

# Wildlife of Southern Australia

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Day 1/2</b>  | Depart London / In flight               |
| <b>Day 3</b>    | Arrive Melbourne                        |
| <b>Day 4</b>    | You Yang Ranges                         |
| <b>Day 5</b>    | Greater Bendigo National Park           |
| <b>Day 6</b>    | Ouyen via Mount Korong and Lake Tyrrell |
| <b>Day 7/8</b>  | Hattah-Kulkyne National Park            |
| <b>Day 9/10</b> | Lake Mungo National Park                |
| <b>Day 11</b>   | Depart Mildura and Melbourne            |
| <b>Day 12</b>   | Arrive London                           |

*Optional extensions are available – see end of document for further information*

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### Departs

October

### Grading

Day walks only. Grade A

### Focus

Birds and mammals



Images from top: Rainbow Lorikeet & Short-beaked Echidna



Naturetrek Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)



*NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.*

## Day 1

## Fly London to Melbourne

Fly from London Heathrow to Melbourne today, we usually use Emirates, Qantas or Singapore Airlines, however alternative flights may be available if required. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

## Day 2

## In Flight

## Day 3

## Arrive Melbourne

On arrival in Melbourne this morning, meet your guide for transfer to your central hotel. The rest of the day will be yours to explore 'the world's most livable city' under your own steam. We would highly recommend a visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens which occupy 38 hectares in the heart of the city and represent over 8,500 species of native and exotic plants. Enjoy dinner with your guide and group this evening.

## Day 4

## You Yang Ranges



Koalas

We depart Melbourne this morning for the Western volcanic plains where we look for birds and other wildlife in Eucalyptus forests and grassy plains. The You Yangs is home to our world-renowned Koala research and conservation project. After many years studying the koalas here your guide will know most individuals and their life histories. We hope to find a couple of these shy marsupials and some of all occur in the national park, along with an abundance of forest birds, including Crimson and Eastern Rosella, Musk and Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Long-billed Corella, Scarlet and Eastern Yellow Robin, Fan-

tailed Cuckoo, Crested Shrike-tit, Rufous and Golden Whistler and Superb Fairy-wren.

After lunch we visit a nearby lake and grassland where we often see Emus and waterbirds including Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Australasian Swamphen, Cape Barren and Magpie Geese, and several different ducks.

Later in the afternoon we travel to the picturesque town of Daylesford in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range, where we stay for a night. After dinner we will have the opportunity to visit the Wombat-Lerderberg National Park for a spotlighting walk and drive. We hope to find Bare-nosed Wombat and Mountain Brushtail Possum and if lucky the vulnerable Greater Glider. Powerful Owl and Tawny Frogmouth are also a possibility.

## Day 5

## Greater Bendigo National Park

Continuing north of the Great Divide we will take time to explore parts of the vast Greater Bendigo National Park including the bird-rich Kamarooka and Whipstick areas. These areas protect large stands of heathland, Grey Box and Mallee eucalyptus woodland and provide a crossover point for northern and southern honeyeaters attracted to the flowering trees. Local water holes attract numerous species including White-fronted, White-eared, Fuscous, Brown-headed, Yellow-tufted, Yellow-plumed, Tawny-crowned and Purple-gaped Honeyeater. Brown Treecreeper are fairly common and we also hope to see Red-capped Robin, Shy Heathwren, Brush Bronzewing and Peaceful Dove.

This afternoon we visit the Bendigo Sewage works with numerous waders attracted to the conservation ponds and red gum woodlands along the Bendigo creek. This is a great area for waterfowl, raptors and forest birds. We stay overnight in a motel close to the centre of the regional city Bendigo. This former gold rush boom town has many Victorian era heritage listed buildings and city parks attract many birds as well as Grey-headed Flying Foxes which are regularly seen flying overhead at night.

## Day 6

## Ouyen via Mount Korong and Lake Tyrrell

This morning we explore the Mt Korong Conservation Reserve. Here, ancient granite hills rise above the surrounding plains providing remarkable scenery. The reserve and surrounding covenanted properties protect important woodland bird habitat that supports raptors including Wedge-tailed Eagle, Peregrine and Brown Falcon as well as White-browed Babbler, Gilbert's Whistler, Rainbow Bee-eater, Southern Whiteface and Diamond firetail. We occasionally see Painted honeyeater, Red-backed Kingfisher and White-backed Swallow. Along with woodland birds the reserve also provides opportunity for seeing kangaroos, wallabies, echidna and special reptiles such as Shingleback Lizard, Marbled Gecko and Jacky Dragon.



White-winged Fairy-wren

After a cafe lunch in a small town, we visit one of Australia's largest salt lakes, Lake Tyrrell. This is a vast salt-crusted shallow depression, intermittently with a thin layer of water (after good rains). This is a great place for a leg stretch and a few photos. The shrublands in the south also provide good habitat for Rufous Fieldwren, Black-faced Woodswallow and White-winged Fairy-wren.

In the late afternoon we arrive at our accommodation in the small Mallee town of Ouyen.

## Day 7

## Private Mallee Reserve and Hattah-Kulkyne NP

We will spend this morning with a local guide on a private property that protects important Malleefowl habitat. The 6,000-acre property contains a mix of established Mallee woodland, newly re-vegetated areas and open areas. Several Malleefowl mounds are present and we hope to see these incredible mound-builders, as well as desert parrots and honeyeaters from carefully placed hides and at waterpoints. Listed as vulnerable, and covering a fraction of their former range, Malleefowl conservation relies on the combined efforts of regional recovery teams, government and private landowners to control predators and protect remaining habitat from fires and land clearing.



Pink Cockatoo

After lunch we continue deeper into the Mallee, visiting Hattah-Kulkyne National Park with its Mallee and Cypress pine woodlands, saltbush scrub and ephemeral lakes system. This 50,000 hectare reserve is famed for its incredible mix of dryland and wetland bird life and other wildlife in an extraordinary environment where both red and yellow sand dunes meet riverine forest beside a large system of natural lakes and wetlands. The semi-permanent lakes here are Ramsar-listed Wetlands of International Importance and sustain large water bird populations in good years as well as many parrots and raptors, including White-bellied Sea-eagle and Little Eagle. Large Red Gum and Black Box trees provide nesting hollows for many parrots and we may see Regent Parrot, Mallee Ringneck, Yellow Rosella, Bluebonnet, Pink Cockatoo and Little Corella. We often hear iconic dry country birds like Pied Butcherbird, Crested Bellbird and Peaceful Dove and the picnic grounds are a great place to look for comical flocks of Apostlebirds.

## Day 8

## Hattah-Kulkyne and Lake Mungo National Park



Western Grey Kangaroo

This morning we return to Hattah-Kulkyne NP to spend time looking for some of the elusive species living in the Mallee-spinifex woodlands in the western part of the reserve. Mallee Eucalyptus with an understory of Spinifex grass is the ideal habitat for the shy Mallee Emu-wren, Striated Grasswren and Chestnut Quail-thrush. We listen out for the characteristic call of the Crested Bellbird and Grey Currawong and also keep an eye out for Western Grey Kangaroo and reptiles such as Lace and Sand Goannas, Shinglebacks and Bearded Dragons.



Mulga Parrot

After a picnic lunch we cross the Murray River at Mildura before continuing to Mungo Lodge. En-route we enter the vast – 2,400 km<sup>2</sup> – Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area (WHA) and walk along an ancient ‘fossilised’ watercourse that gave its name to this gigantic lake system. This is the Willandra Creek that, like the entire system, has been dry for 18,000 years. After checking in at the lodge we enter Lake Mungo National Park and watch the sunset over the dry bed of Lake Mungo, a magical experience. We often have our first sightings of Red Kangaroos and some of the desert parrots, like Mulga Parrot and Mallee Ringneck.

## Day 9 & 10

## Lake Mungo National Park

We have two full days to explore this famous national park, with its rich cultural history and varied ecosystems. Now dry, Lake Mungo has been a living place for Aboriginal people for at least 50,000 years. The dunes beside the lake have eroded to expose the oldest human living site on earth which is the main reason for the creation of the World Heritage Area. Another reason for its World Heritage status is a unique layer of exposed megafauna skeletal remains that tell of a cooler, wetter time in Australia when giant marsupials and Aboriginal people coexisted beside a magnificent freshwater lake system.

We travel through a diverse array of habitats varying from dense mallee woodlands, cypress pine/buloke woodlands, mulga scrub and vast expanses of saltbush. Huge white sand dunes rise high above the dry lake beds and have been eroded in some areas allowing burrowing birds like the White-backed Swallow to build their nests. We take our time to explore the fauna and flora of the different habitats and also to uncover some of the cultural heritage of this important area.

Over these two days we expect to see many Western Grey and Red Kangaroos. Birds we hope to see include Emu, Pink Cockatoo, Mulga Parrot, Blue-winged Parrot, Bluebonnet, Chestnut-crowned Babbler, Splendid, White-winged & Purple-backed Fairywren, Black-faced, Masked & White-browed Woodswallow, White-backed Swallow, Orange Chat, Zebra Finch. If the Eremophila is in flower there is a chance of nomadic species like Pied and Black Honeyeater. Reptiles we may encounter include Sand Monitor, Bearded, Painted & Mallee Dragon, Shingleback and Bynoe’s Gecko. We sometimes hear the Owlet-nightjar around the lodge grounds at night.



Red Kangaroos

To begin this journey we walk to a lookout over the dry lakebed of Lake Mungo near sunset. Here we will learn how the Willandra Lakes System dried out over thousands of years as the climate warmed

## Day 11 Mildura to Melbourne

After an optional early morning birding walk we will enjoy our final breakfast before making our way back to Wentworth. We visit the confluence of the iconic Murray and Darling rivers. Over the water and along the banks we keep an eye out for Caspian Tern, Australasian Darter, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Whistling Kite, Yellow (Crimson) Rosella and Blue-faced Honeyeater. The journey will end at around midday we will return to Mildura for our onward flight to Melbourne and London



White-bellied Sea-eagle

## Day 12

## Arrive London

### *Optional Pre-tour Extension – East Gippsland*

## Day 1

## Fly London to Melbourne

Fly from London Heathrow to Melbourne today, we usually use Emirates, Qantas or Singapore Airlines, however alternative flights may be available if required. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

## Day 2

## In Flight

## Day 3

## Arrive Melbourne

On arrival in Melbourne this morning, transfer to your central hotel. The rest of the day will be yours to explore 'the world's most livable city' under your own steam. We would highly recommend a visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens which occupy 38 hectares in the heart of the city and represent over 8,500 species of native and exotic plants.

## Day 4

## Far East Gippsland

Meet your guide and small group this morning to travel past internationally acclaimed RAMSAR wetlands of the Lakes District of East Gippsland, then transfer by ferry to an island sanctuary, with a thriving colony of wild Koalas. Whilst spotting for Koalas there should also be Echidnas, Wallabies, Kangaroos and a variety of parrots, honeyeaters and seabirds to look out for.

## Day 5

## Far East Gippsland

After a relaxing breakfast, travel into the rugged mountain forests of East Gippsland. Today we will visit both dry and wet mountain forests, visit the famous Snowy River, and walk beside a wilderness creek where the landscape changes dramatically from the sunny, dry slopes to the near-rainforest of the gully. We may see Gippsland Water Dragon, Cunningham Skink, Swamp Wallaby, Echidna, Koala, and a good variety of bird species such as Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, King Parrot, White-throated Treecreeper, Red-browed Finch, Rufous Fantail, Eastern Yellow Robin, Scarlet Robin, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Olive-backed Oriole, Wonga Pigeon, Superb Lyrebird, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Australian Wood Duck. Your Wildlife Guide will provide detailed information of the formation of these mighty forests, and help you search for lyrebirds, parrots, goannas, wallabies and honeyeaters. Birds and reptiles are abundant, but other human visitors are few.

## Day 6

## Secluded River Estuaries on the Wilderness Coast



Eastern Grey Kangaroo

First walk into a large lowland (warm temperate) rainforest in search of birds and wallabies. Then walk through a heathland and along a forest-lined river to its estuary in Australia's Coastal Wilderness. We hope to see White-bellied Sea Eagle, Black Cormorant, Silver Gull, Pacific Gull, Little Tern, Sooty & Pied Oystercatchers, Black Swan, Azure Kingfisher, Buff-banded Rail, White-faced Heron, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Tawny-crowned, Lewin's, White-eared, New Holland & Crescent

Honeyeaters and Silvereye. Visit a quiet beach with a complex dune system for beach and ocean-going birds. After lunch take a walk on the nearby rocky headland, peering into rock pools, walking past wind-sculpted coastal shrubs looking at the expanse of the 90 mile beach. Spend a little time on a beautiful beach removing old fishing nets which wash up from the sea and sometimes back out, where they trap and kill sea creatures. Our dinner tonight is a picnic in the bush overlooking the beach (weather permitting). On our way back to Orbost we will search the plains for wallabies, kangaroos and s, including Swamp Wallaby, Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Common Wombat.

## Day 7

## Snowy River to Melbourne

This morning depart East Gippsland after one last visit to the beach at the Mouth of the Snowy River, looking for Little and Fairy Terns, Australasian Gannet (out at sea), Great Egret, Black-fronted Dotterel and Pacific Gull. On the way back to Melbourne visit the Krowathunkoolong Keeping Place, an informative Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Bairnsdale. We also search for Grey-headed Flying-foxes in their daytime roosts beside the river at Bairnsdale. A large colony set up there in 2013 now provides great viewing opportunities. (They may move on at any time though). We continue on to Melbourne for a final night before meeting our group the following day.

## Day 8

Meet your group in Melbourne this morning (*Join Day 3 of standard group tour*)

**East Gippsland Extension cost (valid for October 2023 tour only): £ 2,295 per person based on two people sharing**

**Single room supplement for East Gippsland extension (valid for October 2023 only): £ 350**

## *Optional Pre-tour Extension – Sydney and the Blue Mountains*

*Please note that this extension can also be taken prior to the East Gippsland extension to make this a 19-day holiday.*

## Day 1

## Fly London to Sydney

Fly from London Heathrow to Sydney today, we usually use Emirates, Qantas or Singapore Airlines, however alternative flights may be available if required. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

## Day 2

## In Flight

## Day 3

## Arrive Sydney

On arrival this morning you will have time to relax and have lunch before visiting the Royal Botanic Gardens with your guide this afternoon for a first glimpse of some of Australia's varied and colourful bird species. An oasis of 30 hectares in the heart of the city, it is ideally located near the water, with some of the most spectacular views in the city overlooking all of Sydney's famous icons. Originally established around 1816, as a buffer zone between the Governor's residence and the penal colony, it now holds an outstanding collection of plants from around the world, which in turn attract a significant number and variety of birds. You will have ample opportunity to begin to familiarise yourself with some Australian birds which have adapted well to life in the big city. Common birds will include Australian White Ibis, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorant, Dusky Moorhen, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Wood Duck and the widespread Silver Gull.

In the trees and on the lawns are Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Noisy Miner, the introduced Common Myna, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Laughing Kookaburra, Welcome Swallow, and if you are lucky, Superb Fairy-wren and Buff-banded Rail. After this preliminary wildlife introduction, you take a scenic journey back to your hotel via the attractive views of the harbour and the world famous Bondi Beach. Dinner is not included this evening as there are a number of excellent



nearby restaurants for you to sample depending on your preferences.

## Day 4

## Blue Mountains

This morning you may explore the breath-taking Blue Mountains, with its stunning scenery and extensive areas of "bush", creating a wide diversity of habitats within the National Park including heath, rainforest, eucalypt woodlands and open forest. Structurally, the Blue Mountains are part of the greater Sydney Basin, which consists of layers of sedimentary rocks laid down over the past 300 million years. The Blue Mountains and Great Dividing Range were formed about 50 million years when the area was uplifted. More recently, volcanic flows covered large areas of the mountains in basalt. These have largely worn away, leaving only occasional outcrops on the high peaks.

In the eucalypt forest, we will look for Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet and the elusive Southern Emu-wren. Whilst exploring the rainforest we will search for Satin Bowerbird, Superb Lyrebird, Eastern Whipbird and Catbird. Hopefully, we may locate some of the particularly attractive species such as Beautiful Firetail, Rock Warbler and Flame Robin. Rainforest habitat also offers a chance to find the lovely Rose Robin, Russet-tailed Thrush, Red-browed Treecreeper and Satin Bowerbird.



Laughing Kookaburras

These fascinating birds are well known for the courting behaviour of males, who perform their own songs and display, perfectly mimicking other forest birds' songs, as well as any other noise it may hear!

In the open forests, banksias and grevilleas line the understorey of the Blue Mountains' open forests. The flowers attract the honeyeaters, silvereyes and Eastern Spinebills. Other birds of the open forest include Laughing Kookaburras, Crimson Rosellas, Grey and Pied Currawongs, Scarlet Robins, Scrub Wrens, Tree Creepers, Spotted Quail-thrushes and Striated Thornbills.

Distinctive birds of the closed forest include the King Parrot, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, White-naped Honeyeater, Wonga Pigeon, Brown and Striated Thornbill, Satin Flycatcher, Eastern Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, White-browed Scrub Wren and Golden Whistler. Many birds rely on the forests and woodlands of the Blue Mountains not just for food, but also for shelter. Eastern Rosellas, Crimson Rosellas, Galahs and Cockatoos all need tree hollows to nest in. In similar habitat there are smaller birds like Thornbills, Scrub Wrens, Rufous Whistlers and Spotted Pardalotes.

Woodlands have plenty of grassy clearings, which suit the larger marsupials, including Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Common Wombats, Red-necked Wallabies, Wallaroos and Swamp Wallabies. Other species occurring within the park include Koala, echidnas, Brush-tailed and Common Ringtail Possums, Bandicoots, Spotted-tailed Quolls and Grey-headed Flying Foxes.

## Day 5

## Sydney to Melbourne

Return to the airport this morning for your flight to Melbourne, and meet up with your group this afternoon (*Join day 3 of standard group tour*).

**Sydney and Blue Mountains Extension cost (valid for October 2023 tour only): £ 985 per person based on two people sharing**

**Single room supplement for Sydney and Blue Mountains extension (valid for October 2023 only): £ 350**

### *Optional Pre-tour Extension – The Great Ocean Road*

## Day 1

## Fly London to Melbourne

Fly from London Heathrow to Melbourne today, we usually use Emirates, Qantas or Singapore Airlines, however alternative flights may be available if required. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

## Day 2

## In Flight

## Day 3

## Arrive Melbourne

On arrival in Melbourne this morning, transfer to your central hotel. The rest of the day will be yours to explore 'the world's most livable city' under your own steam. We would highly recommend a visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens which occupy 38 hectares in the heart of the city and represent over 8,500 species of native and exotic plants.

## Day 4

## The Great Ocean Road

Meet your guide and small group this morning to see some of the world's most spectacular coastal scenery. We follow the Great Ocean Road to the surging surf coast, and walk in the magnificent rainforests of the Otway National Park. Here we will look for Pied Currawong, Gang Gang Cockatoo, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Satin Bowerbird, a number of Honeyeaters, Golden Whistler, Scarlet Robin, Grey Fantail, Musk Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet and Crimson Rosella. Your guide will explain the formation of these mighty forests.

Travel through Port Campbell National Park, looking out for echidnas, wallabies, lizards and colourful birds which make their home in the coastal heathlands. There will be an opportunity to linger a while to take in some of nature's handiwork at the Twelve Apostles and the Loch Ard Gorge, and hear stories about the terrible shipwrecks of the past. The main clifftop viewing areas offer opportunities to spot Australasian Gannet, Wandering Albatross, Nankeen Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. And in the Loch Ard Gorge car park, the endangered Rufous Bristlebird sometimes makes an appearance. In the coastal heath you may see Singing Honeyeater, Southern Emu Wren and Superb Fairy-wren.



The Twelve Apostles

## Day 5

## The Great Ocean Road

This morning we will enjoy one last look at the coast, in the dramatic morning light, before returning to Melbourne across the vast grasslands of the Western Plains. Created by intense volcanic activity over the past 2 million years, the 7000 volcanoes of the Western Plains are now extinct, but the resultant savannah is pasture to a rich wool growing area. We stop en-route to drive to the top of an extinct volcano, with spectacular views across the plains. From the summit we see some of the hundreds of volcanic lakes scattered across the plains. Later we pass Lake Corrangamite, the largest permanent lake in Australia, often covered with prolific birdlife.

We continue on to Melbourne Airport arriving in the late afternoon when we will meet up with the rest of our group to join Day 3 of the standard group tour.

**Great Ocean Road Extension cost: Available upon request**

## Tour grading

This is a birdwatching and wildlife tour that covers the very best of Southern Australia's fine selection of habitats producing a diverse range of habitats and a high number of the bird species occurring in the country. As you will be traveling across three states of Australia, equivalent to the distance of several European countries, there will inevitably be some long drives. However, we will be driving mainly on good, metalled roads with plenty to view on our drives. Equally, however, there will be ample opportunities for walking through the great variety of habitats, at a gentle pace, allowing the relaxed pace and itinerary of this tour suitable for most ages and levels of fitness.

## Weather

The month of October, is spring in southern Australia, so the weather should be generally sunny and pleasant, although the occasional showery, windy day is possible, it will generally be quite cooler at nights. Southern Victoria will be cooler than the others areas we visit, with daytime temperatures ranging from 18 to 22°C, but

warmer by a few degrees in New South Wales and South Australia. Nighttime will be cooler inland than the coast, with temperatures generally around 8°C.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.