

Australia's Mammals

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 – 2	Outbound flights
Day 3	Arrive Cairns & Atherton Tablelands
Day 4 – 5	Atherton Tablelands
Day 6	Mareeba
Day 7	Etty Bay - Cairns - Lamington NP
Day 8 – 9	Lamington NP
Day 10	Hobart, Tasmania
Day 11	Bruny Island
Day 12 – 13	Central Plateau
Day 14	Cradle Mountain
Day 15 – 16	Inbound flights

Departs

October

Focus

Mammals

Grading

Grade B

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code AUS09)

Highlights

- Incredible monotremes including Platypus and Short-beaked Echidna
- Tasmanian Devil and Koala
- Many gliders and possums after dark
- Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo, bandicoots, wallabies, kangaroos and wombats
- A rich variety of Australian birdlife



Platypus, Koala, Tasmanian Devil



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Introduction

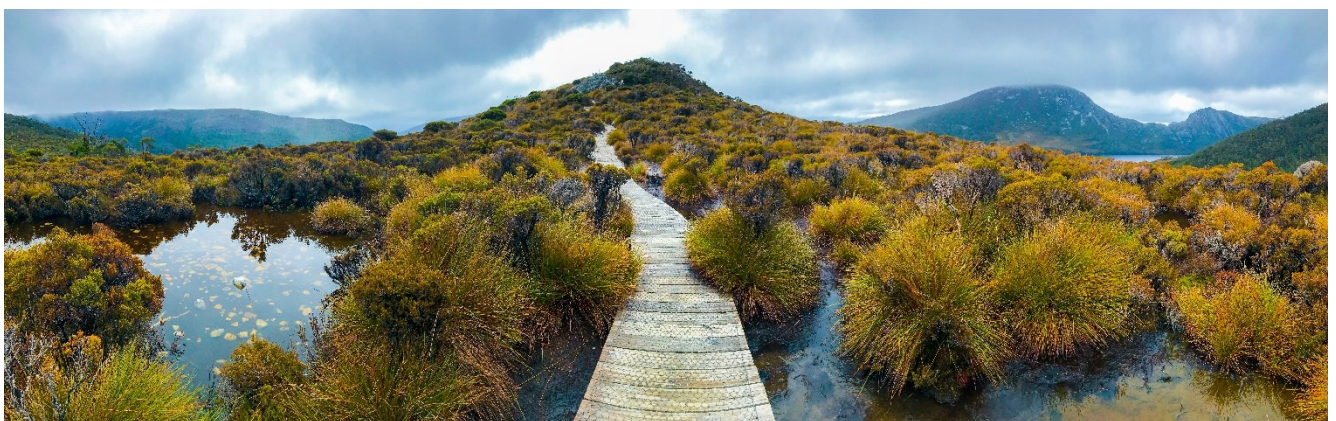
Australia's distinctive wildlife is inseparable from its remarkable geological and ecological history. Separated from the ancient supercontinent Gondwana around 50 million years ago, Australia drifted in isolation through the southern oceans, allowing its ecosystems to evolve in extraordinary ways. Today, it stands as a living laboratory of evolutionary marvels, where ancient species thrive in landscapes both harsh and beautiful. The continent's geology is among the oldest on Earth, dominated by vast, ancient rock formations and low-lying mountain ranges that have been worn down over millions of years. The arid interior, known as the Outback, is a vast expanse of desert, scrub and dry grasslands, punctuated by rugged ranges and weathered gorges. In contrast, Australia's coasts and uplands host lush forests, wetlands and heathlands, nurtured by more temperate climates.

This diversity of habitats has given rise to one of the world's most unusual mammal faunas. Marsupials dominate, filling ecological niches that elsewhere are occupied by placental mammals. Kangaroos, wallabies and their relatives range from tropical rainforests to dry woodlands and open plains, each species superbly adapted to its environment. Tree-dwelling marsupials, such as gliders and possums, thrive in forested regions, while iconic species like the Koala rely on specialised diets, feeding almost exclusively on eucalyptus leaves.

Perhaps nowhere is Australia's evolutionary uniqueness better illustrated than in its monotremes—the egg-laying mammals. The Platypus, with its duck-like bill and webbed feet, inhabits cool, clear streams, while the Short-beaked Echidna roams a variety of habitats, from forests to arid plains.

Carnivorous marsupials, including quolls and the Tasmanian Devil, add further intrigue, while other unusual mammals such as the Wombat, nature's stout, burrowing herbivore are uniquely Australian. The continent's mammal diversity is complemented by a dazzling array of reptiles, amphibians, and birds.

Australia's fragile ecosystems, shaped by fire, climate extremes, and millennia of isolation, make it a truly special destination for wildlife enthusiasts, where each day reveals species and landscapes found nowhere else on Earth.



Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and 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.

Days 1 – 2

Fly London - Cairns

For those taking the group flights, this evening we depart London bound for Cairns.

Day 3

Cairns to Atherton Tablelands

After arriving in Cairns, we meet our expert naturalist guide and travel inland to the Atherton Tablelands. Our base for the next four nights is Chambers Wildlife Lodge, an idyllic eco-lodge set within the heart of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Surrounded by lush rainforest, the lodge offers excellent wildlife-viewing opportunities right from our doorstep. After settling in, we have time to relax and acclimatise following our journey. This evening, we may join an introductory spotlighting walk within the lodge grounds, where we might encounter Krefft's Glider, Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot, Fawn-footed Melomys, and the striking Striped Possum.

The lodge's purpose-built nocturnal viewing area offers an excellent chance to observe wildlife under gentle lighting.

Days 4 & 5

Atherton Tablelands

Over the next two days, we explore a variety of habitats across the Atherton Tablelands, adjusting our plans to make the most of recent wildlife sightings and weather conditions.

Key targets include the charismatic Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo, a unique arboreal macropod with powerful



Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo

limbs and exceptional climbing ability. We will also search for the diminutive Musky Rat-kangaroo, the most primitive of all macropods, often seen foraging among the forest leaf litter.

Platypus sightings are possible in the clear streams around Yungaburra, while Red-legged Pademelons are frequently encountered in the forest understorey.

The birdlife here is spectacular, with highlights including Victoria's Riflebird, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, Wompoo Fruit Dove, and Australian Brushturkey.

Night-time excursions offer the chance to see a wonderful variety of nocturnal mammals including Lemuroid, Herbert River and Green Ringtail Possums, Coppery Brushtail Possum, and gliders such as Yellow-bellied and Greater Gliders.

The area is also renowned for reptiles and frogs, with possible sightings of Boyd's Forest Dragon and Northern Leaf-tailed Gecko.

Day 6

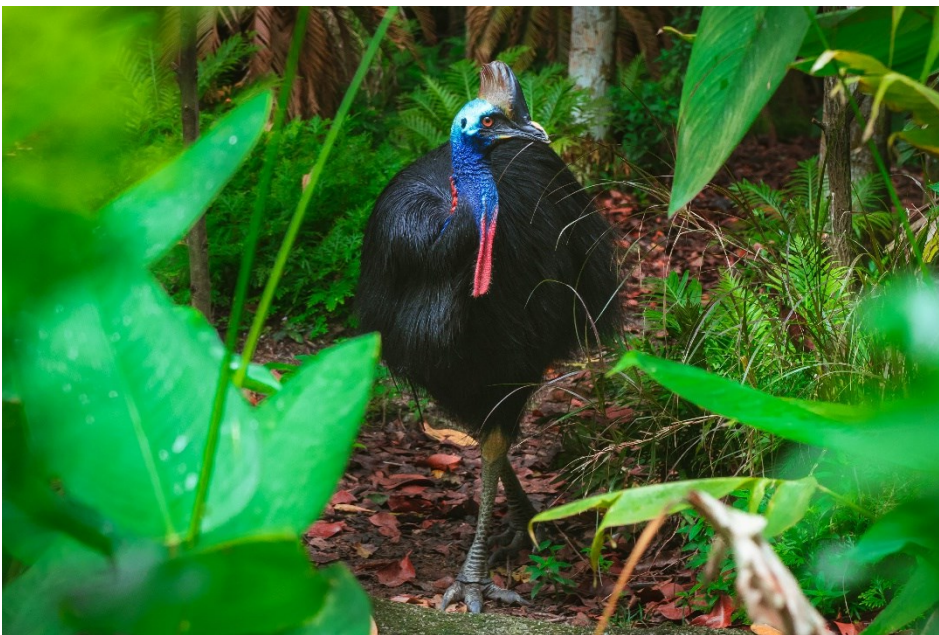
Mareeba

Today we venture west to Mareeba, where the drier savannah landscape hosts species distinct from the rainforest. Our first stop is Granite Gorge, home to the endemic Mareeba Rock Wallaby. These charismatic wallabies have become accustomed to human visitors, offering close views and photographic opportunities. We then explore the Mareeba Wetlands, a haven for birdlife including Brolga, Magpie Geese, and jacanas.

As dusk falls, we enjoy dinner, followed by spotlighting through the surrounding savannah and open woodland. We search for Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Whiptail Wallaby, Agile Wallaby, Rufous Bettong, and possibly Northern Quoll, with their spotted coats and inquisitive behaviour. The diversity of this region, coupled with its open landscapes, makes it an excellent place for observing both large and small mammals.

Day 7

Etty Bay & Transfer to Lamington National Park



Southern Cassowary

We make an early start today, heading south to Etty Bay in search of Southern Cassowary, Australia's largest and most iconic bird species. With their vivid blue skin, helmet-like casque, and powerful legs, cassowaries are a truly prehistoric sight. Although elusive, this area offers one of the best chances to see them foraging for fallen fruits in the coastal rainforest. After soaking up the unique wildlife and scenery of Etty Bay, we return to Cairns for

our flight to Brisbane. From there, we travel westward into the hills of Lamington National Park, arriving at the welcoming O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. Nestled at 1,000m amid subtropical rainforest, this historic lodge

will be our home for the next three nights. The views en route are superb, with changing landscapes from cityscape to mountain rainforest.

Days 8 & 9



Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Lamington National Park

Over the next two days, we explore Lamington National Park's rich mosaic of rainforest and eucalypt woodland. The area around O'Reilly's is renowned for its diversity of mammals and offers some of the best mammal-watching opportunities in Australia. Daytime sightings may include Short-beaked Echidnas, Red-necked Pademelons, Whiptail Wallabies, and Eastern Grey Kangaroos, while the lodge's gardens and nearby trails attract an array of birdlife including the vibrant Regent and Satin Bowerbirds, Noisy Pittas, King Parrots, and the elusive Albert's Lyrebird. During night walks, we search for

Sugar Gliders, Squirrel Gliders, Greater Gliders, and a variety of possum species including Mountain Brushtail, Common Ringtail, and Short-eared Brushtail Possums. Platypus are sometimes seen from the lodge hide, adding another mammal highlight to our stay.

Day 10

Transfer to Tasmania

Today we leave Queensland behind and fly south to Hobart, the charming capital of Tasmania. Upon arrival, we explore Kunanyi / Mount Wellington, a towering peak overlooking the city. This area provides excellent birdwatching, with endemic species such as Yellow Wattlebird and Black Currawong present, alongside spectacular vistas of the surrounding landscapes. Later, we enjoy an evening spotlighting excursion in the nearby Waterworks Reserve, where we hope to encounter Tasmanian Pademelons, Bennett's Wallabies, and Eastern Barred Bandicoots, alongside Common Brushtail and Ringtail Possums. If we are fortunate, we may even spot the rare Tasmanian Betong.

Day 11

Bruny Island

We take a morning ferry to Bruny Island, a wildlife haven off Tasmania's southeastern coast. Here we embark on a thrilling boat cruise in search of migrating Humpback and Southern Right Whales, as well as playful dolphins and Australian Fur Seals.

Seabird enthusiasts can look forward to albatrosses, shearwaters, and petrels soaring overhead.

Back on land, we visit Adventure Bay in search of the rare albino Bennett's Wallabies, before spending the evening spotlighting for Eastern Quolls and the elusive Long-nosed Potoroo.

Bruny Island is also known for occasional sightings of the 'golden' morph of the Common Brushtail Possum, adding further excitement to our night-time excursion.



Southern Right Whale

Day 12 Central Plateau Conservation Area

After breakfast, we return to the mainland and journey north through Tasmania's Central Highlands to the remote Central Plateau Conservation Area, known as the "Land of a Thousand Lakes". Our accommodation, the Thousand Lakes Lodge, is perched amidst this wild and rugged landscape of glacial tarns, subalpine heath, and moorlands.

This afternoon, we settle into the lodge and, weather permitting, head out at dusk to search for Tasmania's iconic carnivores, the Tasmanian Devil and Spot-tailed Quoll. With its remote location and clear night skies, the plateau also offers superb stargazing opportunities, and we may even catch a glimpse of the Southern Lights.

Day 13 Central Plateau Conservation Area

Today we spend the full day exploring this spectacular wilderness. Bare-nosed Wombats are often seen grazing during the day, along with thick-furred Bennett's Wallabies, Tasmanian Pademelons, and occasionally Short-beaked Echidnas. Raptors such as the Wedge-tailed Eagle and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos are frequently spotted overhead. The heathlands and rocky slopes provide habitat for reptiles, including skinks and Mountain Dragons, while the solitude of this region offers a rare sense of immersion in Tasmania's natural heritage. After dinner, we embark on another night-time spotlighting excursion in search of Tasmanian Devils and other elusive nocturnal mammals.

Day 14

Cradle Mountain

We depart the Central Plateau and head towards Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, with a stop at the Tasmanian Arboretum en route. Here we have a superb opportunity to see Platypus in the wild, along



Short-beaked Echidna

with endemic birds such as the Green Rosella. Continuing to Cradle Mountain, we arrive at our accommodation set within one of Tasmania's most celebrated national parks. Cradle Mountain is a haven for wildlife, with excellent chances of seeing Common Wombats, Short-beaked Echidnas, Bennett's Wallabies, and Tasmanian Pademelons during our stay. In the evening, we visit the Devils@Cradle sanctuary to learn about Tasmanian Devil conservation and observe these remarkable animals up close.

Days 15 – 16

Inbound flights from Devonport

On our final morning, we may enjoy a leisurely walk or some last wildlife encounters amidst the stunning scenery of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Following breakfast, we transfer to Devonport for our onward flights, bringing this unforgettable journey through Australia's diverse mammal habitats to a close.

Optional Pre-tour Extension

Extension Day 1

Arrive Cairns

On Upon arrival in Cairns, you'll be met for transfer where the remainder of the day is free for you to relax and recover from your flights.

Cairns, sandwiched between the lush rainforests of the Wet Tropics and the glimmering waters of the Coral Sea, is the gateway to one of Australia's finest wildlife destinations.

The area's history dates back tens of thousands of years, with the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people among the Indigenous groups maintaining a profound connection to the land and sea. Although Captain James Cook charted the coastline in 1770, European settlement didn't gain momentum until the late 19th century, when gold was discovered near the Palmer River. Cairns was established as a port in 1876 to support the booming

mining industry, later expanding into a centre for agriculture, especially sugarcane, which remains vital to the local economy.

Those eager to explore on their first day might take a leisurely stroll along the Esplanade, where mangrove-fringed shores and tidal flats draw pelicans, cormorants, egrets, spoonbills, ibises, waders, terns, and other waterbirds in impressive numbers. A visit to the Botanical Gardens offers a chance to get to grips with the native tropical flora, while a glance skyward during the early evening is likely to reveal a spectacular sight, as Spectacled Flying Foxes emerge en masse to feast on fruiting trees.

Extension Day 2

Frankland Islands Cruise

Today we'll be collected by coach, heading south from Cairns through stunning UNESCO World Heritage-listed rainforest and vast sugar cane fields. We'll pass Walsh's Pyramid, the tallest natural freestanding pyramid in the world, before arriving at Deeral, just 45 minutes from Cairns.

From Deeral, we'll board the Turtle Islander vessel for a peaceful 30-minute cruise along the Mulgrave River, surrounded by lush rainforest and mangroves teeming with birdlife. This is also the realm of Australia's most formidable predator – the Saltwater Crocodile. The boat then ventures on to Normanby Island, just 10km offshore, where the day will be spent snorkelling amongst a remarkable variety of corals and marine life, including an abundance of colourful fish, sea turtles, and octopus. A guided snorkelling tour offers the opportunity to explore and interact with the reef under the expert guidance of marine naturalists, with all equipment provided and tuition available to ensure you are comfortable using your mask, fins, and snorkel. For those who prefer to remain on dry land, the guided 'Island Discovery Walk' is a must. Join the naturalists for an informative and fascinating exploration of the island's coral cay forest, sandy beaches, and the reef's nursery – the rock pools – where you might spot Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Sacred Kingfishers, Eastern



Frankland Islands

Ospreys and the Beach Stone-curlew. A coral viewing tour from a semi-submersible or glass-bottom boat is also available, and as an optional extra, there is the chance to explore the Great Barrier Reef with a certified or introductory dive on Normanby Reef.

After a tropical buffet lunch on the island, we will depart in the afternoon and enjoy tea and cake on board before returning to our hotel this evening, where we can relax for a few hours before dinner.

Extension Day 3

Daintree Excursion

This morning is yours to enjoy at your leisure - perhaps taking a stroll along the Esplanade to watch the local birdlife.

By mid-afternoon, your Australian naturalist guide will arrive to escort you north along the Great Barrier Reef Drive, widely regarded as the most scenic coastal highway in the region. We'll be heading for the Daintree Tropical Rainforest - one of the oldest rainforest ecosystems in the world.

Our first port of call is the Daintree River, where we'll board a solar-powered boat. This eco-friendly cruise allows us to venture quietly into the habitat, free from the noise and emissions of a standard vessel, as we look out for crocodiles, birds, snakes, and other wildlife. Afternoon tea is provided before we set off.

From here, it's on to Cape Tribulation, a World Heritage area featuring pristine beaches set against the backdrop of rainforest-clad mountains. We'll spend an hour or so exploring this dramatic coastline - where the rainforest truly meets the reef - followed by a delicious dinner in the heart of the jungle.

While the Daintree is home to one of Australia's rarest mammals - the Bennett's Tree Kangaroo - sightings of these near-mythical creatures are exceedingly rare. We're more likely to encounter such species as Northern Brown Bandicoot, White-tailed Giant Rat, or the striking Striped Possum during our evening exploration. We'll hope to cross paths with the more approachable Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo later in the trip.

We'll return to Cairns late this evening, ready for the main tour to commence tomorrow.

Extra expenses

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday, starting with dinner on Day 3 and ending with breakfast on Day 15., with the exception only of lunch on our travel Day 10. Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday:

- Entry visa – this can be purchased online in advance
- All items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, souvenirs
- Tips

Tour grading

This is a mammal tour that covers the very best of the Queensland's and Tasmania's fine selection of habitats. There will inevitably be some long drives during the tour, but they will mainly be on good, metalled roads with plenty to view. 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 to be suitable for most ages and levels of fitness.

Tour focus

This tour focuses on the best of Australia's mammals. Other wildlife of interest, including birds, will, of course, be enjoyed, but mammals will remain the strong focus. Landscapes will be rich and varied and photographic opportunities will be plentiful.

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, 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.

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