

The Great Alpine Walk in Victoria's Alps!



Highlights

Whether you want to scale the mountaintops using deserted alpine roads or simply enjoy a relaxing ramble through wildflower meadows, this seven-day Great Alpine Walk in Victoria, Australia offers it all. With the choice of a guided or self-guided version of the holiday available, you can enjoy the walking and the views with none of the fuss!

The Victorian Alps, situated to the north east of Victoria, form the southwestern half of the Australian Alps National Park. Whilst generally snow covered from May through to November, the landscape here is a vibrant ecosystem nonetheless - grasslands and bogs retain vast quantities of water, which in turn supply the alpine rivers and streams all year round.

The abundance of water in this mountainous region helps to support diverse life in the snowy grass plains and is filled with iridescent wildflower displays, making this a tremendous stage for walking holidays. What's more, if you choose the guided option, you'll be following a knowledgeable guide so you can be sure not to miss the best bits of this multi-faceted landscape.

Going off road and you'll come across an original Alpine hut which dates back to the early cattlemen days and, if the fancy takes, have a go building one yourself. It is also an area filled with gold prospecting history originating from a gold rush dating back to the early 1800s, so there is plenty of inspirational knowledge to be gleaned whilst enjoying the blissful sights of the Victorian Alps.

Is it for me?

One bonus of the tour is that there are a few alternative routes which are not only scenic but make some sections of the walk easier. This means that you do not need to be super fit to undertake the whole week, unless of course you wish to scale the heights or tackle the off-road challenges. All routes offer fantastic views in isolated places, far away from the populous but close enough to civilisation for an enjoyable evening meal.

The walk is ideal for people those who like to get back to nature, but don't want to leave comfort and luxury back at home. In terms of terrain, the track contains a little bit of everything from the ever-present glacial mountain ranges to valleys, woods and alpine streams making this a walking tour which caters for all tastes.

Accommodation

The accommodation for this tour takes place in the lap of luxury with all manner of creature comforts. Three nights of the week will be spent in alpine ski lodges, which contain a bar, sauna and spa. You'll also spend two nights in a grand, four-star alpine motel with a restaurant, bar and private spa and your last night will be in a hotel with a bar, bistro and swimming pool.

Cooked breakfast, lunch and four dinners are provided during the course of the week. On the two evenings when dinner is not offered there are plenty of local restaurant facilities nearby, and packed lunches are provided to take on full days out kept in insulated containers for freshness.

Tea, coffee and juice at breakfast are provided, but alcoholic beverages are not.

Prices from

1,134 GBP (7 days) per person

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Self-Guided 8 Day Itinerary

(includes 7 nights accommodation & 6 days walking)

Day 1: Starts in Mount Beauty any time after 2pm. No walking scheduled for today. Accommodation: Mt Beauty

Day 2: After a transfer high into the mountains, the walk begins by following an easy Aqueduct Trail connected to one of Australia's early hydro-electricity schemes, built between the 1930's and 1950's. Mountain cattlemen's huts feature prominently on this holiday and today you'll visit the oldest in Victoria, Wallace's Hut. The ancient snowgum trees here are twisted and gnarled by centuries of harsh winters. After rain or fog these tree trunks change colour to brilliant shades of red, orange, yellow and green. After lunch, walk along the southern edge of Rocky Valley Dam, before climbing to Falls Creek ski resort. Accommodation: Falls Creek

Day 3: An easier walking day, following more aqueduct trails and crossing gently graded snow plains. All the walking terrain yesterday and today provides superb cross country skiing during winter. It is easy to imagine dozens of fit, lycra-clad athletes skating past and making it look effortless. The day ends with a walk to the summit of a small peak with a fine view over Falls Creek and the Kiewa valley before strolling along another aqueduct trail back to the village. Accommodation: Falls Creek

Day 4: A big one today! Very few people have done this walk, even amongst the locals. Follow a section of the 750km Alpine Walking Track (between Walhalla and Canberra) all the way to Mt Hotham. You certainly won't see many people out here, in fact you are more likely to see brumbies (wild horses) than people! Along the way, drop steeply down to the Cobungra River and Dibbins Hut (sometimes also called "Creep-Inn" – you'll see why), then back through the Mt Hotham ski village. Skiers flock to Hotham for its powder snow. It is easy to see how the surrounding steep valleys would provide protection from strong winter winds, allowing snow to settle gently into deep drifts. The day's walking finishes with a stroll through the picturesque Davenport area of Hotham village. Accommodation: Hotham alpine village

Day 5: Today's walk meanders through snowgum forests and across thick snowgrass plains, where there are many spring wildflowers. The standard 10km track to Dinner Plain is easy, but you can also add an optional 9km walk to the aptly named Mt Tabletop. Cattle grazed these plains till recently, and you'll see historic huts and even some cattle yards made by felling trees into piles! You'll walk into Dinner Plain, the highest freehold land in Australia, where every building is constructed of mud brick, weathered timber, local rock and galvanized iron. You can build anything you like there, so long as it resembles a cattleman's hut. Accommodation: Dinner Plain

Day 6: Another big walking day today. After an early start, you'll be transferred to the breathtaking Razorback Ridge, surely one of the most dramatic walking routes in Australia. As you walk along it, Mt Feathertop gradually looms more and more impressively. The final (optional) steep climb to the summit is a ripper! The rest of the day is spent walking down the gently graded Bungalow spur to the township of Harrietville. The spur is covered by tall mountain ash trees, many of which stand stark and white following the bushfires of 2003. Either dead or alive, they are impressive. Harrietville is built on mine tailings created by a huge dredge called the Tronah Monster, which was sold to a tin miner in Malaysia in the 1930's. Today it's a friendly holiday village with a laid-back atmosphere. Accommodation: Harrietville

Day 7: An easy walk through valley bushland and a good chance to stretch those muscles after yesterday's big descent. Walk through forests beside the Ovens River to the outskirts of Bright, then detour to Wandiligong, another historic gold town that is Heritage Listed. The only industry at Wandil these days is apple growing but there are numerous sluices, tailings, mines and shafts remaining from the days when Chinese miners were more successful than Europeans, with nasty consequences. The day finishes with an optional walk through the Ovens River Gorge. Bright town is a busy tourist area, now better known for its splendid tree-lined streets and colourful autumn leaves than for the phenomenal amount of gold extracted in the past. Accommodation: Bright

Day 8: The trip ends after breakfast, either by catching a V-line coach out of town, or by catching a taxi back to Mount Beauty to collect your car (taxi fare not included in tour cost - allow approx. \$70).

Self-Guided 6 day Itinerary

(includes 5 nights accommodation & 4 days walking)

Day 1: Starts in Mount Beauty any time after 2pm. No walking scheduled for today. Accommodation: Mt Beauty

Day 2: After a transfer high into the mountains, the walk begins by following an easy Aqueduct Trail connected to one of Australia's early hydro-electricity schemes, built between the 1930's and 1950's. Mountain cattlemen's huts feature prominently on this holiday and today you'll visit the oldest in Victoria, Wallace's Hut. The ancient snowgum trees here are twisted and gnarled by centuries of harsh winters. After rain or fog these tree trunks change colour to brilliant shades of red, orange, yellow and green. After lunch, walk along the southern edge of Rocky Valley Dam, before climbing to Falls Creek ski resort. Accommodation: Falls Creek

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Day 5: An easy walk through valley bushland and a good chance to stretch those muscles after yesterday's big descent. Walk through forests beside the Ovens River to the outskirts of Bright, then detour to Wandiligong, another historic gold town that is Heritage Listed. The only industry at Wandil these days is apple growing but there are numerous sluices, tailings, mines and shafts remaining from the days when Chinese miners were more successful than Europeans, with nasty consequences. The day finishes with an optional walk through the Ovens River Gorge. Bright town is a busy tourist area, now better known for its splendid tree-lined streets and colourful autumn leaves than for the phenomenal amount of gold extracted in the past. Accommodation: Bright

Day 6: The trip ends after breakfast, either by catching a V-line coach out of town, or by catching a taxi back to Mount Beauty to collect your car (taxi fare not included in tour cost - allow approx. \$70).

Guided Group Walk

Day 1: Starting at Melbourne airport, you'll be transferred via historic Glenrowan and Mt Beauty to Falls Creek Alpine Village. A short village stroll provides you with a good orientation session in the afternoon.

Day 2: Today you'll begin by following an easy Aqueduct Trail connected to one of Australia's early hydro-electricity schemes, built between the 1930s and 1950s. Original cattlemen huts dating back to Australia's early history feature prominently on this tour, and today you'll visit the oldest in Victoria. You'll also get to see ancient forests of the rare snowgum tree, and incredibly beautiful if alien-looking member of the Eucalyptus family. Continuing in the afternoon around the shores of Rocky Valley dam, you'll eventually come to a delightful lunch spot. After lunch, you will have a choice of an easy walk following the lake shore back to the bus or a harder hike to the summit of Mt McKay with stunning 360 degree views. Whichever you choose, you'll then walk through the Falls Creek Alpine ski area to get back to the lodge.

Day 3: Today you will hike to some of the Falls Creek peaks and visit another couple of historic huts. Your route begins along easy aqueduct trails again before climbing up through gently graded snow plains to visit secluded Fitzgeralds Hut. The afternoon presents you with another choice - you can either take the easier option along Watchbed Creek and back to the transport bus, or for a more challenging option head up onto Heathy Spur and then cross country on a compass bearing to Roper Lookout. You then descend to the shores of Rocky Valley Dam.

Day 4: The challenging walk today leads all the way from Falls Creek to Mt Hotham. Very few people have done this walk, even amongst the locals. In fact, you certainly won't see many people out here; you are more likely to encounter brumbies (wild horses) than people. Along the way, you drop steeply down to the Cobungra River and Dibbins Hut and then finally reaching Mt Hotham, a village popular with skiers owing to its powdered snow. Your day's walking finishes with a stroll through the picturesque Davenport area of Hotham village. A leisurely and shorter walk is available for the day also, travelling part of the way by bus.

Day 5: The walk today meanders through snowgum forests and across thick snow grass plains, where there are many spring wildflowers. The standard 10km track to Dinner Plain is easy, but you can also add an optional 9km walk to the aptly named Mt Tabletop. Accessing this remote mountain requires you to go off track walking over uneven terrain. Cattle grazed these plains till recently, and you'll see historic huts and even some cattle yards made by felling trees into piles. You'll then head into Dinner Plain, the highest freehold land in Australia, where every building is constructed of mud brick, weathered timber, local rock and galvanized iron. You can also have a go at constructing anything you like there, so long as it resembles a cattleman's hut!

Day 6: Today's walking features another long route, leading across the breathtaking Razorback Ridge. As you walk along it, Mt Feathertop gradually looms up from the horizon - the final (optional) steep climb to the 1,922m summit is a killer! The rest of the day is spent walking down the gently graded Bungalow spur to the township of Harrietville. The spur is covered by tall mountain ash trees, many of which are dead and charred, standing as stark reminders of bushfires over the last century. Once you arrive at your overnight hotel in Harrietville you'll be free to roam this friendly holiday village with some leisurely walking options available.

Day 7: On this final day you'll embark on a two hour walk through the picturesque Bright Gorge. There are numerous sluices, tailings, mines and shafts remaining from the days when Chinese miners were more successful than their Europeans counterparts. After morning tea in Bright, you'll head back to Melbourne, arriving at the airport at about 4pm.

Details

Getting there

The walk starts in Mt Beauty which is a 5 hour drive from Melbourne. If you've opted for the group option, you will leave from Melbourne in a mini bus. If you opt for the self-guided option, you can leave your car in Mt Beauty, but you will need to catch a taxi back to collect it at the end of the walk.

Price includes

Price quoted is for the 7 day self-guided walk and is per person based on 2 people sharing.

When is best

This walk can be done any time from the start of December to 20th April. This mountain environment is about 10 – 15 degrees cooler than Melbourne and Sydney, and there is a possibility of bad weather even during summer. January and February are usually warm and the alpine wildflowers are at their best. December and March are usually mild, and considered by many people to be the best times to visit.

Comfort level

Refined (boutique or luxury accommodation and food)

Experience required

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