

Australia: The Great Ocean Walk

Tour-Only Itinerary

Dappled light fills the eucalyptus forest, and a sleepy koala yawns on a branch overhead. Pausing under a giant tree fern, you contemplate the soothing roar of waves rolling in off the Southern Ocean. To hear it described, the Great Ocean Walk in Australia seems like it must be a work of colorful fiction. Sixty miles of pristine coastline preserved as national parkland, accessible only on foot. Here's the proof: golden beaches, azure inlets, and rugged sandstone bluffs day after glorious day. Shortly you'll emerge at Station Beach, one of Australia's wildest stretches of sand, and cool off under Rainbow Falls, a curtain of spring water cascading down red limestone cliffs. As for tonight...you'll be dining like royalty in another comfy backcountry lodge.



Highlights

Pick the route that's best for you, with a choice of beachside walks or hilltop hikes, allowing for new coastal vistas every day.

Spot iconic wildlife – such as kangaroos, koalas, and kookaburras – and hike to scenic wonders like the towering sea stacks of the “Twelve Apostles.”

Stroll from the green hills of the Otways into the laid-back town of Apollo Bay to enjoy its renowned seafood, surfer charm, and trendy shopping.

Learn the fateful history of Loch Ard Gorge from your expert guide during an afternoon walk amid the Gorge's captivating maritime geology.

On all Self-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



A local representative
available 24/7.



Gracious accommodations
that are a clean, comfortable
home away from home.



Detailed maps & route notes
featuring turn-by-turn
directions and places of
interest.



Experts to handle all the
details, including moving
your luggage between hotels
while you're out exploring.



Scheduled taxi transfers to
bring you to and from each
day's walks.



Access to a Self-Guided
Flight Concierge—ask our
knowledgeable team to find
flights that sync with your
planned trip.



Delicious meals—many
are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate, with an average of 6 to 10 miles per day (3 to 5 hours of steady walking), plus additional options. This is a linear walk with limited vehicle access points; therefore, there are limited options to shorten daily sections. There are no major steep sections, but the terrain is undulating most of the way, which can be tiring for some. Walks follow cliff tops, wide forest trails, sandy beaches, and even traverse short sections of private farmland. The undulating terrain includes coastal and forest foot paths, a small amount of closed 4WD tracks, short stretches of beach, and some boardwalking. A few shallow unbridged river crossings may be necessary in periods of heavy rainfall, especially when combined with high tide and ocean swell conditions. Remember:

Preparation is the key to ensuring your tour readiness; the more you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

DAY 1

Arrival in Melbourne. Transfer to Apollo Bay. Optional Marriners Lookout Walk

5.3 miles, easy to moderate

Arrive in Melbourne and, with a Country Walkers representative, make your way by private transfer to Apollo Bay. The transfer—a glorious three-hour drive along the Great Ocean Road—is one of the world's most scenic drives and a great way to get acquainted with the sprawling coastal landscape you will soon explore. The road took 13 years to build in the 1920s, laid by servicemen returning home after World War I as a memorial to their fallen brothers. Today, surfers and beach lovers from all over the state of Victoria and throughout Australia follow this picturesque byway to Apollo Bay. Visitors are not only drawn to the bay's natural beauty and white-sand beaches, but also to the town's fine restaurants and artsy shops, separated from the beach by a wide, grassy greenspace. The rolling hills of Great Otway National Park border the town, providing an inviting and pastoral setting. If you arrive at your lodge early enough, you can rest up on the beach or perhaps wet your feet in the waters of the mouth of the Barham River. Alternately, you might warm up for your walking days on the Marriners Lookout Walk, an easy beach and road walk, followed by a steep climb to a breathtaking overlook. Choose from one of Apollo Bay's many eateries for dinner on your own.

Accommodation: Apollo Bay Guest House, Apollo Bay

Included Meals: None

DAY 2

Shelly Beach Picnic Area to Blanket Bay Day Visitors Car Park

8.5 miles, moderate

Begin the day with a transfer to Shelly Beach Picnic Area, where a tranquil walking path awaits. As you hit the trail, you follow an inland route into Great Otway National Park through a forest cathedral of towering mountain ash trees, among the tallest in Australia. This area was heavily logged during early settlement

days, and you might spot notches in some of the stumps about three to six feet up, where loggers plugged in planks to stand on them as they cut the trees. Today, the park is also known for its unique bird species (such as pink robins and striated fieldwrens), an extreme variety of beneficial fungi, and a population of elusive koalas. Keep your eyes peeled for them all as you negotiate the rises and falls of this well-worn, wide dirt track. You return to the coast at Blanket Bay, an isolated spot where supplies were once delivered to the Cape Otway Lightstation. You might pause here for a swim, one of your few chances to do so during your trip as many of the beaches you will visit are known for their crashing surf. At Blanket Bay, you meet a representative who shuttles you to one of two accommodations (depending on availability). Either an award-winning eco-retreat in Cape Otway where you can join a local conservationist for a dusk walk, perhaps spotting wild kangaroos and koalas. Or Cape Otway Lightstation, Australia's oldest continually operating lighthouse. It closes its gates at 5:00 p.m., after which it becomes your private seaside oasis. As twilight approaches, you might join the caretaker for a stroll out to the lighthouse point, listening to stories from World War II and marveling at the rocky coastal views from 300 feet above the pounding surf as the sun dips below the horizon in a blaze.

Accommodation: Great Ocean Ecolodge, Cape Otway

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

Blanket Bay Day Visitors Car Park to Cape Otway Lightstation

6.4 miles, moderate

Return to Blanket Bay this morning to continue tracing the Great Ocean Walk. Today's breathtaking route leads through a coastal forest dotted with stunted stringybark trees, and along a soaring clifftop with sweeping views of the ocean and surrounding hills. Soon, you arrive at the quiet haven of Parker Inlet, where the Parker River empties into the ocean. This is a favorite spot for its picture-postcard setting, and you will want to linger for a rest or a swim. From here, follow rock shelves and beaches along the water (if the tides allow) or take the high inland route. You might depart the main trail for a side trip to idyllic Crayfish Bay, where you can go for a swim. After time here among the impressive rock formations, return to the main route and continue through forests, rolling hills, and farmland. In spring, this area is blanketed with a stunning display of wildflowers. Perhaps you will spot the white flowers of the coastal Correa or the coast beard heath. By walk's end, you arrive at the Cape Otway Lightstation. This afternoon, you can redeem your provided ticket to explore the station's museum and the lighthouse itself, perched atop a

300-foot cliff overlooking the roiling ocean below. This evening, enjoy dinner at your accommodation.

Accommodation: Great Ocean Ecolodge, Cape Otway

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

Cape Otway Lightstation to Castle Cove Lookout

9.6 miles + optional 1.3-mile beach walk, moderate

Begin today's walk at Cape Otway Lightstation. En route to Station Beach, you pass an old cemetery that is the final resting place of shipwreck casualties, victims of the treacherous waves for which this coast is infamous. You may take an optional short trek to Rainbow Falls, a pretty, spring-fed cascade that comes alive with color when sunlight shines upon it at a certain angle. After time here, you may choose either the inland or the beach trail, depending on the tides and on your ability to walk on sand for a long distance. We recommend trekking along Station Beach, a magnificent wild stretch of sand pounded by waves and populated by darting hooded plovers. You will want to walk between the high-water line and the dunes to minimize disturbing the tiny birds' nests. Expect to navigate some rocky outcroppings on the beach. Alternately, the inland walk takes you through wind-sculpted sand dunes and coastal scrubland, tracing high, calcified cliffs. You later arrive at the tranquil Aire River estuary and wetlands, a spectacular natural haven where the Aire River spills into the Southern Ocean. Climb inland, upriver, through spinifex forests, rising up and down with the trail. Enjoy sweeping views of the rugged coastline and watch for echidnas, platypus-like egg-laying mammals covered with defensive quills. Your destination is a lookout over Castle Cove, a stunning beach surrounded by soaring cliffs where dinosaur fossils have been unearthed.

Accommodation: Aire Valley Guest House, Hordern Vale

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

Castle Cove Lookout to Milanesia Beach Turnoff

9.1 miles, moderate

On today's hike you'll take in some of the most spectacular ocean vistas in Australia and visit one of its

most gorgeous beaches. From Castle Cove, trace the cliff tops through heathlands and forests, passing magnificent expanses of manna gums—grass trees with their long-needle-like leaves and tiny white flowers—and patches of wildflowers such as pink heath, the floral symbol of Victoria. Your undulating footpath occasionally emerges from the bush to reveal breathtaking panoramas. Close by, in the protected area of Dinosaur Cove, almost 1,500 fossils of small herbivores and plant life have been uncovered. Keep your eye on the skies for the majestic peregrine falcons that nest and hunt in the canopy. Your trail descends to the white sands of Johanna Beach; its broad expanse and enormous crashing surf make it one of the country's most dramatic coastal havens. Take time to soak in its natural beauty. If you would like to swim, walk up the Johanna River for a dip rather than risking the ocean's dangerous rip tides. Walk the beach's soft sands for about a mile before ascending inland to rolling hills and bucolic farmland. Perhaps you'll spot a troop of Eastern gray kangaroos napping or grazing in the grassy valleys. Your walk today concludes at the Milanesia Beach Turnoff, where you meet your shuttle. This evening, back at your lodge, you enjoy a well-earned dinner and a relaxing evening in good company.

Accommodation: Aire Valley Guest House, Hordern Vale

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6

Milanesia Beach Turnoff to Parker Access Track

7.5 miles, moderate with challenging sections

Return to the Milanesia Beach Turnoff after breakfast and follow the pathway to the shore. Isolated and rugged, this beach sees few visitors, so you just might have it to yourself. Follow the beach for a time before ascending the lofty sea cliffs. Your path frequently rises and falls today, crossing creeks and following wooden steps and four-wheel drive tracks, with many scenic views of the breathtaking rocky coast and the ocean beyond. From Bowker Hill, you can see all the way back to Cape Otway Lightstation. After a break at Ryans Den campground, continue to the most challenging leg, traversing the rolling, pristine wilderness and coastal forest of Cape Volley. The diversity of plant and animal life here thrives amid the rich archaeological sites of the Gadubanud people, who, to this day, cherish the cultural relics you see. Your walk finishes at Moonlight Head, so named after Matthew Flinders was entranced one night in 1802 as rain-soaked clouds parted to reveal a magical lunar-lit landscape. Your delightful lodge for the night is up the trail along the Parker Access Track. Settle in, rest, and relax before dinner on site.

Accommodation: Southern Anchorage Retreat, Wattle Hill

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7

The Gables Car Park to Gellibrand Bridge. Loch Ard Gorge guided walking tour. Optional Port Campbell Discovery Walk

8.1 miles, easy to moderate (does not include three additional optional walks/sections of 3.4 miles, 0.4 miles, and 3.1 miles)

You may begin your day with a 3.4-mile walk through a shady forest to the official beginning of today's walk at the Gables Car Park. Alternatively, your hosts will be happy to give you a lift. As you get underway, you follow a newly established section of trail to the Gables Lookout, perched atop one of Australia's highest sea cliffs. Between June and September, whales can often be spotted from here. Continue through a grove of casuarina trees before emerging onto Wreck Beach. If the tide is low, you can walk the white sands to your next destination, peering out across the water to two shipwrecks from the 1890s. Two anchors poking above the surface are eerie reminders of the treacherous nature of these waters. If it is high tide, follow the inland route over more rolling terrain. Arrive at Devils Kitchen campground, and then follow a mostly flat trail along the wild coastal cliffs toward Gellibrand Bridge in Princetown. Your local Loch Ard Gorge guide meets you here. If you arrive early, you might have time to explore the wetland boardwalks and bird signage across the street. En route to your accommodation in Port Campbell, your guide leads you on a tour of the Razorback Walk in the spectacular Loch Ard Gorge, sharing insights about local geology, whale migration, the Twelve Apostles rock formations, and the wreck of the Loch Ard. Later, settle in to your motel in Port Campbell, a colorful and lively seaside village. Set on a beautiful sheltered bay and surrounded by cliffs and Norfolk pines, the town feels like a safe haven along a rocky, roiling coast. For a bird's-eye view of the area, consider the Discovery Walk, an invigorating climb up a set of stairs from the beach at Port Campbell Bay. Dinner is on your own tonight—you may choose from several restaurants along Port Campbell's main street or beachfront.

Accommodation: Portside Motel, Port Campbell

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8

Gellibrand Bridge to the Twelve Apostles. Departure from

Camperdown

4.2 miles, easy

After breakfast, you are returned to Gellibrand Bridge, where you begin your walk to the Twelve Apostles, a remarkable group of limestone sea stacks hugging the coast. These magnificent natural towers were created from the constant crash of waves on soft rock. As waves lashed at the headlands, they eroded the rock from both sides until arches formed. When the arches collapsed, they left the stacks behind. From Gibson Steps, you see the two stacks called Gog and McGog. If the tide is low and time allows, you can walk to the beach for a closer look. After, continue to the Twelve Apostles Visitor Center, where you can follow an interpretive trail along boardwalks and enjoy spectacular views of the famous rock formations. After your visit, your final transfer meets you here and delivers you to the Camperdown train station for your onward connections.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Boutique accommodations	✓
18 meals: 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 5 dinners	✓
Detailed water- and tear-resistant Route Notes and maps	✓
Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓
Scheduled taxi and luggage transfers (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to transfer with your luggage from one accommodation to the next at no additional charge)	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary: Guided walking tour of Loch Ard Gorge, entrance to Cape Otway Lightstation, and depending on accommodation availability, guided dusk walk with conservationist	✓
Travel assistance available 24/7 provided by Allianz Global Assistance	✓
Access to Self-Guided Flight Concierge—Ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync perfectly with your planned trip.	✓