



Great Ocean Walk - end to end

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.

This walk encompasses the full length of the walking trail so you experience all of the most spectacular and remote sections of the trail, showcasing all the wonderful diversity of scenery and habitats. We have also included a 'rest day' on Day 4 with a shorter, leisurely walk with a local historian who will bring the incredible history of this coast alive. Please note that the minimum group size required for each departure is 6 people.

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.

Itinerary

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Day 1 Melbourne - Apollo Bay / Walk Apollo Bay – Shelly Beach 8km walking

7.30am pick up from the Melbourne Arts Centre, St Kilda Road. Transfer to Apollo Bay approx. 3 hours drive and where we stop for lunch and check into our accommodation. After a briefing from your walking leader we'll head out that afternoon on the first section of the walk. The Great Ocean walk starts from the Apollo Bay visitor's centre and winds out through the town to the beachside suburb of Marengo, named by a passing French explorer.

Marengo is home to a colony of Australian fur seals who hang out on rocks in the bay. The walk follows the foreshore as we leave Marengo and enters the Otway forests, eventually coming out at Shelly beach where we end for today and transfer back to Apollo Bay for the evening. That night we'll enjoy a good meal out on the town and prepare for a big walk the next day.

Accommodation: Apollo Bay

Walking distance: approx. 8 km / 3 - 4 hours walking

Meals included: Dinner only

Day 2 Walk Shelly Beach – Parker Inlet 20.5km walking

The first section of our walk today takes us away from the coast and into the towering forests of mountain ash that characterize this part of the Otway national park. At upto 65m high these are some of the biggest trees in Australia and walking through the heart of the giant forest is a wonderful experience though there are some hills to be negotiated!

We rejoin the coast at Blanket bay, an isolated stretch of coast that was one of the original ports for unloading supplies for the Cape Otway light station. The track meanders along the cliff tops and through coastal forests to the quiet haven of Parker's inlet. Expect to see Black wallabies, Echnida's, Black Cockatoo's, Rosella's and other wildlife along our route. At Parker's inlet we transfer to our accommodation at Cape Otway. You will be in shared bunk house style accommodation in natural surroundings – a great place to see the resident koalas of Cape Otway.

Accommodation: Cape Otway

Walking distance: approx. 20.5 km walking / 6 - 7 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

Day 3: Cape Otway – Johanna Beach 22.5km walking

This morning we start from the Cape Otway light house, which is Australia's oldest continuously operating lighthouse. We then ascend back up to the escarpment overlooking the beach and walk along a narrow coastal path overlooking Station beach. The path winds through along the cliff tops and then wind sculpted sand dunes before descending to the beautiful Aire River estuary and surrounding wetlands. After stopping for a break at Aire river we continue along the coastal path with stunning coastal views ahead en route to 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.

Continuing on from Castle Cove we encounter some of the most spectacular coastal views of the entire walk. 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 from Johanna Beach to our accommodation at Cape Otway.

Accommodation: Cape Otway

Walking distance: Approx. 22.5 km walking / 6-8 hours

Meals included: Breakfast and packed lunch

Day 4: Parker Inlet - Cape Otway 6km walking / rest day

Today is a relatively relaxing day where we take time to explore Cape Otway at a leisurely pace. This morning we return to Parkers Inlet and join a local Shipwreck Historian who'll inform us of some of the fascinating and often tragic history of Cape Otway and it's significance in Australia's development. We meander along the waters edge following rock shelves and beaches before we ascend the cliffs along the coast to the Cape Otway light house, which is Australia's oldest continuously operating lighthouse. We take a tour around this historic structure with it's museum and telegraph station. Remainder of the day can be spent relaxing or enjoying further short walks in the area.

Accommodation: Cape Otway

Walking distance: Approx. 6 km walking / 2-3 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

Day 5: Johanna Beach - Ryan's Den 14.5km walking

Our afternoon walk is one of the wildest and most challenging sections of the entire track. We From Johanna beach the track rises through rolling hills and farmland as it cuts inland before returning to the coast and one of the walk's highlights: Milanesia Beach. Isolated, rugged and hidden, Milanesia receives few visitors and is all the more special for it. From here the trail continues along the high sea cliffs to our take out point at Ryan's Den with breathtaking views all the way back to Cape Otway lighthouse.

Accommodation: Princetown

Walking distance: Approx. 18 km walking / 6-8 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

Day 6: Ryan's Den – Wreck Beach 14 km walking

We continue through coastal forests that lead us to the evocatively named Moonlight Head and Cape Volney with more breathtaking views to Cape Otway. After Moonlight head the track turns inland and follows an unsealed road several kilometers before returning to the coast. The final highlight of today's walk is the Gables Lookout, perched on one of the highest sea cliffs in mainland Australia. Groups in September may be lucky enough to see one of the departing Southern right whales which frequent this coast in the winter months. We continue through a grove of Casuarina trees to come out near Wreck Beach where at low tide we can descend and see the anchors of two of the many shipwrecks that lie submerged along this coast ('The Fiji' and the 'Marie Gabrielle').

Accommodation: Princetown

Walking distance: Approx. 14 km walking /4-6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

Day 7: Wreck Beach– 12 Apostles 17 km walking

Our final day on the Great Ocean walk! We continue our walk from Wreck Beach passing the Devil's Kitchen we follow an old coach road towards Princetown and the Twelve Apostles marine park. The wetlands around Princetown support a wide variety of birdlife and we cross the Gellibrand River on a trestle bridge. We are now on the home stretch into Port Campbell national park and the world famous Twelve Apostles soon come into sight. The Great Ocean walk currently finishes by Glen Ample homestead and we'll have a drink to celebrate our achievement. For those who are keen the last few kilometers can be walked to reach the visitor centre at the Twelve Apostles (time permitting). That evening we return to Melbourne, anticipating arriving by 8pm after stopping en route for dinner

Walking distance: Approx. 17 km walking /4-6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, packed lunch

Accommodation

We use a variety of guesthouse and cabin accommodation for this trip along the route. We stay a night at Apoillo Bay and are based at cabins in the Otway's for 3 nights in bunk style accommodation. It is basic but comfortable, clean and with excellent toilet and shower facilities. In this location you have walkers cabins surrounded by Manna gum forest. Koala sightings are frequent here. The last night will be spent further along the Great Ocean road near Princetown in guesthouse accommodation.

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 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 final 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 10 people.

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

We can cater to most dietary restrictions without any problems. 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. You can do laundry at our accommodation in Cape Otway if needed.

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, cape Otway and Princetown and Lavers Hill there is a public phone available and mobile reception (carrier dependent).

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.

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.

The information in these trip notes has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and RAW Travel.