



Great Ocean Walk - Standard

Beginning at Apollo Bay, this newly opened walk traverses through the rainforests of the Great Otway National Park to the majestic Twelve Apostles. On the way you'll see kangaroos, koalas and other wildlife, wild deserted beaches, waterfalls plunging gracefully to the Southern Ocean, a historical lighthouse and remains of several shipwrecks.

We only run small groups and have chosen what we consider the best sections of the track to showcase the wonderfully diverse scenery and habitats. We'll show you a walk of real contrasts from the secluded Parker River inlet to wild Station Beach and the magnificent sea cliffs at remote Milanesia. The walk progresses from 'mild' to 'wild' walking as we head further west towards the 12 Apostles.

RAW's Great Ocean Walk is achievable regardless of your fitness level. A support vehicle follows the group at all times, and there's no pressure to walk the entire way - you only walk as much as you'd like to. You can return to the accommodation should you wish or walk extra distance, and you'll only need to carry a day pack. RAW's Great Ocean Walk is an inspiring journey that immerses you in natural beauty.

Itinerary

Beginning at Apollo Bay, this newly opened walk traverses through the rainforests of the Great Otway National Park to the majestic Twelve Apostles. On the way you'll see kangaroos, koalas and other wildlife, wild deserted beaches, waterfalls plunging gracefully to the Southern Ocean, a historical lighthouse and remains of several shipwrecks

Day 1 Walk Blanket Bay to Cape Otway

After meeting in Melbourne we start the three hour drive to Cape Otway, breaking the journey for coffee en route and picking up our lunch at Apollo Bay. Our first stop is a grove of old growth forest at Mait's rest before we arrive at the Cape and the start of the Great Ocean walk.

Drive to Blanket Bay where we start walking our first section of the Great Ocean walk trail to Parker Inlet. The track meanders along the cliff tops and through coastal forests to the quiet haven of Parker's Inlet. Expect to see Black Wallabies, Echidnas, Black Cockatoos, Rosellas and other wildlife along our route. At Parker's inlet we meet our local guide who will be pointing out some of the unique features of the Cape Otway area and illuminating us on the human and natural history of the area. We'll slow the pace right down as we get to hear some fascinating stories and are shown various natural features that make this area unique.

Leaving Parker Inlet we walk along the beach (tide permitting) to see some of the shipwreck relics in this area. The walk emerges from the forest and into open terrain along the coast to the Cape Otway light house, which is Australia's oldest continuously operating lighthouse. It was built in 1848 and marks the entrance to the Bass Straits. A local expert will reveal some of the remark-

able stories of ship wreck along this wild coastline.

We will then be transferred by minibus to our accommodation at the edge of the Cape Otway national park. We stay in walkers Cabins in an area surrounded by Manna Gum forest and you'll have frequent sightings of Koalas, kookaburras and other native wildlife. We take our meals in a communal area, dining inside or out depending on if the weather is kind to us. The communal area has couches and a fire to relax and enjoy a book and glass of red with at the end of a day's walk. There is an excellent showerblock, bathroom and laundry facility for guests to use.

Walking distance: approx. 9-10 km / 4 hours guided walking

Meals: (Lunch, Dinner & snack stops)

Day 2 Walk Cape Otway to Castle Cove

After a hearty local breakfast we will have an early start as we have a good day's walk ahead of us along the magnificent stretch of coast from Cape Otway to Johanna Beach. If not staying at the lighthouse then we start with a tour of the station and its precincts in the morning. We then walk along a sandy track past the Pioneer cemetery and large sand dunes, eventually descending to wild Station Beach, where we walk along a spectacular stretch of coastline with pounding surf.

We then ascend back up to the escarpment overlooking the beach and walk along a sheltered section of the track for an hour or so. The path winds along the cliff tops and then wind sculpted sand dunes before descending to the beautiful Aire River estuary and surrounding wetlands. After stopping for refreshments and snacks at Aire River we head inland for a while climbing up and around the next point. The route takes us through spinifex forests and then continues along the coastal path with sweeping views of the rugged coastline. Expect some ups and downs with a little climbing before we get to our next break at Castle Cove. Located on a spectacular bend of the Great Ocean Road at Glenaire, Castle Cove is a beautiful beach surrounded with towering cliffs which have high archaeological significance, as dinosaur fossils have been found here.

For those who are keen there is the option to continue on from Castle Cove, where the track winds its way along the cliff tops, through heathlands and forests, occasionally emerging to give breathtaking and extensive views along the coast. The forest here is an interesting mixture of with grass trees and manna gums. Eventually we emerge onto the broad expanse of Johanna Beach. We finish the day by walking along this beautiful beach which must rate as one of the best in Australia for its views and crashing surf. We transfer back to our accommodation to freshen up and relax before dinner.

Walking distance: approx. 16.5 km walking (finish at castle cove) or 22.5 km (full itinerary) / 5-7 hours

Meals: (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner & snack stops)

Day 3 Walk Johanna Beach to Ryan's Den / 12 Apostles & return to Melbourne

Our last day's walk is one of the wildest and most challenging sections of the entire track. Depending on the weather, tides and wishes of the group we may vary the itinerary this day to suit. We walk in from the Great Ocean Road to join the track at a point where it cuts inland before returning to the coast and one of the walk's highlights. Milanesia Beach is an isolated and hidden beach that receives few visitors and is all the more special for it. From here the trail continues along the high sea cliffs cliff to Moonlight head with breathtaking views all the way back to Cape Otway lighthouse. The last section of trail from Ryan's den to Moonlight head offers dramatic scenery but can be a demanding walk because of the rollercoaster nature of the terrain on this-section. The views back along the coast and over the high sea cliffs, bays and caves are truly amazing.

There is also an option to finish earlier at Ryan's Den and hike out to meet our transport and drive down the coast to see the famous Twelve Apostles and / or walk along Wreck beach, dependant on tide movements and the wishes of the group. Wreck beach is a beautiful wild area contains the anchors of the Marie Gabrielle and the Fiji which foundered here in the late 1800's. We stop at a restaurant for dinner (not included) which has amazing views over the Otways before we head back to Melbourne (arriving approx. 9.30pm)

Walking distance: Approx. 10-14 km walking / 5-7 hours

Meals: (Breakfast, Lunch, & snack stops)

Accommodation

We use cabin accommodation for this trip. It is basic but comfortable, warm & clean and with excellent toilet and shower facilities. If you prefer more luxurious accommodation it is possible to upgrade - see our deluxe walk option.

Meal Inclusions

All meals are included except dinner on the return journey and are of a high standard, with refreshments also provided at various rest stops along the walk. You will work up a great appetite from the walk and will be well rewarded with delicious meals of fresh regional produce.

Transport

By private vehicle throughout (minibus)

Joining point & how to get there:

The pick up on departure morning will be 07:30 at the Arts Centre, 100 St Kilda road, central Melbourne. The driver will be wearing a RAW Travel T-shirt and the van will be signed.

The Arts centre is only a 5 minute walk over the bridge from Flinders Station and Federation Square. All trams that travel up or down St Kilda Road stop outside the Arts Centre. By car: While the Arts Centre is on St. Kilda Road, city traffic means it's probably quicker and easier to take Alexandra Avenue, Sturt Street or City Road, depending on where you're coming from. The Arts Centre has its own 850 space undercover car park. The entry is accessible via Sturt and Kavanagh Streets, just off Southbank Boulevard.

Pick up is also available from Avalon airport in Geelong by prior arrangement but NOT Melbourne Tullamarine.

We will drop people off at the end of the trip back at the Melbourne Arts Centre. Approx: 9- 9.30pm on the Sunday night.

Group Size

Maximum of 14 travellers per group

We like to keep our groups small and personal, so that each traveller can benefit from the full support and attention of our staff. We will have two walking guides with groups above 8 people and a driver throughout.

Physical Rating

This iconic Australian walk is achievable by everybody of all ages who have a reasonable level of fitness. The walk is a winding track which follows the contours around the coastal headland. On occasions we walk down to isolated beaches and across soft sand and then walk up the other side over steps on a well marked track that has been constructed and managed with your safety in mind. Some sections involve walking through forested areas where the track is firm under foot, while others can be muddy depending on the weather conditions. Expect to walk for up between 4 to 7 hours each day with regular stops along the way take in the natural beauty or for refreshments such as tea or coffee.

Important Notes

1. Walking boots:

Walking boots are recommended for this walk with full ankle support or hiking shoes with a good grip. It is possible to walk the track in training shoes but we do not recommend it as some of the track can be muddy & slippery. Make sure that your chosen footwear is well worn in & comfortable.

2. Weather conditions:

Please note that this is Victoria which is famous for its ever changing and unpredictable weather conditions ('four seasons in one day'). Please ensure you are prepared with the right clothing. A warm jacket, thermal top, & woollen hat are advisable all year round. A hat and sunscreen is essential. In extreme heat conditions we will shorten the walks.

3. Drinking water

You will need to carry at least 2 litres of water with you. We will be able to refill your bottles part way through days 2 & 3 when we meet up with our support crew. Dehydration is the biggest risk when undertaking a physical activity. It is so important to be aware of your fluid intake and to constantly drink water throughout the day (even when you do not feel thirsty).

4. Dietary requirements

Please notify us in advance of any special meal requirements.

5. Extreme heat:

Please be aware that extreme sunshine can cause sunburn - particularly in the summer. We recommend that you bring loose, cool, cotton clothing to protect yourself from the harsh sunrays. A wide rimmed sunhat and sunglasses are a must from October to April due to high UV radiation.

6. Pull out points:

Along the route there are various pull out points where you can leave the track early if you do not feel like continuing. Our driver will meet you and take you back to our lodging where you can kick back, read or explore the area and relax before the others return.

Checklist (suggested list):

Travel Documents

- None required except for Australian tourist visa for Overseas visitors

Personal Items

- High factor sunscreen
- Blister pads and / or tape for rubbing / blisters on your feet. Especially the ladies!
- Mosquito repellent
- Sunglasses
- Toiletries
- Watch or alarm clock
- Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing
- Wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel

Clothing

- 3 T-shirts / long sleeved T-shirt - quick drying materials recommended
- Pair of comfy shoes (to relax in)
- Well worn in walking shoes or boots with good grip required
- 2 pairs of knee length shorts or long trousers (not jeans)
- Light sweater/ fleece
- Light weight waterproof
- Towel and swim wear (summer months)
- Sun hat
- Change of clothes to relax in
- Water bottle or drinking bladder , min. 1 litre capacity

Please be prepared for a variety of weather conditions with the possibility of cold, windy & wet conditions whilst on the walk as Victorian weather is notoriously changeable.

Other Suggestions:

- Camera
- Adapter for recharging digital camera
- Small binoculars
- Reading material
- Penknife
- Torch / head torch

Spending Money

Very little spending money is required for this trip, the main expense would be dinner on the last night or any alcohol you wish to buy. Additional funds for activities such as Helicopter rides at the 12 Apostles or additional alcohol after dinner are optional.

Keeping In Touch - communication while on the road

Mobile reception is very sporadic in this area of Victoria given the dense tree cover and steep valleys. During the walk there is sporadic mobile reception in certain places. The leaders will be carrying 2 way radios. At Apollo Bay and Lavers hill there is a phone available and mobile reception.

Your fellow walkers

Are from all walks of life and ages. People join this trip as both singles and couples, so you are likely to enjoy good company from like minded people of similar interests. We have made the walk as flexible as possible to cater to different walking abilities and wishes and your walk leader will consult with you to determine what you'd like to get from your walks. If you wish to undertake shorter walks this can be arranged through an earlier pick up and similarly we are able to extend the walk for those people who wish to on certain days. The walking guide stays with the people who wish to extend their walk and the support vehicle shuttles those who want to return to the accommodation. We have found this arrangement works well to satisfy everyone's aims from the weekend.

Group Leader

All RAW trips are accompanied by one of our experienced group leaders who are trained in first aid and knowledgeable about the activity undertaken and area you are visiting. Your group leader is also accompanied by a driver, taking you from the start to finish in a minibus which also acts as the support vehicle. The aim of the group leader is to direct you through the walk safely and to help you have the best time possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the areas visited on the trip which is supplemented by the local experts we bring in to talk on the historical and environmental aspects of the Great Ocean walk.

Responsible Travel

We practice 'leave no trace' outdoor ethics on all our trips, aiming not only to minimize the environmental impact of our visit but also to leave a positive contribution. You will often see your leader collecting litter left by other walkers and a donation is made towards local wildlife conservation from your participation on this trip.

RAW Travel has taken an active approach to helping communities in destinations that we visit and raising money for grass roots projects aimed at alleviating poverty and conservation of the natural environment. For more details please visit our website where we have a download document detailing our responsible travel practice and philosophy:

<http://rawtravel.com/resptravel/responsibletravel.pdf>

Local Dress

Australia has relaxed attitudes towards standards of dress; however the extreme sunshine can cause sunburn - particularly in the summer. We recommend that you bring loose, cool, cotton clothing to protect yourself from the harsh sunrays. A sunhat and sunglasses are a must.

Health & Safety

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in a group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW Travel reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

Our leaders are first aid qualified and will be carrying a first aid kit. Please ensure that you bring a good hat and high factor sun screen, insect repellent. We advise that you carry at least 1 litre of water with you at the start of each day.

RAW Newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of traveller's stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip.

If you have any suggestions to add more information to our trip dossier that you think other walkers would find useful please email: adventure@rawtravel.com. And of course email us if you have any questions leading up to the event.

We hope you will love the Great Ocean Walk as much as we do and we look forward to you joining us on other RAW experiences.