charsfield

🏠 Villa Donati, Richmond

This lovely two-storey villa was built in 1885 as the private residence of the distinguished architect and mayor John Bernard Augustus Koch, and is a classic example of Italianate architecture. It has since, at different times, served as the residence for the Anglican Archbishop and the infamous 'Moulin Rouge' massage parlour. Today it is a quiet, private retreat located in Richmond, one of Melbourne's most popular districts, minutes by tram or train from the sights. Each room is individually furnished and the charming guest lounge with its veranda where breakfast is served is the ideal place to relax.



St Kilda



Melbourne



Dandenong Ranges

YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES

Less than an hour from Melbourne the richly fertile Yarra Valley is dotted with fruit orchards and flower farms, peppered with vineyards and sheltered by the verdant Dandenong Ranges. Here the Puffing Billy steam train winds its way through fern glades and mountain ash trees from Belgrave to the lovely village of Emerald. The William Ricketts Sanctuary, a place of beauty and spirituality, has an amazing collection of Aboriginal sculptures, and a short distance to the east, the Upper Yarra Valley extends beyond Warburton in a wild tumble of rocky mountain streams and nature at its most beautiful and unspoiled.

Monreale Estate, Dandenong Ranges

In the heart of the Dandenong Ranges, Monreale Estate is just a short drive from the Yarra Valley vineyards. Six cottages, set in rambling water-gardens surrounded by a galaxy of colourful flowers, are individually decorated with open wood fires and spa baths. Breakfast hampers can be delivered to your cottage and the hosts Cheryl and Karl will be happy to advise you on the dining options available.



Mornington Peninsula

MORNINGTON PENINSULA

Two bays flank the Mornington Peninsula, as it pushes out into the mighty Southern Ocean. Fertile hills and lavender farms roll to the coast, with iridescent beaches and tranquil harbours. Less than an hour from Melbourne, its laid-back lifestyle has attracted many chefs and wine makers, creating an unexpected gastronomic haven. A retreat for artists, the 'Artists' Trail' combines the scenes that have inspired some of the country's best-known painters and with regular craft markets, especially at Red Hill, the region has an unmistakeable creative buzz. At the tip, Sorrento is a historic gem acclaimed for fine buildings, excellent eateries and galleries. The nearby ferry at Portsea links you to the Great Ocean Road so this is a great diversion from the main highway.



Yarra Valley

QUEENSCLIFF

At the head of Port Phillip Bay this town was born from humble beginnings as a sea pilots' station and military garrison, but has blossomed into a bayside town of faded glamour replete with Victorian-era buildings, fascinating galleries and renowned restaurants. Heritage hotels testify to flamboyant days gone by and simple cottages echo a more modest past amongst the fort, lighthouse and beaches. We suggest you take the daily ferry from Portsea on the tip of the Mornington Peninsula to Queenscliff and spend a couple of nights before continuing on a journey along the Great Ocean Road.



Woodman Estate

Woodman Estate, Moorooduc

This gracious Victorian Manor is set amid acres of bush and rolling pastures and overlooks a lake. Choose from lakeside chalets or a room in the main house, each classically designed and comfortable. The wonderful restaurant has been acclaimed by Victoria's "Age Good Food Guide" and is a great excuse to stay in for the evening. Dining is anything but conventional: guests are encouraged to walk through the gardens to the lake between courses.

Athelstane House, Queenscliff

Built in 1860, Athelstane House is Queenscliff's oldest guesthouse: its charming historic exterior is complemented by spacious, comfy guestrooms. It has won numerous accolades for its fabulous cuisine (which we can highly recommend) and its extensive wine list. Relax on the lovely veranda or in the gardens that surround the house, or use the property as the perfect base as you are just moments from the beach and the town centre.



Bells Beach

THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD

Hugging the contours of Victoria's rugged coast, this famous road snakes from the surf-capital of Torquay past cliffs, scenic lookouts, rainforests, wrecked ships, and laidback fishing villages on its way to Port Fairy. Between Angelsea and Lorne the Otway Ranges' forests are riven with waterfalls and bushwalks, with the Otway Fly walkway offering you a chance to explore the forest canopy. Drive along the coastline past the tiny hamlets of Wye River and Skenes Creek to Apollo Bay, and briefly head inland to Lavers Hill, the highest point in the Otway Ranges, where Melba Gully has one of the most impressive rainforest walks. Princetown marks the boundaries of the Otway and Port Campbell National Parks, where the spectacular 'Shipwreck Coast' (see page 70) starts. Picturesque Warrnambool, less than half an hour from Port Fairy, is a lovely maritime village where each June southern right whales visit to calve offshore.

APOLLO BAY

This small fishing village was named after a local schooner and despite the town becoming a resting place for many shipwrecks it oddly remains popular with fishermen. Set in the foothills of the Otway Ranges there is a remarkable contrast between the craggy coastline and breathtaking forest wilderness. A wander will uncover some excellent cafés and restaurants, but make sure you continue to 'Mariners Lookout' for a stunning view back over the bay, its long sandy beach washed by deep blue waters.

Chocolate Gannets, Apollo Bay

Set just outside Apollo Bay, these spacious self-contained villas offer spectacular sea views. Relax in your ensuite double spa bath looking out to the rolling ocean, sink into a rich leather sofa in front of an open fire, or use it as a base to explore. From the tasty breakfast hamper that greets each new day, all the home comforts you need are provided.



Captain's at the Bay

Captain's at the Bay, Apollo Bay

This welcoming, contemporary bed & breakfast is within a stroll of the superb restaurants of tranquil Apollo Bay. Whether you are in the Terraces, Cottage or the Loft, the elegant décor is warm and inviting. A sumptuous Australian breakfast is served in the guest lounge and the dining room is a great place to relax with a huge open fire and local maritime history on display.



The Great Ocean Road

THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD

One of the world's most scenic driving routes will take you from Melbourne along one of Australia's most scenically dramatic coastlines, justly named the Great Ocean Road. Pass through friendly seaside towns, famous surfing beaches, dense forest backed by the Otway Ranges and past incredible natural sandstone formations carved by the elements.

- Day 1:** Leave Melbourne and drive to Apollo Bay. Perhaps stop in Geelong and take a stroll along the bollard trail, where local artist Jan Mitchell has transformed hundreds of old timbers from the old pier into striking Australian icons. Stop at Bells Beach near Torquay, one of Australia's top surfing locations.
- Day 2:** Drive to Port Fairy, take a short detour inland and walk along the unique Otway Fly Walkway high in the tree canopy. Continue along the coast and enjoy the magnificent views of the infamous Shipwreck Coast.
- Day 3:** Spend the day exploring the lovely village of Port Fairy, perhaps returning to the Twelve Apostles at sunset.
- Day 4:** Return to Melbourne today via the inland Princes Highway, or continue on to Adelaide.

EXTENSIONS

There are many variations to this famous journey. One of our favourites is to drive down the Mornington Peninsula and take the ferry from Portsea to Queenscliff for a night or two before continuing with your journey to Apollo Bay. Alternatively, you can return to Melbourne from Port Fairy via the Great Southern Touring route (see page 71) taking in the Grampians National Park and the heritage town of Ballarat.



Port Fairy

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Loch Ard Gorge, The Shipwreck Coast

THE SHIPWRECK COAST

Blowholes roar with spouting water and the ocean seems to boil around towering rock stacks on this majestic coastline. At the cavernous Loch Ard Gorge, the stunning vista of towering cliffs, sparkling sea and a tiny sandy beach make it hard to imagine the dramas that have unfolded in the treacherous waters. The beautiful Twelve Apostles, set off by a backdrop of dramatic, imposing cliffs are part of a procession of natural features that string the coast: Pudding Basin Rock, Island Arch, the Blowhole and London Bridge. This coast is best seen when the winds are fierce, whipping the ocean in to a frenzy, playing out the natural force that has battered and crafted the landscape into shape. Boardwalks and viewing platforms ensure easy access to the sweeping, awe-inspiring vistas, with blazing hues at sunrise and sunset. There are plenty of day tours leaving from Melbourne, but these often prove rather long with a good deal of driving: our choice would be to take your time, and spend a night or two in Port Fairy and Apollo Bay.

Great Ocean Road Walk

Traversing one of the most remarkable stretches of Australia's coast this new walking tour passes through tall forests, shaded gullies, remote beaches and towering cliffs, travelling from Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles in four days. The walk breaks after four hours, allowing energetic walkers to continue and those that prefer a more leisurely pace to catch a ride to the overnight stop. Accommodation can be in character bed & breakfast properties or in designated campsites and good food and wine is available all along the route.

PORT FAIRY

In early 1800 a boat called 'The Fairy' chose this tiny bay on the mouth of the Moyne River to shelter from a storm. Steeped in charm, there is also an historic Celtic influence in the architecture of this town of restaurants and a flourishing arts scene: open studios and galleries scatter the streets and are linked into a delightful 'Art Walk'. The beauty of the coastline is at its best on Griffiths Island, home to a colony of mutton birds, and on Lady Julia Percy Island where lava flows have created an almost flat top with soaring cliffs. Although seen by many as an overnight stop, Port Fairy is a perfect base from which to explore the famous and somewhat notorious shipwreck coast.



The Shipwreck Coast

Goble's Mill House, Port Fairy

A beautiful heritage-listed three-storey bluestone building with views of the Moyne River, Goble's Mill House has been converted into a very comfortable and characterful guesthouse by the owners, Noel and Lorraine. There is a homely atmosphere around the massive open fireplace, comfy couches and tiny guest pantry, where guests are invited to help themselves to tea, coffee, homemade biscuits and a glass or two of port. Six bedrooms of varying size are elegantly furnished and three overlook the fishing boats and river: our favourite is the beautiful loft room with its king-size bed and private balcony. Breakfast is served next to the kitchen and Goble's is just a short stroll from an array of restaurants.



Goble's Mill House



Port Fairy



The Grampians

THE GRAMPIANS NATIONAL PARK

From the summit of Mount William the soaring ranges of the Grampians seem to roll into the distance like an endless series of breaking waves. Spanning close to two hundred thousand hectares the region is accessible by foot, car or canoe. Marked trails lead through plains of riotously coloured wildflowers to Aboriginal rock art sites or the magnificent MacKenzie Falls. The Wonderland Loop Walk, although a little strenuous in places, takes you through the Silent Street Ravine to a string of rock formations and along a curving sandstone rock face called the ‘Elephant’s Hide’, with plenty of natural rock pools for a refreshing dip along the way. Our favourite trail is to Mount Wudjub-Guyan where the massive sandstone outcrops and eucalypt-covered slopes offer uplifting views. There is also a beautiful and tranquil walk through tall forests to Silverband Falls. With its natural beauty and indigenous wildlife, the Grampians are simply outstanding.

🏡 Meringa Springs, Wartook Valley

We were thrilled to discover this lovely property with its sweeping mountain views complete with mobs of kangaroo grazing in the foreground. Three villas, beautifully furnished with private deck areas, are just perfect for soaking up the marvellous views. Timber beams and furniture fashioned from local red gum wood are set off by polished wooden floors and huge windows with panoramic views. Breakfast is served on the outside deck or in the dining room and dinners are available by prior arrangement.



Meringa Springs

DAYLESFORD AND THE MACEDON RANGES

Ancient volcanic eruptions, lava flows and erosion have formed this region, surrounded by the gently rising timbered mountains of the Great Dividing Range. Rich in mineral springs the area has attracted a host of spas and therapy centres which offer an array of tantalising treatments. Stroll around Daylesford and browse the works of artists, sculptors and silversmiths mixed with intriguing antiques shops. Overlooking the town is the lovely Victorian Convent Gallery, a gallery of sculpture and art that is also known for its fine food and wine. A short drive away are the jagged hills and thick stands of unspoiled bush of the Macedon Ranges. The cool climate is perfect for quality wines, in particular a famed Pinot Noir, but the ranges are better-known for being the setting for the famous book and film ‘Picnic at Hanging Rock’ - where intriguing walks can be made. This is the perfect day trip or diversion enroute to, or from Melbourne.

🏡 The Lakehouse, Daylesford

Clinging to the shores of beautiful Lake Daylesford, this lovely property has received countless accolades for its great food and wine and is a popular gourmet retreat. Set in acres of flamboyant gardens the thirty delightful rooms share enchanting views. You can take bushwalking trails or rent rowing boats on the lake, and the town, a short walk away is crammed with excellent artist’s studios and galleries.



The Lakehouse

GREAT SOUTHERN TOURING ROUTE

This route offers boundless opportunities to uncover much of the extraordinary state of Victoria. Unearth the heritage of the Goldfields and sample the tranquillity of Daylesford’s many spas. Explore the grandeur of the Grampians National Park and tour the Great Ocean Road with its scenes of nature at its grandest. Although the Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula are not considered to be part of the so-called ‘official’ touring route, we feel they add delightful twists to this magnificent drive.

- Day 1:** Leave Melbourne and drive to the Yarra Valley, visiting a couple of the vineyards the region is renowned for.
- Day 2:** Drive through the Dandenong Ranges, perhaps stopping to take a bush walk or explore the charming village of Olinda. Journey along the Mornington Peninsula.
- Day 3:** Catch the ferry from Portsea to Queenscliff and continue to Apollo Bay, breaking your journey at Bells Beach, a world-class surfing venue near Torquay.
- Day 4:** Spend the day driving along The Shipwreck Coast to Port Fairy, with a short detour inland to walk along the unique Otway Fly.
- Day 5:** Spend the day exploring the lovely village of Port Fairy, perhaps returning to view the Twelve Apostles at sunset.
- Day 6:** Head inland and drive through the Grampians National Park.
- Day 7:** Spend the day exploring the Grampians National Park, walking marked trails or canoeing across Lake Fyans.
- Day 8:** Leave the Grampians, stop to explore the goldrush towns of Ballarat and Sovereign Hill. At Daylesford visit the charming Old Convent Gallery.
- Day 9:** Spend the day relaxing at a local spa or browsing amongst the galleries and studios of Daylesford. Return to Melbourne late in the afternoon.

A shorter version of this drive is to travel directly to Apollo Bay from Melbourne via the main highway.



Daylesford

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

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Wilson's Promontory

PHILLIP ISLAND

Tiny Phillip Island provides a delightful diversion on your coastal journey, and is famous for its nightly penguin parade. Each day at sunset dozens of fairy penguins emerge from the ocean at Summerland beach and shuffle through the spiky, clumpy grass to their nests. Shearwaters fly annually between here and Alaska, seals cavort around the rocks at The Nobbies and koalas can be seen at the conservation centre. The rugged southern coastline facing Bass Strait has roaring surf beaches and every morning the pelicans are fed at San Remo, a display of leaps, flutters and squabbles. Cowes is the main town and offers a range of lively restaurants specialising in fresh lobster and shellfish.

Glen Isla Homestead, Cowes

Ideally located on a pristine sandy beach, Glen Isla Homestead is a mile from Cowes and ten minutes drive from Summerland beach, with its nightly penguin parade. Set in the grounds of this historic homestead are six spacious and elegantly furnished guestrooms each offering modern comforts and private verandas with glorious garden vistas. The main homestead is surrounded by a shady deck where your hosts, Madeleine and Ian, provide breakfast every day and dinners by arrangement.

WALHALLA

In the forested mountain countryside of Gippsland, the historic town of Walhalla is tucked in a steep, sheer-sided valley. During the boom days of the goldrush some 5,000 people resided here, today things are quieter as just 21 people live in the perfectly preserved town. Excellent walking trails link the town's many historic buildings, including the old fire station and corner store, and you can also ride the restored steam engine of the Walhalla Goldfields Railway. The town is surrounded by giant gum trees perched precariously on steep hills, creeks and an abundance of local wildlife, perfect for bushwalks. At night the peace is spectacular, when the town is virtually empty apart from a few friendly locals and an occasional wombat.



Glen Isla Homestead



Fairy penguins

WILSON'S PROMONTORY NATIONAL PARK

Panoramic views, spectacular ocean beaches and rugged mountains make the 'Prom', as it is known, one of Victoria's best loved national parks. Clear waters lap on dazzling beaches of white quartz sand, framed by smooth cliffs of pink granite that shelter a distinctive collection of native plants and wildlife. From the main highway a road leads to the small town of Tidal River, where you'll find information on the bushwalking trails that range from short ambles to Picnic or Whiskey Bays to more challenging trails to Cotters' Beach. The walk to the top of Mount Oberon presents awesome coastal views over the Bass Strait, at its best at sunset. The park is home to wombats, emus and kangaroos. Take care when driving through the park, particularly at dawn and dusk when Australia's wildlife is most active.

Vereker House, Wilson's Promontory

In a quiet rural setting of rolling lawns and pretty bush, Vereker House looks over the Yanakie Valley towards the Vereker mountain ranges of the 'Prom'. With just four guestrooms and a spacious lounge with a conservatory overlooking the gardens, this traditional guesthouse offers a friendly welcome. With the lovely, pristine national park right on your doorstep this is the ideal place to base yourself.



Walhalla's Star Hotel

Walhalla's Star Hotel, Walhalla

Faithfully reconstructed following a fire in 1951, the original Star Hotel was Walhalla's most famous goldrush hostel. Located in the centre of the historic township the hotel incorporates all the modern amenities yet in comfortable surroundings: a lovely guest lounge, à la carte restaurant with wine bar and twelve spacious rooms. This small, friendly hotel is the perfect mountain retreat that evokes the goldrush era in a peaceful environment.



The Gippsland Lakes

THE GIPPSLAND LAKES

Gentle sea breezes, mountain air, villages dozing in the sun and lakes flanked by endless white sand beaches. This area is a beautiful and expansive network of inland waterways. Quiet canals and light winds make this a great place to take to the water for a day with just dolphins for company. There are three coastal parks in the region. At Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park you can cross the slim arm of dunes that separate the inland waterways from the magnificent, oceanfront Ninety Mile Beach. Lakes National Park is home to Lake Victoria and supports a network of bush trails draped with seasonal wildflowers and orchids. The least populated of the three parks, Lake Tyers State Park, has lofty eucalypt forests and calm waters, perfect for a day's canoeing.

METUNG

In the heart of the natural beauty of the Gippsland Lakes, life at the village of Metung proceeds at a gentle, slow pace and yet possesses a smattering of sophistication. Sandy beaches circle bushclad hills and the picturesque marina at its heart make this a favourite place to break the journey between Melbourne and Sydney, or as a base for those who wish to explore the Gippsland Lakes by boat or on foot.

Clovelly House, Metung

From the moment you arrive and are presented with a glass of wine by your hosts, Graham and Polly, you know that Clovelly House is special. Set in landscaped grounds overlooking Bancroft Bay, this lovely property dates back to 1881 but has been lovingly updated: each of the three bedrooms have double spa baths and there is a new cottage with glorious views. Graham, a trained chef, ensures that breakfasts are sensational, with daily-changing menus often served on the sunny veranda with just the birds for company.



Clovelly House

CROAJINGOLONG NATIONAL PARK

This extraordinary park, at the border between Victoria and New South Wales, was declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve because of its white beaches, rocky coastal headlands, rambling heathlands and towering eucalypts. Hundreds of bird and plant species flourish here making it a paradise for bushwalking and bird watching. The peaceful estuary at Tamboon is known for wading birds and at Clinton Rocks granite boulders line the shore, dyed a vivid orange by lichen. Mount Everard Lookout has magnificent coastal views, while some of the most beautiful walks are at Lake Elusive, through silvertop ash and fern gulleys to the Wingan Rapids. The ideal base to explore this park is Gipsy Point at the Mallacoota Inlet.

Gipsy Point Lodge, Gipsy Point

Surrounded by the Croajingolong National Park, this lodge has a peaceful, secluded atmosphere. It is a comfortable base to explore the area's remarkable forests, rivers, lakes and coastline. Each of the seven guestrooms and three self-contained cottages are spacious and comfortable. Extensive gardens surround the property and the lodge offers complimentary use of rowing boats and canoes, with motorised launches available for hire.

HIDDEN TREASURES OF VICTORIA

Some of Australia's most fascinating wildlife and quirky goldrush towns are to the east of Melbourne, from Gippsland onwards. Discover penguin colonies and wildlife on Phillip Island, the far stretches of lush, untouched forests on Wilson's Promontory National Park and the fascinating old gold-mining town of Walhalla.

- Day 1:** Leave Melbourne for Phillip Island and watch hundreds of penguins leave the sea and waddle across the dunes to nest.
- Day 2:** Leave Phillip Island and continue to the pristine National Park of Wilson's Promontory.
- Day 3:** Spend the day exploring the many walking tracks.
- Day 4:** Head inland for Walhalla and a taste of this historic mining township.
- Day 5:** Spend the day in and around the town, exploring above ground and below.
- Day 6:** Leave Walhalla and return to Melbourne through the Dandenong Ranges.

EXTENSION

Take a detour through the lovely Dandenong Ranges and on into the wine regions of the Yarra Valley for a few days of food and wine indulgence before returning to Melbourne.



Thomson River, Walhalla

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Tasmania

Part and yet not part of Australia, Tasmania's southerly latitudes have led to a distinctive landscape, climate and culture. Balmy weather caresses the east coast's beautiful beaches, encouraging wonderful arable produce and some of the best cool-climate wines in the world, while the Southern Oceans crash onto the western side creating dramatic cliffs and dense rainforest. Diverse habitats and huge expanses of wilderness ensure that unique flora and fauna have developed and flourished and there is nowhere better to see such a range of exciting wildlife in Australia. Colonisation took place during the 19th century, establishing the island as Britain's most feared penal colony. The legacy of this period is some of the oldest and most attractive colonial villages and Georgian architecture in Australia and a fascinating history of personal strife and success against all odds. Tasmania is experiencing a renaissance and new-found assurance as more and more travellers realise that it really is a special destination in its own right and not simply the small island off the south of Australia.

HOBART

As Australia's second oldest city, Hobart is rich in colonial and maritime history. Hobart is also the second sunniest city in Australia, after Adelaide, contributing to its bustling café culture which is focused on the waterfront where fishing boats are berthed next to cruising yachts and a square rigger or two. First populated in 1804 as a ragtag collection of tents and huts with a population of 262, of which 178 were convicts, Hobart soon developed into a penal colony. Convict and early settlement history highlights begin with the diverse Salamanca Place and its many galleries, cafés and the extraordinarily vibrant Saturday market, or you can venture up 'Kelly's Steps' to emerge in the city's best preserved village area of Battery Point; so called after the defensive guns built by the British. Also worth including are the views from Mount Wellington, the serene parkland of the 'Queen's Domain' and the harbourfront heritage area of the Henry Jones Jam Factory, established by its rags-to-riches namesake who was, at one point, the largest private employer in the southern hemisphere. Hobart offers so much to see within its own boundaries, but it is also a marvellous base from which to explore the surrounding area's diverse attractions whether taking wildlife cruises or guided convict tours.

Battery Point Guesthouse, Hobart

Located in the historic old town of Battery Point, this is the closest guesthouse in Hobart to the thriving waterfront area of Constitution Harbour and is just a two minute walk to the renowned Salamanca Place Market. The listed building was originally the coach house to the nearby Lenna Mansion and is now infused with character and charm by hosts Roger and Sue. The six spacious and ensuite bedrooms are all individually decorated, including the Empire Suite which is a replica of that found on the Titanic. After a hearty breakfast in the conservatory you may wish to simply lounge in the beautiful garden or put your feet up in front of a log fire. For those that wish to head out exploring, you will not find a better-located place to stay.



Battery Point Guesthouse



🏠 The Henry Jones Art Hotel, Hobart

This historic factory has been restored impeccably and opened for business in 2004. Hobart's most luxurious hotel is a fascinating and unexpected combination of old and new. From its original and beautifully crafted staircase to the restored machinery and all-glass atrium, The Henry Jones Hotel reflects the fascinating influences of its rich colonial trading history and every room is unique as the existing historic structure has been preserved in its entirety. The beguiling mix of textures from original stone walls, ancient beams, polished floors, leather sofas and art covered walls will have you wanting to explore every corner of the hotel before even venturing into Hobart itself.



Henry Jones Art Hotel

RICHMOND

Twenty minutes drive north of Hobart will lead you to Richmond, the first place that the 'Coal River' could be bridged enroute to Port Arthur in 1820. The village is home to over 50 beautiful sandstone buildings including Australia's oldest Anglican Church. The municipal gaol is still splendidly intact, complete with shared and solitary cells, warden's house and flogging yard. Richmond also boasts Australia's oldest bridge, around which many ducks and geese loiter on the riverbanks creating an idyllic rural scene reminiscent of a Constable painting.



Salamanca Market



Port Arthur

PORT ARTHUR

Described by Governor Arthur as a "natural penitentiary", the Tasman Peninsula is connected to the mainland by 'Eaglehawk Neck', an isthmus only one hundred metres wide that was guarded by a permanent line of savage dogs, wickedly sharp man-traps and legend has it, waters baited to keep them shark infested! Port Arthur housed 12,500 convicts between 1830 and 1877. For some, this was a hellish place, however most convicts would earn their probation for good behavior, whereupon their prospects were actually quite good on account of the skills learned in Port Arthur's thriving industries. Convict labour enabled Tasmania to become initially self sufficient and then a nett exporter. You can take a short boat trip to the poignant 'Island of the Dead', where prisoners and civilians alike were buried, often in unmarked graves. Not surprisingly one of the most popular evening tours around Port Arthur is the 'Ghost Tour' which is packed with ghoulish stories and anecdotal evidence. For such a history-focused day out it is well worth considering the use of a guide who will enthrall you with details otherwise missed.



Millhouse on the Bridge

🏠 Millhouse on the Bridge, Richmond

John and Suzanne Hall own this historic property that is consistently voted the best bed & breakfast in Australia by both national and international publications. It is a wonderful mix of hospitality and history, character and comfort. Set on the lovely riverbank next to the famous bridge in Georgian Richmond, the building was built by convicts in 1853 as a steam mill and is now listed by the National Trust. The bedrooms are charming, while the lounge and breakfast areas are roomy and inviting. What really makes it stand out though is the personal touch with which the hosts treat their guests.



Cradle Mountain National Park

HUON VALLEY

The Huon Valley region is one of rich fertile valleys, waterways, forests and mighty rivers. Many of the island's gourmet food producers are in this region, including numerous berry and fruit farms. Vineyards also abound and in the sheltered waterways Atlantic salmon farms can be seen. Exploring deep into the Huon Valley will lead you to the fascinating Tahune Forest Airwalk where you can stroll for nearly a kilometre 40 metres up at treetop level overlooking the Eucalypt forests, rare Huon pines and the majestic Huon River. Head further south and you will find the Hastings cave systems that include a delightful glow worm cavern. After subterranean excursions you can enjoy a dip in the natural hot springs.

MOUNT FIELD NATIONAL PARK

As you wind your way along the Derwent River you pass vineyards offering cellar door tastings and the historic Salmon Ponds and fly-fishing museum near New Norfolk. Beyond this gateway to one of Tasmania's most visited regions is lovely Mount Field National Park. Highlights include walking through man-ferns and wet eucalypt forest to the multi-tiered Russell Falls and visiting the secluded Styx Valley, where the world's tallest hardwood trees grow in the 'Valley of Giants'. In this region you also have a higher chance of seeing platypus than anywhere in Australia and can see most of the state's native species in wildlife sanctuaries.

🏡 Franklin Manor, Strahan

Situated on the edge of the breathtaking World Heritage wilderness of west coast Tasmania, Franklin Manor is 500 metres from the centre of Strahan. The weatherboard building is set in attractive gardens just a stone's throw from the waterfront. Once inside, tasteful modern artworks and sculptures adorn the walls and stained glass windows frame the beautiful staircase. There are two guest lounges, ten standard guestrooms, four suites and four garden cottages. Co-owner Meyjitte Houghenout is a two star Michelin chef and the small restaurant is regarded as the best in western Tasmania, which makes pre-booking essential.



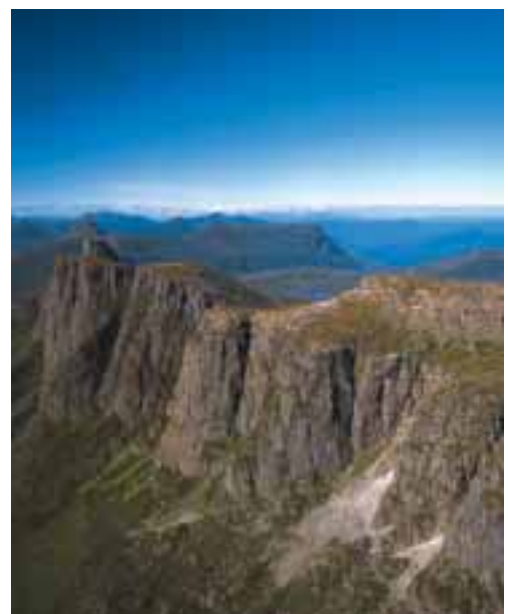
Franklin Manor

STRAHAN & GORDON RIVER

Strahan is located at the head of Macquarie harbour on the World Heritage-Listed west coast of Tasmania where there is nothing but vast stretches of wild ocean until the southern tip of Argentina. In this hostile environment an isolated penal colony settlement was situated on Sarah Island in the middle of Macquarie harbour and it was to here that the worst of the worst European convicts were sent to work and die felling Huon pine - so valuable for ship building - on the banks of the mighty Gordon River. The harbour mouth is named 'Hell's Gate', because of the fearsome reputation held by the penal colony within. Built up on the back of the local timber industry, Strahan is now one of Tasmania's quaintest towns with its old timber buildings, scenic port and natural backdrop of weathered mountains and thick native bush. Taking a cruise out of Hell's Gate into the Southern Ocean and upriver into the World Heritage-Listed Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park is an awe-inspiring visit to pristine wilderness: a real highlight of Tasmania. Strahan is also home to the restored 2896 railway which steams 22 miles across rivers and mountains to the old mining settlement at Queenstown.

LAKE ST CLAIR & CRADLE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Lake St Clair and Cradle Mountain are two iconic elements of this Tasmanian World Heritage area. The scenery is awe-inspiring, as eucalyptus forests give way to mountain scenery reminiscent of Scotland's finest. Whether taking a gentle walk around the enchanting Dove Lake, a summit walk to Cradle Mountain peak or even indulging in the six to eight day 'Overland Track' from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair, you are highly likely to encounter wallabies, wombats and possums at close quarters. As well as the walking you can visit the Waldheim Hut, home to pioneer conservationist Gustav Weindorfer, the Wilderness Photography Gallery, experience bountiful fly-fishing, horse riding and even see the wilderness from the air on a spectacular flight across lakes and peaks from Cradle Valley.



Highland Plateau



Gordon River wilderness cruise

STANLEY

Stanley is an enchanting historic fishing village which is an ideal base from which to explore the wild and remote Northwest coast. You'll discover penguin rookeries, seal colonies and platypus in streams as well as historic sites, cave systems and grand coastal features. A highlight is the lovely Table Cape headland, ablaze with tulips in spring time, while at Stanley itself you can walk to the summit of the Table Mountain-like hill know as 'The Nut'. Nearby lie the ruins of Highfield Historic House (1928) and to the west you can see wild Tasmanian Devils in abundance at the Arthur River or simply unwind with some of the region's glorious cheeses.

DELORAINE

This artistic region is in the lee of the lovely Western Tiers and is home to many idyllic valleys which hold charming villages such as Deloraine that were first settled by colonial pioneers in the early 1800s. This history accounts for the many National Trust and heritage-listed buildings located in what resembles quintessentially English landscape. You will find sculpture trails, pottery shops, cheese factories and berry farms as you explore the area. There are also dramatic natural features such as the lovely Liffey Falls, Mole Creek National Park's glow worm-filled karst cave systems and the Devil's Gullet viewing point on the rim of the Western Tiers.



Calstock Hotel

Calstock Hotel, Deloraine

Built in 1831, Calstock is the most elegant and charming small hotel you are ever likely to find. Restored in 1999, the six rooms are all individually decorated to impeccably high standards and have some of Tasmania's most lovely rolling countryside views. The house is decorated in an English country house style with lofty ceilings, marble mantelpieces and fine plasterwork. Your hosts Remi and Ginett Bancal bring Gallic charm and professionalism with them from their time working at top restaurants in Australia as well as the Paris Ritz. The organic cuisine is Tasmanian (much grown on site) while the wine list has won several Australia-wide awards.

Cradle Mountain Lodge

Cradle Mountain Lodge harks back to bygone days of exploration, now translated into luxurious log cabin accommodation. With no telephones or televisions in the cabins, this is an unashamedly wilderness lodge set in the heart of Tasmania's Cradle Mountain and Lake Clair World Heritage Area. The lodge offers fine wine and food, served in front of a roaring log fire set in timber constructed buildings. Located close to Cradle Mountain Visitors' Centre, perfectly placed to explore the area by car, on foot or on horseback. A spectrum of accommodation is on offer to suit all tastes and budgets, from the charming Pencil Pine Cabins up to the opulent King Billy Suites.



Cradle Mountain Lodge

THE WOMBAT & WINE TRAIL

Explore the delights of Freycinet and Maria Island national parks, cruise from Hobart towards Bruny Island and gain a fascinating insight into the convict history of Australia at Port Arthur while staying in just a few well located bed & breakfasts. You also get to watch the wombats in the beautiful Cradle Mountain World Heritage Area and enjoy the wine tasting in the Tamar Valley. This well-balanced self-drive is for independent travellers keen to see all the highlights at an unhurried pace.

- Day 1:** Arrive Launceston and drive to Swansea.
- Day 2:** Day trip to Freycinet National Park, Wineglass Bay and Hazard's mountains.
- Day 3:** Day trip to Maria Island with its prolific wildlife including wallabies, kangaroos and wombats before driving to Richmond.
- Day 4:** Visit Hobart's Salamanca Market (Saturday) and then cruise to Peppermint Bay for a waterside lunch.
- Day 5:** Guided historical tour to Richmond and Port Arthur.
- Day 6:** Drive to Strahan and the west coast, via Mount Field National Park.
- Day 7:** Gordon River day cruise, then drive to Cradle Mountain National Park.
- Day 8:** Day at leisure exploring Cradle Mountain's scenery and wildlife.
- Day 9:** Drive to Launceston area through the rolling scenery of northern Tasmania.
- Day 10:** Day trip exploring the Tamar Valley wineries and villages.
- Day 11:** Depart from Tasmania.



Wombat

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LAUNCESTON

Historic Launceston and the Tamar Valley blend history, scenery and the superb flavours of food and wine. Launceston is a city of contrasts; a short walk from the graceful Victorian facades is the scenic Cataract Gorge with its peacocks and rhododendrons, fern glades and spacious lawns. Take a heritage walk exploring the city's history, colonial churches and elegant architecture. Travel the Tamar Valley wine route through many award winning cool-climate wineries for which Tasmania is gaining a world-beating reputation, as well as the Grubb Shaft Gold and Heritage Museum - one of Tassie's largest goldmines - and coastal Georgetown where you can see fairy penguins in their natural habitat. Personalised tours can lead you to private wine tastings, exploring forest reserves and face to face meetings with Bennett's wallaby.



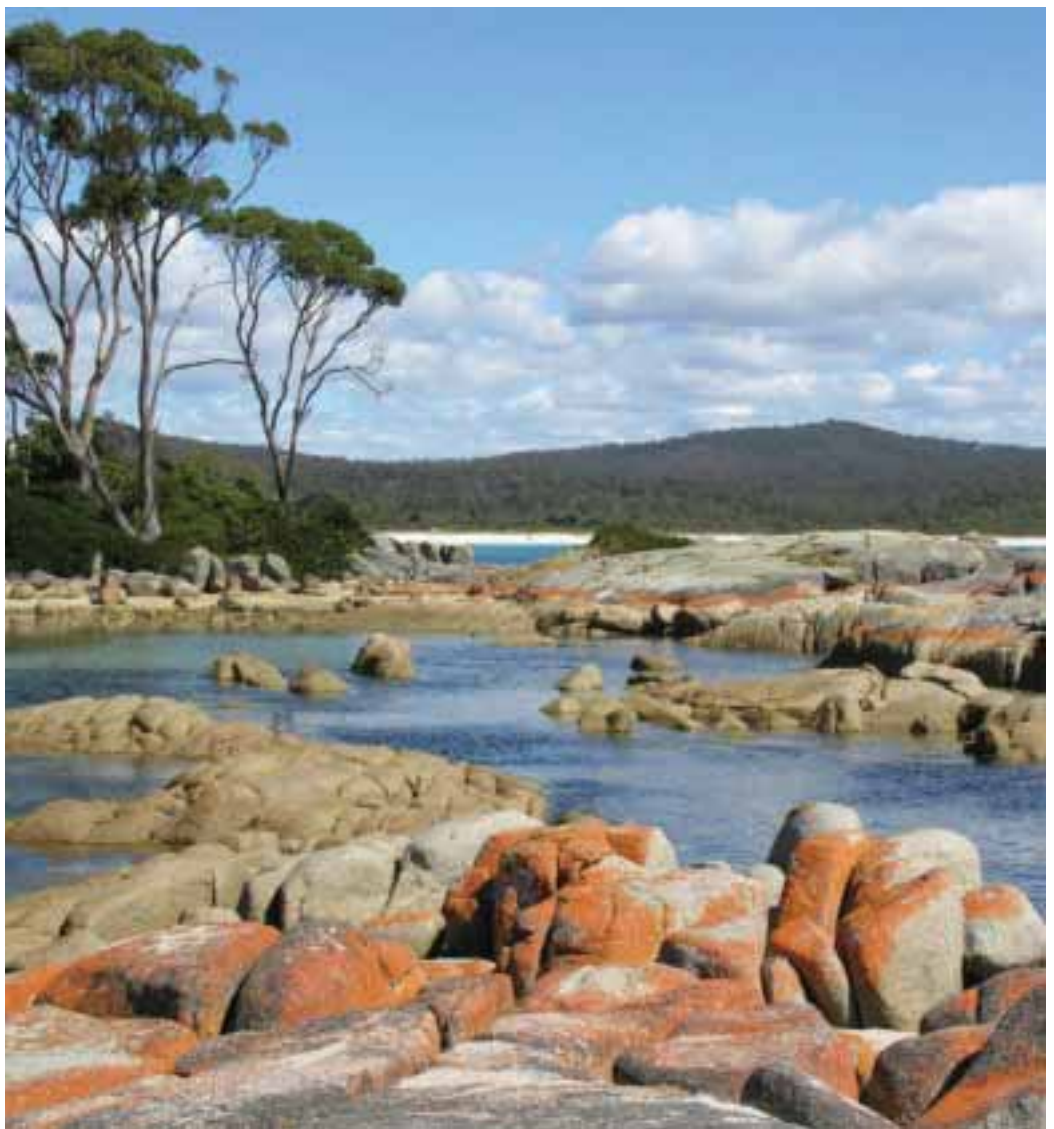
Brickendon Cottages

Brickendon Cottages, Longford

Brickendon is one of Tasmania's oldest farming properties and is located just a few minutes drive from Launceston. Settled in 1824 by William Archer, this magnificent rural estate has been continuously owned and farmed by his direct descendants, now in their seventh generation. Set close to old farm buildings or the renowned gardens are a number of self-contained cottages that simply ooze character and charm from their exposed beam rafters to the fragrant gardens complete with little picket-fence boundaries and the simply lovely rural views.

BINALONG BAY & BAY OF FIRES

Words fail to describe the beauty of the Bay of Fires Coastal Reserve, so-called because the first sighting of the shores by European sailors was ablaze with Aboriginal camp fires. Starting at Binalong Bay, the sparkling white sands, turquoise waters and granite shoreline, covered in fiery red lichen, stretch along 30 kilometres of coast to the Eddystone lighthouse. Explore a good portion of this reserve by car or by indulging in a luxury wilderness walk. Native wildlife, including wallabies and wombats can be seen in abundance which adds to the experience. The remote northeast's Blue Mountains can be explored from Binalong Bay, including the magnificent St Columba Falls at Pyengena. For the active visitors the area is known for its game-fishing from St Helens and the great kelp forest diving.



Binalong Bay

FREYCINET NATIONAL PARK

Located on the east coast, at the southern tip of the Freycinet Peninsula, this national park is the highlight of Tasmania for many people. Dominated by the granite peaks of the Hazards Mountain range, the park is forested wilderness accessible only by walking tracks or boat. Paths criss-cross the peninsula; from the 40 minute climb to view iconic Wineglass Bay to the luxury-tented walk of several days, there are options to suite all tastes. Secluded little coves shelter white sand beaches that can be explored by sea-kayak, walked to on well-maintained tracks or simply enjoyed from afar.



Freycinet Lodge

Freycinet Lodge, Great Oyster Bay

This property offers a real wilderness experience right on your doorstep. Set above the lovely Great Oyster Bay, you are also just a short walk away from the delightful Wineglass Bay. The lodge offers numerous activities from 4WD trips to cycle hire and guided walks in the lush Freycinet National Park. Accommodation is in secluded cabins which all have their own private balcony. The Freycinet and Wineglass (with spa) cabins have just one room, while Oyster Bay cabins have two rooms and a kitchenette, offering ideal accommodation for families (not bookable by couples). Luxurious Wineglass Premier Cabins are a real notch up for those that wish to spoil themselves.

Bed in the Treetops B&B, Binalong Bay

The last guests prior to Audley's visit wrote "The Treetops are halfway to heaven". Nestled in native bush on the hilltop above Binalong Bay at the southern end of the Bay of Fires this property has fabulous sweeping ocean views. The luxury suite is a cabin built around whole tree trunk pillars giving it a distinctive back-to-nature feel. However, with a double spa bath and a private sun deck you are pampered beyond all expectation. Your hosts Bruce and Marianne ensure that you feel at home and then give you as much privacy as you wish. The only other locals you will meet here are kookaburras, sea eagles, wallabies and possums.



Maria Island

SWANSEA

This charming seaside town is a holiday destination for many Tasmanians. Its great fishing and relaxed coastal lifestyle combined with dramatic views over Great Oyster Bay to the Hazards mountains and Freycinet Peninsula are understandable attractions. However, the biggest pull is its ideal touring location. It is just an hour north to Freycinet National Park with all its activities and half an hour south to catch the Maria Island National Park ferry, making Swansea a perfect base to explore the east coast highlights without needing to repack your bags.

Piermont Retreat, Swansea

The setting for Piermont Retreat is just breathtaking and is a real Audley 'find'. On 20 hectares of serene beach frontage sit snug cottages made of local stone and rammed earth. Using local timber and Kashmiri slate they are built 'bio-sustainably' and blend into the native bush gardens. The views across Oyster Bay include Freycinet National Park and the Hazards mountain range. As well as providing bed & breakfast accommodation, Piermont's location, just two kilometres from Swansea, means it is a perfect base from which to explore Freycinet National Park in one direction and Maria Island National Park in the other. Nine Mile Beach and Coles Bay are right on the doorstep as well.



Piermont Retreat

MARIA ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Maria Island National Park offers the most amazing diversity of geography, flora and fauna experiences to be found anywhere in Tasmania. There are pristine white sand beaches bordered by granite boulders covered in startling red lichen and dramatic mountains with dense forests that vary from tall eucalyptus to alpine scrub as the altitude changes. There is a strong colonial history with buildings from the 19th century varying from penal settlement to the ghost town of Darlington that was once home to hundreds. Aboriginal campsites can still be found on the shoreline and fossil cliffs reveal secrets of life from millions of years past. Arguably the highlight though is the stunning amount of native wildlife including wallabies, wombats, cockatoos and penguins which can all be found within easy walking distance of the shores. The island can be visited for day trips by ferry or enjoyed at length on a guided three-day walk (see page 81).



Wineglass Bay

WILD TASMANIA

Explore Tasmania in depth and discover a wealth of diverse scenery, fascinating wildlife and undiscovered wild places. Including the balmy east coast's Bay of Fires, Maria Island and Freycinet National Parks as well as the wilderness regions of the Franklin-Gordon rivers and the majesty of Cradle Mountain National Park, this trip touches on all of the state's real gems. The trip features a two night cruise into the utter wilderness of the enormous west coast World Heritage Area and a wildlife extravaganza on the Maria Island gourmet walk which will delight walkers of moderate fitness.

- Day 1:** Arrive in Launceston and drive to Binalong Bay in the scenic northeast.
- Day 2:** Day exploring the Bay of Fires.
- Day 3:** Drive south to Freycinet National Park.
- Day 4:** Day exploring Freycinet National Park, kayaking to secluded coves.
- Day 5:** Start the four day Maria Island guided walk.
- Day 6:** Day two of the Maria Island guided walk spotting the abundant wildlife.
- Day 7:** Day three of the Maria Island walk.
- Day 8:** Final day of the Maria Island walk followed by a drive to Richmond.
- Day 9:** Guided tour of historic Richmond and the penal colony of Port Arthur.
- Day 10:** Cruise from Hobart to visit kelp forests, salmon farms and wildlife reserves before mooring for lunch at Peppermint Bay.
- Day 11:** Drive to Strahan and board your two night World Heritage Cruise.
- Day 12:** Cruising the Gordon River World Heritage Area and Hell's Gate.
- Day 13:** Cruise to Sarah Island and then drive to Cradle Mountain National Park.
- Day 14:** Take a scenic flight over Dove Lake and Cradle Mountain.
- Day 15:** Drive to Devonport and board the 'Spirit of Tasmania' overnight ferry to Victoria.



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Franklin-Gordon river

WILDLIFE & NATURE IN TASMANIA

Tasmania's landscape varies dramatically within its small area. Parts of the north and the central highway are reminiscent of middle England with its gently undulating arable lands. However, with much of the island designated a World Heritage Area, it is the wild scenery with its often unique flora and fauna that really stands out. The mountainous inland glacial landscapes include Cradle Mountain and the Walls of Jerusalem National Parks while the Mount Field National Park is home to beautiful alpine scenery and eucalypt forests. The west coast consists of steep, jagged cliffs and absolute wilderness as it receives the full fury of the southern oceans, whipped up over vast expanses of seas by the 'roaring forties' winds, resulting in many ships foundering on wicked rocks. The east coast consists of mile after mile of white sand beaches, broken up by granite headlands, sheathed in orange lichen. The southwest of Tasmania is well known for its wild rivers. The Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park is home to two that thread for 75 miles through largely unexplored, pristine forest wilderness and is the last remaining bastion of Huon pine, once highly valued for its ship building qualities. The wildlife in Tasmania is diverse and abundant, so you are likely to come across wombats, eastern grey and Bennett's wallabies, echidnas, Tasmanian Devils, quolls, parakeets, platypus, penguins and an array of birdlife. In order to really experience the wildlife, you are advised to get off the beaten track with one of the guided tours available. We have selected four of the very best that will allow you to experience the wilderness in comfort.



Heritage Cruise

🏠 Franklin-Gordon Rivers World Heritage Cruise

Sheer size and almost total isolation have kept the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park virtually inaccessible to all but the hardest of bushwalkers and kayakers. With more than one million hectares of rugged mountains, wild rivers and one of the world's last great temperate rainforests, it is home to some of the oldest plants and rarest creatures in the world. The luxury small ship 'Discovery' allows just 24 guests a magical experience visiting the remote river valleys and majestic gorges of this World Heritage Park in comfort on a three day cruise that takes you, from Strahan (page 76), across Macquarie Harbour and 20 kilometres upstream into the heart of the wilderness. Included are twilight walks through copses of Huon pine, kayaking near platypus, exploring the old penal colony of Sarah Island and cruising out of Hells Gate. Gourmet dining adds a further dimension to this very special experience.



Bay of Fires

Bay of Fires Walk

At the edge of Mount William National Park, the magnificent wilderness coastline known as the Bay of Fires (page 78) invites you to experience its dramatic landscape and wildlife. Led by well-informed Tasmanian guides, small groups can explore both the fascinating beach environment and the rich diversity of the nearby woodlands. The first night of this three day walk is spent in a permanent bush camp set in the sand dunes just back from the beach, while the following two nights are in the lovely Bay of Fires Lodge. You will spend the free day relaxing and kayaking up Ansons River in Mount William National Park, a haven for wildlife and home to the largest population of eastern grey kangaroos in the state, as well echinadas, brush-tail possums, wombats, Bennett's wallabies and Tasmanian Devils. Birdlife too is abundant, with over 100 species occurring in the park, including many varieties of sea and shore birds. The area is one of great significance to the Aboriginal community and huge middens of discarded shells are a reminder of days when tribes would migrate to the coast in winter to forage for shellfish, mutton birds and seals. Up to 10,000 years ago these Aboriginal tribes would cross the land bridge that once connected Tasmania to the mainland. Today, looking north to Bass Strait, the remnants of this land bridge - the Islands of the Furneaux Group - can be clearly seen from the coastline of this magnificent national park.

Bay of Fires Lodge

This is the only building in this near-unknown wilderness paradise and has views up and down the pristine white sand beaches. In the lodge's magnificent living area, with a large timber deck and open fire, you'll enjoy delicious meals prepared with the freshest local produce and accompanied by fine Tasmanian wines. Solar power provides the lighting and hot showers in a building whose very concept was based on 'eco-sustainability'.



Maria Island

Maria Island Walk

Tasmania's newest four day "Gourmet Walk" really will captivate you from the Hobart start point onwards. The island has a compelling mix of tranquility, varied scenery, abundant wildlife and one of Australia's best preserved convict settlements. Aboriginal ochre pits, ancient fossil cliffs as well as the flora and fauna are really brought to life by your informative local guides. This walk features the indulgence of meals prepared with fine Tasmanian produce and accompanied by regional wines served at your magnificent beachfront wilderness camp. Your final night is spent in a National Trust Listed house, a magnificent banquet is a fitting finale. What makes the walk unique is the fantastic variety of geography, flora and fauna that you will experience in just four days, a real roller-coaster of diverse sights and sounds.



Cape Barren goose

Cradle Mountain Huts Walk

Cradle Mountain National Park is home to one of the southern hemisphere's great wilderness walks. The 64 kilometre track has traditionally been enjoyed by only the most serious of walkers who have taken all provisions with them on a gruelling hike that extends from Cradle Valley to Lake St Clair through spectacular landscapes. The Cradle Mountain Huts six-day walk follows the famous Overland Track and now allows walkers to enjoy the trek while staying in five, comfortable, well-appointed huts. After a hard day's walk with stunning views you will find yourself at a rustic dining table, in convivial company, for a hearty meal prepared by your guides with fine Tasmanian wine and cheerful conversation. Your twin-share rooms are in the only private huts in the area. The eco-friendly design ensures that your hot showers, cooked meals and local wines do not impact the environment while local guides will enhance the journey with their knowledge and understanding of the flora, fauna, geology and history of the Overland Track and tales about the World Heritage Area.



Bay of Fires



Flights & Stopovers

When travelling to Australia, you may be driven by a desire to fly in the greatest possible comfort, to travel most economically, to depart from a regional airport or by wanting to have a specific stopover destination included enroute. These are all factors that we take into consideration when selecting the most appropriate airline for your trip.



Easter Island

WHICH AIRLINES DO WE WORK WITH?

Audley arranges tailor-made holidays all over the world and has forged strong relationships with the most reputable airlines, securing some of the best prices on the market. Airlines deserving a particular mention are Qantas, British Airways, Air New Zealand, Emirates and Singapore Airlines. All have excellent legroom and entertainment facilities as well as offering the most direct flights to Australia and some of the most exciting stopover destination options. Flying with these airlines may also allow you discounted or complimentary flights in the UK, Australia and stopover destinations.

CLASS OF TRAVEL

There has never been a better time to fly long haul. Economy cabin seats are ergonomically designed for comfort and have sophisticated seat-back entertainment systems. Upgrade to business class, however, and you enter another world. Several airlines offer flat beds, such as the Qantas Skybed, which allow you a good night's sleep, leaving you refreshed and alert upon arrival. Some airlines, such as British Airways, Air New Zealand and Virgin, have a premium economy service that is quieter and more spacious, with greater legroom, than economy. These airlines will even allow you to upgrade individual flights within your trip.



Qantas Skybed

BREAKING YOUR JOURNEY

The advantage of taking a stop enroute is that you can manage the amount of time spent in the air, combined with the chance to enjoy exotic and fascinating destinations. Of course, if you wish to maximise your time in Australia then you can simply transit in the stopover airport and continue to Australia. Although there are differing views on whether one should fly east or west to avoid jetlag we would argue that it very much depends on where you would like to stop enroute. You may wish to do both and travel round the world.

ROUND THE WORLD

We have a wealth of experience in arranging round the world flights, allowing you to combine a number of different destinations and continents, offering exceptional value for money. Specific airline tickets will offer better coverage in one continent than another, so if you would like to visit more than one or two continents, please ask our specialists which fare will be the best one for you.

STOPOVERS

Why not break your journey to and from Australia? We can provide tailor-made travel arrangements in most of the world's continents and our specialists will ensure that you can really experience the best of any stopover destination that you may choose. Here are a few tantalising introductions to some of the most popular stopover destinations on offer.



New Zealand



Middle East



Botswana

MIDDLE EAST

Flying to Australia with Emirates allows you the luxury of taking a stop in Dubai. Perhaps to start off your trip with some sunshine on the beach or to end it with some tax free shopping, haggling for a bargain in the atmospheric old souks or sophisticated shopping malls while you to shake off the effects of flying long-haul prior to returning home.

AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

Magnificent Cape Town, Stellenbosch vineyards, Johannesburg and Kruger National Park in South Africa can be built in as stopovers to Australia when travelling with British Airways. Air Mauritius also fly 'Downunder', offering travellers an Indian Ocean stopover on this exotic and enticing island.



Japan



Peru



French Polynesia

ASIA

Asia offers the largest number of different stopover destinations. Fly into Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo or Bangkok to experience the buzz of Asia's metropolis. Perhaps take a short flight to Thailand's northern rainforests, south to the idyllic island of Koh Samui or even across to Cambodia's Angkor Wat. Alternatively, you can fly into Penang or Langkawi, in Malaysia, for a beach break on your way to Australia, while the more adventurous travellers may choose to visit Laos or even Papua New Guinea.

THE AMERICAS

The most common break point for travellers flying westwards is Los Angeles and is a good starting point if you wish to drive to some of the USA's great national parks. You could also fit New York or San Francisco into the equation for good measure. South America's gateway cities include Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and Santiago, each with their own unique highlights. With a little more time, you could even think about a side trip to Iguazu Falls, Machu Picchu and the Galapagos Islands.

NEW ZEALAND AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

New Zealand offers dramatic scenery from the sub-tropical north, through the Southern Alps to the lush Fiordland. Combine this with Maori culture, wonderful food and wine in a country where everything is only a few hour's drive away, making it a fantastic stopover destination. Do allow enough time to do it justice though. The South Pacific destinations of French Polynesia, Fiji, the Cook Islands and Samoa offer the ultimate beach breaks on the way home.



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