



# SCOTTSDALE TOURS

Southern States & the Murray  
River 2011

*Thank you to Ali for this wonderful 'blurb'.*

We began our adventures in Southern Australia by arriving at our lovely hotel in Melbourne pretty late after flight delays. The city lights looked lovely as we drove in from the airport.



After breakfast the next morning we set off northwest through the harness-racing area of Melton and on to Bacchus Marsh with its beautiful Memorial avenue of trees and lovely old houses. Lots of orchards here and workers in coolie hats in big market gardens. Saw a huge tree stump that had been carved in the shape of a hand. Through the thermal area of Ballan and on through gum forest to Ballarat where we had morning tea beside a big shallow lake. A very pretty gold-mining town with huge old trees and lovely old houses with verandahs and lacy ironwork. Some magnificent old buildings.

Then up the hill to Sovereign Hill – an old historic mining settlement – touristy but very well done with lots to see and do. A proper town with old stores and school, pub, church etc. Displays of coach-building, gold-pouring, gold-panning, horse and coach rides and a good gold museum. There were lots of happy kids here on a school camp. For a week they dress in period costume and live as kids did in the 1860's – and have to have the manners to match! The soldiers marched through the streets and then fired the big canons. After early dinner at our motel we were back at Sovereign hill for the 'Sound and Light Show', the story of the 1854 miners' uprising, which was wonderful. Back to the motel just in time to watch Kate and Wills get married!

**Day 3** saw us heading north again through green rolling country and tidy farms, then through the Wombat State forest to Daylesford where we drove up through the botanic gardens to a lookout tower- great views and stunning autumn colours. On past Guildford and Castlemaine, where three rivers meet, to our roadside morning tea stop in the sun. Lots of new lambs and calves in the fields.

Had a ride on the 'Talking Tram' in the lovely old gold-mining town of Bendigo which gave us a good look at the town. Young people everywhere – a rock concert on close by. After lunch we were off through flat wheat country to Goornong, Elmore and Rochester and



on to the river town of Echuca. Buster and his white parrot took us on a walking tour around the old river port. Enjoyable and informative –an hour with Buster was enough! After a wee rest at our motel we headed down to the river to have dinner on the paddle-steamer 'EmmyLou'. Nice dinner and a very pretty ride on the river on a fairly chilly evening.

**Day 4** we set off along the Murray River valley through the little river towns of Gunbower, Cohuna and Kerang. Flat country here. Arrived at Lake Boga which was the secret Base for the Catalina Flying Boat Service during the war. Visited the museum, watched a video and walked around the HUGE semi-restored Catalina. Had morning tea by the lake. Not a breath of wind, huge old pepper trees and two couples in very sporty e-type Jags. On through Swan Hill, Nyah, WoodWood and Tooleybuc to Robinvale where we stopped at the loo and raided the biscuit tin to keep us going, and then on to Mildura

for late lunch. Then straight along the Sturt Highway past miles and miles of irrigated grapevines and orchards to Renmark, right on the river. Put our clocks back 30 minutes – (now in Sth Australia), and had time to explore before dinner in the hotel. Jock and Neil, skipper and crew of the 'Spirit of the Murray' joined us for dinner.

**Day 5** had a nice slow start with time to explore Renmark before Ross drove us back to the customs house at the border to meet the boat. Interesting drive with lots of fields still not planted because they have been under water until very recently. Lots of vine-like ?lemons/melons growing wild on the bare earth. Evidence of the floods is everywhere. At the Custom House, Paul was waiting with his fantastic BBQ lunch and the boat was tied up waiting for us. Birds everywhere and a silly Willy Wagtail making a fool of himself in the side mirror of the bus. Then all aboard for the first 66 K's of our 560K journey down the mighty Murray. We waved goodbye to Ross who, unfortunately for him, had to drive the bus and meet us later. We backtracked a bit to Border Cliffs and then set off down river, with a stop for some Robertson family history and afternoon tea at Chowilla station. Back in Renmark at 5pm.



The next four days on the Murray were simply magic. Warm and cosy in the cabin and wild and wonderful up on deck. There has not been as much water in the river for 40 years and to see it like this, full and spilling over everywhere was a real privilege. The locks have all been underwater and have only just re-opened, some under repair. It may not be like this again for 100 years. Jock and Neil looked after us so well and were full of information.

#### Some daily highlights:

**Day 6:** The koala on the island; Paringa bridge opening for us; Lock 5; a look at Berri; Neils morning tea and packed lunch; Lock 4; kangaroos; landing on the grass at Loxton because the jetty was underwater; Historic village; river birds – royal and yellow Spoonbills, darters, corellas, cormorants, kites and one lonely pelican. Swallows with us all the way – every day.



**Day 7:** Walking down to the boat at Loxton on a perfect morning; river mist; reflections; drowned caravans for sale; a tricky landing at Overland Corner; lunch in the old pub; water for miles on the flood plain; Banrock Station; off the boat straight onto the grass again at Waikerie.

**Day 8:** early morning lookout walk; Butcher birds singing at Lock 2; murals on the Cadell prison pump station; lots of pink galahs; museum visit and station lunch at Morgan; lock 1 at Blanchetown; wonderful cliffs; drowned houses; landing right on the road at Nildottie; up high across farm country and river ferry to Mannum where you could walk across the river during the drought.



**Day 9:** Hundreds of galahs outside the dining room at breakfast on a very chilly morning; bus back to the boat at Nildottie; Cynthia, hard hats and aboriginal history at NgautNgaut; lots more houses/baches/shacks and house-boats; going slowly so the wake didn't wash into houses; getting out onto the hotel lawn at

Mannum with the 'Murray Princess' tied up; Neil's special lunch on the aft deck; more stunning cliffs; refuelling; the end of our river trip at Wellington; back on the bus with Ross and into Adelaide at sunset.

**Day 10:** Woke up in our lovely hotel and said goodbye to Ally and Ces who were leaving us to fly home. We spent the morning having an excellent guided tour of Adelaide with a local guide.

A free afternoon. Some of us went on the Obahn(a bus/train).



**Day 11** saw us back on the bus and off down the Fleurieu peninsula to catch the ferry to Kangaroo island. Out through the suburbs and the coastal towns with McLarenvale wine country on our left – hilly, pretty land and lots of kangaroos. Through Yankalilla and out by the coast with nice views, past a wind farm and on to Cape Jervis where we were JUST in time for the sturdy, drive-on ferry. Calm, 45 minute crossing. Drove off at the town of Penneshaw and had morning tea in the sun at Hog bay. Quite a long drive to the other end of the island through attractive farms and patches of salt-marsh to the visitor centre at Seal Bay.

A walkway down to the beach and sea-lions of all ages everywhere – up in the dunes and all along the beach and so close to us. A big flock of crested terns too. Wonderful.

After a wee drama with the trailer we stopped at a café for lunch and then through Flinders National park to see the truly remarkable Remarkable rocks. From there to the Cape de Couedic lighthouse and down a boardwalk to view Admirals Arch and lots of fur seals. Back along the island to Kingscote for the night. Saw lots of kangaroos today and lots of Norfolk pines here.

**Day 12** saw us back on the ferry to the mainland where we had a chilly morning tea and then headed off through the ‘second valley’ area. Pine forests and dairy farms – and rain! Sunny again when we got to Victor Harbour where we had lunch and then a look at the Whale museum before a horse-drawn carriage ride across the causeway to Granite Island.

**Day 13** was quite a long day in the bus in very changeable weather. Back around Lake Alexandrina to Wellington and our last look at the Murray from the ferry, then across low-lying desert-like country to Meningie where we had morning tea by the lake. Along beside the ‘Coorong’ past Police Point and Salt Creek to our lunch stop at Kingstone, and on to Robe where we didn’t find Beacon Hill but did find the rubbish dump! Then the heavens opened and we carried on through torrential rain all the way to our motel in Mt Gambier.!



**Day 14** was COLD. Nice guided tour with Judy to see her town and Blue Lake which is volcanic and supplies all their water, Valley lakes recreation area with its wheelchair swing, and the Umpherston Sinkhole. We had morning tea here between showers. A nice town with great facilities. Back on the bus and through pine forests to the Victorian border- clocks forward again. It felt quite cosy in the bus – only 9 degrees outside and damp and windy. The roadworkers were all bundled up like eskimos. At Heywood we turned south towards the coastal town of Portland where we stopped for lunch and then picked up a local guide who showed us the port and the huge aluminium smelter, the town centre etc and told us a lot about the history of this very busy port and town. Then on past Yambuk to Port Fairy, an old whaling town, now a holiday place. Lovely old buildings here. Very pretty place with a big sheltered inlet and some lovely homes and boats. On to our motel in Warrnambool where the heaters were on!



**Day 15** we woke to a few blue patches in the sky and did a wee tiki tour around this hilly attractive town with its big dairy factories before we headed off through cow country towards the south coast and our first stop at ‘Bay of Islands’. What a spectacular sight – huge orange cliffs, tall square rock islands and a wild and stormy sea. On through Peterborough with lots of holiday homes and sheltered inlet, to ‘London bridge’; no longer a bridge but well worth a photo stop. Next stop at ‘The Grotto’ with lots of steps but worth the climb. On past the old whaling/sealing town of Port Campbell to a stop at Lake Ard, a little round bay, very dramatic and

wild today. We had to hold onto the rails in the gale! So lucky to see all this at all after yesterday's rain. Headed inland across the top of Cape Otway through a gorge with ferns and huge Telegraph gums, across a flat swampy valley, over more hills and down into Apollo Bay for lunch. A beautiful sandy bay. On again for 80K's right by the sea, tricky road with cliffs and big drop-offs; rocky coastline with a few sandy bays – and good surf! On past Wye River village and through the beautiful beach town of Lorne basking in sunshine! At Anglesea there were some swimmers in the sea and kids in kayaks on the inlet. Just miles and miles of lovely sandy beaches until we got to Torquay at the end of the Great Ocean road. Had a wee break and then braved the motorway to Melbourne with Prince Phillip Bay on our right and through industrial Geelong. Torrential rain as we came into Melbourne at rush hour. Crowds of people with umbrellas- only 5pm but very dark and pretty challenging conditions for Ross and 'Bossy' the GPS with cars and trams filling the roads. The bus has done 3,700K's and we did 560 K's on the river.

**Day 16** started with a comprehensive tour of Melbourne with a local guide. Through the city and suburbs out to St Kilda, a stop for cakes and coffee in Acland Street, and a quick stop at the war memorial before we let a few people off at Victoria markets. A free afternoon to ride the free tram, shop ,go to the top of the Eureka building, find the glockenspiel or just explore. Our mystery dinner was in the old Victorian tram where we were warm and cosy and had a lovely meal as we travelled to St Kilda and back. A great finale to a great tour.

**Day 17** saw us up very early on a cold, wet morning on the way to the airport and homeward bound.

*Thanks everyone for a great trip and special thanks to Ali for the write-up and photos. Kind regards Ross*

