

Best of Australia

Independent Journey 19 days / 18 nights

Sydney - Ayers Rock – Cairns

Small World Journeys opens Australia to you with a responsible approach, allowing you to meet local people and join in activities that respect the environment.

Discover the best of Australia by Small World Journeys

Detailed Itinerary:

DAY 1 Arrival in Sydney, Free Afternoon

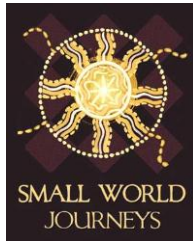
After transferring from the Sydney airport, settle into your stylish hotel in the city centre. Your hotel is located right in 'The Rocks'—the historic district where Sydney began, and location of the lively weekend markets.

DAY 2 Sydney Opera House, Harbour Cruise

Today you learn more about the cultural, historic and natural sites of Sydney as you walk the city streets, cobblestone lanes and seaside paths of this attractive city. Take in sites like Chinatown, Darling Harbour, Kings Cross, and the Rocks historic district as you discover where history happened and what locals like to do. You can also visit the Royal Botanic Gardens, which occupy one of Sydney's most spectacular positions, and are considered to be one of the great botanic gardens of the world.

Then you board a cruise this afternoon that takes you all around the harbour and shows you all of the highlights of Sydney – Circular Quay, Harbour Bridge and the iconic Opera House to name a few. As you cruise, the historical and cultural city sites will be explained which gives depth to your experience of the city.

Later you visit one of the world's most recognizable buildings, and the icon of Australia – The Sydney Opera House. Your guide will teach you about this amazing structure - a work of art that came into existence against impossible odds, and stands as a miracle of architecture and engineering. This evening as a special treat, you can opt to see a live performance in the Opera House - from opera to circus, rock and cabaret – in one of the busiest performing arts venues in the world (extra cost, ticket prices vary). **(B)**



DAY 3

Sydney Aquarium and Optional Surf Lesson at Manly Beach

Today is full of colour and surprises: you visit one of the most celebrated aquariums of Australia, the Sydney Aquarium. Explore the sea life through a series of see-through acrylic glass tunnels where sharks swim above you, and a mosaic of fish species surround you. See unusual animals found in Australia such as Little Penguins, the duck-billed platypus and more. Treat yourself to lunch at the bustling Darling Harbour or the locals' favourite – the Sydney fish market.

Manly Beach is also an Australian icon, world-renowned as one of the most popular beaches in Australia. Nothing soaks in the true spirit of Australia like surfing, and today you can get your feet wet learning how to catch some waves at a good beach for beginners. Travel by scenic ferry this afternoon to the hamlet of Manly, one of Sydney's outer suburbs. In a small group of no more than 6 beginners, you'll start your lesson with ocean hydraulics, tides, rips and surf-related safety skills. Then you'll learn about proper standing and paddling techniques, surfing etiquette and how even first-time surfers can catch a wave. By the end of the lesson with a little practice, you should be standing and shredding! Perhaps the perfect memento of an Australian coastal holiday – return home knowing how to surf! (*optional, extra cost*) **(B)**

DAY 4

Wildlife, Aboriginal Culture and The Blue Mountains

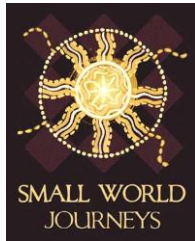
Today in a small group you explore the Blue Mountains that lie only a couple hour's drive from Sydney. A kaleidoscope of contrasts and colour, rich in native Australian bush and wildlife and always with a distant blue haze on the horizon. You visit ancient rock formations, including the iconic "Three Sisters", and avoid the tourist spots to enjoy the Blue Mountains as they should be seen - from secluded lookouts, short bushwalks and pristine valleys. You discover an aboriginal culture centre, where you learn about traditional stories, bush food and medicine walk, and boomerang demonstrations. Your day ends at an extinct volcano, where wild kangaroos come out to play. You return to Sydney this evening. **(B, L)**

DAY 5

Wine Tasting in the Hunter Valley

Australia's Hunter Valley enjoys the distinction of having been one of the earliest planted vine areas in the country, and is now celebrated for its Shiraz, Chardonnay, and Semillion. With your guide today you take the backroads to this bountiful region, regarded as the Napa Valley of Australia. You learn about Australian history, wildlife & aboriginal culture along with the wine tastings in a full day of complimenting experiences.

Travel through beautiful national parks and colonial townships, meet some of the winemakers themselves at small boutique wineries and then visit a larger winery known for its wide varieties. There are over 80 cellar doors in the lower Hunter Valley, and the winery visits are tailored to the desires of the group. Your day includes a wine and gourmet lunch and there are options for cheese and chocolate tastings. Sample up to 30 premium Hunter wines, some of which are not available anywhere else in the world. You return to Sydney this evening. **(B, L)**



DAY 6

Flight to Alice Springs

Welcome in the Red Centre! After your transfer from the airport, settle in a charming B&B in Alice Springs. This B & B is particularly charming: your host greets you with freshly-baked brownies and kangaroos come to feed at sunset in the back yard. Relax and enjoy your time in the atmosphere of the outback. This evening is free. **(B)**

DAY 7

Camel Farm, Mt. Connor and Uluru (Ayers Rock)

This morning it's an early rise to start your exploration of the Red Centre. After meeting your guide and the other travelers in your small group, you head south towards The Rock. According to the local aboriginal people, the Anangu, the Central Australian landscape was created at the beginning of time. Along your journey today, you will learn more about this rugged outback country, and you view the monstrous flat top mesa known as Mt. Connor, referred to by the traditional people as "atila" – the ice man. You keep a look out for wild camels, learn how they came to be in Australia, and even take a short ride on the "tame" ones during a stop if you wish (*extra cost*).

After lunch, you head to the iconic Uluru - Kata Tjuta National Park for your first glimpse of The Rock. Uluru is one of the largest monoliths in the world and it is here that you experience its power first hand. You do a full base walk to explore the Rock's multitude of cracks and crevices, and visit the Rock's Mutijulu Waterhole. At this point you can also join the Kuniya Walk with an indigenous guide who will speak in his own language (Pitjanjatjara) accompanied by a translator, about his culture and tribe and explore stories of creation (*extra cost*). Afterwards you visit the cultural centre to understand local aboriginal law and religion and understand the special connection the aboriginal people have to this sacred site.

No Uluru adventure would be complete without experiencing the famous changing colours of Uluru at sunset. With refreshing drinks and snacks at a special lookout point, you watch The Rock go ablaze with brilliant scarlets, coppers and crimsons. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 8

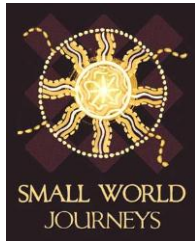
Sunrise at Uluru and The Olgas "Valley of the Winds"

This morning you roll up the swags and head off to Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) for an 8 kilometre (2.5-3.5hrs) walk through the "Valley of the Winds". This is also a sacred site to the Anangu aboriginal people, and a superb gathering of red rock monoliths known as "many heads". Mysterious canyons collect here, red rock towers overhead, and a feeling of calm pervades. Your guide teaches you about the geological and cultural significance of this place as you traverse this spectacular valley. After a stop at Kings Creek for fuel and refreshments, you travel to Kings Creek Cattle Station and your camp. The camp has stunning views out over the George Gill Ranges and gives you the true essence of the outback. You enjoy dinner around the campfire with another night out under the stars. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 9

Watarrka (Kings Canyon), the Lost City and Garden of Eden

In the care of your guide today you visit Watarrka (Kings Canyon) for a mind blowing 7km (3-4hrs) walk through the towering walls, crevices and plateaus. This scenic landscape of rugged ranges, rockholes and gorges acts as a refuge for many plants and animals, making the park an important conservation area and major attraction of central Australia. You can visit the Amphitheatre and the beehive formations at the Lost City plus a swim in the tranquil "Garden of Eden" if you wish.



After Watarrka you're off to 4-wheel drive across the Ernest Giles Road, where you'll be shaken but not stirred! You now cross the famous Hugh River Stock Route and arrive at Oak Valley Aboriginal Community. Here you can relax and enjoy the evening joined by an aboriginal host who will share stories about his culture over the campfire. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 10

Aboriginal Culture, Rock Paintings of Oak Valley and Ormiston Gorge Walk

Morning is at its best just as the sun starts to rise followed with a hearty breakfast and a fresh pot of coffee. You spend the morning checking out the sights of Oak Valley including rock paintings and carvings with your aboriginal host. Departing the area, you head back along the Hugh River Stock Route taking a short cut across Owen Springs Reserve cutting into the West MacDonnell Ranges. Stopping at Ormiston Gorge you hike the "Ghost Gum Walk" (named for the eerie eucalyptus trees), keeping an eye out for honeyeaters and goannas, and swimming in the surrounding rock pools. After a visit to Glen Helen later in the day you then stop at your next bush camp for another night under magnificent southern stars. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 11

Gosse Bluff and Palm Valley Walk

After breaking camp you head off around Namatjira Drive stopping at Tyler's Pass to view Gosse Bluff (comet crater) along the way. From this point it's on towards Hermannsburg, a historic Lutheran Mission established in 1877. On arrival at Hermannsburg you visit the heritage precinct where you can explore the historic buildings and grounds.

Next you lock in the hubs and 4-wheel drive into Finke Gorge National Park, site of Palm Valley. Palm Valley is the only place in central Australia where the Red Cabbage Palms survive. After lunch you hike through this picturesque valley, discovering some of its hidden treasures. After your hike it's home to Alice Springs where you can have a drinks and a farewell to new-found friends. You return to the charming B&B you stayed on Day 6. **(B, L)**

DAY 12

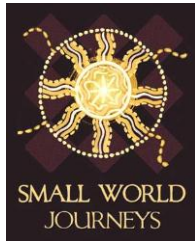
Flight to Cairns, free afternoon

Today you fly to tropical Cairns. One of the Small World Journeys staff will warmly greet you and you will be transferred to your accommodation. Settle into your stylish hotel only a block from the Cairns oceanfront, accessible to shops, cafes, the lovely swimming lagoon and Cairns celebrated Esplanade. **(B)**

DAY 13

Aboriginal Art & Culture, Traditional Fishing & Tracking, Jungle Walk

Today's small group guided tour takes you on several different adventures in the care of a knowledgeable guide. Perhaps the best way to learn about aboriginal culture, first you walk with two aboriginal brothers of the Kuku Yalanji tribe along the coast they've called home for thousands of years. Their specialty is helping you find mud crabs, mussels, and other "bush tucker" among the mangroves. In a small group, learn how to throw spears and try your hand at catching food the traditional way. Later you learn about local customs, hear tales of the indigenous "Dreamtime" and eat your day's catch. Then you will continue north to a Mossman art gallery, where you'll meet Binna, an aboriginal artist-in-residence. You will share in an authentic Aboriginal art experience with him, taking home a memento of your experience and learning more about aboriginal culture as well. Then it's off to a private waterfall that is reached by a short twisty path through the jungle. A natural swimming hole beneath the falls is a perfect cool-off spot at the end of the day. You arrive back in Cairns this evening. **(B, L)**



DAY 14

National Parks, Waterfalls and Crater Lakes or Whitewater Rafting

The lush mountains of the Dividing Range rise up from Cairns, and today you explore with a guide the Highlands' fantastic natural wonders. Wooroonooran National Park boasts Queensland's highest mountain, Bartle Frere, from which pour countless cascades. Josephine Falls is perhaps the park's most picturesque, and you arrive at the base of the falls by way of a short guided hike through the jungle. Here you can glide down an exhilarating natural waterslide that ends in a perfect, clear swimming hole. You will also walk at the enchanting Babinda Boulders, where mysterious giant boulders stand in a swirling river. You learn from our guide about the spiritual significance of this mysterious place and why it has given rise to aboriginal legends. You'll swim in an ancient volcanic crater, have a home cooked meal at a traditional Aussie teahouse and see Millaa Millaa Falls from behind its watery veil. Finally, near sunset, look for the unique and elusive duck-billed platypus in its natural habitat. This is fun-filled day with a vivacious guide, a taste of Aussie culture, and plenty of lively music to keep everyone entertained while you travel the Highlands.

OR You can choose the optional whitewater rafting day trip. The Tully River ranks high with rafting enthusiasts around the globe for its stunning course through national parklands, thrilling Class III-IV rapids, and its reliable year-round flows. First timers and experienced rafters alike will be spoiled by the Tully's non-stop action and gorgeous pristine wilderness. It really worth it! **(B, L)**

DAY 15

Snorkeling and/or Diving The Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef - a UNESCO World Heritage Site - is considered one of the world's top natural wonders, and it lies just off Cairns' coast. Explore the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef. A roving marine park permit allows the boat the flexibility of choosing different sites at which to snorkel or dive, most of which are exclusively yours. You can expect to see a thousand shades of hard and soft corals, angelfish and "Nemos" in anemones, elusive white-tipped reef sharks, and giant turtles. You learn about different coral species, the unusual mating habits of some undersea animals, and the conservation issues facing the reef today.

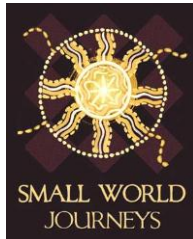
On the sail back to civilization, keep an eye out for dolphins swimming and playing in the wake, while in the winter season both humpback and minke whales may make an appearance. After you arrive back in Cairns, perhaps have a drink at a trendy pub on The Pier with your new friends or enjoy one of the seafront restaurants. **(B, L)**

DAY 16

Wildlife Sanctuary, Crocodile-Spotting Cruise, Daintree Rainforest

Considered one of the most scenic drives in Australia, the Captain Cook Highway winds north from Cairns and treats you to views of golden beaches and the translucent sea. Travel today in the company of a guide and small group to the famed Cape Tribulation, the site at which explorer Captain Cook ran aground. It is here where two World Heritage areas also lie side by side. Along the way, visit a refuge for Australian animals such as crocodiles, kangaroos, koalas, and countless exotic birds. A guide will educate you about these different species, and you'll have an opportunity to interact with the animals up close, whether it's holding a python, feeding a lorikeet or meeting a mother kangaroo and her joey.

Next you'll take a croc-spotting river cruise on the Daintree River where you can look for these magnificent reptiles in the wild. Then you cross the Daintree river by way of car ferry and enter the Daintree, home of the magical ancient rainforest. At one hundred and thirty-five million years old, the Daintree is the oldest rainforest in the world. Your guide takes you on a rainforest walk to discover some of the area's unique flora and fauna. If you're lucky you'll spot the Peppermint Stick insect on the pandanus palms, or the Daintree's endangered and giant flightless bird, the



cassowary. Your Daintree lodge boasts an attractive swimming pool, day spa, and a superb location in the rainforest. **(B, L)**

DAY 17

Cape Tribulation, Optional Jungle Zip Line or Horse Ride

Today experience you enjoy the beautiful beaches of Cape Tribulation or choose to add some optional activities to your trip. You advise to you to try the art of "jungle surfing": an exhilarating flying fox ride among the tree tops. By clipping into a series of steel cables arranged in the trees, you can fly across the rainforest canopy and get a bird's eye view of the world. During this unique adventure led by naturalists and scientist guides, keep an eye out for Boyd's Forest dragons and the brilliant blue Ulysses butterfly. For those who want a tamer option, choose a horse ride (optional) through the jungle and then canter down the beach with the wind in your hair. Top the morning off with a dip in a secluded freshwater swimming hole. **(B)**

DAY 18

Flight to Sydney, Optional Activities

You will spend a last day in Sydney to relax between your two flights. The day is free. You can choose to spend the afternoon on one of Sydney's beaches or visit the Royal Botanical Gardens of Sydney: wrapped around Farm Cove at the edge of Sydney Harbour, the Royal Botanic Gardens occupy one of Sydney's most spectacular positions, and are considered to be one of the great botanic gardens of the world.

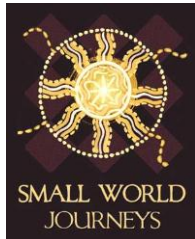
Other options include a "Ghost Tour" of The Rocks historic district, a star talk & telescope viewing at the Sydney Observatory, and a performance at the Sydney Opera House **(B)**

DAY 19

Departure or Trip Extension

After breakfast today you can do some optional activities or extend your trip to another destination or you will be transferred to Sydney International Airport for your flight home or another destination in Australia. **(B)**

Contact us for more information



Price: \$ 3995 AUD per person

GST included

Single Supplement: \$1375 AUD

▪ **What's included :**

- All nights in upscale accommodations and 4 nights in an outback campground (with shared bathroom)
- All meals specified in the itinerary
- All activities specified in the itinerary
- A 25-metre square of Daintree rainforest adopted in your names by the Australian Rainforest Foundation
- All transportations and private transfers to/from Cairns International Airport
- Snorkeling gear, youtsuit rental and Levy tax
- *ClimateCare*[™] carbon-offsetting for a carbon-neutral trip
- Comprehensive travel notes, maps, background and logistical information

▪ **What's not included :**

- Flights to Australia
- Domestic flights betyouen Sydney, Alice Springs, Cairns (4 flights to book on your own or contact us)
- Alcohol
- Items of a personal nature
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Optional guide gratuities
- Optional SCUBA diving (includes equipment hire)
- Other optional activites

To get more information or booking on line, please check our website:

<http://www.smallworldjourneys.com.au/>

or email us :

info@smallworldjourneys.com.au