

The Bush to Beach Eco & Education Adventure



Welcome to Venture!

Explore rural Australian towns and working farms on this jam-packed jaunt through the lesser travelled places in this vast land. Proud of its pioneer history and buzzing with locals and larrakins, this slice of Australia is in a world of its own. Get your hands dirty pitching tents and peeling 'spuds', kayaking and throwing a fishing line into the Glenelg River or kick back under a shady gum tree and enjoy the tranquillity of the bush. Soak up the stunning Great Ocean Road sites at dusk and get a telescopic tour of the clear night sky's constellations. From the bush watching Echidnas strolling past you to some great surf beaches, visiting a small rural high school and its students and with the chance to join locals in their favourite pastime – playing sport!, this is an adventure for anyone wanting some of the best and not so well known, that Australia has to offer.

What's Included

This is a list of included activities on this trip. All other activities are optional and at your own expense. For a list of optional activities and sightseeing available on this trip, see the optional activities section below. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not be refunded.

Meal Inclusions

8 Breakfasts, 9 Lunches, 8 Dinners

Transport

Private van/minibus, 4WD, cycling, walking, kayaking

- Night walk and spotlighting (Little Desert)
- 4WD tour and environmental study (Little Desert)
- Wildlife walks on Mount Arapiles and in Barabool Flora and Fauna Reserves
- High School and farm visits (Murtoa)
- Cooking lesson (Murtoa)
- Yabbying experience (Murtoa)
- Boomerang Lesson (Halls Gap)
- Bush cycling (Barabool Flora and Fauna Reserve and Grampians National Park)
- Mt Zero Olive Farm experience (Grampians)
- Seppelts Winery Tour (Great Western, Halls Gap)
- Kayaking on Glenelg River
- National Park entries and camping permits



Trip Duration	8 days
Grade	Basic level
Accommodation	Cabin & Hotel accommodation

At a glance

Day 1	Melbourne - Little Desert National Park - Mount Arapiles
Day 2	Murtoa
Day 3	Barabool Flora & Fauna Reserve
Days 4	Barabool Flora & Fauna Reserve - Grampians National Park
Day 5	Halls Gap
Day 6	Glenelg River
Day 7	Glenelg River - Great Ocean Road
Day 8	Port Campbell - Melbourne

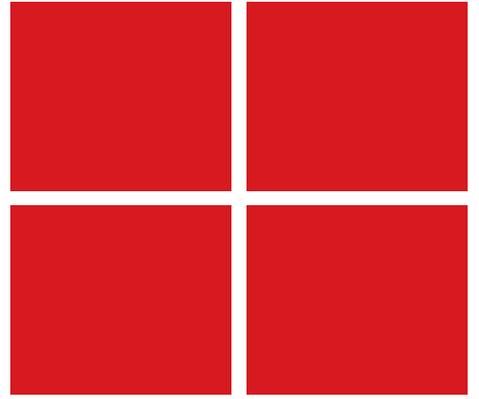
Accommodation

Motel (1 night Port Campbell and 2 nights Horsham and 1 night Glenelg River), bush cabins (3 nights Halls Gap) Please keep in mind that accommodation as shown in the itinerary is subject to availability at time of booking. The closest available alternative will be substituted if our first choice hotels are not available. Deductions or supplements may be applied to the trip price as a result. We can also fit in farmstays, homestays and camping if preferred.



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Trip dates. 2015

Detes to be confirmed

Trip cost

Joining Picton Base Cost: POA

Options & supplements

single supplement: POA



Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Melbourne to Little Desert National Park

The tour starts from Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport with a morning transfer by our private van for the trip to Mt Arapiles, a spectacular rock feature rising sharply from the barren and flat Wimmera plains. Mount Arapiles is renowned as Australia's premier rock climbing area and is known world wide with climbers. The views from the summit seem endless and we keep our eyes peeled for the resident Peregrine Falcons that nest in the area. If climbing is your thing then an afternoon scaling the side of the rock, rather than casually strolling to the top, can be organized.

Tonight we stay in Horsham in nice twin share hotel accommodation.

Day 2

Today we drive to the a small quaint farming village in the Wimmera Plains (45 minutes) with a pioneering history and strong town spirit, common to the area which is dependent on weather and crops for livelihoods. Murtoa has long been an important town in Australia's main wheat producing area and the population is very in touch with the land and rural Australia.

Local attractions include a massive grain silo that was used to store wheat not able to be exported during the second world war and the 1862 homestead of one of the first settlers, considered to be one of the finest Gothic villas in Western Victoria. Interestingly enough some of the earlier white farmers in the area were German, though it was also home to the Jaadwa Aborigines prior to white occupation. Major Mitchell passed through in 1836. Many direct descendents still farm the area and we will meet a few during our stay. The current name of the town comes from an Aboriginal word meaning 'home of the lizard'.

What Murtoa lacks in world famous sites it makes up for in friendliness, and tonight before dinner we are free to try our hand at some of the various local sports under the tutorship of some locals keen to show off their own skills – a kick of the footy, a hit of cricket, a shot of netball, a hit of tennis or having a go at lawn balls perhaps. At a welcome BBQ we will enjoy more of that friendliness as a few lively locals, some great food and possibly bring their instruments along for a sing under the star filled night sky. What better way to get in touch with Australia than by getting off the tourist track and meeting some of the people who have helped shape the Australian sense of identity?

A farm stay can be organized or snuggling up under the stars in a bush camp is another options. Students can stay with families in town as well for a homestay experience and better chance to get to know the locals.

Day 3 Barabool Flora and Fauna Reserve

This morning we spend time exploring the town more, meeting a few more interesting characters and seeing life in a small town in this part of the world.

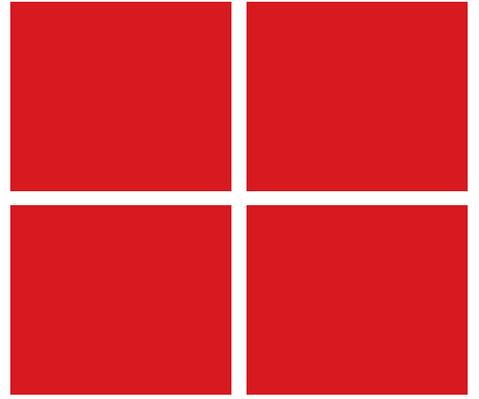
We start by learning about some of the resident bird and animal life with our morning 'Billy Tea' which many in Murtoa claim can not taste any better than the local style. We will be VIP guests at the local high school exclusively opened to these tours as we learn about some very special alternative energy projects making the school and students world first pioneers. We stop by a farm for some morning tea on the verandah and to say hi to some local families working hard through the tough drought gripping the area and depending on the time of year we may be lucky enough to try everything from shearing a sheep to driving some heavy crop stripping equipment.

We try to catch the local specialty – yabby – a tasty fresh water version of a crayfish. There are as many ways to catch them as there are to cook them and we will learn a few over lunch overlooking the lovely Rabi Park setting in town where a beer or local wine would not be out of place....we are



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Fast facts

Private Groups:

Private group options are available for this trip

Singles:

A single supplement is available for this trip*

Leader:

Expert local leader

**Ask our staff for more information*



on holidays, remember. This afternoon we jump on our thick tired bikes for a bush ride through the nearby Barabool Flora and Fauna Reserve. Tonight we will set camp up in the reserve to learn more about this great style of seeing (as well as hearing and smelling) the bush and before we make our own dinner at the camp we will explore the area by bike and on foot. We will come across the many resident Kangaroo families, sprinting Emus, diverse and unique birds including the colorful red-rumped parrot, strolling Echidnas, Blue Tongue lizards sunning themselves or see where some of the Brush Tailed Wallabies build their homes with the area ablaze with stunning wildflowers in the Spring. The many insects, spiders and snakes will stay hidden to us while in the reserve but our resident expert will introduce us at the very least to one or two creepy crawlies, including the infamous red back spider with a deadly poison and attitude warranting its red warnings, you will be looking under your chair for the rest of the trip ;-). The afternoon adventure should close with you putting on swimming togs and relaxing, swimming and soaking in the cooling water of this great bush country but the lifeblood of the area, the Yarriambiack Creek, is dry at the time of writing. This will be an exciting inclusion to future trips once the rains return.

By visiting the area we hope to support the local community, educate our travellers about environmental problems Australia faces and provide an alternative source of income to struggling farmers. After all, if everyone leaves the land who will grow the world's food? The star-filled night sky makes a great companion for our camp fire dinner setting tonight. If it's a clear night we will enjoy a guided tour of the heavenly bodies of the skies through a telescope. Seeing the Southern Hemisphere stars, view of the Planets and Moon, will lead to explaining more about Star Clusters and constellations and most importantly about the lack of light pollution that makes this all possible in a bush and rural setting like this. A view that is almost totally lost in most urban areas as they are poorly designed with artificial light being allowed to shine outward and upwards into the sky where it actually isn't wanted. We try to reconnect people with that old friend - the night sky. Insects do not gather around globes in this environment, changing the eating habits of bats. Frogs don't confuse brightly lit freeway noise with breeding calls of females of the species and end up squashed on the busy and roads. Birds don't crash into buildings blazing with light. Nocturnal mammals can forage as they always have here, not needing to be more cautious due to the constant nightly presence of a full moon due to man made light streaming into their habitat.

We drive under the stars to Halls Gap, the only town in the Grampians National Park for our first of 2 nights in great Log Cabins accommodation.

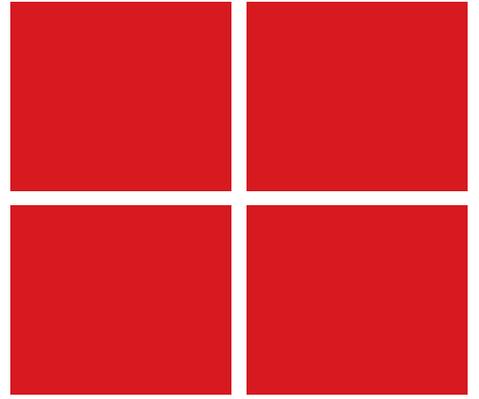
Day 4

We awake to the noises of the bush as the animals are busy about their business as we enjoy our al fresco breakfast before heading to Mount Zero for a lovely walk at the northern part of the Grampians National Park. We enjoy great views and morning tea before having a tour of the Mt Zero Olive Farm with our host Rich and his team. This family owned business' biodynamic farming techniques and commitment to sustainable organic agriculture have made this experience a real highlight of the trip – award winning olives, fine local wine or beer and lunch in a stunning setting at the base of the Grampians Range; Perfect!. After lunch we walk to the top of Mount Stapyton where we will be rewarded with breathtaking views along the trail with the impressive natural amphitheatre of Flat Rock ringed by massive cliffs the highlight – don't forget your cameras! On our way to Halls Gap (45 minutes) we will stop by one of the earliest Aboriginal Rock Art sites. Dating over 5,000 years Gulgurn Manja shelter and its images of animal tracks and small right hands for story telling, make this a great start to our time learning about the unique Grampians area and its early inhabitants and their history. Tonight is a real treat again as we stay in the heart of the National Park in lovely log cabins at our



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Adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are mentally flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise.

If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your consultant or travel agent.



cabins at our hosts, David and Sue resort. Kangaroo families are our room mates and kookaburras our alarm clocks. There is a salt water pool for a soak and for those looking for a spot of indulgence, why not try a private massage with a local wine at the nearby health and spa studio. The local pub is the best place to eat in town. Portions fit for a king they say, so for tonight, we will become royalty.

The thick gum tree forest of the National Park is home to its own nightlife and we grab a torch that won't bother the mammals we will try and spot as we enjoy a night walk under the stars.

Day 5 Halls Gap

We muck in for a great buffet style breakfast before heading to the Brambuk Aboriginal Center to learn how to throw a boomerang with one of the Park rangers. We will learn more about the life of the local Aborigines in the Grampians (or locally known as Gariwerd) and have the chance to see some local art works and possibly try our own hand. Brunch can be had at the center with its unique bushtucker menu allowing you to try kangaroo, crocodile and even emu.

The afternoon is free for either a lovely walk (4 hours return) to the top of the Wonderland Range at the famous Pinnacle Lookout for fantastic views of the gap or perhaps back on the bike to ride some of the off road trails in the heart of the forest where you will be able to get close to the animals as they go about their business in the silence the Grampians bushland is famous for. You are of course free to relax and enjoy time in this quaint town or do shorter walks and rides at your own pace.

Before dinner we will head to the nearby Seppelts winery at Great Western where we will sample (and most likely buy) some award winning and international known wines after having a tour of part of the many kilometers of underground cellars dated back to the late 1800's.

Tonight we relax in our lovely surrounds and have a BBQ prepared for us with a few hints on doing some great secret sauces when we return home to make a family BBQ that little bit 'Ozzie' flavoured.

Day 6 Glenelg River

Sleep in or enjoy a pre dawn drive to Boroka lookout (15 minutes) for the sun rising and a new day starting. After breakfast we head to the Glenelg River (90 minutes) for the start of the water based part of our adventure.

We stop for a nice brunch in lovely Dunkeld first before we pick up our kayaks to enjoy the stunning limestone gorges of the river as we slowly paddle through this lovely National Park. We will run over full safety and paddling techniques and this part of the trip is designed for beginners with a sense of adventure as much as it is for experienced kayaking enthusiasts.

From the kayaks we will get a great view of the nature around us in this pristine river environment with the rich variety of native bird, plant and mammal life supported by the river. We use one of the great no road accessible canoe camping sites for the evening for some bush tucker and a spot of fishing perhaps with a beer and some stories around the camp fire (we can stay at a nearby hotel).

Day 7 Glenelg River and Great Ocean Road

This morning we awake to the bush singing its morning song and a simple stroll along the riverbank is all you need to be reminded of how remote and isolated we really are here in this lovely spot.

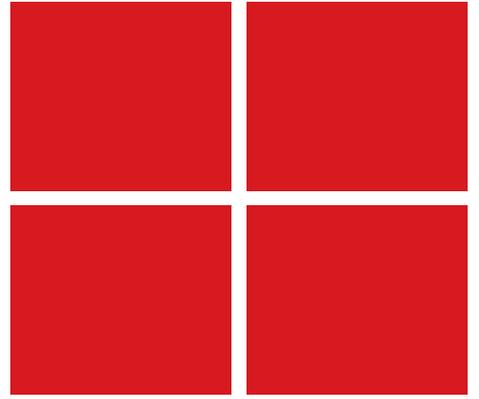
Wildlife is in abundance in this part of the Glenelg River and includes platypus, ducks, moorhens, emus, kangaroos, wallabies, possums, koalas, wombats and kingfishers. More than 700 species of native plants bloom in the bush, including dozens of varieties of wildflowers.

We are back in the kayaks for a final bit of paddling and we are in no hurry so we can relax and enjoy our time on the river with its many sandy beaches for swimming, more fishing and watching the nature slowly pass by. We visit what is often called 'The Jewel of the Glenelg Crown' the Princess Margaret Rose Cave, formed millions of years ago when the limestone was compacted before the sea floor retreated and the water percolated and dissolved the limestone forming this and other caves.



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Important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information in the current brochure, including but not limited to the itinerary and price. The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.



We head to Tower Hill (90 minutes) a volcano formed 30,000 years ago by a violent eruption. We go to a vantage point for a great view of the rim and crater of the volcano as well as smaller more recently created craters. We will learn about this area with its unique scenery, geographic features, sea bed, glacier and volcano field formation as well as its flora and fauna. A special place today and yesteryear, as it was the first area to be declared a National Park in Victoria.

They say save the best for last and a real highlight for client and guide alike will be the view of the sun setting on the 12 Apostles. These iconic guardians of the coast stand at the end of the Great Ocean Road (45 minutes) and are hard to describe at any time of day, but at dusk, they are breathtaking and we will arrive early and hover to make the most of the stunning coastline and wonderful time of day. We will have a great final dinner in nearby Port Campbell, a busy, fun and typically Australian coastal town.

Day 8 Port Campbell/Melbourne

In the morning there will be some time after breakfast to experience more of the town's historic charm visiting the beach or coastal works or taking in some last minute shopping before boarding your bus back to Melbourne along the famous Great Ocean Road. A great finish to a great adventure as you will travel the length of the road famous for surf beaches, rainforests and sheer rugged coastline.

Our transfer back to Melbourne departs mid morning. Your tour finishes on arrival in Melbourne.

Optional Activities

- Mount Arapiles or Grampians rock climbing or abseiling
- Massage and spa retreat (Halls Gap)
- Coasteering (Port Campbell)
- River Sledging (Glenelg River)
- Horse riding (Grampians)v

Physical Rating

You are required to carry your pack on and off trains/buses and from cars/vans, up hotel steps, in and around some of the inclusions etc. This itinerary is not an active itinerary but does include easy paced kayaking, walks and some bike riding for their unique experience in the bush for sunrises, sunsets, get deeper into the nature or to get to a spot for views. A person who has a basic level of fitness and has prepared with some walks and rides if they are active as a normal part of life will be able to enjoy any physical elements of this itinerary.



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