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Victoria
 Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
 Activity

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

Jan 30 2023 to Feb 14 2023

Small group tour of Victoria for Seniors of Gardens and Goldfields



Introduction to this small group tour of Victoria

Sometimes we overlook the great attractions to be found in our own local area (or country). There are often fabulous museums and historic houses in the next suburb or town that we only think to visit when we have guests come to stay.

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

This 16 day escorted small group tour of Victoria for the senior or mature traveller who enjoys learning, whether as a couple or solo traveller, explores an area of central Victoria that is rich in historic houses, gorgeous gardens and some amazing art. This small group tour of Victoria, like other small group tours, takes you off the beaten track to find the great historic attractions that are found locally. But no Phillip island or Penguin parade on this group tour!

Our small group tour of Victoria for the senior traveller with an interest in Australian history, is concerned primarily with the colonial history of the state of Victoria and the impact of Europeans on the region. We will travel a circular route north from Melbourne through Ballarat and Castlemaine as far north as the Murray River, before turning east to Beechworth and then back south again through Benalla and the Yarra Valley, and then, back to Melbourne. We look particularly at a number of historic houses and gardens established by 19th century European settlers and at the art which they collected and continue to collect and create to this day. It was the gold rushes of the 1850s which ensured Victoria's initial prosperity and we concentrate our tour on a number of gold rush towns as well as areas made rich by agriculture, viticulture and pastoral activities. A number of the towns we visit on the road, are as a day tour, had their glory days in the second half of the 19th century when wealth from mining led to a rush of substantial public and private buildings being built. When the gold ran out a number of the towns slipped into obscurity and were consequently preserved with their Victorian era characteristics intact.

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This small group tour commences in Melbourne

This small group tour begins in Melbourne. The city of Melbourne founded in 1835, located on the Yarra River on the traditional land of the Kulin Nation. When John Batman, one of the first European settlers, arrived he made, what he claimed, was a treaty with the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation giving him ownership of the land. It is unlikely that the Wurundjeri realised exactly what this would mean for them as they, and other members of the Kulin Nation, were progressively dispossessed over the following fifty years.

European Melbourne developed rapidly as a port and trading centre for settlers heading inland to graze their flocks on the rich pastures of central Victoria. Melbourne competed with Sydney and South Australia's Adelaide as places to do business.

Just over 25 years after the Europeans first arrived, gold was discovered north of Melbourne and the great rush began. In 1851 there were some 80,000 Europeans living in the region south of the Murray/Murrumbidgee with 20,000 of them living in Melbourne. By 1854 the colony's population had grown to 300,000 and an extraordinary period of prosperity had begun. In 1856, for example, 86 million grams of gold were mined, and Melbourne had begun to form the foundations of Australia's financial centre. All of this resulted in a building boom and accelerated development in a number of the areas which form the basis of our small group tour of Victoria through regional Victoria.

The first full day tour, the small group begins its exploration of Melbourne, named for the British Prime Minister at the time the city was founded. We spend three nights in the city but have time to look at just a small portion of the city's rich architectural heritage. The National Trust of Victoria has been instrumental in preserving a number of important buildings from the colonial era and, on the second day of our tour, we begin by visiting the National Trust of Victoria's Rippon Lea, a grand 19th century mansion surrounded by seven hectares of pleasure gardens, including the Southern Hemisphere's largest fernery.

A visit to Rippon Lea

In 1868 Frederick Thomas Sargood bought 27 hectares of scrub at Elsternwick to establish his dream home and garden. It was designed by Joseph Reed, Melbourne's most important architect of the time. He named the property after his mother, Emma Rippon, adding 'lea', an old English word for meadow. In 1869 construction began on the two-storey, 15 room house which was made from polychrome brickwork, a new material at a time when most of the important buildings in Victoria were built in stone or stuccoed brick.

(Some of you might recognise Rippon Lea from its starring role in Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries.)

Magnificent ornamental gardens surround the house with features including a large lawn, extensive shrubberies, flower gardens and a lake. Hedges separate the ornamental gardens from the more practical areas, which included a large kitchen garden, an orchard of historically significant fruit varieties, farm paddocks and a stable complex.

Sargood was ahead of his time in devising a sophisticated system for water self-sufficiency for the house and garden. An underground water collection, irrigation and drainage system, with water pumped by a windmill, ensured the garden flourished.

In the afternoon you will have time to explore some of Melbourne's city attractions. Deciding just where to begin will be the main problem. Perhaps you could begin in Federation Square, on the banks of the Yarra and opposite Flinders St Station. When Federation Square opened in 2002 to commemorate 100 years of federation, it divided Melbourne's citizens. There were those who loved it and those who hated it. Either way, it has become an integral part of the city and a great place for tourists to start their sightseeing. The building's ultra-modern design of open and closed spaces contrasts with the surrounding Victorian architecture. Federation Square also houses the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, dedicated to Australian art. This outstanding collection features works from Aboriginal art, through the Heidelberg School and on to contemporary mixed media and is well

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worth a few hours of exploring.

Perhaps you'll find time to visit the Botanic Gardens. In the heart of green parkland extending south of the Yarra River, about two kilometres from the CBD, the Royal Botanic Gardens are among the finest of their kind in the world. Established in 1846, the gardens encompass two locations: Melbourne and Cranbourne. (We will be including a visit to Cranbourne later in the tour.)

The Melbourne Gardens cover an area of 38 hectares with more than 8,500 species of plants, including many rare specimens. The Aboriginal Heritage Walk is a popular tour that looks into the rich heritage of indigenous Australians.

Or possibly you'd just like to take a stroll through the streets of the city. Wandering the labyrinth of lanes and alleyways around Flinders, Collins, and Bourke Streets reveals elegant, interesting, and quirky Melbourne at its best. The jewel in the crown is the magnificent Block Arcade in Collins Street. With its mosaic floor, period details, and unique shops, this is the place where late 19th-century gentry promenaded, coining the phrase, "doing the block." It's worth lining up for a morning tea at the Hopetoun Tearooms. This Melbourne icon dates back to 1892 and is the only original shop still in the arcade today. The opulent Royal Arcade is Melbourne's oldest arcade, and Flinders and Degraes Lanes are also well worth exploring. Your programme leader/tour guide will be happy to make suggestions.

Exploring Como House

On Day Three we remain in Melbourne and take a day tour to visit another National Trust treasure. Built in 1847, Como House and Garden is one of Melbourne most glamorous stately homes. "A unique blend of Australian Regency and classic Italianate architecture, Como House offers a rare glimpse into the opulent lifestyles of former owners, the Armytage family, who lived there for over a century. Famous among Melbourne high society for its elegant dances, dinners and receptions, the Armytage home remains furnished with original family heirlooms, and even the servant's areas have been carefully preserved. Como was acquired by the National Trust of Australia in 1959 and the

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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opulent property features two hectares of sprawling lush gardens, a fountain and even a croquet lawn.”

In the afternoon we visit a third National Trust property. Every effort will be made to include Waller House in our itinerary. The history of Waller House, built in 1922, is often associated with the life and career of noted Australian muralist, mosaicist and stained-glass artist Napier Waller. Less is known however about the women who also worked within these walls. Christian Waller worked alongside her husband to establish this superb Arts and Crafts style home, whilst also pursuing her own successful career. Christian’s young niece Klytie Pate came to live in the house, going on to become one of Australia’s foremost studio potters of the twentieth century. Napier’s second wife Lorna, also a talented artist, worked alongside Napier to create the Hall of Memory mosaic for the Australian War Memorial.

If Waller House remains closed to the public, then another National Trust property will be substituted.

Today we head to Ballarat

On Day Four we leave Melbourne and head north towards Ballarat, the first of our gold rush towns. Before reaching Ballarat, however, we’ll turn off the main road to stop in Werribee to visit Werribee Park Mansion and gardens. Werribee Park is set on approximately 1,000 acres of land and we will visit the elaborate Victorian era Italianate mansion built in the 1870s for the pioneering Chirnside family. The area includes the Werribee Mansion (1873) with formal garden, grotto, mansion gates and gate lodge, freestanding laundry, the Chirnside homestead (1865) with ha-ha wall, ration store (built by 1861), blacksmith shop, men’s quarters, stables and implement shed.

Thomas Chirnside arrived in Australia in 1839 to invest in sheep. By 1875, Thomas and his younger brother Andrew owned 250,000 acres of freehold land, and large areas of leasehold land, in Victoria. In addition to running the 93,000-acre Werribee Park sheep station, the Chirnsides also hosted numerous sporting events, hunts, picnics, balls, vice-regal visits, and the first Volunteer Military Encampment

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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in Victoria (1857).

The formal garden's meandering paths, shrubberies and trees were used to frame views, illustrating the influence of the 18th century English landscape movement. There is a dominance of conifers and evergreen trees, especially Araucaria, Pinus, Cupressus, Cedrus, Schinus, Lagunaria, Corymbia and Eucalyptus. Deciduous Ulmus, Quercus Phytolacca, and the palms, Phoenix canariensis, P. reclinata, Trachycarpus fortunei have been planted to provide foliage contrast in the landscape. The State Rose Garden is also to be found at Werribee Park. It covers some five hectares and contains over five thousand roses.

From Werribee we continue to Ballarat, important in Australian history not only for its gold but also for the rebellion known as the Eureka Stockade with its contribution towards the development of Australian independence and democracy. Gold was the catalyst for great change in Australia. The belief that you could dig your own fortune attracted people from across the country and around the world. Melbourne lost half its men to the goldfields, crews abandoned their ships in port, shepherds deserted their flocks; the call in London, California, Germany and Italy was, 'off to the diggings'. At first the pickings were considerable but as time went by the amount of gold recovered decreased, while the costs of remaining on the diggings did not. A gold licence had to be bought whether you found any gold or not.

On 30 November 1854 miners from the Victorian town of Ballarat, disgruntled with the way the colonial government had been administering the goldfields, swore allegiance to the Southern Cross flag at Bakery Hill and built a stockade at the nearby Eureka diggings. Early on the morning of Sunday 3 December, when the stockade was only lightly guarded, government troops attacked. At least 22 diggers and six soldiers were killed. Although the authorities won the battle the miners eventually won the war.

The police arrested and detained 113 of the miners. Eventually 13 were taken to Melbourne to stand trial. Governor Hotham called for a Goldfields Commission of Enquiry on 7 December, but the citizens

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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of Victoria were opposed to what the government had done in Ballarat and one by one the 13 leaders of the rebellion were tried by jury and released. In March the Commission of Enquiry released their recommendations. The licence fee was removed, replaced by an export duty and a nominal £1 per year miner's right. Half the police on the goldfields were sacked and one warden replaced the multitude of gold commissioners (who had issued the licences), many of whom were corrupt. Twelve new members were added to the Victorian Legislative Council, four appointed by the Queen and eight elected by those diggers who held a miner's right. One of these members was Peter Lalor who had survived the Eureka clash but had been wounded in the left arm, which was later amputated. It was a victory for the miners and was one of the key steps to Victoria instituting male suffrage in 1857 and female suffrage in 1908.

Ballarat.

Ballarat with a population of over 100,000 is now one of Victoria's largest regional centres and has many attractions for the visitor including the art gallery, the Botanic Gardens and the Sovereign Hill theme park. On Day Five we'll take a guided tour of the city with its many fine Victorian buildings and then, in the afternoon, we'll visit the Art Gallery. The Art Gallery of Ballarat is not just Australia's oldest regional gallery but one of its most exciting. Located in the heart of Ballarat's central heritage precinct, the Gallery boasts a stunning collection of Australian art.

The Gallery's magnificent collection of Australian paintings, sculpture, ceramics and works on paper gives visitors the opportunity to experience key moments in the history of Australian art, with important representative works from colonial to contemporary periods. The heritage-listed Gallery building has evolved to accommodate the expanding collection and now includes a range of spaces from grand and elegant nineteenth century rooms to stunning contemporary

additions.

The following morning (Day Six) we'll take the opportunity to visit Sovereign Hill.

Sovereign Hill

Sovereign Hill is an open-air museum and depicts Ballarat's first ten years after the discovery of gold there in 1851. It was officially opened on 29 November 1970 and has become a nationally acclaimed tourist attraction. Set in the Australian 1850s, the complex is located on a 25-hectare site that is linked to the richest alluvial gold rush in the world. The site comprises over 60 historically recreated buildings, with costumed staff and volunteers, who are able to answer questions and will pose for photos. The recreation is completed with antiques, artwork, books and papers, machinery, livestock and animals, carriages, and devices all appropriate to the era.

From Sovereign Hill this group tour heads back to the Botanic Gardens, set on the shores of Lake Wendouree, with plenty of time to explore. Ballarat Botanical Gardens' historically significant lakeside gardens were designed and planted in the 1860s and now feature magnificent mature trees, statues and constantly changing plantings and glasshouse displays. Begonias provide a significant part of the garden's attraction. This garden covers some 40 hectares.

In the morning on Day Seven, our small group tour leaves our Ballarat hotel and drive north through Creswick, Daylesford and Hepburne Springs to Castlemaine where we spend the next three nights.

At Creswick we visit a family run woollen mill. Here we can have morning tea followed by an informative tour of the mill.

Daylesford is located between Castlemaine and Creswick, within a region that contains Australia's largest concentration of natural mineral springs. A gold rush occurred in the area when alluvial gold was found

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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in 1851, with the town of Daylesford being surveyed in 1854. While Daylesford's initial growth was due to the thousands of workers looking for gold, the town, today, is much more famous for the bubbling mineral waters which flow from its many springs. The commercial centre of Daylesford is located along Albert Street and Vincent Street. Here we will find a generous collection of historic buildings including the post office (built in 1867), town hall (1882), and several hotels and shops.

Lake Daylesford, which covers land upon which gold was first discovered, was created in 1929 and is located in the beautiful Central Springs Reserve, just a few minutes' walk south of the town centre. A short walk east of the town centre is the Wombat Hill Botanical Gardens which were first established in 1863. They are situated on an extinct volcano and offer good views over the surrounding countryside from its manicured lawns and pathways. The gardens also feature a rotunda, lookout tower and conservatory.

Renowned for its mineral spring water, hot mineral water spas and iconic heritage buildings, Hepburn Springs, only a few minutes' drive from Daylesford is an historically rich destination. Originally known as Spring Creek, the village was later renamed as Hepburn Springs after Captain John Hepburn, an early settler in the region. In the early 1850s alluvial gold was found, again drawing thousands of immigrants, particularly Swiss Italians to the search.

Castlemaine

In the afternoon we arrive in Castlemaine, another town built on the proceeds of gold mining but now sustained by a variety of other activities including fruit growing, farming, light industry and tourism. Europeans settled in the area, once occupied by the Jajowurrong People, in 1841 when William Barker established a sheep run, he called "Mount Alexander". Before long, however, gold was discovered on the run by one of Barker's shepherds. Soon all of the area's streams were being scoured by a rag-tag army of hopefuls from all over the

world.

By 1852 it is thought that there were some 25 000 people on the Mount Alexander diggings, living mainly in shanty towns of canvas tents. Gradually more substantial buildings were added, including a school at Castlemaine (1852), dwellings, sly-grog shops and even an office of the Bank of NSW (also 1852). Castlemaine became an administrative centre for the region. Due to this and to the immense riches which poured into Castlemaine in the 1850s and early 1860s, substantial administrative, commercial and private buildings emerged far more quickly than in many other centres. Moreover, the town ceased to grow when the alluvial gold dwindled, and so the older buildings were deemed adequate for the town and not replaced by more modern structures. Consequently, many of the CBD's structures date from that early period. Even those that have been transformed retain older elements, such as post-supported verandas and ground-floor shop facades.

After breakfast on Day Eight the group tour takes a guided walking tour of Castlemaine's` historic centre with visits to the town Market Hall (now the information centre) and, if possible, the historic Theatre Royal. We also visit The Castlemaine Art Gallery and Museum, as well as Buda House.

Centrally located, and the centrepiece of the Market Square, is the exceptional Castlemaine Market. Designed by town surveyor William Downe it reflects the influence of Christopher Wren and was built in 1861-62 of stone and brick with cement rendering. It was also the venue for celebratory balls: in 1862 for the opening of the railway and in 1867 for the visiting Duke of Edinburgh.

The original Theatre Royal was built in 1855. Two years later it was burnt to the ground, but it was immediately rebuilt. It has now been in continuous use since 1857, which makes it one of Victoria's oldest theatres. In 1856 noted Irish-born dancer and entertainer Lola Montez appeared at the theatre during a tour of Australia. The facade dates

from the 1930s.

After morning tea, we visit the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Museum is considered one of the state's finest provincial galleries, featuring major Australian works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The collection includes the paintings of Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts, Louis Buvelot, Russell Drysdale, Fred Williams, Margaret Preston and many more recent works. The gallery was founded in 1913 and the Art Deco facade was added in 1931.

Tour of Buda House

Buda, originally a private home, was built in 1861 in the Indian bungalow style by Colonel John Smith, an army colonel who had served in India. He named it 'Delhi Villa'. In 1863 it was purchased by silversmith, jeweller and watchmaker Ernest Leviny who journeyed to Australia in 1853 to mine gold. He made improvements to the building, giving it its current name in honour of Budapest in Hungary, his birthplace. It was extended in 1890. The house features the Leviny family's collection of silver, art and crafts (including the enamelling, wood-carving, embroidery, photography and painting of Ernest Leviny's daughters which reflect their Hungarian heritage), works by other distinguished Australian artists, furnishings and domestic effects accumulated over a period of 120 years. The house features stucco moulding, a clerestory and projecting bay-windowed wings and a broken pediment over the porch. The excellent historic garden covers 4.5 acres. Given a Category One in the 1980 Study of Historic Gardens the citation notes that 'More than any other garden in Victoria, this has retained the very elusive character of the nineteenth century...its clipped cypress hedge is probably the largest in Victoria'. The ornate aviary was made at Thompson's Foundry in Castlemaine

Maldon

The next morning (Day Nine) this small group tour of Victoria will circumstances permitting, take a steam train ride to Maldon. (If the trains aren't running for any reason, we'll take the coach.) Maldon has

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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been perfectly preserved since its mining days and is Australia's First Notable Town – classified by the National Trust in 1966. Its list of historic buildings is impressive and includes the railway station (built in 1884), the Grand Hotel (1888), the old post office (1870) and a number of churches. Most of the historical buildings of interest are concentrated around the block in the town centre.

In the afternoon we take a guided tour of the 1880s Carman's gold mine tunnel. Around 1882 the Great International Quartz Mining Company commenced work in Carman's Tunnel in an attempt to drive a tunnel straight through Mt Tarrangower and intersect rich reefs which had been previously mined from shafts on the mountain.

After processing only about 600 metres, work at Carman's Tunnel was abandoned at the end of 1884 after a mere two years of operation. While no gold bearing rock was cut, this tunnel is an excellent example of 1880's mining techniques. The 570m long tunnel is now open to the public for candle lit tours, and is dry, clean, spacious, level and, apparently, easily accessible.

We return to Castlemaine for the night and continue our way north the next morning.

Bendigo and Echuca

In the afternoon of Day Ten we arrive in Echuca, on the banks of the Murray River. On our trip to Echuca we have a day tour of the city of 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.

Bendigo hosts a tulip festival in September and October.

After the day spent exploring Bendigo, we continue to Echuca where we spend the next two nights.

Day Eleven of our trip involves a departure from the gold rush towns of central Victoria. After breakfast we drive, from our Echuca hotel, to the Barmah wetlands for a tour of this ecologically important region. According to the Australian Government's, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment website:

The Barmah Forest Ramsar site is located on the Murray River floodplain in north Victoria. It predominantly consists of river red gum forests and floodplain marshes. Together with Millewa Forests (on the New South Wales side of the Murray River), it forms the largest continuous stand of river red gums in Australia. It is also an Icon Site in The Living Murray program. The wetland site features major streams, anabranches, swamps, billabongs and permanent lakes. The majority of the forest functions as a single floodplain system and is dependent

on seasonal flooding.

Many threatened species of wildlife including native birds, fish, reptiles and plants make the forest their habitat.

On our return to Echuca we have the opportunity to take a cruise on the Murray in a paddle steamer. The Murray River was first navigated in 1853 by William Russell and Francis Cadell who responded to the South Australian Government's 2,000-pound competition to open the Murray as a waterway. From then on numerous paddle steamers began travelling inland with stores and passengers, returning to port laden with wool.

The paddle steamers which came to trade along the inland rivers of the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee were an Australian design. Some 300 were built of local red gum. Paddle steamers were flat bottomed with a broad beam for greater stability. They usually had two or more decks, and were propelled by steam engines driving paddles, either at the rear or more often the side. Their carrying capacity was increased by towing barges with goods such as wool, sheepskins, hides, tallow, station supplies, timber and farming equipment. Up to 2,000 bales of wool could be carried, stacked in the hull and piled in several tiers above the deck.

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 closet 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 Redgum 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

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PS Alexander Arbuthnot were restored in Echuca by shipwrights at Port of Echuca.

The Murray River and the Mallee

West of Echuca, the lands around the Murray River slowly become more arid, turning into 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 Victorian/South 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 *Tulong* to the Dadi Dadi.

The lives of Aboriginal peoples of the Murray River are vividly recorded in a number of sources, including the journals of explorer Charles Sturt

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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(who charted the river to its ending point in South Australia) and Surveyor-General of NSW Thomas Mitchell. Though Sturt and Mitchell were influenced by the racial biases of their times, they wrote fascinatingly of their complex encounters with the peoples of the Murray River.

All Saints winery visit

We spend a second night in Echuca before moving on to Beechworth on Day Twelve. On our way east to Beechworth we visit the historic All Saints winery at Wahgunyah for a wine tour and, after passing through picturesque Rutherglen, 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 there 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.

Chiltern

At its height the town had an estimated population of up to 20,000 prospectors but this was short lived because the easily accessible gold disappeared and deep quartz reef mines, requiring major investments, dominated the local economy. Prospectors moved to easier alluvial fields.

These days over 20 buildings in the village are registered or owned by the National Trust and we can take a walk through the streets, past the historic post office, courthouse and masonic hall. The original police cells still stand as does the Federal Standard newspaper office and the famous Dow's Pharmacy.

Lakeview House, the elegant former childhood home of distinguished author Henry Handel Richardson (who penned the Australian classic

Small group tour of Victoria for Senior travellers

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The Getting of Wisdom), is now owned by the National Trust. It has been restored to the period when the Richardson family lived there, and we will pay it a visit. Time permitting, we will also visit Dow's Pharmacy and the historic Federal Standard newspaper office.

A pharmacy for over a century, this fascinating commercial premises was built in 1859. One of the early pharmacists was David McEwen, father of the Australian prime minister, John McEwen. Pharmacist Hilda Dow ran the store from 1929 until 1968. When the pharmacy doors closed in 1968, everything inside remained intact. Some of the stock and equipment even predated Mrs Dow's tenure and is from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Medicines, photographic supplies, shop fittings and other stock in original packaging and on original displays, can be seen in one of the few authentic vintage shops remaining in Australia.

The Federal Standard Printing Works is one of the few substantially intact provincial newspaper printeries remaining from the gold mining era. It contains still functioning printing presses from a century ago. The Federal Standard newspaper was founded in Chiltern in 1859 and operated from its printing works for the next 110 years. The building still stands and houses printing equipment from the 1870s to 1930s, all working and maintained and demonstrated by retired printers.

From Chiltern we continue down the road to Beechworth, another well preserved town with its origins in the gold rush period.

Beechworth

On Day Thirteen our small group tour sets out in the morning for a 1/2 day tour of the town, with particular attention to the historic precinct. In Beechworth's historic centre we will visit the courthouse where forty trials for various members of the 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.

In the afternoon you may continue to wander through Beechworth's many craft and curiosity shops, or perhaps take a hike starting at the town information centre. There are a number of walks, but the six-kilometre circular Gorge Walk takes you through one of Victoria's richest goldfields and includes views of waterfalls and rugged countryside. Natural features include woodlands, granite tors, spring wildflowers, stands of native cypress pine and Spring Creek, with its cascades and tranquil rock pools.

The effects of the gold strikes on the landscape are also evident on this walk. The trail passes the impressive granite Newtown Bridge, built by Scottish stonemasons in 1875, the old Rocky Mountain gold mining tunnel and the restored Powder Magazine, where gunpowder used in mining was stored. The Precipice gives an excellent view over the Reids Creek goldfield, and Fiddes Quarry looks as if the masons have downed tools only minutes ago.

We spend a second night in Beechworth before continuing our small group tour early the next morning.

Benalla

Day Fourteen of this trip takes us past some spectacular silo art on our way to Benalla, where we visit the art gallery and museum, before moving on to Yarra Glen in the late afternoon.

The Benalla silo art trail takes us past a number of spectacular murals painted on local grain silos. The GrainCorp Silos at Devenish in North East Victoria were painted by Melbourne Street Artist Cam Scale. The stage one artwork, unveiled on Anzac Day 2018, depicts a stunning image of a WW1 nurse and a modern female military medic in the Australian Armed Forces. This mural also depicts the changing role of women in the military and society in general. Stage two, on the short silos, was officially unveiled one year later on Anzac Day 2019. This mural is a tribute to the Australian Light Horse. The Australian Light Horse were mounted troops with characteristics of both cavalry and mounted infantry, who served in the Second Boer War and WW 1.

We also visit silos at Tungamah, Goorambat and St James, pausing for morning tea before continuing to Benalla.

The Benalla Art Gallery

The art gallery, situated on the shores of Lake Benalla, is a striking modernist building. The gallery was constructed in 1975 as a result of a generous donation by a local benefactor, Mr Laurie Ledger, of 25 percent of the construction costs and his collection of fine Australian art. The permanent collection includes works spanning three centuries of Australian art, including outstanding examples of contemporary and Indigenous art. The Gallery's permanent collection includes wonderful works by Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin, Fred Williams, Sidney Nolan, and many other great Australian artists.

After lunch you have a choice of activities. The Benalla Museum, with its exhibitions on both Ned Kelly and Weary Dunlop (Dunlop was born in Benalla), is worth a visit, as is the historic Botanical Garden. Or you might like to just take a wander through the streets to enjoy the street

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art for which the town is noted.

The Benalla Botanical Gardens were designed and developed in 1886 by Alfred Sangwell and were listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1995. They are significant because much of their original layout remains intact and are notably unusual for their combination of ornamental gardens, with a large oval described as the most picturesque cricket ground in the country.

Later in the afternoon we continue our journey to the Yarra Glen area where we spend the night.

Yarra Glen

Day Fifteen is the final full day of our small group tour of Victoria and we plan to visit both Beleura House and Gardens on the Mornington Peninsula and the Royal Botanic Gardens complex at Cranbourne.

A division of The Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Cranbourne Gardens is one of Victoria's most precious areas of remnant native bushland and offers visitors the chance to explore heathlands, wetlands and woodlands on the 363-hectare site. It is recognised as a site of State significance for flora and fauna conservation, the local wildlife here includes over 25 species listed as endangered, threatened or at risk of extinction. Following representations by the Maud Gibson Trust, Cranbourne Gardens was established in 1970 when the Victorian Government acquired the land with a view to developing it into a botanic garden that complemented Melbourne Gardens through the display of native plants and ecosystems.

Beleura House and Gardens

From Cranbourne we drive the relatively short distance to Beleura House and Gardens. Built in 1864 by James Butchart, the wealthiest man in the colony of Victoria, Beleura comprises twelve acres of pleasure gardens surrounding a Classical style villa designed by architect Joseph Reed. Its final owner was the composer John Tallis

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who bequeathed Beleura to the people of Victoria as a memorial to his late father, Sir George Tallis, the well-known theatre entrepreneur and head of J.C. Williamson Ltd. The house and its splendid grounds, interiors and archival material reflect the life and legacy of the Tallis family. A small collection of work by ceramic artist, Klytie Pate was part of this legacy and has since expanded to become the Klytie Pate Treasury.

Later in the afternoon we return to our Melbourne Hotel where we spend the night. Our farewell dinner will be in a local restaurant.

Your small group tour of Victoria for seniors finishes after breakfast on Day Sixteen.

Odyssey Traveller acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

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).

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 Victoria:

- [Visit Victoria](#)
- [Guide to Victoria](#)
- [National Trust Victoria](#)
- [12 Reasons to visit Hepburn Springs](#)
- [17 of the best Australian wildlife experiences](#)
- [Goldfields Guide](#)
- [Heritage Buildings of Melbourne](#)

Tour Notes

- The itinerary is subject to change pending local restrictions and opening times.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Melbourne

Overview:

Check into your Melbourne Hotel and, in the evening, meet with your programme leader for a tour briefing.

The welcome dinner this evening will be in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Victoria Hotel or similar.

Day 2

Locations: Melbourne

Overview:

This morning we begin with a visit to historic National Trust property, Rippon Lea, for a tour of the house and gardens. The house, a grand 19th century mansion, is surrounded by 7 hectares of Victorian pleasure gardens.

We return to the city in the afternoon and the rest of the day you will have free to explore the city at your leisure.

Accommodation:

Victoria Hotel or similar.

Day 3

Locations: Melbourne

Overview:

Our tour this morning is to Como House and Gardens. Here we can explore the gardens and, depending on opening hours, we may be able to visit the 1847 home, built in a mix of Australian Regency and classic Italianate style.

In the afternoon our tour will, opening times permitting, take us to Waller House and Gardens. This is the c1922 Arts and Crafts home of artists Napier and Christian Waller. If the home is unavailable another National Trust property will be substituted.

Accommodation:

Victoria Hotel or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Ballarat

Overview:

This morning we leave Melbourne after breakfast and head towards Ballarat via Werribee.

Werribee Mansion Park includes a Victorian era restored Italianate homestead, built for the pioneering Chirnside family, as well as 10 hectares of formal garden.

This afternoon we drive to Ballarat, famous as one of the most important of the Victorian gold rush towns. We spend three nights here. The remainder of the afternoon will be at leisure.

Dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Overnight in the historic George Hotel or similar.

Day 5

Locations: Ballarat

Overview:

This morning we begin with a guided walking tour of the main historic buildings in the city. The abundance of cash flowing into the area, from gold being mined, meant that there was money available for both public and private building.

In the afternoon we visit the Ballarat Art Gallery, the oldest and largest gallery in regional Australia. The gallery was established in 1884 and contains a large collection of Australian paintings covering all periods from colonial times to the present day.

Accommodation:

George Hotel or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Ballarat

Overview:

This morning step back in time and visit the Sovereign Hill museum village.

In the afternoon we visit the Ballarat Botanic Gardens for a guided tour. The gardens, situated on the shores of Lake Wendourie, were first designed and planted in the 1860s and feature magnificent mature trees as well as constantly changing plantings and glasshouse displays.

Accommodation:

George Hotel or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Castlemaine

Overview:

After breakfast this morning we leave Ballarat and drive towards Castlemaine, another gold rush town with a rich past. On the way we stop to visit a woollen mill and to explore the towns of Daylesford and Hepburne Springs.

Dinner tonight will be in a local hotel or restaurant.

Accommodation:

Castlemaine Colonial Motel or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Castlemaine

Overview:

This morning we take a walking tour of historic Castlemaine including a visit to the art gallery and to Buda house and gardens. Buda was occupied by just two generations of the Leviny family between 1863 and 1981. Ernest Leviny was a renowned gold and silver smith who exhibited at the Great Exhibition in London before travelling to the

Victorian gold fields and settling in Castlemaine.

The rest of the day you will be free to explore the town at your leisure.

Accommodation:

Castlemaine Colonial Motel or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Castlemaine

Overview:

This morning we make a steam train journey from Castlemaine to nearby Maldon and stop to

explore this well preserved gold era town with its impressive collection of historic buildings including the 1884 railway station and 1870 post office.

In the afternoon we take a candlelit tour of an 1880s gold mine.

We return to Castlemaine for the evening.

Accommodation:

Castlemaine Colonial Motel or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Echuca

Overview:

After breakfast this morning we leave Castlemaine and drive through Bendigo to Echuca on the Murray River. We stay in Echuca for the next two nights.

In Bendigo we will tour the historic centre and visit the Art Gallery, established in 1887, before driving on to Echuca where we will spend the night.

Dinner in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

CocknBull Boutique Hotel, Echuca, or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Echuca

Overview:

This morning we visit the Barmah Wetlands and Forest, home to Australia's largest Red Gum forest. Many threatened native birds, plants, fish and reptiles make the forest and wetlands their home. Spring floods help to keep the red gums healthy.

In the afternoon we take a ride on a Murray River paddle steamer.

Accommodation:

CocknBull Boutique Hotel, Echuca, or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Beechworth

Overview:

After breakfast this morning we drive to the historic All Saints Winery at Wahgunyah (near Rutherglen) for a tour of the winery and for lunch.

After lunch we drive through Rutherglen to Chiltern on our way to Beechworth, where we stay two nights.

In Chiltern we visit Lake View House, the home of author Henry Handel Richardson and featured in a number of her works. The house, built in 1870, is now owned by the National Trust and has been restored and furnished in period style.

Time permitting we will also visit Dow's Pharmacy built in 1859 and the Federal Standard Printing Works, both also owned by the National Trust for Victoria. The printing works contains one of the few intact printeries dating from the gold rush era. It was founded in 1859 and operated for the next 110 years.

From Chiltern we continue to Beechworth where we stay two nights.

Dinner in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Beechworth at The Linaker Quarters, or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Beechworth

Overview:

Today we spend exploring Beechworth with visits to the historic centre. Here we can find the courthouse built in 1858 and in continuous service for the next 131 years. The courthouse saw over forty trials of various members of the Kelly family, though not the final trial of Ned Kelly himself.

We also visit the local museum. Established in 1857, it is one of Australia's earliest museums and known by many as "the museum of museums". In 1861, after his death, it was renamed in honour of Robert O'Hara Burke. Burke had at one time been Beechworth's much respected Superintendent of Police.

In the afternoon there will be time to take a walk along one of Beechworth's scenic hiking trails.

Accommodation:

Overnight in Beechworth at The Linaker Quarters, or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Yarra Glen

Overview:

This morning we have an early start and after breakfast drive to the Yarra Glen area via Benalla.

On our way to Benalla we take a rather circuitous route stopping to view the amazing silo art at Goorambat, St James, Tungamah and Devenish.

Once in Benalla we visit the regional art gallery, a strikingly modernist building overlooking Lake Benalla and the botanic gardens. The gallery, built in 1975, contains a collection spanning three centuries of Australian art. There are outstanding examples of contemporary and Indigenous art as well as works by well known earlier artists including Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin, Fred Williams and Sydney Nolan.

After our visit to the gallery there will be time to visit the galleries café for lunch, have a look at some outstanding street art or possibly visit the

local museum. The museum has an interesting Ned Kelly exhibition as well as one on Weary Dunlop (who was born in the town).

Later in the afternoon we will continue on to The Yarra Glen/Healesville area.

Dinner will be in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

TBC

Day 15

Locations: Melbourne

Overview:

Today we visit the Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne, followed by Beleura House and Gardens on the Mornington Peninsula.

In the morning we visit the Royal Botanic Garden of Victoria which specialises in native plants. A diversity of more than 170,000 individual native plants are maintained at the Cranbourne Gardens. You will find them displayed in settings that capture the essence of Australia's diverse landscape from the Red Centre to the coastal fringes.

From Cranbourne we travel to Mornington where we visit historic Beleura House and Gardens.

Later in the afternoon we drive the short distance to our Melbourne hotel where we stay for the final night of our tour.

This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

TBC

Day 16

Locations: Melbourne

Overview:

Our tour concludes this morning after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 15 nights accommodation.
- 15 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 8 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 Domestic airfares
- 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.