



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GRAMPIANS PEAKS TRAIL

### Rocks, Rock Art and Award-Winning Wineries

This new Level 5 tour explores the rugged mountains of the Grampians National Park and cherry picks some of the best walks of the new long-distance Grampians Peaks Trail. The park is one of Victoria's great natural wonders, known as Gariwerd, and is registered on Australia's National Heritage List for its Aboriginal cultural heritage. The craggy granite and sandstone mountains rise out of the flat Wimmera plains affording outstanding views of central Victoria, and the spectacular rocky ridges are home to some 900 different species of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. We stay three nights in the bustling town of Halls Gap, in the heart of the National Park, followed by three nights in Mount Sturgeon Homestead in Dunkeld at the southern tip of the mountains. Our final evening is at the renowned Wickens Restaurant at the Royal Mail in Dunkeld.

#### 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 Halls Gap and Dunkeld
- Five fully-guided hikes
- Fabulous dinners every evening with excellent local and award-winning wines
- Final evening in one of Victoria's best restaurants: The Royal Mail in Dunkeld
- Exceptional picnic lunches and snacks en route
- Wine tastings
- Support vehicle
- Free transfers to and from Ballarat
- Comprehensive pre-trip information



#### Itinerary

##### DAY 1

We meet at Hotel QUEST Ballarat Station, 11 Nolan Street, Ballarat at 9.30am. There is a good train service from Melbourne or you could self-drive and enjoy a few days exploring this wonderful gold-rush town before or after the tour. If you need to park your car for the duration of the tour there is free street parking and a multistorey car park nearby. Quest Ballarat Station is a 300 metre walk from the train station.



We drive a couple of hours to the Northern Grampians for our first hike. We take an easy walk to see Gulgurn Manja Shelter, an important Aboriginal rock art site. After a picnic lunch there is a short, steep climb up and over rocky boulders taking us to the top of Hollow Mountain, a spectacular introduction to the week ahead. At the end of our hike we drive to Halls Gap to arrive at our accommodation in the late afternoon. Time to settle in before dinner in a local restaurant. **(3.5km)**

## DAY 2

Today we set out on foot from Halls Gap and climb steadily through geological history on the popular, and historic, Wonderland Trail to The Pinnacle lookout. We hike over rocky slabs, climb up ladders and squeeze between massive sandstone rocks to the lookout which thrusts out over the escarpment. After taking in the views, we descend through natural bush to our picnic spot. In the afternoon we climb up a spectacular boulder-strewn trail to the summit of Mt Rosea from where there are stunning vistas of the mountains. We descend through the bush to the end of the hike at Borough Huts. A short drive takes us back to Halls Gap and there is time to relax before dinner in a local restaurant. **(20km)**



## DAY 3



After breakfast a short drive takes us to the start of our hike. We are slightly more off the beaten track than on Day 2 and a rugged climb on a well-graded trail through the bush and over boulders brings us to another Grampians peak, Briggs Bluff, from where we are rewarded with jaw-dropping views over the craggy mountain ranges. We descend back to the valley in the afternoon. Both guides join you on the hike today. There is no vehicle access and we enjoy a picnic on the trail which we hike in for you. At the end of the walk, we return to Halls

Gap and enjoy a hearty dinner in a local restaurant. **(14km)**

## DAY 4

We depart Halls Gap after a leisurely breakfast and head to a historic local winery to visit their underground cellar and enjoy a private tasting followed by a light lunch on the estate. We arrive in the Southern Grampians in the afternoon and check into Mount Sturgeon Homestead, a beautifully restored, historic 1800's colonial house.



The property is set on a working farm and from the verandah and sitting room we can enjoy the sweeping views of Wurgarri (Mount Sturgeon). The Homestead, together with a couple of charming bluestone cottages, is part of the extensive property of the Royal Mail Hotel and our exclusive home for the next three nights. Enjoy an in-house dinner – prepared by Mick and Jackie acting as your private chefs - matched to local wines this evening.

## DAY 5



Today you can choose to curl up with a good book or just relax on the terrace. For the more energetic, we'll head out early and a short drive takes us to the start of our hike which follows another section of the Grampians Peaks Trail. We climb up to Signal Peak before continuing to Mud-dadjug (Mount Abrupt). The track climbs steadily up sandstone steps through a mixed forest of stringybarks, grass trees, banksias and tea-tree before arriving at the ridge leading up to the summit. From here there are panoramic views over woodland, farmland, the northern ranges of the Grampians and south to Dunkeld. We descend back to the valley passing Piccaninny to end our hike near Mount Sturgeon. Today there is no van access at lunch. Another delicious home-cooked dinner in the Homestead this evening. **(11.5km)**

## DAY 6

Our final hike starts from the back gate! We cross the creek before following a private track through bushland – with wonderful views to the Homestead and the adjoining farm property - which brings us to the National Park and the start of our climb of Wurgarri (Mount Sturgeon). A steady climb on a rocky trail leads us to the summit with magnificent views before descending via a different track to our picnic. This is the final section of the new Grampians Peaks Trail which will be launched in 2021. After lunch we leave the National Park and follow a pretty trail along the river through the estate's property to return to our Homestead. **(16km)**



Our final dinner is at the Royal Mail in Dunkeld. Robin Wickens is an innovative chef and The Royal Mail is home to Australia's largest working restaurant kitchen garden. The farm where Mt Sturgeon Homestead is located supplies beef and lamb which are born and bred for use specifically in the Royal Mail Hotel dining room, and further produce is grown and foraged for in surrounding orchards, olive groves and wild pastures. Our menu is matched to wines from the wonderful cellar belonging to the Royal Mail.

## DAY 7

The tour ends after breakfast. We return to Ballarat for 11am (1hr 45 mins drive)

## **Walking – Level 5**

5 days of walking

Shortest day: 3.5km

Longest day: 20km

The entire Grampians Peaks Trail is due to open by the end of 2021. We may need to adapt a couple of the hikes if sections of the track are closed. However, there are plenty of wonderful alternatives to choose from.

We hike through rugged terrain with significant ascents/descents (up to 800m). The trails are generally well-graded and there is some boulder-hopping. The Grampians are a craggy and rocky mountain range and sturdy boots with good ankle support are recommended. Walking poles are an advantage, especially for the descents. There are two days with no van access at lunch. On day 5 you will need to carry your lunch - a delicious selection of nutritious treats, which will be prepared for you in a lunchbox. In order to maximize your enjoyment of the holiday we recommend you exercise regularly prior to the trip in order to build up your fitness level.

## **Weather**

Average temperatures: Max. 16°C Min. 8°. Average monthly rainfall 40mm.

It is generally mild during the day with cool evening temperatures. Weather can be very unpredictable so bring good rain gear and strong waterproof walking boots. In extreme heat/cold or very wet conditions we may adjust the walking route accordingly. Local forecast: [Halls Gap](#)

## **Accommodation**

Halls Gap – The Pinnacles Lodge

Dunkeld – Mount Sturgeon Homestead and Cottages at The Royal Mail

**Cost: \$3495 per person based on two sharing**

**Single Supplement: \$300**

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