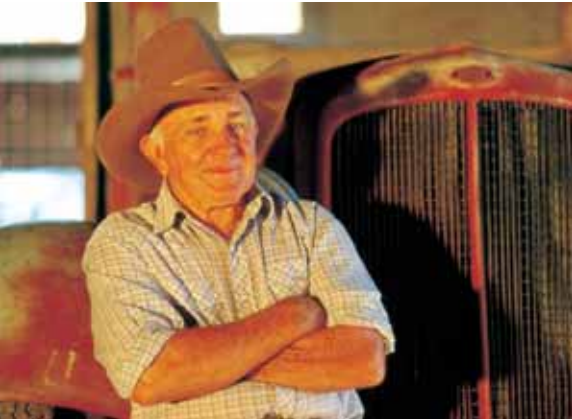


REAL AUSTRALIA



Resisting the urge to use the phrases G'day or Downunder, Audley's Australia team introduce our new programme to the continent and pick out a few of the highlights.

FACT FILE

There are countless ways to discover Australia and we can tailor an itinerary to suit your interests and budget. Patrick, Lyndsey, Michael and Nikki, our Australia specialists, would be delighted to discuss your plans and can also tell you about the many options as well as discuss the flight choices. Please feel free to call them on 01869 276 345.



With the new Australia brochure about to be printed, we reflected on how we came to be at this point. “Why bother, when there are so many travel companies offering Australia already?”, we asked ourselves. The answer was simple really: we recognised that travellers wanted to get ‘under the skin’ of the country, gain insights into the history and culture, meet the locals, experience little-known beautiful places and the more well-known ones from a different angle, while staying in places with character; altogether a more genuine experience.

Our team of Australia specialists have all returned from month long research trips. Despite having all visited the destination before; we asked them to investigate some of the less known destinations, as well as the popular ones, with the brief to discover the real Australia. Their universal response was “wow!”. With accommodation choices varying from charming rustic homesteads, heritage B&Bs and remote outback stations to grand hotels with cityscape views, and luxurious island retreats. Travelling is so much more than just where you stay, however, and Australia has an embarrassment of fascinating experiences whatever your interests.

Travelling through this vast, diverse country can be daunting, yet you can still preserve your independence by self-driving, rather than taking an organised tour. We asked our specialists to drive themselves, as well as taking organised tours, this way they can best advise you on the journeys where you can ‘go it alone’ or those where your experience will be enhanced by taking a guided tour. We use a number of tour companies in specific regions with the emphasis on local operators who specialise in small groups guided by local people. A fine example of this is the use of the sailing catamaran, ‘Synergy’ to visit the Great Barrier Reef. With a maximum of 12 guests, rather than the usual several hundred found on many other boats, this trip offers a truly individual and memorable day out.

Indigenous culture

Some of the best destinations cannot be reached on just a day trip from the main centres without compromising the experience, some often warrant a few days. An area that springs to mind is the Aboriginal owned Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, with its wild coastlines, monsoon rainforests and soaring escarpments. Home to one of Australia’s most powerful cultural sites at Mount Borradaile, it is here that thousands of rock paintings chronicle Aboriginal Dreamtime beliefs. Specialist Patrick Chase joined the ebullient Sab Lord of Lord’s Safaris on a 4WD trip, where he camped (in comfort) by thriving billabongs, visited fascinating culturally significant sites and had ancient rock art interpreted by an Aboriginal guide. Sab Lord grew up amongst the local Aboriginal peoples and is able to regale guests with myriad stories while providing unique unparalleled access to native culture and sensitive sites restricted to those entrusted by the Aboriginal landowners.

Character accommodation

We feel accommodation should be far more than a place to rest your head and the vast outback stations particularly epitomise just what it is to live in rugged Australia. Located in some of the country’s most remote and beautiful places, these stations offer fantastic experiences from spotting the prolific wildlife, gathering cattle with the station owners to exploring rock art sites and taking bush walks with an Aboriginal guide. Some of these stations are within striking distance of the main centres. Tyreconnell for example is an old gold mine only two and a half hours west of Cairns which now offers cottage accommodation amongst the termite mounds and rust red scenery. Others, such as Bullo River Station in the Northern Territory and Angorichina Station in South Australia’s magnificent Flinders Ranges, are best reached by hopping in a light aircraft.



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1 Traditional Aboriginal body painting

2 Angorichina Station

3 Wilpena Pound, Flinders Ranges

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Unique wildlife

Australia is an absolute heaven for wildlife enthusiasts, particularly as many of the occasionally quirky species are unique to the country. Seeing a kangaroo larger than yourself suddenly stand up just a few metres away, disturbed from his sunbathing, or swimming with sealion pups and whale watching in South Australia's Baird Bay are inspiring experiences. Wombats, echidnas, wallabies and koalas can all be seen in abundance in havens such as the wonderful Cradle Mountain and Maria Island National Parks in Tasmania. On Maria Island an enchanting three day trek brings numerous animal sightings combined with fine local food and wine each evening.

The flat barren plains and rocky undulating hills of the Flinders Ranges stretch from Crystal Brook, just north of the Clare Valley, far into South Australia's Outback, an area renowned for wildflowers, wildlife and walking trails. Here, Angorichina Station offers a tantalising taste of outback life on a working sheep station, one of the earliest pastoral properties to be established in Australia. Set amongst sandstone mountain ranges hundreds of miles from their nearest neighbour, your hosts here are Ian and Di Farger, fourth-generation owners with a wealth of local knowledge colourfully expressed in countless spellbinding anecdotes that accompany tours of the vast property and Di's delicious meals. For a quieter insight Arthur Coulthard, a charismatic member of the local Adnyamathanha people, can take you through an interpretive journey of the surrounding bush. The variety of your stay on an outback station is something that will not only provide you with warm memories, but also hopefully provide you with a few tales as rich as those regaled to you by your hosts.

The undisputed jewel in Australia's wildlife crown, however, is Kangaroo Island. With a coastline of towering cliffs, rocks named 'Remarkable', sheltered beaches and vast tracts of dense bush and forest covering the red interior, it is clear why the island is considered to be Australia's finest natural reserve. At the western end of the island, Flinders Chase National Park preserves some of the finest areas of scrub and tall forest, with a resident population of koalas, echidnas, possums, and platypus which, if you are lucky and patient, can be seen in abundance. A favourite of ours is the lovely Ravine des Casoars walking trail on the remote Cape du Couedic. After passing the lighthouse, the trail leads down to the naturally formed 'Admirals Arch' to watch New Zealand seals nurse their pups. Although day visits to Kangaroo Island from Adelaide are popular, the majority of birds and animals feed at dawn and dusk so staying overnight in a well chosen guesthouse, hosted by local people, is highly recommended.

Escaping the mass tourism trail is an exciting experience in Australia. Of course, you still want to see Sydney, Ayers Rock and the Great Barrier Reef, but the way you see them can entirely enhance your trip. Whether your favourite memory comes from staying in characterful guesthouses and getting to know the owners, visiting the places that only the locals know about or viewing the fascinating array of indigenous wildlife, we are sure that you will agree, Australia has so much more to offer than you ever imagined.



- 1 The Melbourne Lanes
- 2 Emus, Flinders Ranges
- 3 Sublime scenery in Tasmania
- 4 Swimming with sealions



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