TOUR CODE

AU1

ADVENTURESABROAD

AUSTRALIA

'The Land Down Under'

17 days

Updated 30/09/2013

Day 1 ***Arrival in Melbourne***

Today we arrive in Melbourne, Victoria.

Melbourne flourished in the 1850s when the city emerged as a result of the huge gold rush in the Victorian hills. Melbourne is culturally very diverse and has several times been named the world's "most liveable city."

ATTENTION: This tour is based on a Qantas air pass that MUST be booked by Adventures Abroad in conjunction with Qantas international air tickets. If you intend to secure your own international air a SURCHARGE (approx 600-1000 USD) will apply.

Overnight in Melbourne. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Melbourne: City Tour***

Melbourne boasts broad and leafy streets, plenty of parks and gardens, and an air of distinction. It is the stateliest of all Australian cities. It is also a fairly recent creation, for it was only in 1835 that a Tasmanian farmer named John Batman arrived to establish a settlement here. He made a deal with local Aborigines, trading blankets, knives and tomahawks for 500,000 acres of land, and a township began to grow. A gold rush in the 1850s resulted in rapid expansion and, by 1861, Melbourne's population (then 125,000) had already overtaken Sydney's. Sydney moved ahead again in 1911 and has stayed ahead, but Melbourne has never been far behind.

Today our tour includes a number of highlights, including Fitzroy Gardens, originally laid out in the shape of the Union Jack. The prime attraction is Cook's Cottage, the family home of James Cook, the English navigator who explored the southern hemisphere in three great voyages. It was purchased in 1933, shipped over from Yorkshire and presented as a gift to the state of Victoria for its 1934 centenary. We will also see the Old Melbourne Gaol, Shrine of Remembrance, St Kilda Road, Victoria Market, Melbourne University, Parliament House, Lake Albert, and pay a visit to St Patrick's Cathedral.

Overnight in Melbourne. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Melbourne: Yarra Valley***

Today we have an excursion into the Yarra Valley, one of the finest wine growing regions in Victoria and home to over 40 wineries. The Yarra Valley region has earned itself an enviable reputation based on fine produce, rolling hills, wines and stunning views. We will visit several wineries and enjoy a wine tasting as part of our tour. We also include lunch today, allowing you to enjoy an evening at leisure back in Melbourne.

Overnight in Melbourne. Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 4 *Melbourne - Canberra: City Tour*

This morning we fly from Melbourne to Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. On arrival we visit the National Capital Exhibition, which displays the development of Australia's capital city; followed, appropriately, by a guided tour of the distinctly designed Parliament House. We then enjoy a guided tour through the Australian National Botanic Gardens at the base of Black Mountain.

We also drive through the embassy district, where many of the embassies reflect the architectural style of their native countries. Canberra is a uniquely Australian city which, right from its beginning, had had a very strong North American connection. The idea for a purpose-built capital came soon after the various Australian states agreed to form a federation in 1901. The creation of a new city was seen as a means of ending the rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne, and a way of giving the fledgling nation its own identity. An international design competition was conducted and, in 1913, the competition was won by a young landscape architect from Chicago named Walter Burley Griffin, who submitted his design in conjunction with his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin. Since then, Canberra has grown to become one of Australia's most distinctive cities.

Overnight in Canberra. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Canberra - Cairns*

Today we fly from Canberra to Cairns, Queensland.

Queensland is huge -- at about 1 745 000 sq km (667,000 square miles) the second largest state (Western Australia is the biggest) and more than twice the size of Texas. Taking the Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf of Carpentaria into account, it has an enormous coastline over 7500 km (4,590 miles).

Queensland started out as part of New South Wales, used as a penal colony starting in 1824. An influx of free settlers, many who entered illegally, changed its face from prison to agricultural centre. In 1842 it was officially opened to free settlement and, by 1859, the population was large enough to justify its status as a separate colony. The settlers made their way with sheep, cattle, wheat, an abundance of natural resources and cash crops --including bananas, which gave rise to the rather derisive name the rest of Australia sometimes uses for Queensland natives: "Banana benders".

Overnight in Cairns. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Cairns: Reef Cruise*

Today we have a full-day cruise out to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system, composed of roughly 3,000 individual reefs and 900 islands that stretch for 2600 kilometres (1,616 mi) and cover an area of approximately 344 400 sq km. The Great Barrier Reef can be seen from outer space and is sometimes referred to as the single largest organism in the world. In reality, it is made up of many millions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps. The Great Barrier Reef supports a wide diversity of life and was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

Generally, the vessels offering reefs trips are large and comfortable with plenty of deck space and interior seating. A buffet lunch is served (included) and a wide range of beverages are available for purchase. Snorkeling equipment is available and included.

Overnight in Cairns. Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 7 *Cairns - Kuranda - Darwin*

This morning we travel by the Kuranda Scenic Railway through the dense tropical rainforest, passing Barron Falls and Barron Gorge, to Kuranda, a picturesque village set in lush tropical rainforest on the edge of the Atherton Tablelands. Market stalls display works of local artisans.

Late this afternoon we transfer to the airport for our flight to Darwin (there may be a stop en route).

At the "top end" of Australia is a city unlike any other. Darwin is Australia's most northern capital city and its isolation from the other states has encouraged the evolution of a unique lifestyle. It is both old style Australia and distinctly Asian in feel and the genuine multicultural mix is reflected in the food, open-air markets and a people of immense character and hospitality. Here you will find a living Aboriginal history and art heritage, the elusive 'Dundees' and their crocodiliac partners lurking in the farms and wildlife parks. The perennially warm, tropical climate has bred an energetic outdoor lifestyle and a friendly, easy-going attitude to match.

Overnight in Darwin. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Darwin - Kakadu National Park*

Today we travel by road to Kakadu National Park along the Stuart and Arnhem Highways. We continue to Nourlangie Rock, an ancient Aboriginal living shelter. The area surrounding Nourlangie has great diversity: creeks, billabongs, sandy alluvial plains, forest and sandstone escarpment. Rich in food sources -- fish, waterfowl, wallabies, flying foxes and yams -- groups of Aboriginals made this area one where they would make camp and utilise the natural resources. Paintings of animals, insects and people that were done years ago, now help us to record human occupation in the region. Signs and displays will give detailed explanations of the art and area.
We also have time to visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre to better understand the park's culture and history.

After a break for lunch, we head to Cooinda for our Yellow Waters Billabong Cruise. Yellow Water is part of the South Alligator River floodplain. You will have the opportunity to see the varied birdlife Kakadu's World Heritage wetlands, and perhaps a croc or two.

Overnight in Kakadu. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Kakadu - Darwin*

This morning you have the option of a one hour scenic flight over Twin and Jim Jim Falls (optional: AUD 195 - your Tour Leader can pre-book).

We depart Kakadu at approximately 11:00 and return to Darwin with a stop at the Wetlands Visitors Centre, which has great views over the wetlands.

Overnight in Darwin. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Darwin: City Tour*

This morning we will be collected from the hotel for a city tour of Darwin. Highlights include Parliament House, Stokes Hill Wharf area, Mooring Basin, Botanic Gardens and East Point Reserve. We continue to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. The galleries focus on the aspects of the Northern Territory environment, history, ethnic diversity maritime and natural history. The museum houses an impressive display of Aboriginal art. The Cyclone Tracey Gallery provides an actual experience of the cyclone.

Overnight in Darwin. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Darwin - Alice Springs*

Today we fly from Darwin to Alice Springs.*

Alice Springs lies at almost the exact geographical centre of Australia. Many Aboriginals work as stockmen on the vast stations in this area, and reminders of their rich heritage are everywhere. Wild camels roam throughout the region, and the dry red earth and deep blue sky create a surreal atmosphere. Neville Shute wrote a famous novel, A Town Like Alice, in 1950. That book and the movie based on it put Alice Springs on the international map for the first time, but it was many more years before it began attracting tourists in telegraph station here after his wife, Alice, and the town which later grew up nearby took the same name.

This evening we enjoy a typical outback meal at a local restaurant.

* NOTE: Due to ever-changing air schedules into / out of the Red Centre, the order of our sightseeing activities in Ayers Rock and Alice Springs may vary from this itinerary. If there are any changes for your trip, your Tour Leader will advise upon arrival.

Overnight in Alice Springs. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Alice Springs Area*

Our day tour of Alice Springs includes the panoramic ANZAC Hill, the Old Telegraph Station, and the Royal Flying Doctor Service HQ. "The Alice" began in 1872 as an overland telegraph station linking the north and south. Today it combines the vigour of the frontier-like environment with the convenience of modern facilities.

A must see for every visitor is the Alice Springs Desert Park. In the space of just a few hours, you can discover many of the secrets of the Central Australian deserts. Hundreds of species of plants and animals found across Central Australian deserts can be seen. Our visit involves an easy walking trail through three desert habitats. Witness free-flying birds of prey in the nature theatre, see rare and endangered animals in the spectacular nocturnal house, hear the insights into the interlinking world of plants, animals and people from our local guides and enjoy a cinematic journey through four-and-a-half billion years of desert evolution during the 20 minute cinematic journey of "The Changing Heart".

Overnight in Alice Springs. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Alice Springs - Uluru (Ayers Rock)*

Today we travel over the Macdonnell Ranges and cross the vast desert to Uluru (Ayer's Rock), in the centre of the continent.

Uluru is an incredibly impressive monolith 5 km (3 miles) in length and over 300 m (1,000 feet) high! Uluru is a

remnant of ancient mountains which long ago weathered away, leaving the sandstone monolith standing alone in the desert. In 1989 scientists found evidence that Uluru, the Macdonnell Ranges, and a cluster of huge rock domes named Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) were part of a single plateau. Although British explorers trekked through the Red Centre as long ago as 1844, none of them visited Uluru until 1873, when it was named Ayers Rock after a colonial administrator of the day, Sir Henry Ayers.

We visit Uluru for a short walk at the base before travelling to the sunset viewing area.

Overnight near Ayers Rock. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Uluru - Sydney: City Tour*

Today we have an early morning excursion to see the sunrise light up the Olgas / Kata Tjuta. We then fly from Ayers Rock to Sydney.

On arrival we tour Sydney, and include a cruise on Port Jackson, Sydney's harbour, much like Captain Cook once did many years ago. Sydney is regarded as having one of the finest harbours in the world. The odd thing is that when the British explorer Captain James Cook sailed up the east coast of Australia in 1770 he missed it altogether. He saw the Sydney Heads, of course, but did not guess that a vast harbour lay behind them. So when a British fleet arrived to establish a colony in Australia in 1788 it went first to nearby Botany Bay. Within days, however, Sydney Harbour was discovered and the settlement moved there.

We pass the world-famous Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Opera House, various sandy white beaches, and the exclusive homes that line Sydney's harbour on our way to the Pacific gateway. The Harbour Bridge spans one of the most narrow inlets of the harbour and is one of the largest arch bridges in the world. The bridge is affectionately known as "the Coathanger." Our tour also takes us to Bondi Beach, Paddington, Oxford Street, and King's Cross.

Overnight in Sydney. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Sydney - Blue Mountains - Sydney*

This morning we drive by coach westward to the Blue Mountains, named for the blue haze created by the eucalyptus oil in the air above the mountain gum forests. The Blue Mountains National Park includes almost 600,000 acres of sandstone plateau, forested river valleys and deep gorges. We'll visit the Wentworth Falls Reserve for a short walk and spectacular views of the valley, followed by a drive along Cliff Drive to the Echo Point Visitor Information Center where we will see colourful parrots, lorikeets and rosellas, which gather at the center's panaramic windows. There is a nice view here of The Three Sisters formation, in legend members of the Katoomba tribe who were unlucky in love.

Return to Sydney.

Overnight in Sydney. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Sydney: At Leisure*

Today is a free day to explore Sydney's attractions on your own. You'll have ample advice from our Tour Leader and from materials available locally. You may also wish to do some research on your own before departure.

Overnight in Sydney. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Departure*

Departure from Sydney.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.