

Mungo, Mutawintji & Blue Mountains

Dates: *Tuesday, 6th October to Wednesday, 21st October, 2009* **(16 days)**
Cost: \$3,200 **Style:** *Accommodated* **Start and Finish:** *Sydney*

Explore two World Heritage sites: Willandra Lakes (Lake Mungo National Park) and the Blue Mountains plus Hattah-Kulkyne International Biosphere Reserve and Macquarie Marshes, Wetlands of International Significance (Ramsar sites). Visit Mutawintji and Kinchega National Parks. Appreciate the cultural legacy left in Aboriginal art and artifacts - relics of the oldest continuous civilization known on Earth. John Sinclair's last GO BUSH tour explores the biological diversity of New South Wales from east to west.

John Sinclair will be joined at by Aboriginal custodians at Mutawintji and elsewhere who will interpret the landscape and the Aboriginal culture to enrich the experience with expertise, local knowledge and as an observer of nature.

The self-catering group will travel in a Coaster bus with the GO BUSH trailer to carry luggage, food and catering equipment. The group will sleep in diverse accommodation from an underground B&B and a motel to youth camps and shearers quarters. They will therefore be equipped with towels pillows and sleeping bags for where these may be necessary

Draft itinerary

Day 1; Tuesday, 6th October: Depart Eddy Avenue opposite Central Station at 7.30 a.m. Follow the early explorers footsteps across the Blue Mountains to Bathurst. Plan to have lunch in Orange. Then via Burrendong Arboretum and Wellington to Dubbo. Accom: Dubbo.

Day 2; Wednesday, 7th October: Visit the Macquarie Marshes, an important breeding habitat for large colonies of ibis, spoonbills and egrets where the Macquarie sprawls into a 200,000 ha wetland in good seasons. This diversion from the Mitchell Highway is to see and discuss priorities for water use — human use or wildlife. Accom: Nyngan.

Day 3; Thursday, 8th October: Travel via historic mining town of Cobar to Mt. Grenfell historic site to see some Aboriginal paintings which densely cover rock shelters at. Then travel via Wilcannia, once a thriving port on the Darling River with its legacy of historic buildings and now a large Aboriginal community. Accom: Wilcania.

Day 4; Friday, 9th October: To the quaint old opal mining town of White Cliffs. Jock will guide us through White Cliffs and his underground accommodation and the lunar landscapes of this barren land. (It was Australia's first solar town). Accom: Underground B&B.

Day 5; Saturday, 10th October: Make an early start to visit Mutawintji National Park, a gem of New South Wales' Outback, with its dramatic scenic beauty. Aboriginal guides will help reveal the wealth of Aboriginal relics, colourful and unusual rock formations. After this drive on to the historic mining city of Broken Hill Accom: Broken Hill PCYC Camp.

Day 6; Sunday, 11th October: Take an excursion out to the almost ghost town, Silverton. Explore the famous mining town, Broken Hill, with its interesting vernacular architecture. The "Silver City" has produced some talented bush artists who have captured the spirit of the bush. Visit Broken Hill's Sculpture Park. Accom: Broken Hill PCYC Camp.

Day 7; Monday, 12th October: Visit the "ghost town" of Silverton before going on to Menindee, setting off point for the Burke & Wills Expedition. Nearby Kinchega N.P. on the Darling River has a prodigious population of kangaroos, emus and other birds. Arid red dunes contrast with the Menindee Lakes and river gums. Accom: Kinchega Shearers Quarters.

Day 8; Tuesday, 13th October: Follow the Darling River through sheep country with lots of sandhills and mallee growth to Pooncarie before leaving the river to reach Mungo National Park in the Willandra Lakes World Heritage site. Here an ancient lake system millennia ago supported a population of Aborigines and interesting fauna. It dried up after the last ice age producing a lunar type landscape. It is the best preserved and best known occupation site of the world's oldest continuous civilization. Accom: Mungo Shearers Quarters.

Day 9; Wednesday, 14th October: The crumbling Walls on an old lake lunette hold complete evidence of Aborigines who feasted here more than 40,000 years ago when the lake provided prodigious food. Relics of species now extinct on the Australian mainland such as the Tasmanian Devil may be found here. Explore Australia's earliest known human habitation site and the pastoral legacy of Mungo National Park. Accom: Mungo Shearers Quarters.

Day 10; Thursday, 15th October: Travel to Buronga and on to Wentworth at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers where the problems of this once mighty river system are best epitomized. Then after lunch proceed through vineyards and orchards to Mildura, centre of the Sunraysia irrigation area. We plan to visit a winery to learn more about modern viticulture in the afternoon. Accom: Cabins Mildura.

Day 11; Friday, 16th October: Explore the 48,000 ha Hattah-Kulkyne National Park in mallee country with its large lake that only fills when the Murray River floods. It is a rich fauna habitat. It is an International Biosphere Reserve and this will help appreciate the Biosphere concept. Accom: Balranald.

Day 12; Saturday, 17th October: Travel about 550 kms through the Riverina towns of Hay, West Wyalong noting the various rural industries. Accom: Forbes.

Day 13; Sunday, 18th October: Travel via Grenfell to Cowra to see the Japanese Garden. Then via Bathurst and Kandos to the edge Wollemi National Park. Accom: Rhystone. Farmstay.

Day 14; Monday, 19th October: Explore the spectacular sandstone pagodas of Dunns Swamp and other lesser known but wonderful features on the western side of the Blue Mountains. They contain an enormous floristic diversity, grand sandstone escarpments, vast wilderness areas, wonderful bush-walking opportunities, challenging adventure, spectacular scenery and a rich history. Accom: Rhystone. farmstay

Day 15; Tuesday, 20th October: To the Upper Blue Mountains via Lithgow and the Bells Line of Road. Walk to Mt Banks to appreciate the great chasm of the Grose Valley and its wilderness. Accom: Blackheath Cabins.

Day 16; Wednesday, 21st October: This is a day to explore some of the more popular features of the Blackheath area including Govetts Leap and Evans Lookdown before a walk in the Valley of the Waters and then return to Sydney. We anticipate arriving about 5.30 pm