

TO THE EDGE OF THE OUTBACK

Mungo, Broken Hill & Beyond

Overview

In the 1970s the discovery of 'Mungo Man' and 'Mungo Woman' in a dry lake in the far south-west of New South Wales drew international attention to the region. Lake Mungo has one of the longest continual records of Aboriginal life in Australia, and the skeletons found in its sands are not only the oldest known fully modern humans outside Africa but show the earliest signs of ritual cremation. With its rich archaeological heritage and stark, eerie desert beauty, this area is like nowhere else in Australia.

A visit to World Heritage-listed Lake Mungo is the core experience of this ten-day itinerary, which takes you from the Victorian border town of Mildura to the storied mining town of Broken Hill in western NSW. As well as ancient indigenous sites, we will explore the notoriously fickle river systems of the Murrumbidgee and Darling, which provided the ecological base for both ancient and colonial settlement and trade, and still support industry worth billions to the Australian economy. We also experience the iconic art and culture of the outback, for decades a core part of Australian myth and identity.

Tour leader

Dr. Chris Carter is an Indigenous and historical archaeologist with over 20 years' experience leading tours in Australia, Central and South America, Spain and Ireland. He has a BA(Hons), MA and PhD from the Australian National University. When not leading tours, Chris works as an archaeological consultant and heritage advisor.

Essential information

Tour dates: September 9-18, 2022

Price per person: \$5,430

Supplement for sole use of double room: \$1,970

Deposit: \$500

Maximum number in group: 12

Start: 6.00pm, September 9, Mercure Hotel, Mildura

Finish: After breakfast, September 18, Imperial Hotel, Broken Hill

Fitness level

★★★ Physically demanding; excellent overall fitness required

Itinerary

Mildura (2 nights), Lake Mungo (2 nights), Bindara (1 night), Broken Hill (4 nights)

Further information and bookings

Hannah Kleboe 02 9235 0023, hannah@academytravel.com.au



Highlights

The Riverina

Discover the economic and cultural significance of the remarkable inland river systems of southwestern New South Wales. Visit local galleries and historic Yanga Station.

Lake Mungo National Park

Explore the archaeological heritage of the ancient lakebed of Mungo National Park, recognised for both its important geological past and its 50 000-year record of Aboriginal settlement.

A Great Mining History

Get to know the history of mining towns like Broken Hill and Silverton, which prospered from rich deposits of lead, zinc and silver. Visit the Line of Lode Miners Memorial and relive the harsh conditions of the mines in Silverton.

Ancient Art and Culture

Experience indigenous culture dating back over thousands of years in the stunning landscape of Mutawintji National Park: from dreamtime stories to rock art and hand stencils.

The Myth of the Outback

Witness Broken Hill's flourishing arts scene, born of the uncompromising landscapes. The town provided the backdrop for such classic films as *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert* and *Mad Max 2* and Pro Hart was born and painted here.

Detailed itinerary

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

Friday 9 September – Arrive

The tour commences at our Mildura accommodation at 6pm. After meeting Chris Carter for introductions, we enjoy a welcome dinner in Stefano's, a multi-award-winning Italian restaurant. Overnight Mildura [D]

Saturday 10 September – Murray River

This morning we board the historic paddle steamer PS Melbourne for a leisurely cruise on the Murray River. An informative onboard commentary provides an insight into the Murray Darling River system and its environs as we meander along the river. We learn about the history of the majestic steam driven paddleboats and enjoy a light lunch onboard before disembarking at Mildura Wharf. During the afternoon we will visit Rio Vista, the home built in 1892 by William Chaffey, who, along with his brother George, was responsible for establishing Mildura and the development of the irrigation programs that eventually brought prosperity to the region. The Mildura Art Gallery occupies space adjoining the original house. Overnight Mildura [B, L]

Sunday 11 September – Walls of China

After a leisurely breakfast we take the short drive to Wentworth where we make a brief stop to see the confluence of the Murray and Darling Rivers. On arrival at Lake Mungo, we have a picnic lunch and visit the Information Centre and the shearing shed that once belonged to the original Mungo Station. We check into our accommodation mid-afternoon and have time for a short rest. This evening we head back into the National Park to witness the sun setting over the Walls of China. Overnight Lake Mungo. [B, L, D]

Monday 12 September – Mungo National Park

We return to the Walls of China this morning and walk across the lunette that formed along the eastern margin of the lake to search for evidence of the earliest human inhabitants and extinct animals dating back 50 000 years. The World Heritage-listed Willandra Lakes system has remained dry for approximately 18 000 years, creating a significant archaeological region known for the discovery of Mungo Man, the oldest human remains found in Australia. We drive around the lunette, stopping at Vigars Well to climb the dunes for a spectacular view, and enjoy a picnic lunch. Overnight Lake Mungo. [B, L, D]

Hotels

Accommodation on this tour is limited by the remote locations and the number of rooms available at certain destinations. Our stays vary from motel style in Mildura, to cabins at Mungo Lodge. At Bindara, located on the banks of the Darling River, we have sole use of the historic station. The rooms here reflect its heritage nature and some have shared facilities. In Broken Hill we are the sole occupants of a charming eight room heritage hotel where we get to mingle with the owners who still work in the mining industry.

Due to the limited accommodation the group size is limited to 12 participants.

The Mercure Hotel, Mildura

(2 nights)

Mungo Lodge, Lake Mungo

(2 nights)

Bindara Station, Bindara

(1 night)

Imperial Hotel, Broken Hill

(4 nights)

Tuesday 13 September – Bindara Station

After an early morning walk along the dry western shoreline of the lake we depart for Pooncarie on the Darling River. Burke and Wills passed through here on their ill-fated journey to the Gulf of Carpentaria. We stop for a cold beer and barbecue lunch at the Telegraph Hotel before continuing to historic Bindara Station. In the evening we enjoy a campfire dinner with station owner Barb. Overnight Bindara Station. (B, L, D)

Wednesday 14 September – To Broken Hill

The majestic red brick homestead and outbuildings on Bindara were built by Joseph Dunne around 1870 from bricks fired on the property using local clay, while other materials used in the construction were transported up the river by paddle steamer. We explore the outbuildings and old cemetery and take a stroll along the banks of the Darling River, where the bushland provides a natural habitat for a wide range of birds including many rare species. This area also contains evidence of Aboriginal occupation including stone tools, fireplaces and trees scarred by the removal of bark to build canoes. We have lunch at the Station before driving on to Broken Hill, where we arrive in late afternoon. Overnight Broken Hill. (B, L, D)

Thursday 15 September – Explore Broken Hill

Today we explore Broken Hill's wide streets and heritage, discovering the town's mining past and thriving modern art scene. We take a walking tour with a local guide through the historic town centre past palatial Federation and Victorian buildings funded by mining wealth, as well as tin cottages and 1930s art deco properties. After the tour, we will call in at the Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery housed in the refurbished Sully's Emporium building. The gallery collection comprises colonial, modern and Aboriginal works by Australian artists such as Lloyd Rees, Pro Hart and Emily Kame Kngwarreye. This afternoon we visit the Line of Lode Miners Memorial, located atop a mullock heap. The impressive structure pays tribute to the 800 miners who lost their lives working at the mine. Later, we take a short drive out of town to see the sun setting over the Sculpture Park. Overnight Broken Hill. (B)

Friday 16 September – Mutawintji National Park

This morning we make a 300-kilometre round trip northeast of Broken Hill to Mutawintji National Park, dominated by the Bynguano Ranges whose vibrant colour beautifully captures the changing light and provides a backdrop for the famous hand stencil

Weather

September is a pleasant time to travel to inland NSW with temperatures historically ranging between 9-19°C. Mornings in Western NSW and Broken Hill are cool with minimums between 7-10°C. There is only a slight chance of rain.

Fitness requirements for this tour

GRADE THREE ★★★

This Grade Three tour is among our most physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 5-8 kilometres at a moderate pace with only short breaks
- stand for a reasonable length of time in galleries and museums
- tolerate varying climatic conditions like humidity and heat
- negotiate walking over uneven ground on dirt tracks, boardwalks and rocky terrain
- walk up and down steps and slopes
- get on and off a coach with steps unassisted
- travel distances of up to six hours on a 20-seat minibus, sometimes on unsealed roads
- move your luggage unassisted

artworks of the local people. The ruggedly beautiful park shows evidence of continuous use by Aboriginal people for thousands of years. We are guided around Mutawintji by one of the traditional owners and introduced to its history, culture and embark on a walk to view the rock-art. Overnight Broken Hill. (B, L)

Saturday 17 September – Daydream Mine

We travel 20 kilometres outside of Broken Hill for a private guided tour of the Daydream Mine site, founded in 1881. Starting on the surface, we visit the old township where the miners lived in extremely harsh conditions in the 1880s and see the historic smelter used by BHP. Then we descend underground to see how the mine once operated, donning a hat and light just as the Cornish miners would have done. We continue to Silverton and wander through the historic buildings, many of which have appeared onscreen in films and television series. At the iconic Silverton Hotel, you can have lunch washed down with a cold beer before we return to Broken Hill in the afternoon. Tonight (weather permitting) we'll enjoy an evening at the Outback Astronomy centre and dinner under a night sky with no light pollution. Overnight Broken Hill. (B, D)

Sunday 18 September – Depart

The tour concludes after breakfast. (B)

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