

Day 1: Adelaide, Australia

Arrive in Adelaide, the state capital of South Australia. Wedged between the Mount Lofty Ranges and Gulf St. Vincent, this is the homeland of the Indigenous Kurna peoples. Adelaide, established by British settlers in 1836 as a convict-free colony, has become a gateway to South Australia's burgeoning wine country. Dotted with historic buildings and lush parks, the "City of Churches" is recognizable for its multitude of spires that rise from downtown, representing diverse faiths within a city founded on a commitment to religious freedom and civil liberties. This evening, gather with our Expedition Leaders for a welcome dinner and introduction to our route through Kangaroo Island, Tasmania and the Grampians Ranges.

Day 2: Adelaide / Private Flight to Kangaroo Island

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our short chartered flight to Kangaroo Island. With more than 300 miles of coastline surrounded by turquoise waters, Australia's third-largest island is renowned for its pristine beaches, local wines and abundant wildlife that the island's isolation has naturally protected. "KI," as it's known by locals, lies less than 10 miles off the mainland, but its offshore status helps sustain considerable numbers of native Australian species, including kangaroos, wallabies, echidnas, New Zealand fur seals, Australian sea lions and one of Australia's largest koala populations. On arrival, we head to Duck Lagoon to do some birdwatching, seek out koalas and have an orientation to the island over a cup of tea. Then it's off to Seal Bay Conservation Park for a private tour among Australian sea lions sprawled along a sandy beach—an endangered species hunted nearly to extinction in the 19th century. Today, about 800 of them thrive here, one of Australia's largest sea lion colonies. Watch pups nursing or playing in the surf, see old bulls scarred by territorial disputes, and learn about their unique breeding biology.

After a seafood barbecue lunch, continue to Stokes Bay to explore a range of varied habitats from scrub to woodland to rocky shoreline and sandy beach. Within these varied environments, we may encounter tammar wallabies, koalas, glossy-black cockatoos, Australian pelicans, hooded plovers, and a unique subspecies of kangaroo found only on the island. Along the way, observe how native plants have adapted to bushfires. Exploring the Bay of Shoals and Reeves Point, look for more birds, including black swans, cormorants, crested and Caspian terns, and a suite of bush birds like superb fairy-wrens, crescent honeyeaters, rainbow and purple-crowned lorikeets.

Day 3: Kangaroo Island—Hanson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary / Flinders Chase National Park

Begin the day with a bush breakfast on Pelican Lagoon, one of the oldest marine conservation reserves in Australia. This is kangaroo terrain, and we're sure to be distracted from our eggs and bacon by the 'roos hopping around! The remote western reaches of Kangaroo Island offer a true sense of wilderness and solitude, with abundant birdlife and koalas dozing in the eucalyptus trees. At Hanson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, walk among koalas and learn about fire ecology, hearing how the landscape and local animals were affected by the intense 2020 bushfires and observing native flora species that only flower following a burn. We also visit with field personnel from Land for Wildlife, observing their camera traps used to monitor wild animals and learning about how they are rewilding private land destroyed by the fires.

In Flinders Chase National Park, view the massive shapes of the Remarkable Rocks, formed by 500 million years of wind, waves and rain that have left them impossibly perched on top a granite dome plunging into the ocean. We break for lunch with a gourmet bush picnic, then continue to Admirals Arch, a rock bridge and coastal grotto that

provides a haul-out for a large colony of long-nosed fur seals. Seabirds flourish here, too, and we may see a range of terns, Australasian gannets, shearwaters, Pacific gulls, and possibly some southern emu-wrens.

Day 4: Kangaroo Island—Baudin Conservation Park / Wine Tasting / Cygnet Park Sanctuary

At Pennington Bay, look for hooded plovers and other shorebirds on the beach, and climb the steps to the top of Prospect Hill for a vantage over the narrowest section of Kangaroo Island. Delving into the ecology of the island, we take a walk with a researcher who is a world expert on the short-beaked echidna—an ancient egg-laying mammal that once roamed with dinosaurs. After a picnic lunch on Eastern Cove, visit Baudin Conservation Park to learn about the elusive glossy-black cockatoo. The park was a family farm from 1861 to 2002, comprised of she-oak woodland rolling hills with sweeping views across Backstairs Passage to the Fleurieu Peninsula. We may also see tammar wallabies, Kangaroo Island kangaroos, wedge-tailed eagles and small penguins that nest along the shoreline. Look offshore for dolphins and southern right whales. At Cape Willoughby, explore the exposed granite shoreline near the lighthouse, scouting for coastal raptors and oceanic seabirds from the exposed promontory. Late this afternoon, we stop for a tasting at False Cape Wines.

Our day ends at Cygnet Park Sanctuary, a haven for native island vegetation where we find significant populations of nationally threatened plant species. On a tour of the property, get an overview of the park's revegetation program and glossy-black cockatoo recovery project. A highlight is dinner in the field, surrounded by the sights and sounds of wildlife. As dusk descends, we walk in search of nocturnal animals, which could include the brush-tailed possum, southern stone curlew, micro-bats, eastern barn owl and southern boobook owl, as well as other species we also see during daylight hours.

Day 5: Private Flight to Warrnambool / Grampians Ranges—Mount William Station

Fly from Kangaroo Island to Warrnambool on a private chartered flight this morning and continue a short distance by road to Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve. Formed by volcanic eruptions 30,000 years ago, Tower Hill is part of an Aboriginal Cultural Landscape and is home to some of Australia's best-loved wildlife living inside the large crater of this dormant volcano. After a picnic lunch, take a guided hike with an Indigenous guide (subject to availability) to learn about the area's geologic history and ancient lava flows, ecology, wildlife and Aboriginal heritage. As we walk, look for koalas, emus, eastern grey kangaroos, black (swamp) wallabies, echidnas, long-necked turtles and varied birds including the superb fairy-wren, black swan, golden whistler, and rarer waterfowl like musk- and blue-billed duck.

By mid-afternoon, we start our journey to the Grampians, passing through the small country towns of Peshurst and Dunkeld as we anticipate our first look at the sandstone peaks that rise from the vast plains. This is archetypical Australia, an expansive place of grassy woodlands dominated by huge trees in the shadow of the mighty mountains overlooking the entire region. Entering the secluded Victoria Valley, hemmed in by the towering Victoria and Serra ranges, look for emus and wedge-tailed eagles commonly seen here, then continue into Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park. The Grampians Ranges cover more than 400,000 acres and are part of the Gariwerd Aboriginal cultural landscape. The region was declared a national park in 1984 and is listed as a National Heritage Area for its extraordinary flora and fauna and its long Aboriginal history, with human habitation dating back 20,000 years. The region holds more ancient Aboriginal rock art paintings and shelters than anywhere else in southern Australia. Famous for striking landscapes of high rocky plateaus and lush gullies, the Grampians have inspired works by Australian writers, poets, painters and photographers.

Traversing a high pass in the densely vegetated Serra Range, we drop down to the plains again to reach our lodging for the next three nights, remote Mount William Station, an artfully renovated century-old homestead on a working farm. Nearby, the highest peak of the Grampians, Mount William, rises directly out of the plains to provide a spectacular backdrop. Major Thomas Mitchell, one of Australia's eminent early explorers and surveyors, named the ranges after he scaled Mount William in 1836, calling them the Grampians after the rugged region in his native Scotland. One of the first sounds you will hear at the station will surely be the call of the sulphur-crested cockatoo. These lively birds are everywhere, making their presence known with wild fly-bys and screeches, easily spotted by the bright yellow crest on top of their heads. On an introductory walk around the homestead, look for cockatoos, parrots and waterbirds in the nearby wetlands. Then it's time for cocktails and dinner in the homestead dining room, enjoying our hosts' famous country hospitality.

Day 6: Wildlife & Aboriginal Rock Art of Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park

Rise early today to delve into the dramatic landscape that surrounds us. Shaped like five giant boomerangs, the sandstone escarpments of the Grampians jut from the surrounding plains like a series of sawtooths. Their craggy slopes are covered in dense forest vegetation and separated by deep valleys rich in a staggeringly diverse mix of flora. Three major rivers rise in the region, and hundreds of streams flow down to create waterfalls and wetlands that abound with mammals and birds, most notably cockatoos, which like to nest in the ancient red gum trees that line the riverbanks. More cockatoos live in Australia than anywhere else in the world, including the endangered red-tailed black cockatoo, and our time here offers our best chance to see them, along with a host of other wildlife including kangaroos, emus and wedge-tailed eagles. Runoff from the ranges waters thousands of square miles of the surrounding western plains, creating semi-perennial wetlands. With the majority of Victoria's plains cleared for agriculture, the remnant bushland in Grampians National Park has become a refuge for native plants and animals. More than 975 native plant species thrive in the Grampians, including 75 orchid species—many of which are found only here.

This morning we visit a large lake known for its abundant waterfowl, where we may spot Australia's largest crane, the brolga, along with black swans, spoonbills and many other waterbirds. Continuing into the foothills along the east edge of the Grampians, we have beautiful views of the mountains in the morning light. Following a short path past large boulders in the Black Range Scenic Reserve, we reach an important Aboriginal rock painting site. The overhang contains the only known rock art depiction of Bunjil, the creator spirit for Aboriginal peoples in central Victoria. Then it's on to the village of Halls Gap, tucked at the base of the mountains, where we have lunch at a local cafe followed by a short hike into the forest in search of kangaroos, wallabies, emus and other birdlife. Return to the homestead to relax for a bit, perhaps enjoying a refreshing dip in the swimming pool. Once it cools down in the late afternoon, we travel to where the escarpment meets the woodlands, an ecotone (where two habitats meet) that offers a chance to see bush birds, parrots, black-and red-necked wallabies, eastern grey kangaroos, and emus. With luck, we might even spot an echidna before we head back to the homestead for dinner.

Day 7: Exploring the High Grampians

We spend a full day traversing the heights and valleys of the Grampian landscape. Between the ranges, we walk and drive amid dense forests and along rivers, ascending through gaps in the escarpments to spectacular viewing platforms surveying the plateaus and plains. As we go, look for one of Australia's most difficult-to-find cockatoos, the Gang-gang—the male has a bright red face and crest. These small birds eat gum nuts high in the eucalypt trees, and often the only way we find them is when the litter from their feeding falls onto the path below. In the valleys, we often see mobs of kangaroos resting in the shade on hot days or feeding with flocks of emus on the

grassy flats beside mountain streams. The valleys are also home to kingfishers, including the famous laughing kookaburra.

After a bush picnic lunch, our final stop today is Reed Lookout, overlooking the Victoria Valley near the very top of the range. From here, take an easy walk from through high-elevation forest to reach the Balconies, whose rock ledges offer an iconic vista over this dramatic landscape. Keep watch for cockatoos, including Australia's largest, the yellow-tailed black cockatoo, before we start our return to Mount William Station.

Day 8: Grampians / Warrnambool / Private Flight to Devonport, Tasmania / Cradle Mountain

Departing after breakfast, we travel through the national park, alert for early-rising mammals we might spy along the way. Once back in Warrnambool, we board our private chartered flight to the island state of Tasmania, 150 miles south across the Bass Strait. Landing in Devonport, continue to the interior of the island, which covers more than 26,000 square miles, 42% of which is protected in national parks and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. A legacy of wilderness appreciation is intrinsic to Tasmania, the birthplace of the world's first environmental political party. The island of Tasmania, or lutruwita, is home to the Aboriginal palawa peoples who have lived here for more than 60,000 years, before the British Empire arrived to form a penal colony in 1803. From our lodge on the edge of Cradle Mountain National Park, make an evening outing to seek out the abundant wildlife around the premises—we often spot wallabies, echidnas, pademelons and wombats that come out around dusk. And while we're extremely unlikely to see one, Tasmanian devils and quolls also inhabit the forest.

Day 9: Cradle Mountain–Lake St. Clair National Park / Private Tasmanian Devil Encounter

The day launches early as we enter Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park, part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This UNESCO-protected realm covers 3.7 million acres, one-fifth of Tasmania's landmass. The park's imposing peaks, lakes and glacier-sculpted valleys comprise some of Australia's most stunning landscapes. 5,069-foot Cradle Mountain is surrounded by diverse habitats of grassland, temperate rain forest and ancient plants that date to the supercontinent of Gondwana, including the King Billy pine, deciduous beech and pandani, the world's tallest heath plant. Exploring the network of trails near Ronny Creek and around our lodge, look for wombats, a cuddly cousin to the koala, which are prevalent here—although no koalas exist in the wild in Tasmania.

This evening, tour a nearby conservation sanctuary working to protect and sustain the Tasmanian devil. Our visit offers a rare opportunity to see and learn about these mysterious, hard-to-find nocturnal species that are endangered in the wild. The sanctuary is involved with breeding, release and re-introduction of Tasmanian devils, in addition to field monitoring of wild populations and orphan rehabilitation. It also houses the closely related spotted-tail and eastern quolls, offering a trifecta of Tasmania's three largest carnivorous marsupials. If our timing is right, we may even witness a feeding.

Day 10: Exploring Cradle Mountain

This morning, hike around Dove Lake, gleaming sapphire-blue beneath Cradle Mountain's jagged profile, and stop at some waterfalls, too. We will spend time looking for wombats, echidnas, pademelons, and if we are lucky, platypus. This evening, we enter the park at night to look for crepuscular and nocturnal wildlife using redlight spotlights. If we are fortunate to have a cloudless night, we'll be able to see many of the Southern Hemisphere constellations, including the famous Southern Cross.

Day 11: Marakoopa Cave Private Tour / Central Plateau Conservation Area / Derwent Valley

After a dawn wildlife walk followed by breakfast, head to Marakoopa Cave in Mole Creek Karst National Park for a private tour of this dramatic limestone cavern. This immense structure contains two underground streams, large vaulted chambers, expanses of glittering flowstone and dramatic stalagmites, plus a sparkling display of bioluminescent glowworms. From here, it's a half day's drive to southern Tasmania. En route, we stop at the Central Plateau Conservation Area, a wild realm of subalpine moorlands and countless tarns. In the isolated heart of Tasmania away from major roads, the region is known for its wilderness hiking and world-class trout fishing. We stop to admire the view of Great Lake and look for echidnas, plus yellow-tailed black cockatoos and Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles, among other birdlife.

Continue to Truffle Lodge, a luxury camping outpost in a remote part of the Derwent Valley that is our own private accommodation for the next two nights. Once dusk falls, look for echidna, wallabies and pademelon, then enjoy dinner and stargazing from camp, if skies are clear.

Day 12: Mount Field National Park / Private Paddling with Platypus

Wake early and wander the environs of our private camp, looking for wildlife. After breakfast, we head to Mount Field National Park, Tasmania's oldest, along with Freycinet, established in 1916. Yet the park has been a nature reserve since 1885, when early white settlers were awestruck by its waterfalls and natural beauty. The region had already been occupied for millennia, however, as the homelands of the Big River nation of Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples. They knew this place when it was buried in glacial ice, and later as rain forests and eucalypt forests flourished. Cave sites, ochre mines, hand-stencil art, rock engravings and stone tool quarries provide a glimpse of their extraordinary lives here. We spend the day walking in their ancient footsteps among the tallest flowering trees in the world, and exploring the coastal rain forest. In summer, the high country can be a blaze of color with blooming waratahs, boronias and heath. Weather will determine our activities in the park, but we're sure to conclude the day with a sense of wonder at the many treasures it holds.

This afternoon, we have a private kayaking tour on the Derwent River, paddling in search of wild platypus that are often spotted just below our tents perched on the bank. This 100-million-year-old semi-aquatic mammal has a duck-like bill, webbed feet and fur, and along with the echidna, it is one of just two egg-laying mammal species on the planet. Back at camp, more wildlife watching awaits this evening, as well as time around the fire under the stars.

Day 13: Kunanyi Mountain Walk / Hobart / Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary Private Tour

Drive this morning to Kunanyi—also called Mount Wellington—for an in-depth walk with a local Indigenous guide from the palawa cultural group. Rising prominently above Tasmania's capital of Hobart, Kunanyi is the central geographic and mythological connecting point for both ancient and contemporary Aboriginal peoples of the region. Visible from great distances, Kunanyi was more than an important landmark to ancestral peoples—it was the bridge to their origins and their predecessors, connecting the Sky Country, land and ocean: Rain collected from the sky in creeks and rivulets, building to great rivers and waterfalls, eventually reaches the sea in a continuous cycle. Many traditional stories and songs passed down over countless generations reference Kunanyi's role in creation and navigation and undergird its cultural centrality over millennia. We'll have a special lunch during our

time at Kunanyi, enjoying a modern take on sustainably sourced bush food sources that have long been staples in palawa cooking.

This afternoon, continue to Hobart, Tasmania's capital at the mouth of the Derwent River and check into our hotel on the historic waterfront. Home of the Muwinina people for centuries before Dutch explorer Abel Tasman arrived in 1642, Hobart is one of Australia's oldest European-settled cities. Early this evening we head outside the city to Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, for a last chance to spend time with more of Australia's unique creatures. On a private tour at dusk, when wildlife wakes for nocturnal activity, we come face to face with animals that became extinct long ago in other parts of Australia. Get a peek at rarely seen species such as the eastern quoll and Tasmanian bettong, and many more. Afterward, we gather for a special farewell dinner on site with our hosts.

Day 14: Hobart / Depart

Our southern Australia nature safari comes to a close in Hobart this morning. A transfer to the airport is included for flights to the mainland and beyond, including the option to extend your time down under by joining Nat Hab's New Zealand Nature Explorer (select departures match up; check dates for details).