TOUR CODE

AU4

ADVENTURESABROAD

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

NEW TOUR - The Best of Oz & Aotearoa

17 days

Updated 22/11/2013

Day 1 ***Arrival in Sydney***

Today we arrive in Sydney, New South Wales.

Sydney is regarded as one of the world's greatest coastal cities. The odd thing is that when the British explorer Captain James Cook sailed up the east coast of Australia in 1770 he missed the site 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.

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 Sydney. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Sydney: City Tour***

Today we tour Sydney. We 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 3 ***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 4 *Sydney - Uluru (Ayer's Rock)*

Today we fly to Uluru (Ayer's Rock), located 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 5 *Uluru - Alice Springs*

Today we travel over the Macdonnell Ranges to Alice Springs, located 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.

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

Day 6 *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 7 *Alice Springs - Cairns*

Today we fly from Alice Springs 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".

As flight times can vary, our day is somewhat open-ended, with opportunities for sightseeing and free time in either location.

Overnight in Cairns. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *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 9 *Kuranda Classic Experience*

Today we enjoy the "Kuranda Classic Experience," whereby we experience wo of the most popular tourist attractions in the Far North Queensland. Glide above the canopy of World Heritage rainforest and learn more about this ancient ecosystem with Skyrail Rainforest Cableway. Your Skyrail experience should take approximately 1½ hours and includes spending time at the two rainforest mid-stations. Allow 20 minutes for each station, to enjoy Ranger guided boardwalk tours and visit the Rainforest Interpretation Centre, lookouts and historical displays.

We leisurely explore Kuranda, the famous 'village in the rainforest', before returning to Cairns aboard the historic Kuranda Scenic Railway. The famous Kuranda Scenic Railway was built over 120 years ago and winds its way through the tropical mountain ranges between Cairns and Kuranda.

Overnight in Cairns. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Cairns, Australia - Auckland, New Zealand*

Today we fly to Auckland, New Zealand.

Located in the northern part of New Zealand, the cosmopolitan city of Auckland is the largest metropolitan area in the country. The geographical location of Auckland is such that it lies between the Hauraki Gulf of the Pacific Ocean to the east, the low Hunua Ranges to the southeast, the Manukau Harbour to the southwest, and the Waitakere Ranges and smaller ranges to the west and northwest. The region is also the site of Auckland Volcanic Field, comprising of around 50 volcanoes. This is perhaps the most vibrant and bustling city in New Zealand. Auckland is also the biggest Polynesian city in the world, a cultural influence reflected in many different aspects of city life.

Overnight in Auckland. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Auckland: City Tour*

This morning we begin our tour of Auckland. Travelling via Auckland's 'Golden Mile' (Queen Street), our tour takes us through the university grounds past many of Auckland's historical buildings. We will make a stop at the Parnell Rose Garden before continuing to Parnell Village, the Central Business District, the Mission Bay area, Tamaki Drive, and the Harbour Bridge before our visit to the Auckland Museum. Three expansive levels tell the story of New Zealand's history, from emergence as a nation through the loss and suffering of war, to their uniquely ancient natural history and priceless Maori and Pacific treasures.

Today we will also enjoy a Fullers Harbour Cruise on the sparkling waters of Auckland's beautiful Waitemata Harbour. We learn about the city's best-loved landmarks with full commentary from the knowledgeable crew. The cruise includes a brief stopover at volcanic Rangitoto Island so you can get a small taste of its volcanic terrain.

Overnight in Auckland. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Auckland - Waitomo Caves - Rotorua*

This morning as we depart from Auckland we will travel to the crest of Mt Eden and enjoy a spectacular panoramic view of the city. This dormant volcano, complete with crater, allows us to clearly view Auckland's setting between two harbours.

We leave the 'City of Sails' and travel south through the rich farmland of the Waikato region before arriving at the world-famous Waitomo Caves. Here we will experience a guided tour of the underground limestone caverns and glowworm caves. After this unique experience we continue on to Rotorua, an area of abundant geothermal activity. Rotorua is in the middle of what is called the Taupo Volcanic Zone, which runs from northeast to southwest across the North Island. The area has long been a popular spa area and the locals make use of the hot steam that rises to the surface for heating their homes, cooking, and building their own private hot pools.

This afternoon we will visit the Te Puia Thermal Reserve and Maori Arts and Crafts Center. Here we will discover boiling pools of mud and geysers that spout up to 30m (100 feet).

Tonight we will enjoy a Maori Hangi (feast) and cultural performance of song and dance.

Overnight in Rotorua. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Rotorua - Queenstown*

Today we fly to Queenstown, located on New Zealand's scenic South Island.

Queenstown is situated on Lake Wakatipu and location is stunning; the lake is beautiful and the surrounding mountain scenery adds to the overall splendour. At some point in our time in Queenstown we will take a gondola ride to the top of a mountain for a panoramic view of the town. Depending on the timing of todays flight, you may have some free time in Rotorua and / or time for an orientation upon arrival in Queenstown.

Overnight in Queenstown. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Queenstown: At Leisure*

Today is a nicely timed free day. Surrounded by majestic mountains and nestled on the shores of crystal clear Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown is New Zealand's premier four-season lake and alpine resort. Queenstown has a compact and sophisticated downtown area tucked into a picturesque bay on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. Dwarfed by the surrounding mountains, there are amazing views from everywhere.

You may choose just to relax, wander the streets, and soak up the atmosphere of the region. Or, you may wish to join one of the optional excursions available (booked locally), such as a lake cruise, wine tour, jet boating, or a local garden tour.

Overnight in Queenstown.

Day 15 *Queenstown - Doubtful Sound Cruise*

We will depart Queenstown this morning and head toward beautiful Lake Manapouri. We cruise across the lake and then travel by road over Wilmot Pass, stopping along the way to experience some of Fiordland's densest rainforest and to view the colourful alpine moss gardens. We board the Fiordland Navigator at Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound.* There is plenty of time to enjoy the stunning views and to discover the hidden arms of Doubtful Sound. Fur seals and bottlenose dolphins are often seen and at times, rare penguins can be observed. There is also time for you to kayak around the shoreline or go exploring in the tender craft with our nature guide. As the shadows lengthen we'll drop anchor at a favourite mooring for the night. After the day's activities, we enjoy a delicious evening buffet meal in the spacious dining salon.

The Fiordland Navigator is purpose-built for cruising in the fiords. The vessel offers spacious viewing decks, a comfortable dining salon/fully licensed bar and observation lounge. Our trip features private cabins with twin side-by-side beds and en suite bathrooms.

NOTE: Please pack an overnight bag for the cruise. Your main baggage will be kept in storage.

* Occasionally, due to availability limitations or scheduled / unscheduled ship maintenance, we may include a cruise on Milford Sound.

Accommodation: Overnight on Fiordland Navigator Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 16 *Doubtful Sound - Queenstown - Christchurch*

Our cruise continues this morning. The physical grandeur of towering peaks descending into moody waters, outstanding waterfalls from high-up ice-age valleys and fiords clad with ancient vegetation, create a powerful atmosphere of solitude and serenity.

We then disembark and proceed to Te Anau with time at leisure for lunch. We continue back to Queenstown from where we fly to Christchurch, the 'Garden City'.

Overnight in Christchurch. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Departure*

Departure from Christchurch.

BON VOYAGE!