



From
\$11,167 NZD

Single Room
 \$13,518 NZD

Twin Room
 \$11,167 NZD

Prices valid until
 30th December 2022

21 days
 Duration

New South Wales
 Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
 Activity

Escorted small group tour of Australia's megafauna

Feb 05 2023 to Feb 25 2023

Small group tour of Australia's Megafauna sites.

From Gondwana to Diprotodon: Explore the deep-time story behind Australia's unique fauna.

Jared Diamond, the esteemed nature writer, has called Australia "the different continent". Why is this so? In this tour we ask two main questions – 'why are Australia's mammals so different from those of the



rest of the world?’ and ‘what is the story of our fauna during the Pleistocene period when giant reptiles, birds and a collection of marsupial roamed Australia?’

We will travel ‘upward’ through ‘deep time’ to learn how scientists are finding the answers to these questions with particular reference to Australia’s megafauna. We will visit sites that give insight into the biogeography, palaeoecology and fauna of Australia as these changed over a period of almost 400 million years through fossils discovered in New South Wales and Queensland. (Odyssey offers a separate small group tour to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Naracoorte to see and learn about the megafauna fossils in that unique World Heritage setting). We will learn about a continent adrift and alone for 60 million years after the collapse of the Dinosaur. How Australia’s climate changed and desertification set in, and finally we look at the impacts, both past and present, that humans have had on its fauna and flora with particular reference to the Australian megafauna record.

Megafauna were global...

Megafauna was a global phenomenon, for this collection of animal megafauna species, extinction occurred at the end of the Pleistocene era, about 10,000 to 30,000 years ago, just as humans were beginning to spread around the world. The Woolly Mammoth and Sabre-toothed Tiger have typically got all the attention, however, Australia had its own unique collection of Megafauna species and a similar extinction period.

Only the African continent and the oceans today have megafauna survivors from this period. Elephants, Rhinoceros’s Hippos and the Blue Whale are the large animal survivors from this period. (Other large species, such as the Saltwater Crocodile and freshwater species, as well as Alligators, arose in the dinosaur period). It is reported that North America lost about 80% of its megafauna, South America and Eurasia about 50% in this period. Scientists continue to suggest that Human activity was a contributor to the the megafauna extinction around the world at differing rates of decline in each continent. Megafauna are loosely defined as any large animal above 45kg in weight. The Australian megafauna extinction was believed to be about 70% of its Megafauna species, including the massive 2000kg + Diprotodon that

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disappeared from the open plains of the Australian continent. Today no mammal in Australia weighs above 90kg.

Australia did not support the diversity nor a population of “really big animals” as did other continents. Climate and poor soils are probably the reason, however, the rise and decline of mega-marsupials, reptiles and birds followed a similar path as the rest of the world. By the Miocene, around 20 million years ago, globally many modern mammal families first appear in the fossil record. Later, in the Pleistocene period much larger species (megafauna) evolved in those families. There are several scientific theories as to why simultaneously around the world this concurrent evolutionary path occurred, and then universally declined.

In Australia, the majority of known Megafauna extinction sites are on the East Coast and Northern Australia and usually in Caves and sinkholes.

An escorted small group Australian outback tour for mature and senior travellers is a journey of learning around central and Northern New South Wales. The tour examines the fossil fish record in inland waters, a site where the first primitive mammals shared the continent with dinosaurs, as well as sites where the marsupial megafauna, such as the marsupial “lion”, the giant echidna, the Diprotodon, (a giant koala) and many large ‘short-faced kangaroos’ occur in abundance.

This, like all Odyssey Traveller small group tours is limited to 14 people

The Itinerary

This small group escorted tour with your tour guide meets in Sydney where the trip begins and ends 14 days later. With your tour guide, this unique Australia tour departs on day 2 for Bathurst. We then enjoy time exploring and observing key moments in the geologic record that build to and include the Megafauna of Australia.

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Articles about Australia published by Odyssey Traveller:

- [The Kimberley: A Definitive Guide](#)
- [Uncovering the Ancient History of Aboriginal Australia](#)
- [Aboriginal Land Use in the Mallee](#)
- [Understanding Aboriginal Aquaculture](#)
- [Mallee and Mulga: Two Iconic and Typically Inland Australian Plant Communities](#) (By Dr. Sandy Scott).
- [The Australian Outback: A Definitive Guide](#)

For all the articles Odyssey Traveller has published for mature aged and senior travellers, click through [on this link](#).

External articles to assist you on your visit to Australia:

- UNESCO: [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape and Willandra Lakes Region](#)
- [Finding Mungo Man: the moment Australia's story suddenly changed](#)
- [A 42,000-Year-Old Man Finally Goes Home](#)
- [Fish traps and stone houses: New archaeological insights into Gunditjmara use of the Budj Bim lava flow of southwest Victoria over the past 7000 years](#)
- ['A big jump': People might have lived in Australia twice as long as we thought](#)

Highlights

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1. Canowindra and the Age of Fishes Museum
2. tour and learn about the Brewarrina fish traps
3. Travel through Inverell and Bingara which are sites with prolific megafauna historic discoveries
4. Visit and learn about megafauna and lightning ridge
5. Visit Wellington caves, New South Wales.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Sydney

Overview:

We meet in the late afternoon as a group for an introduction to the tour program. Followed by a group evening meal.

Accommodation:

Sydney Pullman or equivalent.

Day 2

Locations: Bathurst

Overview:

Today we begin the day with two different talks in the Australian museum before departing in the early afternoon for Bathurst. The first discussion is about the Australian megafauna species and the discovery of extinct megafauna fossils in New South Wales and South Australia including Naracoorte. The second talk is the role, if any, that the arrival of Aboriginal people to this continent had on its ecology and megafauna extinction.

In the early afternoon we depart for Bathurst.

Accommodation:

Bathurst- TBA

Day 3

Locations: Bathurst

Overview:

Today this small group visits Canowindra and the Age of Fishes Museum. This is a spectacular fossil fish fauna from the Late Devonian, 380 mya. Australia at this time was locked up with Antarctica as part of the Gondwana continent. A local guide provides a talk about the fossil sites and museum.

Then in Bathurst we visit the Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum, 'home of Australia's largest collection of fossils and minerals' (The Sommerville collection). A guide provides an insight as to how the collection was assembled and the highlights.

The late afternoon is at your leisure.

Accommodation:

Bathurst- TBA

Day 4

Locations: Dunedoo

Overview:

This small group tour of Australia's megafauna today travels to sites to see Gondwana plant fossils from around Dunedoo. These are from the Permian period (225 mya). The group also visits a National park to see beautiful fish and plant fossils at Talbragar. This National park is considered to have the 'most significant Jurassic (205 – 140 mya) terrestrial siltstone deposits of fossils in Australia.

We visit a leading boutique winery on our way to Dunedoo.

Accommodation:

Dunedoo -TBA.

Day 5

Locations: Uralla

Overview:

We continue North to Uralla today. We stop at Coonabarabran to visit the Visitor Centre museum to see a nearly complete *Diprotodon* skeleton from nearby Tambar Springs (our first introduction to Pleistocene megafauna). The *Diprotodon* was a key member of Australia's megafauna.

Accommodation:

Narrabri-TBA

Day 6

Locations: Narrabri

Overview:

Today we travel onto Narrabri. The region was a very rich source of marsupial fossils during the Pleistocene. We travel through Inverell and Bingara which are sites with prolific megafauna historic discoveries. The group will have the opportunity to possibly see private collections of megafauna.

This region is also the headwaters of the Murray-Darling Basin, geologically interesting, now rich agricultural land.

Narrabri is the gateway to the Pilliga forest and Mt Kaputar.

Accommodation:

TBA

Day 7

Locations: Lightning Ridge

Overview:

From Narrabri we travel onto Lightning ridge.

This is an where we find early Cretaceous (150 – 100 mya) fossils

include Dinosaurs and monotremes, the oldest evidence of any Australian mammal in the geologic record – as well as opalised plant fossils.

We have a tour in the afternoon.

Group meal.

Accommodation:

TBA

Day 8

Locations: Lightning ridge

Overview:

The group continues to explore Lightning ridge in the morning. The afternoon is at your leisure.

Accommodation:

Lightning ridge-TBA

Day 9

Locations: Brewarrina

Overview:

This morning we take a drive towards the township of Brewarrina in order to visit the extraordinary Aboriginal fish traps. Here we will meet with our Aboriginal guide who will explain the working of the traps, still used by local children to catch fish in the traditional way.

The Brewarrina fish traps are estimated to be over 40,000 years old and one of the oldest man-made structures on earth. This elaborate network of rock weirs and pools stretches for around half a kilometre along the riverbed and was built by ancient tribes, to catch the fish as they swam upstream.

Accommodation:

Brewarrina -TBA

Day 10

Locations: Wellington

Overview:

Travelling south we engage a local guide from country to visit Cuddie Springs megafauna site. This is the only site in Australia with evidence of direct contact between megafauna and Aboriginal people 30 – 40,000 years ago.

We continue onto Wellington where we stay for 3 nights. There is a group evening meal.

Accommodation:

Wellington-TBA

Day 12 -13

Locations: Wellington

Overview:

The groups spends 2 full days in and around Wellington Caves with local guides. This is a site that shows some 4 million years of changing fauna from Pliocene to late Pleistocene. It is the site of first discovery of megafauna in Australia and 'home' of *Diprotodon*. Recent research by scientists from Flinders University has described one local deposit as 'the richest Pleistocene mammal assemblage in Australia'.

The group explores and learns as much as possible about Australian megafauna and scientific recovery of fossils over the two days.

Accommodation:

Wellington- TBA

Day 14

Locations: Wellington to Sydney

Overview:

Today we return to Sydney. The late afternoon is at your leisure. There is a farewell group dinner this evening.

Accommodation:

Pullman Hyde park or equivalent.

Day 15

Locations: Sydney

Overview:

Tour concludes after breakfast

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 14 nights accommodation.
- 14 breakfasts, 3 picnic lunches, 6 dinners.
- Transport by modern and comfortable vehicle suitable for the highway conditions.
- Entrances and sightseeing as specified.
- Services of Tour Leader for the duration of tour.
- Detailed Preparatory Information.

What's not included in our Tour

- Return airfares to Sydney
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature, such as telephone calls and laundry

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.