

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GOLDFIELDS TRACK

On the Trail of a Golden History

The Goldfields Track offers some of the most stunning hiking trails in Central Victoria. Our tour here follows 92 km of the trail's true highlights, starting in the beautiful landscape of the Great Dividing Range north of Castlemaine, and exploring native bushland, deep gorges and fern-lined creeks. We head in a southerly direction, winding through open farmland and ironbark and stringybark forests, to unearth many vestiges of the rich gold rush history for which the area is famous. We visit the mineral springs at Hepburn and follow a spectacular gorge to arrive at the lake in the charming town of Daylesford. We stay in a luxurious 19th century period private house and Mick assumes his role as chef on the first two evenings. Dinner on the final day is at the celebrated 2 Chef's Hats Lake House restaurant in Daylesford, with its beautiful setting overlooking the water.

What's included?

- Two professional guides to look after your every need and bring the area to life
- Six nights' accommodation, 3 nights each in Castlemaine and Hepburn Springs/Daylesford
- Six fully-guided hikes
- Fabulous dinners every evening with excellent local and award-winning wines. Final evening in one of Australia's best restaurants: the iconic Lake House in Daylesford.
- Exceptional picnic lunches and snacks en route
- Entrance to the relaxation and mineral spa pools at Hepburn Springs
- Support vehicle
- Free transfers to and from Melbourne
- Comprehensive pre-trip information

Itinerary

DAY 1

We meet you at 8.45am at the Radisson Hotel on Flagstaff in Melbourne and drive 1hr30mins up the Calder Highway to the start of our hike near Castlemaine. ***Please ensure you are in your hiking gear, as we start hiking as soon as we arrive.***



We set out along the heritage-listed Coliban water channel, a masterpiece of 19th century engineering, and enjoy wonderful views across lush open farmland with plenty of kangaroos for company. We climb steadily to the summit of Mount Alexander, the highest point on our route at 725m above sea level. The views from the summit, strewn with boulders of pink granite, are spectacular. We descend through fabulous bushland of manna gums and yellow box to arrive at our picnic spot. After lunch we climb to a viewpoint known as Ed's Seat before descending into open farmland. We follow an easy

farm track to the end of the hike, and a short drive takes us to Castlemaine. We check into our comfortable accommodation in the centre of town and there is time to settle in before we head out to dinner at a local restaurant. **(12.5km)**

DAY 2



After breakfast we return to the end of yesterday's walk to resume our trail. Wide tracks meander through the forest before climbing up to a ridge. As we get nearer to Castlemaine we start to see evidence of the rich gold rush era that left its mark on the region. We pass water races, disused mines and remnants of housing from this bygone age, when Castlemaine was one of the richest goldfields in the world. We picnic by the Garfield water wheel and, in the afternoon, continue through the Castlemaine Diggings Heritage Park to arrive back in town. Dinner in a local restaurant. **(14.2km)**

DAY 3

In the morning our hike explores more of the extensive gold diggings including once of the most famous mines in the district at Spring Gully. It is hard to imagine how vibrant this area would have been when thousands of hopeful men headed here to find their fortunes in the late 19th century. We picnic in the heritage town of Fryerstown, once home to an amazing 15,000 people! In the afternoon we follow easy trails through native forest to arrive at Vaughan Springs, from where we drive back to Castlemaine for our final evening there. **(19.5km)**



DAY 4



After breakfast we leave Castlemaine and pick up the Goldfield Track once more. We follow gently undulating trails through the bush, passing remnants of the mining industry, including one of the few 1850s alluvial gold diggings not obliterated by later workings – and always keeping an eye out for a gold nugget! After our picnic lunch we continue through the forest before emerging into farmland where our hike ends. We drive to our charming period private house in Hepburn Springs or Daylesford depending on the departure, which is where we stay for the next 3 nights. Dinner is prepared by your private chef,

Mick, showcasing wonderful local produce and served with excellent local wines. **(17.8km)**

DAY 5

After breakfast at our accommodation, we drive to the start of our hike. We follow a quiet dirt road through open farmland before entering the bush. A short climb affords wonderful views of the cone of the region's best-known volcano, Mount Franklin, which was formed half a million years ago. Our path continues to wind through woodland to emerge at Hepburn Springs in time for our picnic lunch. In the afternoon there is the opportunity to relax at the historic Hepburn Bathhouse and Spa which draws mineral-rich waters directly from the natural source. Time to explore the lovely town of Daylesford in the afternoon before another delicious home-cooked dinner. **(9km)**



DAY 6



Our final hike is a picturesque walk which follows a lovely gorge alongside beautiful Sailors Creek. We pass some spectacular features with evocative names such as Breakneck Gorge, The Blowhole and Tipperary Springs. We picnic at tranquil Bryce's Flat by the creek before the final section of this magnificent walk brings us to the shores of Lake Daylesford. Our final dinner is at the celebrated Lake House in Daylesford – a restaurant with 2 Chefs Hats. An icon in regional dining, this has long been considered one of Australia's best restaurants, championing local seasonal cuisine long before it became a mantra for many. **(16.6km)**

DAY 7

Return to Melbourne airport for 11am and Radisson for 11.30am

Hiking information:

Shortest/Longest Day 9km/19.5 km

We walk on well-graded tracks in gently hilly terrain, through forests, open farmland and gorges. The trails are well-graded but rocky in sections so sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are recommended. Walking poles would be an advantage, especially on steeper sections. The support vehicle meets the group each day at lunchtime so, although some days are long, there is the option to walk a half day if preferred.

Weather

Max/Min Temperatures: 20 ° / 6 ° Average rainfall for October: 50mm

Be prepared for varied weather conditions and have suitable layers and waterproof clothing. We will send you a full kit list with packing tips before the tour.

Accommodation:

In Castlemaine: The Colonial Motel – Executive & Luxury Heritage Rooms and a great central location

In Hepburn Springs/Daylesford: A splendid period private house. (Single guests here may be required to share bathrooms, but not bedrooms, depending on the make-up of the group).

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