

The Great Ocean Walk



Highlights

The Great Ocean Walk is an up-and-coming iconic coastal route covering the beaches of Victoria, Southwestern Australia. This can be walked in a group or independently. Either way, you will leave a trail of footsteps across the scenic beaches of Apollo Bay and beyond.

The Great Ocean Walk is a relatively new walking track connecting various towns along Victoria's south coast. The name is slightly deceptive however, since as well as the pristine beaches you will go inland too, walking through eucalyptus and rain forests with a chance of seeing some of their natural residents (including koalas and kangaroos which have only recently made this area their home.)

Much of the walk takes you through Great Otway National Park, staying at a variety of lodges and hotels as you go with your luggage transported for you. Two of the most amazing attractions are covered in this tour, including the views from Cape Otway and the Twelve Apostles, an odd geological formation comprising of giant limestone pillars which have been carved from the cliff face by the ocean.

The fantastic thing about this walking trip is that the features you encounter along the way seem like they've been dropped in randomly from the heavens - shipwrecks are left scattered amongst the beaches and waterfalls surprise you around many corners.

There is not just beachcombing fun to be had during your week but visits to the national parks also where you'll get to wander through the lush forests and check out Australia's marsupials. The weatherworn landscape provides further awe-inspiring scenery, and when you climb to the top of the stunning vistas (especially from the heights of Cape Otway Lighthouse) you'll be rewarded with views that will stay with you for years to come.

Is it for me?

One for nature lovers more so than party animals, this walk is suitable for the young and old alike with durations from two and a half hours up to eight hours. You will need to be relatively fit if you intend to walk the whole day however - the walking is not difficult but can get strenuous over the course of a full day.

If you are a nature lover then this walk is definitely for you with some of the most awesome scenery to be found in Australia. If you like your privacy then there are a number of secluded beaches and coves with the only other people you are likely to see being your fellow travellers and friendly guides (who are there to help you and are full of general information about the area.)

Accommodation

The accommodation is based in modern hotels and comes with most meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) with a couple of night's stay in the lighthouse keeper's cottage when up at Cape Otway. The cottage is an utterly charming place, and the atmosphere is made perfect with a candlelit dinner is provided during the stay.

The meals are served generously and feature varied and highly nutritious dishes. Packed lunches are provided on full day walks and are kept in insulated containers to keep them fresh. Tea, coffee and juice is also provided with meals - alcoholic beverages are not included in the price.

Itinerary

Prices from

1,602 GBP (7 days) per person

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Below is the itinerary for the 7 day guided walk

Day 1: Departs Melbourne airport at 10.00am. Travel via Geelong and the Great Ocean Road to Apollo Bay. In the afternoon you'll leave the tourists behind as you walk along the coast away from Apollo Bay. The track hugs the coast at first before heading inland through tall eucalypt forest and patches of rainforest to Elliot River. Back in Apollo Bay your accommodation here will be in modern hotel style rooms.

Meals included today: Dinner

Day 2: Today's walk meanders through delightful mountain ash forest to Blanket Bay then contours through coastal forests and along the cliff tops to Parker Inlet – a picture-postcard setting and definitely one of the best places of the route! An optional side-trip to Crayfish Bay is also a highlight. The track continues through Manna gum forests that are home to large numbers of koalas, eventually emerging at Cape Otway Lightstation. You will stay in the lighthouse keepers cottages for 2 nights and enjoy a tour of the lighthouse.

Meals included today: Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 3: On to Station Beach and pretty Rainbow Falls where a spring cascades down to the rocky coastal platforms below. The track continues through the wind sculpted sand dunes and along the cliff tops to the Aire River estuary and wetlands. Stunning coastal scenery awaits you on the route to Castle Cove. Transfer back to Cape Otway for the night.

Meals included today: Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 4: Today's section has some of the most spectacular coastal views of the entire track. It's also a great day for wildflowers with colourful heathlands and numerous grass trees. Another highlight is the long, white, sandy expanse of Johanna Beach. At the end of the day you'll travel on to Port Campbell where you'll settle in for a three night stay.

Meals included today: Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 5: Milanesia Beach is one of those secret beaches not many people get to and what a special place it is! From here the track continues along the cliff tops and you can see all the way back to Cape Otway lighthouse. High sea cliffs, breathtaking views and coastal forests lead you to Moonlight Head. Back to Port Campbell for the night.

Meals included today: Breakfast & lunch

Day 6: The first highlight today is The Gables Lookout, perched on one of the highest sea cliffs in mainland Australia. Continue through a grove of casuarinas to Wreck Beach where the remains of two shipwrecks can be inspected. Onwards to the Gellibrand River and wetlands. Next comes the first impressive views of the 12 Apostles, a group of limestone sea stacks that are constantly changing. Descend Gibsons Steps that have been cut into the limestone cliff by hand by an early settler and explore the boardwalks and viewing platforms around the Apostles. Back to Port Campbell for the night.

Meals included today: Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 7: The grand finale is the fascinating geological formations at Loch Ard Gorge where you'll learn the amazing tale of survival of the Loch Ard shipwreck. Evocatively named places indicate the turmoil that hardy pioneers of the area endured, including the crews of over 150 ships that have been shipwrecked along this rugged coast. Then you will travel back to Melbourne, arriving around 3.30pm.

Meals included today: Breakfast

Below is an outline of the itinerary for the self-guided trips. Please contact us for more detailed sample itineraries.

There are three routes to choose from along the Great Ocean Walk:

- 1) 8 days / 7 nights – covers the entire track from Apollo Bay to the 12 Apostles
- 2) Part A: 5 days / 4 nights – covers the first section from Apollo Bay to Castle Cove
- 3) Part B: 5 days / 4 nights – covers the second section from Castle Cove to the 12 Apostles

Details

Getting there

The group trips depart from Melbourne, whilst the self-guided trips depart from Apollo Bay.

Price includes

The price quoted is for the 7 day guided option in March and October 2011 (single supplement \$290). Price is \$2495 for 2012 dates (single supplement \$350).

Self-guided walks have lower prices, starting at \$1395 for 5 days and rising to \$2425 for 8 days. Please contact us for exact prices to match your dates.

7 Day Guided Walk:

6 nights accommodation, most meals (6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners), 2 guides, all transport from Melbourne airport, entry to Cape Otway Lightstation, National Park fees, information booklets, insulated lunch bag, map case, notes, maps.

Self-Guided Walks:

Entire route – 8 day itinerary: 7 nights accommodation, 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners, entry to Cape Otway lightstation, all transport ex Apollo Bay, luggage transfers, information pack, insulated lunch bag, map case, National Park fees, walking notes, maps.

Part A – 5 day itinerary: 4 nights accommodation, 4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 3 dinners, entry to Cape Otway lightstation, luggage transfers, all transport ex Apollo Bay, information pack, insulated lunch bag, map case, National Park fees, walking notes, maps.

Part B – 5 day itinerary: 4 nights accommodation, 4 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners, luggage transfers, all transport ex Apollo Bay, information pack, insulated lunch bag, map case, National Park fees, walking notes, maps.

Not included

Alcohol and meals not listed above.

When is best

December through February is usually warm to hot with excellent swimming weather. Book well in advance for January due to the summer school holidays. March through May is usually cooler, with long sunny days, perfect for walking. The winter months (June to August) are cool and sometimes stormy, providing exhilarating walking along the beaches. In winter the hills are covered with pink heath, Victoria's floral emblem. September and November are usually cool to warm and this is when most of the colourful wildflowers appear.

Departures

07 Oct 2012 - 13 Oct 2012

Typical Duration

5 days - 8 days

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed