Tour Code
AU1

ADVENTURESABROAD

AUSTRALIA

'The Land Down Under'

17 days

Created on: 14 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrival in Melbourne

Today we arrive in Melbourne, the capital of Victoria.

This dynamic city grew from a sleepy settlement into a bustling metropolis during the 1850s gold rush, when prospectors flooded the Victorian hills seeking fortune. The wealth transformed Melbourne into Australia's most elegant city, with grand buildings, wide boulevards, and ornate Victorian-era architecture lining the streets. Grand laneways, once bustling with commerce, now house cafés, bars, and street art that give the city its contemporary edge.

Overnight in Melbourne.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Melbourne: City Tour

Melbourne boasts broad, tree-lined streets and an air of distinction that sets it apart from other Australian cities. Founded in 1835 when Tasmanian farmer John Batman arrived to establish a settlement, trading blankets and tools with local Aborigines for 500,000 acres of land. The gold rush of the 1850s triggered rapid expansion—by 1861, Melbourne's population had reached 125,000, overtaking Sydney briefly before the northern city regained its lead.

Today we explore Melbourne's heritage through key landmarks. Fitzroy Gardens, designed in the shape of the Union Jack, provides a manicured oasis in the city centre. Within the gardens sits Cook's Cottage—Captain James Cook's family home, dismantled in Yorkshire and reassembled here in 1934 to mark Victoria's centenary. The cottage offers insight into 18th-century English life, contrasting sharply with the grand Victorian architecture surrounding it.

The Shrine of Remembrance honours Australian soldiers who served in World War I and subsequent conflicts. Built in classical style with a stone pyramid rising above a sanctuary, the shrine's architecture conveys both solemnity and civic pride. Inside, a Ray of Light illuminates the Stone of Remembrance at precisely 11:00 am on November 11—the moment the Armistice was signed.

We continue along St Kilda Road past Melbourne University and Parliament House before visiting St Patrick's Cathedral, a Gothic Revival landmark that dominates the skyline and testifies to the city's significant Catholic heritage. The cathedral's spires rise 103 metres above the streetscape.

Overnight in Melbourne.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Melbourne: the Great Ocean Road

Today we drive the Great Ocean Road, one of Australia's most iconic coastal routes. Built between 1919 and 1932 by returned World War I soldiers, the road was conceived both as tourist attraction and memorial to fallen comrades. The project employed thousands of veterans using hand tools and horse-drawn carts to carve the route through cliffsides and around headlands—inspired by California's Pacific coast highways but executed under far more challenging conditions.

The stretch between Apollo Bay and Peterborough earned the name "Shipwreck Coast" for the treacherous waters that claimed over 700 vessels between 1836 and 1932. The combination of reefs, strong currents, and dense fog created deadly conditions for sailing ships navigating these waters before the Otway lighthouse was established.

The Twelve Apostles—towering limestone stacks rising 65 metres/213 feet from the ocean—stand as remnants of a retreating coastline, carved by wind and waves over 20 million years. Despite the name, only eight stacks remain standing today, and erosion continues at roughly 2 centimetres per year. We stop at viewpoints where the rugged cliffs meet crashing surf, the vast Southern Ocean stretching unbroken to

Antarctica.

Overnight in Melbourne.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Melbourne - Fly to Canberra: City Tour

This morning we fly from Melbourne to Canberra, Australia's purpose-built capital. The city emerged from federation rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne in 1901—creating a new capital would give the nation its own identity while ending the competition between the two dominant cities. An international design competition in 1913 attracted entries from around the world, ultimately won by Chicago landscape architect Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin. Their vision centred on geometric patterns and axial alignments connecting civic buildings to natural landscape features.

We visit the National Capital Exhibition documenting the city's development from sheep paddocks to functioning capital, followed by a guided tour of Parliament House. The distinctly designed building sits partially underground, its roof covered with grass to minimize visual impact on the landscape. The structure opened in 1988 to replace the "temporary" Old Parliament House that had served for 61 years.

Driving through the embassy district reveals how nations express cultural identity through architecture—from the Thai temple-style embassy to the modernist geometries of others. The Australian War Memorial honours armed forces members who died or served in conflicts involving the Commonwealth. Opened in 1941 during World War II, the memorial includes an extensive military museum and is widely regarded as one of the world's most significant memorials of its type. The site provides valuable insight into ANZAC history and Australia's national identity.

Overnight in Canberra.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Canberra - Fly to Cairns - Mossman Gorge

Today we fly from Canberra to Cairns, Queensland. At 1,745,000 square kilometres, Queensland ranks as Australia's second-largest state after Western Australia, more than twice the size of Texas. The coastline extends over 7,500 kilometres when accounting for the Cape York Peninsula and Gulf of Carpentaria. The state began as part of New South Wales, used as a penal colony from 1824 before free settlers—many arriving illegally—transformed it into agricultural centre. By 1859, population growth justified separate colony status. Settlers developed sheep, cattle, wheat, and cash crops including bananas, giving rise to the nickname "banana benders" that other Australians sometimes use for Queenslanders.

This afternoon we travel to Mossman Gorge and the Mossman Gorge Centre, an indigenous eco-tourism development serving visitors to this World Heritage rainforest. Our Dreamtime Gorge Walk Experience begins with a traditional smoking ceremony—burning native plants to create smoke that cleanses and wards off bad spirits according to Aboriginal tradition. The walk meanders through ancient rainforest past traditional shelters called humpies, while our indigenous guide demonstrates plant uses, identifies bush food sources, and explains the deep relationship between Aboriginal people and this tropical environment. Demonstrations include making bush soaps from native plants and creating ochre paintings using techniques unchanged for thousands of years. We conclude with traditional bush tea and damper, a simple bread cooked over coals.

Note: Air schedules may require moving this activity to our departure day from Cairns.

Overnight in Cairns.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Cairns: Reef Cruise

Today we explore the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef system and one of the planet's most extraordinary natural wonders.

Stretching over 2,600 kilometres along Queensland's coast and covering approximately 344,400 square kilometres, this colossal ecosystem contains more individual reefs and coral cays than can be precisely counted. The reef's extraordinary biodiversity and ecological significance earned UNESCO World Heritage status in 1981.

Our reef-equipped vessel offers spacious decks and comfortable interior seating for the journey to the outer reef platforms. A buffet lunch is included, with beverages available for purchase. Snorkeling equipment is provided, and introductory briefings ensure even novice snorkelers can explore safely.

Descending into the crystal-clear waters reveals an underwater landscape unlike anything on land. Corals in every imaginable hue—electric blues, vibrant purples, soft pinks—create complex structures that provide habitat for thousands of species. Schools of tropical fish dart through the coral formations: parrotfish grazing on algae, angelfish in striking patterns, clownfish sheltering in anemones. Sea turtles glide past gracefully, their flippers propelling them through the water with surprising speed. We may spot reef sharks patrolling the deeper waters or dolphins investigating the boat.

The reef supports an estimated 1,500 fish species, 400 coral types, 4,000 mollusc species, and countless other marine organisms. Snorkeling here offers direct connection with one of Earth's most complex and fragile ecosystems—a living structure visible from space, built by organisms no larger than a fingernail.

Overnight in Cairns (dinner on your own this evening).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 7 Cairns: Kuranda Scenic Railway & Skyrail Experience

Today we venture into the Australian rainforest aboard the Kuranda Scenic Railway, a engineering achievement completed in 1891 after five years of construction through challenging terrain. The train winds through dense tropical forest, crossing bridges and entering tunnels carved through mountainsides. The route passes Barron Falls, which during wet season cascades 265 metres/869 feet down the escarpment, and through Barron Gorge where sheer cliffs rise on both sides of the track.

Upon arriving in Kuranda village, we have free time to explore the market stalls where local artisans display handcrafted items, Aboriginal art, and tropical produce. The village developed around the railway station, transforming from a remote settlement into a popular mountain retreat.

The Skyrail experience takes us skyward in gondolas soaring above the rainforest canopy for 7.5 kilometres. This aerial perspective reveals the rainforest's vertical structure—emergent trees breaking through the canopy, the dense middle layer where most wildlife lives, and the shaded forest floor. Two stops along the route allow walks on boardwalks where interpretive displays explain the ecosystem's complexity.

At Rainforestation Nature Park, the Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience begins with traditional dance performances in a rainforest amphitheater. Dancers in traditional body paint and ceremonial dress perform ancient corroborees—rhythmic movements and chants that convey Dreamtime stories and spiritual teachings passed through countless generations. A 30-minute Dreamtime Walk with our indigenous guide reveals the knowledge systems that allowed Aboriginal people to thrive in these rainforests for over 40,000 years, identifying medicinal plants, food sources, and the interconnections that sustain the ecosystem.

We enjoy lunch at Rainforestation before returning to Cairns (dinner on your own due to our substantial lunch).

Overnight in Cairns.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8 Cairns: Fly to Darwin

Today we fly to Darwin, the Northern Territory's capital. Isolated from other Australian states, Darwin developed its own distinctive character influenced by Asian cultures—evident in its food scene, bustling markets, and warm hospitality. The city maintains living connections to Australia's Aboriginal history and art heritage, with indigenous communities preserving traditions and customs.

Darwin's tropical climate fosters an outdoor lifestyle year-round. The city blends old-fashioned frontier spirit with modern metropolitan energy—a place where outback ruggedness meets contemporary vibrancy. Opportunities exist to encounter wildlife including the "Dundees,"

local crocodile hunters who have become legendary figures in Australian folklore.

Overnight in Darwin.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Darwin - Kakadu National Park

Today we drive along the Stuart and Arnhem Highways into Kakadu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site encompassing 20,000 square kilometres of ancient landscapes. The park protects both natural and cultural heritage—Aboriginal people have lived here continuously for at least 65,000 years, making this one of the world's oldest living cultures with direct connection to their ancestral lands.

At Nourlangie Rock, an Aboriginal living shelter, we explore an area featuring creeks, billabongs, sandy plains, monsoon forests, and sandstone escarpments. This abundant environment has attracted Aboriginal groups for millennia, who established temporary camps to utilize seasonal resources—fish and waterfowl during wet season, yams and bush fruits as they ripened, and game animals year-round. Ancient rock paintings depicting barramundi, turtles, goannas, and human figures offer insights into daily life, spiritual beliefs, and the animals that sustained people. Some paintings are recent, refreshed within living memory, while others date back thousands of years. Signs and displays explain the art styles and landscape features, enhancing our understanding of this significant cultural site.

The Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre provides deeper context through interactive exhibits showcasing Bininj/Mungguy people's traditions, customs, and artistic expressions—illuminating their relationship with the land, seasonal movement patterns, and the knowledge systems that allowed them to thrive in this challenging environment.

After lunch, we cruise Yellow Waters Billabong through the South Alligator River floodplain. During wet season, this area transforms into vast shallow lakes; by dry season it contracts to permanent billabongs where wildlife concentrates. As we glide through tranquil waters, we observe waterbirds—jabirus, magpie geese, egrets—and raptors including sea eagles and kites hunting from the air. With luck, we may spot saltwater crocodiles lurking in the shallows, only their eyes and nostrils visible above the waterline.

Overnight in Kakadu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Kakadu Touring - Darwin: City Tour

Venturing deeper into Kakadu, we reach Ubirr, a renowned Aboriginal rock art site that served as both shelter and canvas for countless generations. A moderate walk leads to lookouts overlooking the Nadab floodplain, where views extend across wetlands to Arnhem Land escarpment. The rock art galleries showcase indigenous artistic traditions spanning thousands of years—x-ray paintings depicting fish, turtles, and goannas with their internal organs visible, contact paintings showing European ships with full sails, and dynamic hunting scenes. At the main gallery, a rare painting depicts the thylacine—the Tasmanian tiger—which disappeared from the mainland over two thousand years ago, providing remarkable evidence of the region's ancient ecosystem and the accuracy of Aboriginal artistic observation.

Optional scenic flight over Twin and Jim Jim Falls is available for those wanting aerial perspectives of Kakadu's most dramatic waterfalls (your Tour Leader can arrange details and pricing). The Wetlands Visitors Centre offers panoramic views and informative exhibits about the region's ecology, seasonal transformations, and Aboriginal management practices.

Returning to Darwin, we tour the city including Parliament House, a tropical-adapted building with wide verandahs and elevated design. Stokes Hill Wharf buzzes with restaurants and cafes overlooking the harbour, while the Mooring Basin preserves Darwin's maritime heritage. The Botanic Gardens showcase tropical and desert plants adapted to the harsh climate. East Point Reserve provides coastal views and World War II gun emplacements—reminders that Darwin was the only Australian city to suffer sustained attack during the war, enduring 64 air raids between 1942 and 1943. Time permitting, we visit the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, exploring Aboriginal art, Southeast Asian maritime connections, Cyclone Tracy exhibits, and natural history collections.

Overnight in Darwin.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Darwin - Fly to Alice Springs

Today we fly to Alice Springs, the Northern Territory's central hub. The deep connection to Aboriginal culture is evident throughout—many Aboriginal people work as stockmen on vast cattle stations, preserving traditional ways of life. Rock art, ancient sites, and cultural centres dot the landscape, testaments to their enduring heritage.

The arid landscape contrasts sharply with coastal Australia: red earth, deep blue sky, and vast open spaces create an otherworldly atmosphere. Alice Springs gained international recognition in 1950 with Neville Shute's novel "A Town Like Alice," later adapted into film. The town's name honours Alice Gray, wife of the telegraph station manager who played a significant role in early development.

Overnight in Alice Springs.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Alice Springs Sightseeing

Our Alice Springs tour begins at ANZAC Hill, providing panoramic views across the MacDonnell Ranges. The memorial honours Australians who served in military conflicts, positioned where it overlooks the town from every direction. We visit the Old Telegraph Station, established in 1872 to relay messages along the transcontinental line connecting Adelaide to Darwin and ultimately to London. The station operated until 1932, its stone buildings now preserved as museum demonstrating how the telegraph transformed Australian communications and opened the interior to development.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service headquarters reveals how medical care reaches Australia's vast outback. Founded in 1928, the service operates aircraft from bases across remote regions, providing emergency response, regular clinic visits to isolated stations, and radio medical consultations. The communications centre coordinates flights across distances where the nearest hospital may be 500 kilometres distant.

Alice Springs School of the Air has been providing education to children at remote cattle stations, roadhouses, Aboriginal communities, and national parks through satellite broadband since 1951. The broadcast area covers 1.3 million square kilometres across the Northern Territory, northern South Australia, and eastern Western Australia—daily lessons reaching students aged 4 to 13 years scattered across impossibly vast distances. Some students live 1,000 kilometres from the nearest classmate.

The Alice Springs Desert Park reveals Central Australian desert ecosystems through three distinct habitats. Hundreds of plant and animal species can be observed along walking trails—from desert oaks and spinifex grass to red kangaroos and thorny devils. The nature theatre features free-flying birds of prey demonstrating hunting techniques, while the nocturnal house displays rare and endangered animals including bilbies and mala wallabies. Local guides explain the interlinking relationships between plants, animals, and Aboriginal people. A cinematic presentation traces 4.5 billion years of desert evolution.

Overnight in Alice Springs.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Alice Springs - Uluru (Ayers Rock)

Today, we have a scenic drive through the Macdonnell Ranges, a rugged mountain range that stretches across the heart of the Australian outback. As we traverse this arid landscape, we witness the dramatic contrast between the red sandstone cliffs and the vast, open plains.

Our journey culminates at Uluru, a colossal monolith that stands as a testament to the power of nature. This iconic landmark, measuring over 300 meters (1,000 feet) in height and 5 kilometers (3 miles) in length, is a remnant of ancient mountains that have eroded over time, leaving Uluru as a solitary sentinel in the desert. In 1989, scientists made a groundbreaking discovery, revealing that Uluru, the Macdonnell Ranges, and the nearby Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) were once part of a single plateau. This geological connection further highlights the significance of this region as a natural wonder.

While British explorers had ventured through the Red Centre as early as 1844, Uluru remained relatively unknown until 1873, when it was named Ayers Rock after Sir Henry Ayers, a colonial administrator of the day.

Upon arriving at Uluru, we embark on a short walk around its base, marveling at its sheer size and the intricate patterns etched into its

surface. The changing colours of Uluru, particularly at sunrise and sunset, create a mesmerizing spectacle.

As the day draws to a close, we head to the sunset viewing area, where we witness one of nature's most breathtaking displays. As the sun dips below the horizon, Uluru is bathed in a kaleidoscope of colors, casting a magical glow over the desert landscape.

Overnight near Ayers Rock.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Uluru - Fly to Sydney

We rise before dawn to witness sunrise illuminating the domes of Kata Tjuta, known as the Olgas to early European explorers. As darkness gives way to first light, we tour around the base of these remarkable rock formations. Kata Tjuta comprises 36 conglomerate rock domes spread across 3,500 hectares, the tallest rising 546 metres/1,791 feet—actually higher than Uluru though less famous. The domes form a sacred site for the Anangu people with restricted areas where traditional ceremonies still occur. The name Kata Tjuta means "many heads" in the local language, an apt description of these clustered formations. As sunrise progresses, colours wash across the rock faces—the rounded domes illuminated by horizontal light that reveals their intricate patterns and textures created by water, wind, and sun over millions of years.

Following our sunrise experience, we return to Ayers Rock Airport and fly to Sydney, Australia's largest city wrapped around one of the world's finest natural harbours. The flight traces the change from desert red to coastal green as we cross the Great Dividing Range.

Upon arrival, we begin exploring Sydney. Captain James Cook sailed past Sydney Harbour in 1770, spotting the distinctive headlands but missing the vast harbour hidden behind them. The British fleet arriving in 1788 to establish a penal colony discovered this sheltered harbour that would become the foundation of Australian settlement.

During our stay we visit the Sydney Opera House, a masterpiece of modern architecture whose sail-like shells have become an international icon since opening in 1973. We may take a ferry ride across the harbour for views of the Harbour Bridge—the massive steel arch completed in 1932 that locals call "the Coathanger." The Rocks district preserves Sydney's colonial origins through cobblestone streets, sandstone warehouses converted to galleries and cafes, and pubs operating since the 19th century.

Overnight in Sydney.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Sydney: City Tour

Today's touring begins with a scenic cruise on Port Jackson, Sydney's majestic harbour. As we glide through the crystal-clear waters, we are treated to stunning views of the city's skyline, the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge, and the pristine white sandy beaches that line the harbour. The Sydney Harbour Bridge, affectionately known as "the Coathanger," is a marvel of engineering, spanning one of the harbor's narrowest inlets. As we pass beneath this iconic landmark, we marvel at its impressive scale and architectural elegance.

Our tour takes us to Bondi Beach, a world-famous destination renowned for its golden sands, turquoise waters, and vibrant beach culture. We also explore the trendy neighborhoods of Paddington and Oxford Street, known for their boutique shops, cafes, and lively atmosphere. King's Cross, another iconic area, offers a glimpse into Sydney's nightlife and entertainment scene.

If not already visited, one of the highlights of our day is a guided tour of the Sydney Opera House, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most recognizable landmarks. This architectural masterpiece is a testament to Sydney's cultural vibrancy and its status as a global city. As we explore the Opera House, we are treated to a behind-the-scenes experience, gaining access to areas that are normally off-limits to the public. We run our hands over the famous shell tiles, admire the elegant custom-made white birch timber chairs, and marvel at the soaring vaulted ceilings. We explore the various theaters and foyers, imagining the performances that take place within these hallowed halls.

Overnight in Sydney.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 16 Sydney: The Blue Mountains

This morning we journey west by coach to the Blue Mountains, named for the ethereal blue haze that blankets the eucalyptus forests. The haze results from oil droplets released by millions of gum trees, the fine mist creating the distinctive blue tinge visible from distance.

Our first stop is Featherdale Wildlife Park, where we encounter Australian wildlife difficult to find in the wild: koalas, kangaroos, wombats, wallabies, Tasmanian devils, and dingoes provide intimate glimpses into Australia's unique marsupial evolution. The park maintains breeding programs for endangered species while allowing close encounters impossible in wilderness settings.

Continuing into Blue Mountains National Park—a UNESCO World Heritage Site protecting over one million hectares—we visit Wentworth Falls Reserve. A short walk brings us to viewpoints where Wentworth Falls plunges 297 metres/974 feet down the escarpment in multiple cascades. The falls were named for explorer William Wentworth, who led the first European party across the Blue Mountains in 1813, finally finding the route west that had eluded earlier expeditions.

We drive along Cliff Drive, winding through rugged terrain with extensive vistas across the Jamison Valley, reaching the Echo Point Visitor Information Centre. Colourful parrots, lorikeets, and rosellas flock to the centre's panoramic windows, drawn by visitors offering seed. From the main lookout we view the Three Sisters formation—three sandstone peaks rising above the valley. Aboriginal legend tells of three sisters from the Katoomba tribe who were turned to stone by their father to protect them from danger; he died before reversing the spell, leaving them petrified forever. The scientific explanation involves differential erosion of the sandstone, but the legend adds deeper meaning to the striking formation.

After a full day exploring the mountains, we return to Sydney.

Overnight in Sydney.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Departure

Departure from Sydney.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast