

FROM GOLD TO THE MALLEE

History, Art and Landscapes of
Western Victoria

Overview

The regions of central and western Victoria are often bypassed by travellers, and yet they offer fascinating insights into Australia's history and culture: from Indigenous Dreaming and custodianship of the diverse lands to Australia's economic foundations in gold, grazing and grain and the recent revival of the arts in these regions.

Our 8-day tour begins in Ballarat, marked by the legacy of gold mining and the Eureka Stockade, but also by its cultural heritage, from the oldest regional art gallery in Australia to the area's many beautiful contemporary gardens. Next, we travel west to Victoria's centre, to witness the spectacular scenery of the Grampians and learn about Indigenous history, art, and custodianship of the land. We then move on to the harsh natural beauty of the Wimmera and the Mallee, where we follow the Silo Art Trail – the disused grain silos which serve as giant canvases for contemporary artists to capture the region's history. As we move north, inland deserts and salt lakes give way to the billabongs of Murray River. We end the tour in Mildura, where we enjoy the landscape and explore the regional town's cultural heritage.

Tour leader

Dr Nick Gordon holds a University Medal and PhD in History from the University of Sydney and has taught at Australian universities for 10 years. Nick's academic expertise is complemented by the specialised knowledge he has gained as an artist. He brings his insights into the history and art of Australia to this tour. Nick has been leading tours for Academy Travel since 2007.

Essential information

Tour dates: October 23-30, 2022

Price per person: \$4,780

Supplement for sole use of double room: \$810

Maximum number in group: 16

Start: 2.00pm, October 23, Melbourne Airport Terminal One

Finish: After breakfast, October 30, Mildura airport

Fitness level

★★ Good overall fitness required

Itinerary

Ballarat (3 nights), Horsham (2 nights), Mildura (2 nights)

Further information and bookings

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Highlights

Paul Bangay's Private Garden

Paul Bangay is one of Australia's most loved and internationally renowned landscape designers. Enjoy a private tour of his own garden, Stonefields, led by Paul himself.

The Silo Art Trail

Huge grain silos dot the landscape of the Wimmera in western Victoria. A remnant of the golden days of Australia's grain trade, these have been turned into huge canvases for contemporary artists to immortalise the people and culture of the region.

The Grampians (Gariwerd)

Get to know this region in depth: from the iconic views across a unique Australian landscape, to its precipitous waterfalls, to the deep history of Australia as revealed through the rock art of the Djab Wurrung and Jardwadjali peoples, the traditional custodians of the land.

Australian History

Explore Australia's history through the places and landscapes that have shaped it, from the Eureka Rebellion in Ballarat, to the grain and grazing of the Federation economy, and the rich Indigenous history of Country.

Unique Landscape of the Mallee

Get to know one of Australia's most iconic landscapes: the dry soils, salt lakes, ephemeral rivers, sand dunes and the low-lying eucalypts that give the region its name. Explore the beauty of this region, including visits to Lake Hindmarsh and the Hattah National Park.

Detailed itinerary

Included meals are shown with the symbols B, L and D.

Sunday 23 October – The Goldfields

We meet this afternoon at 2pm at Melbourne airport, Terminal 1. From here we travel by private coach to Ballarat. Once the centre of life on the goldfields, when it went from a field of tents to become one of Australia's largest inland cities, Ballarat was also the centre of political turmoil, which came to a head in 1854 with the Eureka Stockade. On arrival in Ballarat, we visit the Gold Museum, which traces the development of gold mining in the region and its social history. After settling into our hotel, we have dinner in one of Ballarat's best restaurants. Overnight Ballarat (D)

Monday 24 October – Paul Bangay and the Gardens of Daylesford

The cool climate of the southeastern goldfields is a gardener's delight, and they have become home to some of Victoria's most loved private retreats, including the personal garden of Paul Bangay, one of Australia's most successful landscape designers. This morning we have an exclusive visit of Paul Bangay's own garden at Stonefields. After Paul takes us around his garden, we enjoy morning tea together on the property. In the afternoon, we visit Daylesford and Hepburn Springs, whose well-preserved buildings and streetscapes reveal the history of mining and migration in the colonial period. In the later afternoon, we visit St Erth, a cool climate garden owned by the Diggers Club, which conserves and propagates heirloom seeds and rootstock. Returning to Ballarat, the evening is at leisure. (B, morning tea)

Tuesday 25 October – Ballarat

This morning we have a lecture on the development of landscape painting in Australia in the 20th century. We then visit Ballarat Art Gallery, the oldest regional gallery in Australia, with an exceptional collection of Australian art. After a guided visit, there is time to explore the gallery's temporary exhibitions. After a break for lunch, we travel to the Pyrenees wine region, about an hour's drive north of Ballarat, for wine tastings and nibbles at some local vineyards. The region, with its cold winters and long hot summers, is well regarded for its red varieties. On our return to Ballarat, we visit the Botanic Gardens on Lake Wendouree. Evening at leisure. Overnight Ballarat. (B, wine tasting)

Wednesday 26 October – The Grampians

Today we drive west into Central Victoria. After a morning coffee break in Ararat, another of Victoria's gold towns, we visit Brambuk, the Indigenous Cultural Centre near Halls' Gap, at the base of the Grampians. Here we learn about the deep history and significance of the region – called Gariwerd by its traditional custodians, the Djab Wurrung and Jardwadjali people – and the very particular ecology of the National Park. After a break for lunch, we drive into the Grampians, a spectacular mountain range formed by sedimentary stone formed over 400 million years ago. We stop to take in scenic views across the ranges, including from Boroka Lookout, and the beautiful MacKenzie Falls, and visit some of the exceptionally well-preserved Indigenous rock art sites. In the later afternoon, we continue on to

Horsham, our base for the next two nights as we explore the Wimmera and Mallee. Dinner and overnight, Horsham. (B, D)

Thursday 27 October – Silo Art & Wimmera Plains

The Wimmera Plains form an iconic Australian landscape, with its wide, dry plains and low-lying Mallee forests. With the expansion of the Victorian colony, the region was quickly taken over by graziers and farmers and by the early 20th century the region was a major producer of wheat and wool. Today we explore the history of the region, visiting the ‘Stick Shed’ at Murtoa, a cathedral-like structure built in 1939 to store huge quantities of grain, the Methodist Mission at Antwerp, and the natural beauty of the Pink Lake near Dimboola and Lake Hindmarsh. A highlight of today is the beginning of the Silo Art Trail – a public art project which turned the disused grain silos of the region into canvases on which contemporary artists depicted the history and people of the region. Returning to Horsham, the evening is at leisure. (B)

Friday 28 October – Silo Art and the Landscapes of the Mallee

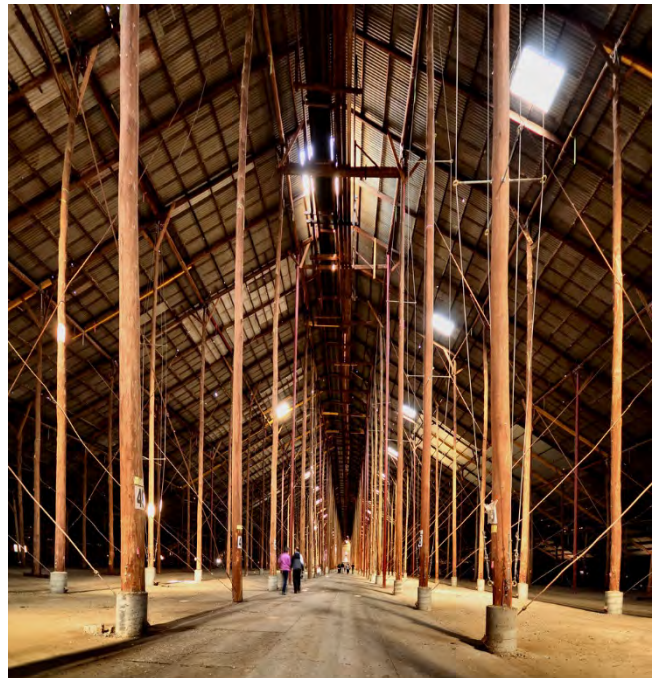
Today we drive north, continuing along the Silo Art Trail and move deeper into the Mallee. As we move north, we notice the landscape becoming drier and less hospitable, the beginnings of Australia’s great inland desert landscapes – the Big and Little Desert wilderness areas – and the distinctive Mallee landscape, with its diverse species of eucalypts. After a break for lunch, we continue north to Lake Tyrrell, whose mirror-like surface creates the impression of an infinite skyline, and then to the Hattah National Park, where the Mallee landscape gives way to the billabongs and marshes of the meandering Murray. Dinner and overnight, Mildura. (B, D)

Saturday 29 October – Mildura and the Murray

The Murray River – despite the drought and chronic problems with finding a solution to water usage along the length of Australia’s longest river system – remains beautiful in the area around Mildura. This morning we explore the landscape, including a cruise along the river, home to native birdlife and unique vegetation. After our tour this morning, we have lunch at a local winery to enjoy the abundance provided by the region. Then we visit the Art Centre – a combination of galleries and collections centred on Rio Vista, a National Trust historic house. This evening, we meet for farewell drinks. Overnight, Mildura. (B, L)

Sunday 30 October – Departure

The tour ends this morning, with a transfer to Mildura airport for morning flights to Melbourne. (B)



Hotels

We have selected 4-star accommodation for this tour, but please keep in mind that regional and rural areas are not always able to provide the same level of in-room service as inner-city hotels.

Craig's Royal Hotel, Ballarat (3 nights)

www.craigroyal.com.au/

Horsham International Hotel, Horsham (2 nights)

www.horshamint.com.au/

Mercure Hotel, Mildura (2 nights)

accor.com/hotel/

Weather

Weather in this region in October tends to be on the cool side.

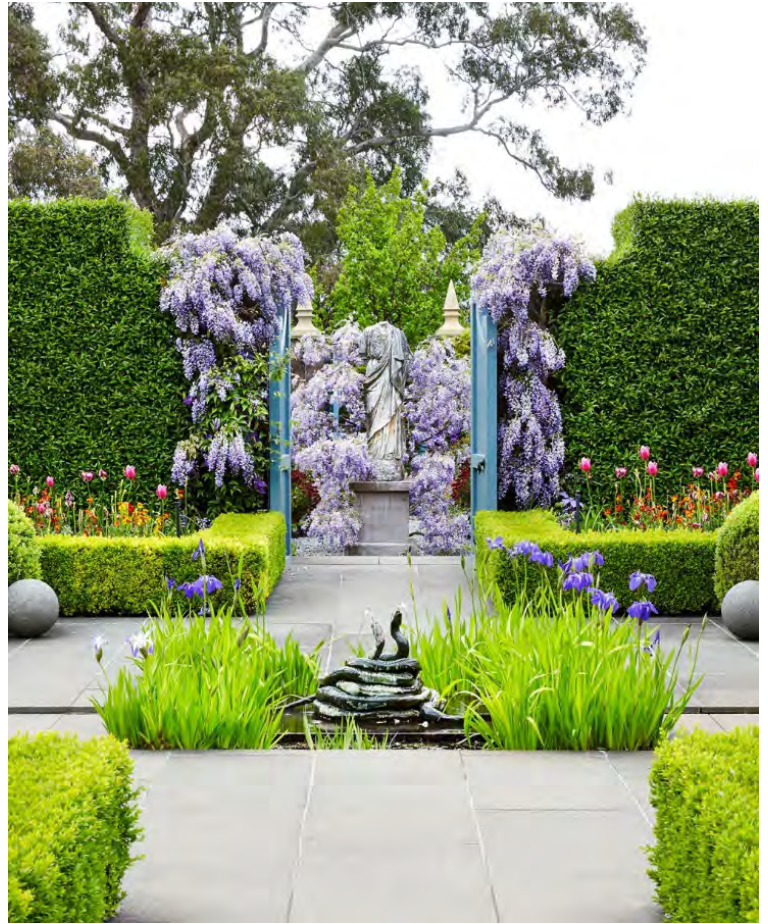
Average high temps range from 18-25°C, with lows from 6-10°C. A rain jacket is suggested.

Fitness requirements for this tour

GRADE TWO ★★

This Grade Two tour is physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 5-7 kilometres over the day at a moderate pace
- stand and slow walk for up to 90 minutes galleries and museums
- negotiate walking over uneven ground on dirt tracks
- walk up and down steps and slopes
- get on and off a coach with steps unassisted
- move your luggage unassisted



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