

An excellent introduction to an area of the country with a rich and well-preserved transport history. This will take you behind the scenes of the better preserved railways with opportunities to chat to those responsible for running the lines.

Tour Highlights

- Cairns in the tropical north, with a visit to the Inner Great Barrier Reef and a tree-top cable ride
- Brisbane is the capital of sunny Queensland with a river cruise and nearby Gold Coast trams
- Sydney – plenty to see and do. Bondi beach, Opera House, Suburban and light rail as well as sightseeing
- Melbourne – The famous Puffing Billy! One of the finest preserved steam railways in the world.
- Melbourne and Bendigo trams – vintage and modern!
- Tasmania – Pearns Steam World. History in steam, from giant traction engines to miniature steam trains. There is also a steam driven boat!
- Don River Railway – One of Australia’s finest heritage passenger carrying railways running alongside the picturesque Don River near Devonport in northern Tasmania
- West Coast Wilderness Railway – Queenstown to Strahan through the dense rain forest on Tasmania’s wild west coast



This is a wonderful chance to experience Eastern Australia by train. There are very interesting workshops and museums to lose yourself in and indulge in the history of steam. Plus, plenty of opportunities to do some alternative exploring if you wish. For those travelling to Australia from the Northern Hemisphere, to allow some ‘recovery time’, it would be wise to arrive in Australia at least a day before the tour commences. Please see the paragraph at the end of this itinerary for details of the available options.

Friday 13 October 2023

We will meet up in Cairns, Queensland, and in the evening, we will have a briefing meeting to introduce you to your Tour Manager and give you a taste of what is to come over the next three weeks.

Saturday 14 October 2023

We will have a fairly gentle first day, first visiting the nearby sugar factory at Gordonvale to see the sugar trains coming in from the for crushing at the factory. Mid-afternoon, we’ll head north for a visit Hartley’s Crocodile Adventures to see the crocs in their natural habitat and see the local keepers trying to avoid getting bitten! There’s a wide variety of birds and other indigenous beasts too.



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Sunday 15 October 2023

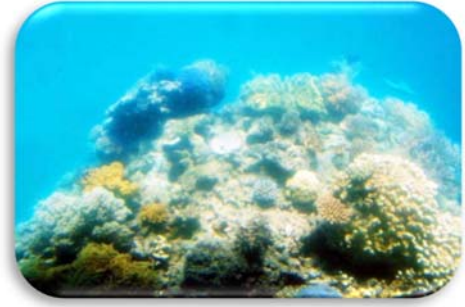
We’ll head north on the coast road with fabulous views and beaches to Port Douglas for a coffee stop and a look at the plinthed loco from the Ballyhooley Railway, regrettably now closed as a victim of COVID. This will be followed by a short ride north to another sugar factory at Mossman to photograph the sugar trains there.

Monday 16 October 2023

A unique rail journey that winds its way from Cairns to Kuranda, a village situated in the heritage listed rainforest - an unforgettable journey through tropical paradise passing spectacular waterfalls into the stunning Barron Gorge. We’ll have a couple of hours to look round the tourist village of Kuranda, and we will return by the spectacular Skytrain cable car skimming over the tops of the trees in this tropical forest

Tuesday 17 October 2023

Cairns is as close as we can get to the Great Barrier Reef. The best parts of the reef are a couple of hours boat ride out, so that is what we will do. We will take a two hour journey in an air conditioned catamaran to a private pontoon anchored above the reef, and we will be able to visit their underwater viewing platform to see the amazingly varied fish population. There is also a glass-sided boat and glass bottomed boat which will take you within inches of the coral-encrusted reefs – if you are really lucky, you may see one of the rare turtles that inhabit the area. On top of this, you can go snorkelling (equipment provided) at no extra cost. Scuba diving is also available. This is a day which cannot be missed!



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Wednesday 18 October 2023

Today we will have our first taste of travel on Australia's mainline rail system. Our train, the 'Spirit of Queensland' leaves Cairns at 0835 and will take 25 hours for the thousand mile journey to Brisbane. Your seat converts into a comfortable bed for the overnight part of the journey

Thursday 19 October 2023

We arrive in Brisbane at 0935. After settling our bags, there is a choice today. Brisbane is built on the Brisbane River, and a fee ferry service is an excellent way of seeing the city from the river. Alternatively, Queensland's Railway Museum is at Ipswich, an hour's train (plus a ten minute bus) ride from central Brisbane. It was Queensland's main rail works, but regrettably most of the interesting areas are closed to visitors, and what remains is largely targeted at children.



Friday 20 October 2023

We have a day out taking the local train to Gold Coast, a seaside city with gorgeous beaches. We will use the new Gold Coast light rail, the largest Public Transport project in the country which is transforming the city into a modern accessible destination. We'll return to Brisbane for the night

Saturday 21 October 2023

Today, we'll move on to Sydney, but it's an early start – the train leaves at 0555, arriving in Sydney at 2155. If you prefer, we can arrange a flight later in the day – the journey time is 1 ½ hours (plus the transfers at each end!)

Sunday 22 October 2023

A two hour train ride (plus a 20 minute bus ride) takes us to Thirlmere, the official rail museum for New South Wales with an absolutely amazing collection of locomotives and other rolling stock and ephemera. This absorbing collection will surely keep us busy for several hours before the return journey to Sydney



Monday 23 October 2023

The morning is free to look round the City centre. In the afternoon, we will take a wonderful half-hour ferry journey from the Circular Quay out to Manly – this is when you will get your best photos of both the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, and look out over the South Pacific. Manly is a nice resort town, and a great place to sit and people-watch with a good cup of coffee. The return trip is just as good as the outward!

Tuesday 24 October 2023

Sydney has a new tram system which is worth exploration, and a very efficient light rail system which will take us out, with a short bus connection, to the world-famous Bondi Beach. We will try to fit in a look round Sydney's Central Station, an impressive building.



Wednesday 25 October 2023

Sydney has an excellent tram museum, our destination this morning – it's a half hour ride from the centre. We will be able to ride a vintage tram and view their extensive collection. In the afternoon, we will try to climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge, with amazing views from the top!

Thursday 26 October 2023

Our train leaves at 0740 for the eleven hour run to Melbourne, arriving at 1830. If you prefer, we can arrange a later flight, which takes about an hour (plus check-in and transfer times!)



Friday 27 October 2023

Today is Bendigo day. Our train leaves Southern Cross at 0905, and we travel to Bendigo, where we will explore the hidden underground tunnels of a real gold mine that operated during the gold rush boom of the late 19th century. Central Deborah Goldmine was awarded the Victorian Heritage and Cultural Attraction of the year in 2011, 2012 and 2013 as well as the Trip Advisor certificate of excellence in 2015. After lunch, we'll take a ride on one of Bendigo's historic trams through this traditional Aussie city before returning to Melbourne for the night.

Saturday 28 October 2023

We'll start the day with a visit to the amazing Queen Victoria Market, and then spend a while on the wonderful Melbourne trams, including a circuit of the city on one of their Vintage trams, and then have a proper look at Flinders Street Station before heading out to Williamstown for a visit to the Newport Rail Museum, with its large collection of Victorian Railways 5'3" locos and rolling stock.

Sunday 29 October 2023

We will have a day out to the Puffing Billy Railway, travelling out by the Melbourne suburban train to Belgrave, about an hour's journey before departure at 1110 for Gembrook where we arrive at 1300. We travel on a century-old steam train running on its original 25km mountain track with stunning views through the beautiful forest and fern gullies of the Dandenong Ranges. We shall return at 1445 arriving back at Belgrave at We travel back to Melbourne on the suburban trains.



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Monday 30 October 2023

We'll take the train back to the Puffing Billy for a workshop visit before a coach (hopefully vintage) will meet us, and chase the Puffing Billy train for photographs. In the afternoon, we'll continue to the immensely popular Healesville Sanctuary to see Australia's best collection of fauna, including their koalas! We return to Melbourne for the night.

Tuesday 31 October 2023

After breakfast, we will break for the journey home

OPTIONAL EXTENSION to TASMANIA

Tuesday 31 October 2023

After breakfast we will fly to Launceston. Once arrived and checked in we will visit the Queen Victoria Museum ex Railway workshops. If there's time, we will then visit the stunning Cataract Gorge and Basin. There are magnificent walkways, a swimming pool, a suspension bridge with panoramic lookouts as well as tea rooms and picnic areas. A ride on the chairlift to the other side to see the Victorian Garden and relax in the restaurant and only 10 minutes from town! We will stay overnight in Launceston. (Dinner included)

Wednesday 1 November 2023

This morning we will leave at 0800 to travel to Devonport by road, visiting Pearn's Steamworld on the way. It can best be described as history in steam! There is everything here from giant steam engines to miniature steam trains, threshing machines, tractors, a fire engine as well as a steam driven boat! Afterward we will go to The Don River Railway and board one of Australia's finest heritage passenger trains which runs alongside the picturesque Don River. The afternoon sees us drive through the sparsely inhabited Western Tasmania to our accommodation in Queenstown. (Dinner included)



Thursday 2 November 2023

Today we will visit the West Coast Wilderness Railway. It has 3 of the former Mount Lyell mining and railway rack locomotives (1,3 and 5) preserved in operational condition. It also has 2 diesel locomotives. railway is significant because of its Abt rack system to conquer the mountainous terrain through the rainforest. If time allows, we will short cruise on the Gordon River. We will stay overnight in Queenstown. (Dinner included)



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Friday 3 November 2023

We will travel by road through the beautiful central Tasmanian Mountains to Hobart, where we will arrange a visit to The Tasmanian Transport Museum in the suburb of Glenorchy. It has an amazing array of exhibits including seven steam locomotives. We will stay overnight in Hobart. (Dinner included)

Saturday 4 November 2023

In the morning, we'll take a drive up Mount Wellington, with great views down over the city. If you prefer, visit the fascinating Salamanca market, down by Hobart harbour. This has been voted one of the best street markets in Australia, and has become a major attraction. In the afternoon, we'll fly back to Melbourne.

Sunday 5 November 2023

We will take the morning train out to Castlemaine for a steam-hauled ride on the preserved Victorian Goldfields Railway to the pretty town of Meldon, where we will have a couple of hours to look round and have lunch. After the return by steam to Castlemaine, we will return on the main line to Melbourne.

Monday 6 November 2023

After breakfast, break for your flight home

What's included

Breakfast daily and dinners where shown, accommodation in 3-star hotels, all transport and excursions as set out in the itinerary and the services of a Darjeeling Tours Limited Tour manager. Personal and incidental expenses are not included. Dinners in large cities are excluded to allow flexibility: Australia has some excellent restaurants, and tastes vary. This allows some individual flexibility, and avoids a continuous diet of hotel buffet dinners.

Flights

There are so many options for flying to Australia that we will treat each booking as individual to accommodate your preferences. You are, of course, free to book on a 'ground only' basis and arrange your own flights, or we will be happy to arrange flights for you at cost. Obviously prices do vary (occasionally on a day by day basis!), but return fares with quality airlines from London would start just above £1250 in economy. **Prices are all based on a 'ground only' basis from Cairns to Melbourne. Please see the paragraph above for flights to and from Australia**

Main tour price

£3,945 (based on two people sharing)

Single supplement

£595

Extension to Tasmania

£1,245 (based on two people sharing)

Single supplement

£295



Please note that carriers, flights times and train times are subject to change.

Great Barrier Reef -
Turtle



Sydney Opera
House



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