

Australia: Sydney to the Blue Mountains

Tour-Only Itinerary

With such sweeping beauty—soaring tablelands of sandstone brimming with rock formations, infinite blankets of blue-green eucalypt and gum forests, waterfalls plunging down massive cliffs—it's little wonder that local Aussies come here for a walkabout. Explore on your own on this self-guided walking tour, using the charming outpost villages of Blackheath, Katoomba, and Leura as your bases, hiking as much or as little as you'd like. Our routes cut deep into Grose River Valley and Valley of the Waters, helping you retrace the paths of Australia's early explorers, traversing steep hills and thrilling cliff-sides with help from occasional manmade ladders, stairs, and bridges. The Giant Stairway descends past the Three Sisters, an iconic trio of rock formations. Countless waterfalls shower multihued cliffs bearded in green. There's awe-inspiring wonder at every turn. And there's breathtaking luxury at day's end, with deluxe accommodations at two sumptuous lodgings and an upscale bed-and-breakfast, made all the more comforting by Aussie home cooking one night and fine dining on two others.



Highlights

Ride the world's steepest incline railway into the Jamison Valley, where you'll explore eucalypt forests, keeping an eye out for lyrebirds and 100-year-old mining relics.

Explore the Valley of the Waters, wending your way past plunging cascades and through grottoes, even following a “mid-cliff” path carved into the sheer rock face.

Stay in a five-star resort and spa in a luxurious country estate, perched beside a dramatic overlook that offers sweeping vistas of Jamison Valley.

Savor a multicourse dinner in a country lodge whose garden supplies the fruits and vegetables used in their kitchen.

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 to challenging with an average of 5.5 to 12.5 miles per day (4 to 6 hours of steady walking) and limited options. There are daily cumulative

elevation gains up to 3,000 feet and daily cumulative elevation losses up to 3,100 feet, with some long, steep sections including ladders and lots of steps. The walk on Day 4, as well as two options on Day 5, are not recommended for anyone with vertigo (there is, however, the option to skip the walk on Day 5—as well as any other day — and transfer to the next accommodation). Walks follow the natural landscape: along cliff tops, down gullies and canyons, and along valley floors. The terrain mostly includes narrow, well-defined, and typically well-marked forested trails (with both smooth, hardened surfaces, as well as uneven, rocky surfaces covered with fallen leaves and branches). A few trails are more exposed with rough and rocky terrain and river crossings on boulders should be expected. The terrain also includes short sections of roads required to reach your accommodation. 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

Your *Australia: Sydney to the Blue Mountains* tour begins. Optional visit of the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens

After arriving in Sydney, make your way by private transfer to Blackheath, one of 26 charming townships in the Blue Mountain region of New South Wales. Famed for its annual Rhododendron Festival, Blackheath boasts a vibrant artistic heart and a rich colonial history, both of which are embodied in its many antique shops. This stunningly beautiful area on the park's western edges draws nature lovers of all types: rock climbers, horseback riders, spelunkers, kayakers, and of course walkers. Its dozens of bush trails traverse some of the most dramatic sandstone vistas and rock formations in Australia. If you arrive at your resort early, you might choose to prepare for your adventure by limbering up with a treatment at the onsite spa (at your own expense; please reserve ahead of time at parklands.com.au/day-spa). Or visit the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens, a rich botanical collection of small exotic plants and towering native trees. The gentle walking paths throughout the park and around the lake provide a nice warm up for your rambles ahead.

Overnight in Blackheath

DAY 2

Blackheath look walk

12.5 miles, moderate with challenging sections, 2,050-ft. elevation gain and loss

Your first invigorating walking day is a long loop walk through rainforest and open woodland that leads to spectacular overlooks. Following Popes Glen Track, you trace a babbling creek beneath a ferny understory down into the Popes Glen Valley. Climbing steeply out of the valley, you make your way up to the lookout point of Govetts Leap for sweeping views of the Grose River Valley, a stunning landscape of blue-and emerald-tinted forest and granite and quartzite faces that glow yellow and brown in the sunlight. Watch for the colorful king parrot taking wing in the canopy and keep your ears trained for the “weela weela” song of the yellow-tailed black cockatoo. From Govetts Leap, descend through the bush to spectacular Bridal Veil Falls, which plummets some 260 feet. Your footpath then leads uphill, tracing the valley edge to Evans Lookout, where you can admire the Blue Gum Forest more than 1,600 feet below. Then navigate down steep terrain to the Grand Canyon Creek, passing silver-bark Blue Mountain ash trees and black wattles. Cross the creek, perhaps stopping to soak your feet, and then follow undulating terrain of tall coachwoods, sassafras, and giant ferns. Soon, arrive at the Grand Canyon, a modest gorge but impressive nonetheless for the razor-sharp cut made by the river below over millennia. Next, you pass through The Rotunda, an expanse of sand and silt overshadowed by hanging rocks. From here, return to town, where you can relax at your lodge before dinner on your own in Blackheath.

Overnight in Blackheath

DAY 3

Scenic World to Jamison Valley and Ruined Castle

9.8 miles, moderate with challenging sections, 2,450-ft. elevation gain and 1,650-ft. elevation loss

Depart Blackheath by taxi this morning, using your included voucher. Your exhilarating walk today is through the Jamison Valley amid rainforest and eucalypt forest. To reach the valley floor, you board either the Scenic Cableway (the steepest aerial cable car in the Southern Hemisphere) or the Scenic Railway (the steepest incline railway in the world). Begin your hike along an elevated boardwalk used by coal miners 100 years ago. As you walk, you see mining relics and tunnels and climb over the remnants of the 1931 landslides. You might even spot the elusive ground-dwelling, pheasant-sized lyrebird and sip pure water from Marrangaroo Spring. Enjoy your packed lunch among a flock of cheeky currawongs or rosella parrots after you scramble up past apple, peppermint, and bloodwood trees to the impressive rocky outcrop known as Ruined Castle. To return, you may board the Cableway or Railway or opt to climb the Furber Steps, a challenging ascent through dense rainforest past cascading waterfalls and lovely grottoes

with spectacular valley views. At the top, you may walk to your next lodging, or halve the distance by riding the Skyway across the canyon. If you prefer, call for a taxi at your own expense. You have the evening to relax at your resort or explore Katoomba, with its lively café scene and shopping. Built on coal mining, this charming town is renowned for its proximity to some of the most stunning vistas in the Blue Mountains. Even the Aborigines named the area “Kedumba,” meaning “shiny, falling waters” after the immense beauty here, some of which is captured in the town’s inviting galleries.

Overnight in Katoomba

DAY 4

Katoomba to Leura via the Three Sisters, Giant Stairway, Leura Forest, Prince Henry Cliff Walk, and Gordon Falls Reserve

5.3 or 6.2 miles, moderate to challenging, 3,000-ft. elevation gain and 3,100-ft. elevation loss. This walk is not recommended for anyone with vertigo.

Begin the day with a short walk to Echo Point, which offers spectacular views of the Three Sisters, a trio of rock formations soaring high up from the escarpment. One Aboriginal legend says it was their father who turned them to stone to protect them from a rival tribe smitten with the beauty of the girls. Descend into the valley via the 862 steps known as the Giant Stairway. These steep steps through the bush deliver you into the thick canopy of the Leura Forest. You won’t find as many tourists here, making for a leisurely and peaceful walk past towering trees engulfed in delicate ferns and covered with mosses that shimmer many shades of green. When conditions are right, filtered sunlight creates a magical woodland scene here. Soon, you ascend the steep trail to the Prince Henry Cliff Walk, passing waterfalls and having the option to take short detours to more cascades and lookout points. At the top, follow the cliffside path to the Gordon Falls Reserve and continue on to your home for the next two nights in the charming town of Leura. A true gem of the Blue Mountains, this village’s residents adore their private gardens and tend to them lovingly, making a simple stroll a visual and fragrant delight. Leura is also home to the Toy and Railway Museum, Australia’s largest collection of toys, dolls, teddy bears, and model railways. Dinner features Aussie home cooking at your in-town Bed & Breakfast.

Overnight in Leura

DAY 5

Valley of the Waters

6.6 or 7.2 or 7.8 miles, moderate with challenging options, elevation gains range from 1,000 ft. to 2,450 ft. and elevation losses range from 1,500 ft. to 2,800 ft. The challenging options are not recommended for anyone with vertigo.

Today, you descend into the Valley of the Waters, wending your way past plunging cascades, beneath overhanging cliffs, and through magnificent grottoes. A real highlight today is the “mid-cliff” walk along a wide path that has been carved into the sheer cliff face. Handrails, ladders, and airy lookouts provide a birds-eye view over hundreds of miles of forest. After a hearty breakfast, depart your hotel by foot for your final bushwalk. Once you reach the Fairmont Resort, skirt a golf course and hike to Lillian’s Bridge, a thrilling 21-foot span over a 200-foot gorge. Once you cross, continue to the Tea Rooms, an eatery on the cliff’s edge also known as Conservation Hut. A trio of trails departs from there and they variously entail steep climbs, walks underneath massive cliffsides, or a trek farther into the valley. No matter your route, enjoy spectacular views of pristine waterfalls, including the Wentworth Falls, a three-tiered shower that has carved a U-shape into the cliff. For the final stretch, make your way along a small stream to Wentworth Falls Village. Another town of rustic charm, this was the terminus of the first railway journey in the Blue Mountains in 1867. Take a taxi back to Leura using your provided voucher. There is time this evening to relax and recount your rewarding walk through the Blue Mountains over drinks and dinner.

Overnight in Leura

DAY 6

Your Australia: Sydney to the Blue Mountains tour concludes

After breakfast, your trip concludes with a transfer to the local train station, where you can make arrangements for your onward travel.

What's Included

Tour Only

Breakfast daily, four packed lunches (days 2, 3, 4, and 5), and three dinners (days 1, 3, and 5); beverages not included	✓
All accommodations while on tour	✓
Local transfers as noted in the itinerary	✓
Orientation phone call with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Luggage transfers between the hotels	✓
Detailed water- and tear-resistant Route Notes and maps	✓
24-hour tour-related support provided by Country Walkers' local partner	✓
24-hour travel-related support provided by One Call International Emergency Hotline and Travel Assistance	✓
The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff	✓