



# GREAT ALPINE WALK

## Self-Guided INN-to-INN Walking Holiday

The High Plains are located in north east Victoria and contain Victoria's highest mountains. From the 1860's huge quantities of gold were discovered in the area. Even before then, graziers brought their cattle into the mountains to feed on the lush green summer pastures. During this walk you'll see rough yards for holding mustered cattle, simple huts built by the cattlemen for protection from the weather, and follow trails that cattle traversed between valleys and the high plains.

Much of the Australian Alps National Park is covered in a blanket of snow from late May to November, but then the winter snows melt and flow as life-giving fresh water into Australia's rivers. The grasslands and boggy areas hold vast amounts of water, allowing a never-ending supply for alpine rivers and streams even during the driest of summers. The rolling plains become a cool refuge from the hot valleys below, supporting masses of spectacular wildflowers and extensive snowgrass plains. Alpine wildflowers are prolific along the walking route from about December to February in most years.

This is a true alpine experience. Highlights include the classic Razorback Ridge to Mt Feathertop, the second highest peak in Victoria. From here the route continues down to the picturesque village of Harrietville. You will also hike all the way from Falls Creek to Mt Hotham. The historic huts circuit walk will delight history buffs and remote Mt Tabletop is a favourite place to sit and ponder the beauty of the region.

### **INN-to-INN WALKING**

During this INN-to-INN walking holiday, you'll walk from place to place through the mountains staying in comfortable accommodation along the way. You only carry a day pack each day while the rest of your luggage is moved for you by vehicle. You will walk independently, without a guide, following our detailed walking notes. Sometimes when distances are too great, you'll be driven a short distance to the starting point of the walk.

Each Auswalk INN-to-INN walking holiday takes several weeks of planning and research. The final products contain numerous special arrangements made just for the walk, such as luggage transfers, picnic lunches, meals in remote locations where there would usually be none available, and local transport.

Route marking ("Way marking" in Europe) is not widespread in Australian mountains, making route selection and navigation a difficult task for many people. On an Auswalk holiday however, it is very easy to find your way. We have selected the best walks available and joined them together into a fabulous route with plenty of variety.

We supply you with Auswalk's unique Walking Notes, which are very detailed and easy-to-follow. These will guide you from point to point along the way. The notes also include lots of extra interesting and valuable information, about the natural environment, walking times, optional side-walks and fascinating historical notes. Our walking notes have been tried and tested by many walkers over many years! They are much more detailed than anything in guidebooks.

You will also receive detailed maps with your walking route highlighted, and a comprehensive kit of information on the area, covering flora, fauna, geology, history etc. of the area you walk through and information on public transport and other local places of interest.

Self-guided walking offers great flexibility. You can choose your own starting date, then discover the mountains at your own pace, stopping and starting as you wish. You walk with your own companions (we require a minimum of two people to book together).

We provide all your accommodation, meals and transport in advance. We know the best places to stay and which ones to avoid. We know the best walking routes and how to help you discover more of an area than you could on your own. Most importantly, we triple-check your travel arrangements so you can relax in the knowledge that your holiday will be hassle-free.

(A similar itinerary is also available as a group guided holiday – it's called "Victorian High Plains").

## **ACCOMMODATION & MEALS**

All accommodation on Auswalk holidays is pre-booked for you. Our properties are close to the walking routes, and each has character, excellent bedding and quiet rooms. Auswalk accommodation is comfortable and run by interesting people. A warm welcome and quality, professional service is more important to us than star ratings.

Being a National Park, the High Plains only has accommodation in the winter ski villages. Hence you will stay in both modern ski lodges and motel-style accommodation. Bedrooms have ensuite bathrooms. All Auswalk prices are per person, based on two people sharing a room. Single rooms are available, but require payment of an extra fee.

Quality dining is an important aspect of all Auswalk walking holidays. Meals vary a lot, but are always plentiful, nutritious and wholesome, sometimes with local flavours and specialties. A typical day starts with a hearty breakfast served by your host. Mostly, these will be cooked breakfasts. Your hosts will prepare picnic lunches for you to carry, packed in an insulated carrier bag to keep the lunch fresh and cool. In the evening you will sit down to a two or three course dinner. Some properties are fully licensed and some are BYO (ie. bring your own alcohol). We include most meals in your package. Where meals are not included there will be restaurants and other eateries nearby.

All of our hosts go to a lot of effort for our walkers. They enjoy our walkers company, and the stories you have to tell. Sometimes hosts will be preparing meals just for you!

## GETTING THERE

This Auswalk tour starts in the town of Mount Beauty. If you are driving from Melbourne or Sydney, follow the Hume Highway to Wodonga then turn east for about 5km. Turn R (ie south) along the Kiewa Valley Hwy to Mt Beauty (4.5 - 5hrs driving time from Melbourne, 8hrs from Sydney).

There are also coach services available to Mt Beauty 5 days a week from Monday to Friday. We can supply more detailed information if you intend using public transport. Also, if you decide to book this holiday, the final walk notes contain detailed information on transport options to get to & from the walk.

## AT THE END OF THE TRIP

This walking holiday ends after breakfast on the last day. If you are travelling by public transport, there is a V-line coach service leaving Bright at 11.35am every day except Wednesday. V-line coaches also depart on all days at other less convenient times. If you drove a car, you will need to return to Mt Beauty to collect it. This cost is not included in your holiday. The local taxi service charges about \$65 for this trip.

## HOW HARD IS THE WALKING?

30% easy, 35% moderate, 35% more strenuous. This is our most demanding INN-to-INN walk. There is an average of 6 hours walking time each day, and tracks are frequently rough or stony underfoot. The highest altitude on this walk is 1922 metres, and the greatest descent is 1400 metres in one day – very impressive! All slopes will require more effort at altitude than at lower elevations. However, we have designed the itinerary so that a long, hard day can be followed by an easier walking day.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

**8 day itinerary:** 7 nights accommodation, 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 3 dinners, luggage transfers, vehicle transfers required for the itinerary, information booklets, insulated lunch bag, map case, National Park fees, detailed walking notes, maps.

**6 day itinerary:** 5 nights accommodation, 5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners, luggage transfers, vehicle transfers required for the itinerary, information booklets, insulated lunch bag, map case, National Park fees, detailed walking notes, maps.

**NOT INCLUDED:** Alcohol, some dinners (there are places where you can buy these).

**THE BEST TIME TO GO:** This walk can be done any time from the start of December to 20<sup>th</sup> April. This mountain environment is about 10 – 15 degrees cooler than Melbourne and Sydney, and there is a possibility of bad weather even during summer. January and February are usually warm and the alpine wildflowers are at their best. December and March are usually mild, and considered by many people to be the best times to visit.

## DEPARTURE DATES:

Any day from 01 December to 20 April for a minimum of 2 people booking together.

## 8 DAY ITINERARY (includes 7 nights accommodation & 6 days of walking)

**Day 1:** Starts in Mount Beauty any time after 2pm. No walking scheduled for today.

Accommodation: Mt Beauty

**Day 2:** After a transfer high into the mountains, the walk begins by following an easy Aqueduct Trail connected to one of Australia's early hydro-electricity schemes, built between the 1930's

and 1950's. Mountain cattlemen's huts feature prominently on this holiday and today you'll visit the oldest in Victoria, Wallace's Hut. The ancient snowgum trees here are twisted and gnarled by centuries of harsh winters. After rain or fog these tree trunks change colour to brilliant shades of red, orange, yellow and green. After lunch, walk along the southern edge of Rocky Valley Dam, before climbing to Falls Creek ski resort.

Accommodation: Falls Creek

**Day 3:** An easier walking day, following more aqueduct trails and crossing gently graded snow plains. All the walking terrain yesterday and today provides superb cross country skiing during winter. It is easy to imagine dozens of fit, lycra-clad athletes skating past and making it look effortless. The day ends with a walk to the summit of a small peak with a fine view over Falls Creek and the Kiewa valley before strolling along another aqueduct trail back to the village.

Accommodation: Falls Creek

**Day 4:** A big one today! Very few people have done this walk, even amongst the locals. Follow a section of the 750km Alpine Walking Track (between Walhalla and Canberra) all the way to Mt Hotham. You certainly won't see many people out here, in fact you are more likely to see brumbies (wild horses) than people! Along the way, drop steeply down to the Cobungra River and Dibbins Hut (sometimes also called "Creep-Inn" – you'll see why), then back through the Mt Hotham ski village. Skiers flock to Hotham for its powder snow. It is easy to see how the surrounding steep valleys would provide protection from strong winter winds, allowing snow to settle gently into deep drifts. The day's walking finishes with a stroll through the picturesque Davenport area of Hotham village.

Accommodation: Hotham alpine village

**Day 5:** Today's walk meanders through snowgum forests and across thick snowgrass plains, where there are many spring wildflowers. The standard 10km track to Dinner Plain is easy, but you can also add an optional 9km walk to the aptly named Mt Tabletop. Cattle grazed these plains till recently, and you'll see historic huts and even some cattle yards made by felling trees into piles! You'll walk into Dinner Plain, the highest freehold land in Australia, where every building is constructed of mud brick, weathered timber, local rock and galvanized iron. You can build anything you like there, so long as it resembles a cattleman's hut!

Accommodation: Dinner Plain

**Day 6:** Another big walking day today. After an early start, you'll be transferred to the breathtaking Razorback Ridge, surely one of the most dramatic walking routes in Australia. As you walk along it, Mt Feathertop gradually looms more and more impressively. The final (optional) steep climb to the summit is a ripper! The rest of the day is spent walking down the gently graded Bungalow spur to the township of Harrietville. The spur is covered by tall mountain ash trees, many of which stand stark and white following the bushfires of 2003. Either dead or alive, they are impressive. Harrietville is built on mine tailings created by a huge dredge called the Tronah Monster, which was sold to a tin miner in Malaysia in the 1930's. Today it's a friendly holiday village with a laid-back atmosphere.

Accommodation: Harrietville

**Day 7:** An easy walk through valley bushland and a good chance to stretch those muscles after yesterday's big descent. Walk through forests beside the Ovens River to the outskirts of Bright, then detour to Wandiligong, another historic gold town that is Heritage Listed. The only industry at Wandi these days is apple growing but there are numerous sluices, tailings, mines and shafts remaining from the days when Chinese miners were more successful than Europeans, with nasty consequences. The day finishes with an optional walk through the Ovens River Gorge. Bright town is a busy tourist area, now better known for its splendid tree-lined streets and colourful autumn leaves than for the phenomenal amount of gold extracted in the past.

Accommodation: Bright

**Day 8:** The trip ends after breakfast, either by catching a V-line coach out of town, or by catching a taxi back to Mount Beauty to collect your car (taxi fare not included in tour cost).

## **6 DAY ITINERARY** (includes 5 nights accommodation & 4 days of walking)

**Day 1:** Starts in Mount Beauty any time after 2pm. No walking scheduled for today.

Accommodation: Mt Beauty

**Day 2:** After a transfer high into the mountains, the walk begins by following an easy Aqueduct Trail connected to one of Australia's early hydro-electricity schemes, built between the 1930's and 1950's. Mountain cattlemen's huts feature prominently on this holiday and today you'll visit the oldest in Victoria, Wallace's Hut. The ancient snowgum trees here are twisted and gnarled by centuries of harsh winters. After rain or fog these tree trunks change colour to brilliant shades of red, orange, yellow and green. After lunch, walk along the southern edge of Rocky Valley Dam, before climbing to Falls Creek ski resort.

Accommodation: Falls Creek

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Accommodation: Hotham alpine village

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Accommodation: Harrietville

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## **PRICES:**

### **8 day itinerary**

1/4/07 - 31/3/08: \$1550pp twin/double share (single supplement \$295)

1/4/08 – 31/3/09 \$1550pp twin/double share (single supplement \$395)

**6 day itinerary**

1/4/07 - 31/3/08: \$1295pp twin/double share (single supplement \$195)

1/4/08 – 31/3/09 \$1350pp twin/double share (single supplement \$195)

**HOW TO MAKE A BOOKING**

Once you decide to do this walking holiday, select your preferred starting date and contact Auswalk to make the booking. We will need a signed booking form and a deposit of \$200 per person. You can print one off the internet or we can mail, email or fax one to you. After we receive your deposit and booking form we will send you confirmation details including detailed preparation notes. The balance is due one month prior to the trip, after which we will send you the final documents including walking notes and maps.

**OTHER DESTINATIONS**

Other self guided INN-to-INN walking holidays include the Great Ocean Walk, Hawkesbury Trail, Blue Mountains, Lamington National Park, Mornington Peninsula, Grampians and Surf Coast walk. We also offer guided walking holidays in many locations including northern Queensland, Lord Howe Island, Australian Alps, Sydney's Bushtracks Bays & Beaches, the Blue Mountains, Carnarvon Gorge & the Bunya Mountains, Lamington National Park, Central Australia, Grampians, Tasmania, an innovative Lighthouses Trek on the south-east coast, Great Ocean Walk, and the Victorian High Plains (which is a different version of this INN-to-INN walk).

**AUSWALK PTY LTD**

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