



From
\$8,849 CAD

Single Room
 \$11,297 CAD

Twin Room
 \$8,849 CAD

Prices valid until
 30th December 2023

13 days
 Duration

New South Wales, Victoria
 Destination

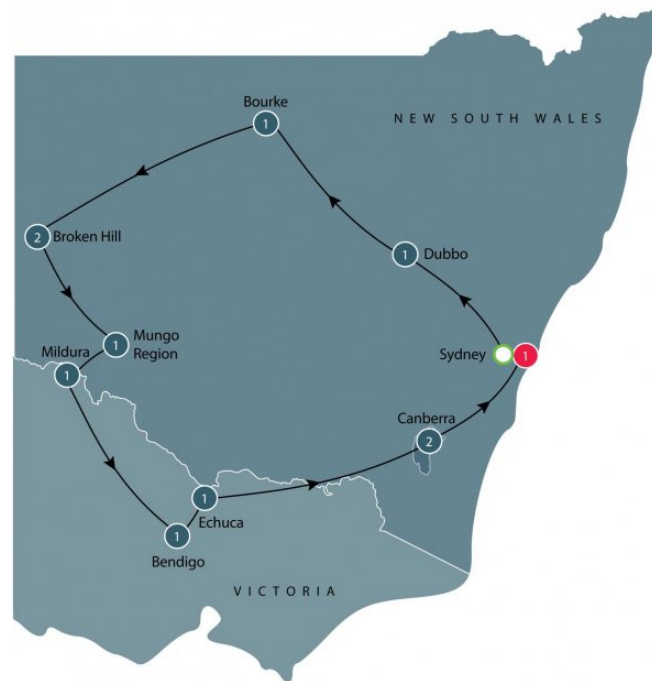
Level 2 - Moderate
 Activity

Escorted small group tour of New South Wales and Victoria

Apr 10 2023 to Apr 22 2023

Small group tour of New South Wales and Victoria.

An escorted small group Australian outback tour for mature and senior travellers is a journey of learning around the Southern edges of the Murray Darling basin and up to the upper southern part of this complex river basin north of Mildura, across the historic Goldfields of Victoria that made Melbourne the richest city in the world to the Nation's capital Canberra and to Sydney. This small group educational tour is offered from late October to March, linking into tours of similar duration either



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before or after of [New Zealand](#) or to [Tasmania](#) for its colonial or wildlife heritage. Though you can enjoy a walking program in New Zealand or the [Flinders island](#) as well with Odyssey at this time of the year.

It provides the traveller on this escorted small group tour of Western New South Wales and the Northern part of Victoria the learning opportunity to gain an insight into [Aboriginal habitation](#) land management over some 40,000 years and then more recently the veneer of European settlement in the last two centuries on the landscape. It is part of a [portfolio of Australian Outback tours](#) offered by Odyssey for like minded people who are curious about [Outback Australia](#).

The itinerary is designed for the traveller who is still time constrained but curious to learn more about the [deep history of Australia](#). This educational tour is for 12 days from Sydney to Sydney.

This, like all Odyssey Traveller small group tours is limited to a maximum of 12 people.

This escorted small group tour has an interest in both Aboriginal and European settlement history. Over the period of this escorted small group tour the itinerary takes you to visit the UNSECO World Heritage Sites of [Mungo Man and lady](#). Gain an understanding and appreciation of the complexity and features of the Murray Darling Basin through some spectacular scenery. The program skirts around the edges of the "Aussie Outback", but is not an outback adventure for the traveller. Whilst the [Murray-Darling](#) begins in Queensland, by the time the river system reaches New South Wales it represents one the most complex river systems in Australia against which modern agriculture has placed substantial stress. We see the historic and contemporary evidence of this in the lakes around Menindee. and the many landscape changes including [the Mallee](#), observing and learning about the river woodland galleries, arid lands, saltbush plains, agriculture practices; as well as the mining and railway history of Southern Australia.

This twelve night fully escorted small group tour takes the senior traveller with an interest in discovering more than usual tourist "must sees", into outback NSW and the northern-most part of Victoria,

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through, what for most, will be unfamiliar territory. The tour is specially designed for seniors with an interest in getting off the beaten track, but with limited time at their disposal. On this tour you won't get to Uluru or the Great Barrier Reef, but you will experience some of the country's most extraordinary landscapes, and explore a history stretching back some 40,000 years.

Your itinerary

Our tour begins and ends in Sydney and, although we cover only a fraction of the Australian continent, includes some long travel days. This is a vast country, and in order to make the most of our time, we will have some early starts, but with plenty of stops along the way to explore the nation's beauty and variety. From Sydney we head west through the Blue Mountains to Bathurst, modern Australia's first inland town. Our first overnight stop will be in Dubbo, some five and a half hours west of Sydney. From there we make our way through legendary outback towns such as Brewarrina, Bourke, Broken Hill, Mildura and Echuca to Canberra, the nation's capital, before returning to Sydney.

In Brewarrina we visit the fish traps installed by the indigenous inhabitants some 40,000 years ago, making them one of the world's oldest man-made structures. In Broken Hill and Silverton, over 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) west of Sydney, we explore the origins of giant mining company BHP and discover a city, based on the mining wealth, which was to have such an enormous impact on the development of the country. Lake Mungo World Heritage Site takes us back into Aboriginal deep history, while just an hour and a half south in Mildura we leap forward into the 19th century impact of wide spread irrigation with a back story linking this part of Australia to Canada and California . We'll drive back east along the banks of the Murray River, the country's longest river, through wine rich country, stopping to taste a little along the way, and then on through some of the nation's most fertile cropping and grazing land.

This is a tour for those willing to scratch beneath the surface, a trip that appeals to visitors who are ready to go beyond the icons of the Great Barrier reef, the Sydney Opera house and Uluru. We can't show you

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everything the country has to offer, but we can let you experience its vast distances and amazing variety of landscapes, geology, land use and history. Join other like minded companions on an extraordinary journey covering several thousand kilometres and 40,000 years of history. This is a small group tour that is rich in contrasts and suitable for the solo traveller, as well as for those travelling with companions.

The Itinerary

This small group escorted tour with your tour guide meets in Sydney where the trip begins and ends 13 days later.

Leaving Sydney, our outback Australia tours itinerary follows at time the path of the iconic Cobb & Co. stagecoach to Dubbo and then to Brewarrina finishing the day in Bourke. The outback town of Bourke has shaped the history of many of the places we will visit. Established in the mid-1950s as a developing town on the Darling River, by the 1890s Bourke became the focus of the world's wool industry. The Darling River had more than eighty boats transporting wool through the outback to ports like Adelaide. With the opening of railways in the early 20th century – which didn't have to deal with the unreliability of river flows – the end of river traffic in outback Australia was in decline.

Bourke today is a town with an outback spirit, on the edge of the wilderness, and with a great sense of Australian adventure in its historical, cultural, and geographic significance. The group spends time in Brewarrina, we stop off to see one of the world's oldest surviving man-made structures: the Brewarrina Fish Traps. The Ngemba people are the custodians of the fish traps, a complex aquaculture network estimated to be over 40, 000 years old. An elaborate network of rock weirs and pools form a series of complex dry-stone walls and holding ponds, stretching for around half a kilometre along the Barwon riverbed. For the Aboriginal people of western and northern New South Wales, the fish traps and surrounds are extremely significant for their spiritual, cultural, traditional and symbolic meanings. The creation of the fish traps, and the laws governing their use, helped shape the spiritual, political, social, ceremonial and trade relationships between Aboriginal groups from across the greater landscape. Brewarrina was one of the

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great Aboriginal meeting places of eastern Australia.

We'll stop to visit Mt. Oxley on our way back from Brewarrina to Bourke. Mt Oxley, that was once climbed by explorers Stuart and Hume in 1829 in search of the "inland sea". Australian explorers from Flinders to Sturt had an almost obsession with finding the inland sea, that was never there.

The next morning we will spend some time exploring Bourke township before heading to our next destination, Cobar. We spend some time in Cobar to view the historic township and learn a little about its mining history and about Stanley Kidman.

In the late 1800s Cobar was Australia's leading producer of copper and the economy boomed. At its peak the town had a population of 10,000 and, although this has declined greatly in modern times, mining still provides the town's main industry. One of the local attractions is the extraordinary view over the open cut mine.

Mount Grenfell Historic Site protects the rock art of the Ngiyampaa people. For thousands of years before Europeans settled in this part of NSW, Ngiyampaa people regularly gathered around the semi-permanent waterhole and took shelter in the overhangs of what is now a national park. In the surrounding rocky ridge, you can see richly coloured paintings of human and animal figures, representations of the natural environment, and hand stencils which are of ceremonial significance to traditional owners. This extensive Aboriginal rock art is now protected within the park and can be reached following the short, relatively easy (3 kilometre return) Mount Grenfell art site walk.

After Cobar we will continue to Broken Hill via Wilcannia. Wilcannia was an important colonial era port on the Darling for wool.

Broken Hill & Menindee

Our itinerary takes this small group Australian outback tour up to Broken Hill, an iconic destination in outback Australia. The tour arranges to visit Silverton nearby Broken Hill. Silverton's mining days are long over, but it has a place in the folklore of followers of the Mad

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Max films. The following day we have a full day tour, walking Broken Hill, including a visit to Pro Hart Gallery. We leave for Mungo today travelling via Menindee and the lakes adjacent to the Darling River, down to Pooncarrie following the important Darling river. We visit the places where Burke and Wills stayed before heading into the unchartered outback as well as visiting one of the major sheep stations now a national park and onto Mungo.

Passing through the Mallee

In South-western New South Wales, this small group tour passes through swathes of mallee country. 'Mallee woodlands' have been listed by the Australian Department of Environment and Energy as one of the 32 'Major Vegetation Groups' of Australia. Mallee country is defined by the predominance of the mallee eucalyptus, a stocky eucalyptus with several stems, which grows on semi-arid soil. Mallee country spreads in a belt across the south of Australia, centring around the Murray River in western Victoria and eastern South Australia, the Eyre Peninsula west of Adelaide, and the 'wheat belt' of Western Australia.

For European settlers, the mallee was a 'dreadful country', desolate and inhospitable, but Aboriginal Australians made a home in these areas for at least 40, 000 years. For the numerous Aboriginal groups who inhabited the Australian mallee, the Murray River was a source of life, providing fishing, meat, eggs, and fibrous water plants. The roots of kumpung were steamed in an earth oven, creating a carbohydrate starch similar to flour, which was in turn used to bake cakes. Kumpung was also used to create twine, which was used for fishing nets, the weaving of bags, belts, and headbands, and traded for stone axeheads and myall spears at great gatherings. Murray River peoples also used fire to create pasture mosaics.

Though each group held custodianship over particular lands, the Murray River peoples shared an overlapping culture, with closely-related languages and spiritual beliefs. People around the Murray River believed in an all-Father who was the creator of all things, though he bore different names to different peoples – Bunjil the eaglehawk to the Wotjobaluk and Kulin people, Tha-tha-pulli to the Wadi Wadi, and

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Tulong to the Dadi Dadi.

UNESCO World Heritage Site:

Mungo National Park has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site for some 40 years.

For travellers on this guided tour the fascinating part when looking at the landscape of Mungo and the Willandra Lakes is that it is a geological window where this small group tour can look into the deep past of old Australia. Buried here in thick layers of sand and clay are the tell-tale signs of how the climate, waters and landforms have changed over the last 100,000 years. And for at least 85,000 years humans have shared that journey. The ancient Willandra people thrived with the abundance of the lakes, then adapted to drier, hungrier times of the last ice age and survived to the present day. Their story can be discovered in the folds of the land, along with their fireplaces, burials, middens and tools. The people of Lake Mungo and the Willandra Lakes have a long past that is important to the whole world in archaeological studies and human evolution.

The history of these fossil lakes is deeply entwined with what has happened in the dune fields, rivers and mountains hundreds of kilometres away. A geological stable region sediment from the Queensland mountains has washed through the Australian outback and accumulated, piling up like the pages in a history book, waiting to be read in this national park. But here it is not just the recent geologically record that is important.

Lake Mungo is one of the most important archaeological sites in Australia. A unique set of circumstances have created a landscape where it is possible to get an insight into Aboriginal life some 40,000 years ago. At that time Lake Mungo was one of series of large, deep, interlocking lakes teeming with large fish. It was 20 km long, 10 km wide and 15 m deep. On the lake's eastern shore sand dunes provided sheltered campsites. Not surprisingly Aboriginal hunters and gatherers settled on the shores, established campsites and enjoyed a healthy diet of fish, crustaceans and animals which came to drink at the water's

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edge.

About 40,000 years ago, Mungo Lady lived around the shores of Lake Mungo. A time of plenty was coming to an end at Willandra Lakes, when the basins were full of water and teeming with life. The human population was at its peak, and Mungo Lady was the daughter of many mothers – the generations before her that had lived at Lake Mungo since the Dreamtime. She collected bush tucker such as fish, shellfish, yabbies, wattle seeds and emu eggs, nourished her culture and taught her daughters the women's lore.

When Mungo Lady died, we know her family mourned for her. Her body was cremated, the remaining bones were crushed, burned again and then buried.

About 42,000 -40,000 years ago out here in what is now the Australian outback, Mungo Man lived around the shores of Lake Mungo with his family. A time of abundance in the Willandra Lakes system was drawing to a close, but he could still hunt many species of game, including some of the soon-to-be-extinct megafauna. Mungo Man cared for his Country and kept safe the special men's knowledge. By his lore and ritual activity, he kept the land strong and his culture alive.

When he was young Mungo Man lost his two lower canine teeth, possibly knocked out in a ritual. He grew into a man nearly 1.7m in height. Over the years his molar teeth became worn and scratched, possibly from eating a gritty diet or stripping the long leaves of water reeds with his teeth to make twine. As Mungo Man grew older his bones ached with arthritis, especially his right elbow, which was so damaged that bits of bone were completely worn out or broken away. The condition of arthritis was so advanced that he would not have been able to fully extend his arm or turn his hand properly. Such wear and tear is typical of people who have used a woomera to throw spears over many years.

Ancient footprints

A key feature of the Meeting Place interpretation centre in the UNESCO World heritage site National park is the re-creation of part of the ancient

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human tracks that were re-discovered in 2003. The footprints record some frozen moments in the lives of Aboriginal people who travelled across a damp claypan around 20,000 years ago. This is the largest known collection in the world of such ancient human footprints.

Today these fragile relics are specially protected. The footprints are extremely precious to the people who are directly descended from those who made them so long ago, and they are important to all humanity. To let everyone experience something of the wonder of the tracks, a section has been reproduced as an accurate replica at the Meeting Place.

The ability to go so far back in human settlement over such a large area makes for a truly fascinating and touching visit in the Mungo National park as part of this unique Australia tour. This escorted small group tour spends 2 days with the tour leader and local guides exploring and learning about the park, its unique wildlife and sees an amazing sunset, we hope.. in Australia's outback.

From Mungo to Victoria and then Canberra.

From Mungo, we travel to Victoria and Mildura. The town is the work of two Canadians, the Chaffey brothers, whose story we follow today. We continue on to Echuca, Bendigo for stories of the gold rush and eventually onto Canberra for 2 nights. Canberra is where at the National museum we tie so much of what we seen and observed over the last 10 days all together through the indigenous first nation and colonial Australia displays. After lunch we have time to visit the National Art gallery in Australia's capital. After Canberra we return to Sydney the following day with a stop at one of the leading National trust properties before reaching the city.

Articles about Australia published by Odyssey Traveller:

- [The Kimberley: A Definitive Guide](#)
- [Uncovering the Ancient History of Aboriginal Australia](#)

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- [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:

- [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](#)
- [Mildura, Victoria](#)

Published December 2021

Highlights

1. Travel to meet the edge of the Australian outback with stories and views along the road.

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2. Learn about aquaculture in Aboriginal culture at Brewarrina Fish traps.
3. Visit Lake Mungo World Heritage Site for extraordinary landscapes and ancient Aboriginal history.
4. Learn about the cattle King whilst enjoying a glass of champagne at sunset in the desert near Silverton.
5. Explore Canberra, the nation's capital, and visit the National Museum to consolidate much of what we and seen and heard.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Sydney - Dubbo

Overview:

We meet mid morning 10.30-11.00am in central Sydney to head to Bathurst and onto Dubbo. Those of you from overseas may be surprised to discover just how low these "mountains" are, but the early European settlers found them a difficult barrier to westward expansion, and they were not officially crossed by Europeans until 1813. The mountains are ancient, and well weathered into deep ravines and gullies, causing dramatic and unexpected landscapes.

Bathurst we break for afternoon tea and a walking tour introduction to the colonial settlement of New South Wales

Followed by a group evening meal.

(D)

Accommodation:

Dubbo RSL motel or similar

Day 2

Locations: Bourke

Overview:

This morning we begin our drive to Bourke.

On our way to Bourke we pass through the town of Nyngan, where we'll stop for morning coffee, and visit the Shearing Shed Museum.

From there we continue to Brewarrina where we take a guided tour of the ancient Aboriginal Fish Traps which date back over 30,000 years. These heritage-listed traps, stretching for half a kilometre along the Barwon River, present us with an extraordinary system of rock weirs, on a site where neighbouring Indigenous tribes gathered for thousands of years for ceremonies and trade. 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.

Bourke, on the Darling River, is an historic outback town. It was once an important river port on the Darling, with wool from across western NSW and S-W Queensland being transported to Bourke by bullock wagon and then shipped down the river to South Australia.

Consequently it has an impressive Court House, a number of fine public buildings, and a solidity which is the result of its early prosperity.

Dinner tonight will be in a local restaurant.

(B)

Accommodation:

Darling River motel or similar

Day 3

Locations: Broken hill

Overview:

We have a long drive today and an early start as we travel from Bourke to Broken Hill.

Our first stop will be in the mining town of Cobar where we'll visit The Great Cobar Heritage Centre and stop to view the open cut copper mine from the Fort Bourke Hill Lookout.

From Cobar we continue along the Barrier Highway to Broken Hill, stopping at Wilcannia, where we have time for refreshments and a look at what was once another important river port, transporting the wool clip to the ports of Adelaide!

Group dinner this evening.

(B, D)

Accommodation:

The Lodge Outback motel or similar

Day 4

Locations: Broken Hill

Overview:

Today we spend in Broken Hill, starting with a guided tour of the historic centre. Broken Hill, Australia's first Heritage Listed city, has always been associated with silver, lead and zinc mining. Many of the streets are named after metals, minerals and compounds and, during our tour, we will learn more about its links with the mining industry.

The group's day tour of Broken hill, which was named by Charles Sturt, begins with a walking tour in the morning of Argent Street, Broken Hill's Main Street with a local guide. Here Government influenced Architectural design from the Victorian period reigns, from the courthouse to the post office. The group gains an appreciation of the transformation from wild west mining to organised unionists managing the town.

We spend some time visiting the mining museum but what is also important gain an appreciation of the collective work of the "Brushmen

of the Bush” so that as we travel into the landscape of the desert, the eye has an appreciation and understanding of this group of Artists.

Broken Hill has more art galleries than any other inland town or city in Australia as well as a strong Regional Art Gallery with works by Charles Blackman, Arthur Boyd, Clifton Pugh, and Lloyd Rees to view.

The Albert Kersten Mining and Minerals Museum, which we will visit at the end of our tour, will provide us with more detailed information about the history of mining in the region.

In the afternoon we will visit the the historic town of Silverton, established in 1883. It was once a thriving mining community, with a population of some 3000, but it now has just a few permanent residents. Some of the significant historic buildings, which are part of Silverton's unique heritage, are well preserved and still in use today which we'll visit: the School Museum and the Silverton Gaol. Australian poet, Dame Mary Gilmore, taught at Silverton between 1887-1889.

A third museum in the town is dedicated to Mad Max 2. At the end of our visits day we'll have some time for dinner at the local hotel (own arrangements).

On our way back to Broken Hill we'll stop at the Mundi Mundi Plains lookout for an incredible view of the surrounding area. The next stop is at the Living Desert and Sculptures Park, located just outside Broken Hill. Here we view the sculptures and enjoy the sunset before returning to our hotel.

The Living Desert is Broken Hill City Council's contribution to the environment, for the protection of native flora and fauna and for the better management of our ecosystem and sustainability. It is located in the Barrier Ranges and is just 12km from the Broken Hill. It is a unique 2400ha reserve which was established in 1992. The sculptures were added to the park in 1983 and can be easily accessed via a walking trail that begins at the park's picnic area.

(B)

Accommodation:

The Lodge Outback motel or similar

Day 5

Locations: Mungo National Park

Overview:

This morning we leave Broken Hill for Lake Mungo, a World Heritage Site. On our way to Lake Mungo we stop in Menindee.

The township of Menindee is situated between the Menindee Lakes and the Darling River. Established in 1852 by Thomas Pain, Menindee is the oldest European settlement in western NSW, and the first town to appear on the Darling. Back in the 1880s, the Darling saw cargo-laden paddle steamers churning their way to and from South Australia. In Menindee, we visit the places where explorers Burke and Wills stayed before heading into the uncharted outback, as well as visiting one of the local sheep stations, now a national park, that also has an association with the expedition.

The Menindee Lakes are also noted, except in times of extreme drought, as an inland wonderland for water birds and a vital source of water for neighbouring citrus orchards and vegetable farms.

From Menindee we continue to Lake Mungo via Pooncarie.

Don't expect there to be any water in Lake Mungo. That all dried up many thousands of years ago. Until 15,000 years ago, however, the region was a vast lake, its waters rising and ebbing according to climatic change, making Mungo a preferred habitat for a dazzling diversity of wildlife. Giant kangaroos, wombats and other mega fauna roamed the land. A treasure trove of fossils is a legacy of this extraordinary heritage.

The abundance of the lake also made Mungo an ideal location for Aboriginal settlement. Tribes camped and fished along the shores, hunted for food and quarried stone from rock outcrops on the lake floor. Mungo is thus the site of one of earth's longest continuous human habitations. The cremated remains of "Mungo Lady" and the skeleton of "Mungo Man", found in the park, date back some 30,000 to 40,000 years.

Lake Mungo is one of the most important archaeological sites in Australia. A unique set of circumstances has created a landscape where it is possible to get an insight into Aboriginal life some 40,000 years ago. At that time Lake Mungo was one of series of large, deep,

interlocking lakes teeming with large fish. It was 20 km long, 10 km wide and 15 m deep. On the lake's eastern shore sand dunes provided sheltered campsites. Not surprisingly Aboriginal hunters and gatherers settled on the shores, established campsites and enjoyed a healthy diet of fish, crustaceans and animals which came to drink at the water's edge.

About 16,000 years ago the lakes dried up leaving a 25 km-long sand dune, called a lunette, which stretched along the eastern edge of the lake and was, in places, up to 40 metres high. When shepherds, many of whom were Chinese, arrived in the area in the 1860s they called the lunette the Walls of China.

[Mungo National Park](#) has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site for some 40 years.

For travellers on this guided tour the fascinating part when looking at the landscape of Mungo and the Willandra Lakes is that it is a geological window where this small group tour can look into the deep past of old Australia. Buried here in thick layers of sand and clay are the tell-tale signs of how the climate, waters and landforms have changed over the last 100,000 years. And for at least 45,000 years humans have shared that journey. The ancient Willandra people thrived with the abundance of the lakes, then adapted to drier, hungrier times of the last ice age and survived to the present day. Their story can be discovered in the folds of the land, along with their fireplaces, burials, middens and tools. The people of Lake Mungo and the Willandra Lakes have a long past that is important to the whole world in archaeological studies and human evolution.

The history of these fossil lakes is deeply entwined with what has happened in the dunefields, rivers and mountains hundreds of kilometres away. A geological stable region sediment from the Queensland mountains has washed through the Australian outback and accumulated, piling up like the pages in a history book, waiting to be read in this national park. But here it is not just the recent geological record that is important.

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Lake Mungo's importance are threefold.

- It has "one of the longest continual records of Aboriginal life in Australia " having been occupied for over 50,000 years.
- The skeletons found in the sands of the lunette are the "oldest known fully modern humans outside Africa" and,
- the skeleton of Mungo Woman (or Mungo I as she is officially known), which has been radiocarbon dated to around 40,000 years ago, "has provided the oldest evidence of ritual cremation in the world."

As a small group touring the lake and the National park, take time whilst at Lake Mungo to gaze across the dry lake bed to contemplate the idea that once, tens of thousands of years ago, here in the Australian outback was a important meeting place for the indigenous Aborigines. Aborigines painted themselves with ochre, ate fish and mussels from the lake, buried and cremated their dead, cooked meat in simple hearths and ovens, sewed skins to make cloaks and shaped bones and stones into tools and weapons. If you want to glimpse what life was like for Aborigines when our European ancestors were still living in caves then Lake Mungo is a genuinely unforgettable experience.

About 40,000 years ago, Mungo Lady lived around the shores of Lake Mungo. A time of plenty was coming to an end at Willandra Lakes, when the basins were full of water and teeming with life. The human population was at its peak, and Mungo Lady was the daughter of many mothers – the generations before her that had lived at Lake Mungo since the Dreamtime. She collected bush tucker such as fish, shellfish, yabbies, wattle seeds and emu eggs, nourished her culture and taught

her daughters the women's lore.

When Mungo Lady died, we know her family mourned for her. Her body was cremated, the remaining bones were crushed, burned again and then buried.

About 42,000 -40,000 years ago out here in what is now the Australian outback, Mungo Man lived around the shores of Lake Mungo with his family. A time of abundance in the Willandra Lakes system was drawing to a close, but he could still hunt many species of game, including some of the soon-to-be-extinct [megafauna](#). Mungo Man cared for his Country and kept safe the special men's knowledge. By his lore and ritual activity, he kept the land strong and his culture alive.

When he was young Mungo Man lost his two lower canine teeth, possibly knocked out in a ritual. He grew into a man nearly 1.7m in height. Over the years his molar teeth became worn and scratched, possibly from eating a gritty diet or stripping the long leaves of water reeds with his teeth to make twine. As Mungo Man grew older his bones ached with arthritis, especially his right elbow, which was so damaged that bits of bone were completely worn out or broken away. The condition of arthritis was so advanced that he would not have been able to fully extend his arm or turn his hand properly. Such wear and tear is typical of people who have used a woomera to throw spears over many years.

Mungo Man reached a good age for the hard life of a hunter-gatherer, and died when he was about 50. His family mourned for him, and carefully buried him in the lunette, on his back with his hands crossed in his lap, and sprinkled with red ochre. Mungo Man is the oldest known example in the world of such a ritual.

When [Mungo Lady and Mungo Man](#) turned up some 40 years ago they rocked the scientific community. They have been dated to 42,000 years old – the oldest human remains in Australia and some of the oldest modern humans in the world outside Africa.

And when 20,000 year old [footprints](#) of the Willandra people were found in 2003, they also rocked archaeological records. They are the only Pleistocene [footprints](#) in Australia and the most numerous yet found anywhere in the world.

Ancient footprints

A key feature of the Meeting Place interpretation centre in the UNESCO World heritage site National park is the re-creation of part of the ancient human tracks that were re-discovered in 2003. The footprints record some frozen moments in the lives of Aboriginal people who travelled across a damp claypan around 20,000 years ago. This is the largest known collection in the world of such ancient human footprints.

Today these fragile relics are specially protected. The footprints are extremely precious to the people who are directly descended from those who made them so long ago, and they are important to all humanity. To let everyone experience something of the wonder of the tracks, a section has been reproduced as an accurate replica at the Meeting Place.

These finds are remarkable enough in the Australian archeological record, but perhaps the most important thing about the Willandra Lakes is how such discoveries can be connected with the [landscape](#) and [climate](#). Places like Mungo are rare, where changes in an environment can be matched with how people have lived there in a continuous record across vast ages.

The scientific evidence shows that Aboriginal people have lived at Mungo for at least 45,000 years. This is the dated age of the oldest stone artefacts that have been found so far, and represents a lineage that extends back over some 2000 generations. But many Aboriginal people say they have been here even longer, reaching back into the Dreamtime, perhaps forever. The long history of occupation at Mungo has combined with ideal conditions for the preservation of some types of relics to create an archaeological treasure house complete with Aboriginal rock art.

Today, the [Paakantji](#), the [Mutthi Mutthi](#), the [Ngiyampaa](#) and all Aboriginal people hold their Willandra ancestors and their story as precious gifts to be shared with all people.

The ability to go so far back in human settlement over such a large area makes for a truly fascinating and touching visit in the Mungo National park as part of this unique Australia tour. This escorted small group tour spends 2 days with the tour leader and local guides exploring and learning about the park, its unique wildlife and sees an amazing sunset,

we hope.. in Australia's outback.

Lake Mungo's importance as a World heritage area is threefold:

- It has "one of the longest continual records of Aboriginal life in Australia ", having been occupied for over 50,000 years.
- The skeletons found in the sands of the lunette are the "oldest known fully modern humans outside Africa", and
- the skeleton of Mungo Woman (or Mungo I as she is officially known), which has been radiocarbon dated to around 40,000 years ago, "has provided the oldest evidence of ritual cremation in the world."

Lake Mungo is also the site of the famous "Great Wall of China" lunar style landscape, and this evening we take a guided sunset tour of the region before dinner at Mungo Lodge.

(B, D)

Accommodation:

The Lodge

Day 6

Locations: Mildura

Overview:

Early this morning there may be time to further explore Lake Mungo, before we head south to the irrigation settlement of Mildura on the Murray River.

On arrival in Mildura we have a guided walk/drive through the town, with particular emphasis on the role the Chaffey brothers played on the region's development.

After the harsh drought of the 1870s the Victorian government (this was before the Federation of the Australian states in 1901) began to search for irrigation options. Canadians, George and William Chaffey were developing an irrigation scheme in California when they met Alfred Deakin, then a Victorian Cabinet Minister. Deakin, impressed with their work, encouraged them to come to Australia to work on an irrigation scheme on the Murray River. The Victorian government offered an

inducement of £300,000 for the task of improving Mildura and the Mallee over the next 20 years.

Despite a number of setbacks the irrigation project prospered, resulting in many of the features notable in Mildura today. The Chaffey plans included wide streets, an agricultural college, parks and churches. Our guided tour will take us on the “Chaffey Trail” visiting places such as Rio Vista, the historic home once lived in by W B Chaffey and his family, as well as the Mildura Grand Hotel, originally the Mildura Coffee Palace. (Mildura was established as a temperance colony despite the fact that the Chaffey brothers planted grapes and established a winery!)

After a break for lunch we take to the river on a paddle vessel. We have a two hour cruise downstream which takes us through Lock 11. A commentary provides us with an insight into the local environment and the history of paddle steamers in the region.

Tonight you have the opportunity to explore the local restaurant scene on your own, or take “pot luck” with your programme leader.

(B)

Accommodation:

TBC

Day 7

Locations: Bendigo

Overview:

We leave Mildura this morning and head south into Victoria. We stop at Swan Hill and then continue to Bendigo, once a thriving town during the gold rushes of the mid-19th century.

On our way to Swan Hill we divert via the small town of Sea Lake, in the heart of the Victorian Mallee. Sea Lake has recently joined the Victorian Silo Art Trail and we stop to admire *The Space in Between*, the work of street artists Drapl and The Zookeeper, which pays homage to nearby Lake Tyrrell and the Boorong People, with their deep and rich connection to both the night sky and the 120,000 year old salt lake.

Lake Tyrrell, just seven kilometres north of Sea Lake, is Victoria’s largest salt lake covering some 20,860 hectares. The reflective surface of the shallow, ancient lake can make for some amazing photography,

and there is evidence of ongoing Indigenous occupation, going back 45,000 years.

From Sea lake we continue to Swan Hill, so named (apparently) by explorer Major Thomas Mitchell when he camped here in 1836 and was kept up all night by noisy black swans.

Our next stop will be at the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement Museum. As the museum's website explains: "The Pioneer Settlement lets you experience Australian history first hand. You will find real-life Mallee cottages, a hotel, schools and shops, plus our enormous collection of working tractors and machinery – sourced mostly from the local area. You can feel the heat in the blacksmith shop, listen to the sounds of the old Pianola or take a ride through our Mallee township on a horse and cart. As you wander the site, you can also chat to our staff and volunteers, all looking the part in costumes of the period. The Pioneer Settlement opened in 1966 after a joint community and government effort to recognise the unique history of our Murray Mallee region. By the 1970s, the Pioneer Settlement was one of the most popular tourism destinations in Victoria, if not Australia, and the concept has been emulated around the country."

There are plenty of places for lunch at the museum before we continue to Bendigo with its elaborate Victorian streetscape, enormous cathedral and renowned art gallery. Bendigo has a rich heritage dating back to the time gold was discovered in the area in the 1850s. Since then, Bendigo has been the second highest producing goldfield in Australia and remains the seventh largest in the world.

The group's local tour guide provides a talk about the history of Bendigo and its key buildings from the Victorian period. One of Bendigo's most elegant streets is Pall Mall, in the city centre. At its southern end stands the grand Alexandra Fountain which was built in 1881 out of granite. Further along Pall Mall is the elaborate old post office (built between 1883 and 1887) which now houses the Bendigo Visitor Information Centre, and next door are the law courts (built between 1892 and 1896), also of similar architecture. On the corner of Pall Mall and Williamson Street is Bendigo's most famous hotel, the lavishly adorned Shamrock, which was built in 1897. Rosalind Park, in the city's centre, features a lookout tower offering impressive views across Bendigo, while Bendigo's Sacred Heart Cathedral, built in 1896, is the largest Gothic cathedral in the southern hemisphere. Other

attractions include several art galleries and the Golden Dragon Museum which is a tribute to the city's long history of Chinese settlement.

Accommodation:

Mercure Hotel Mildura or similar

Day 8**Locations:** Echuca**Overview:**

We spend the morning continuing our exploration of Bendigo with a guided visit to the Central Debra Gold Mine before visiting the Art Gallery and, time permitting, the Golden Dragon Museum. After lunch we continue we turn to the Murray River and the town of Echuca.

On arrival Echuca this afternoon we explore the old wharf area of the town. In its heyday, from about 1860 to the early 1900s, Echuca was a bustling, pioneering outpost. Paddle steamers ferried people and goods from all through the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee River systems, to Echuca – the closest point to Melbourne on the Murray.

Echuca flourished. Pubs, breweries and brothels boomed as the township revelled in its success. Legend has it that it wasn't uncommon for horse races to stir up the dust down High Street where boutiques boasted the finest in European fashion and finery, bare knuckle fights lasted hours down on the river banks and you could catch cod fish as big as a man. The centre piece was the huge Red gum wharf, where in just one year (1872), more than 240 boats were cleared. Once Australia's largest inland Port at 1.2km long, it is now home to the world's largest collection of paddle steamers. Both PS Pevensey and PS Alexander Arbuthnot were restored in Echuca by shipwrights at Port of Echuca.

Accommodation:

Mercure Port of Echuca or similar

Day 9

Locations: Beechworth

Overview:

On our way east to Beechworth we visit the historic *All Saints Winery* at Wahgunyah for lunch and a wine tour. Then, after passing through picturesque Rutherglen, we visit the little township of Chiltern.

All Saints Estate is a family owned winery established in 1864 and located on the banks of the Murray River. Original owners George Sutherland Smith, and John Banks, arrived from Caithness, Scotland in 1852. They were just 23 and 20 years of age. Choosing to settle in the Wahgunyah area, they used their training as engineers from the Edinburgh Railway Institute to build a bridge over the Edwards River at Deniliquin.

Smith and Banks began growing vines at 'Sunday Creek' closer to Wahgunyah than the present All Saints Estate winery, before relocating to build the 'All Saints castle' just three miles north of Wahgunyah, in 1864. The partners took up 100 acres and proceeded with planting vines in earnest whilst also constructing pise cellars made from the estate soil.

The All Saints Estate castle was based on the design of 'The Castle of Mey', including turrets and a tower. The castle was constructed mainly of handmade bricks that were fired in the All Saints Estate Brick Kiln (classified on the Victorian Heritage Register) on the property. However, only the battlement parapets of the lower wall and a turret were copied, not the main castle style. The Castle of Mey owned, until her death, by the late Queen Mother, was where George Sutherland-Smiths' father was a carpenter and joiner.

The All Saints Estate castle is classified by the Victorian Heritage Register and National Trust, including two other buildings on the Estate: the (former) bottling hall and cellar which now houses the Indigo Food Co. (est. December 2005) and the Chinese Dormitory.

The main wine storage area, The Great Hall, is lined with huge 100-year-old oak casks, filled with rare Tokays and Muscats. When originally built, this hall was considered to be the largest wine storage facility in the Southern Hemisphere. All Saints Estate won the first gold medal for Australian wine in 1873 at the London International

Exhibition. George Sutherland Smith was the first Australian winemaker to win an award at an overseas wine show.

The All Saints Winery boasts an excellent restaurant and we will lunch at the winery before continuing our journey through Rutherglen, famous for its fortified wines. From there we continue to Chiltern, a once thriving gold rush town. It was home (for one year) to Australian author Henry Handel Richardson, but is now a quiet back water.

We stop for the night in Beechworth, an historic gold mining town which became wealthy in the 1850s. This wealth is reflected in the town's Victorian architecture, with over 30 National Trust listed buildings.

Accommodation:

Armour Motor Inn or similar

Day 10

Locations: Canberra

Overview:

This morning we spend some time exploring Beechworth's historic precinct before continuing to Canberra.

In Beechworth's historic centre we visit the courthouse where forty trials for various members of the infamous Kelly family were held. The courthouse, built in 1858, was in continuous service for 131 years and was the site of many trials other than those of the Kelly family. Famously it was the scene for the trial of the first woman to be hanged in Victoria.

The Burke Museum is also well worth a visit. The Robert O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum is one of the oldest in Australia and proudly known as "the museum of museums". It boasts a collection of over 30,000 items, many dating back over 150 years. The building itself was originally built as the Beechworth Athenaeum in 1857, but after the death of Beechworth's former Superintendent of Police, Robert O'Hara Burke at Coopers Creek in 1861, the Athenaeum was renamed in his honour. Now more commonly known as the Burke Museum, it combines traditional didactic exhibition settings, combined with modern technology and interpretative techniques to bring the visitor a unique

perspective on Beechworth's place in Australian History.

After the morning in Beechworth we drive north through Albury and then along the Hume Highway towards Canberra. We'll stop in Holbrook, once called Germanton but undergoing a name change during WWI, to view the unexpected submarine sitting in the local park hundreds of kilometres from the sea.

As with many Australian towns which smacked of some connection with Germany, its name was changed in 1915 to Holbrook after Submarine Commander Norman Douglas Holbrook.

At the corner of Albury Street and Wallace Street this town that loves submarines has an 8.5 m replica scale model of the 43 m British B11 submarine that Lieutenant Holbrook piloted through the minefields off the Dardanelles to torpedo a Turkish battleship in December, 1914. The craft, operated by a battery-driven electric motor, was limited to six knots for two hours and it was extremely difficult to handle.

After Holbrook sunk the battleship the B11 came under fire, the compass was shattered and it took nine hours to escape the attack. Remarkably none of the crew were injured. As a result of the success Holbrook became the first member of the British Navy (and the first submariner) to receive the Victoria Cross. (Possibly he is also the only member of the British Navy to have a country town in Australia named in his honour.)

(B)

Accommodation:

Novotel Canberra or similar

Day 11

Locations: Canberra

Overview:

Canberra is a 20th century planned city with a much longer history. For thousands of years, the indigenous Ngunnawal people lived in the Canberra region and the name 'Canberra' is believed to be derived from an indigenous word meaning 'meeting place'. The first European explorers arrived in the Canberra area in 1820 and the first settlers came in 1824. During the 19th century, the European settlement slowly

grew, but the indigenous people were devastated by European diseases.

The Anglican Church of St John the Baptist is the oldest building in Canberra. It was built in 1845 of sandstone and bluestone. It had an adjoining schoolhouse, which is now a museum.

After the Australian states federated in 1901 there was much argument about where the new capital should be sited. The two most populous states, NSW and Victoria, both advocating their major city as the most suitable. Finally a spot near neither Sydney nor Melbourne was selected. In October 1908 the House of Representatives voted for Yass-Canberra, followed by a Senate vote in November confirming the choice of Canberra by a whisker. With the decision made, attention turned to the design of the future capital. An international design competition was launched, which attracted 137 entries from all over the world. Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony Griffin were the winners, although the judging process was as fraught as the selection of the site.

Today we spend exploring the nation's capital. There is plenty to see in Canberra. We tour the city by coach before visiting the new Parliament House, the National Museum and the National Art Gallery.

Accommodation:

Novotel Canberra or similar

Day 12**Locations:** Sydney**Overview:**

We return to Sydney via Bowral where we stop to visit Retford Park. Retford Park is a place of great heritage significance. Its European history extends back to grants of land promised to Edward Riley senior by Governor Macquarie in 1821.

The house was built in 1887 by Samuel Hordern (1849-1909) merchant and stockbreeder, and his wife Jane nee Booth. The house at Retford Park (designed by Albert Bond) is set on a low rise, a grand rendered brick Italianate style residence. It was in 1964 that James Fairfax bought the property and started to turn it from an agricultural property to

a gentleman's residence. Mr Fairfax gifted Retford Park to the National Trust in 2016.

Having been in the caring hands of Mr Fairfax for over 50 years, the garden is a delight to wonder through. As you venture up the driveway the grand Victorian Italianate homestead appears from a towering arboretum of a magnificent collection of evergreen and deciduous trees, some very rare and unique.

Surrounding the eastern side of the homestead is a patchwork of hedged gardens showcasing everything from a detailed knot garden, exquisite swimming pool and pavilion, sculptures demanding centre stage and even a friendly family of five emus.

From Bowral we continue to Sydney.

Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Ibis World Square or similar

Day 13

Locations: Sydney

Overview:

Tour concludes after breakfast this morning.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 12 nights accommodation.
- 12 breakfasts, 2 picnic lunches, 6 dinners.
- Transport by modern and comfortable 4wd or other 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.