

## Hidden Italy King Valley and the Victorian High Country Getaway

With its rolling hills covered in vineyards operated by second and third generation Italian families, its and charming villages, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in Tuscany rather than the King Valley in North East Victoria. But King Valley is more than this as well. Located at the foothills of the Alpine National Park, King Valley is surrounded by rugged mountains including Mt Buller, Mt Stirling and Mt Buffalo that have been a trekkers' mecca since the first bushwalking club was established in Bright in 1887. It is also rich in history: Aboriginal people have been living here for over twenty thousand years and many of the towns were founded during the Gold Rush of the 1850s, including splendid Beechworth, famous for its associations with Ned Kelly, and lovely Yackandandah.

This seven-day walking tour showcases the best of the region including staying for six nights in fabulous, 4-star accommodation overlooking one Australia's best known vineyards on the edge of the delightful town of Milawa; three guided walks through some of the most beautiful alpine country in Australia; a wine and food day exploring the gourmet heritage of the area; guided visits to the principal towns; and a private cooking class in a purpose-built kitchen in one of King Valley's most celebrated (Italian) vineyards.

*Private groups of 8 to 12 people can save \$50 per person off the standard prices when they book a departure. Choose the date of your choice subject to availability.*

### **The accommodation:**

The accommodation for the six nights is in a beautiful 4-star hotel surrounded by gardens, overlooking neighbouring vineyards and distant alpine peaks. The hotel has a pool, guest lounge, terrace and an excellent restaurant. The generous rooms are elegantly decorated in classic country house style. We use garden rooms, however, it is possible to upgrade to Mt Buffalo view rooms, if you prefer.

### **Walks:**

We have included a variety of walks to highlight the natural beauty and diversity of the Alpine National Park. They range from 12 to 16 kms and will take from 4 to 5 hours. They follow well-defined, marked trails and will include some short steep climbs, long gradual inclines, with occasional rough and uneven surfaces. You will be accompanied by two guides.

### **Food and wine:**

Food and wine are some of the highlights of this tour. The King Valley is a prosperous cool-climate wine region and a gourmet food area. The valley extends along the King River with a sprinkling of twenty or so award-winning vineyards specialising in Italian varieties. Food is a huge lure to the region with a number of great restaurants and wineries using the excellent local produce. The tour includes all meals and wine accompanying the meals.

**Getting there:**

The closest airport is Albury (the one-hour transfer from there can be organised). Milawa is 6.5 hours drive down the Hume Highway from Sydney (we can provide suggestions for interesting places to break [the](#) drive along the way). There is an early morning train from Sydney to Albury that takes 7.5 hours. Milawa is three hours' drive from Melbourne. There is a midday train service from Melbourne to Wangaratta that takes around 3 hours (transfers here to Milawa can be arranged).

**COVID 19 precautions:**

All aspects of the tour will rigorously comply with the Victorian government Department of Health protocols, including: the maintenance of social distancing (in the accommodation; in the transport; at meal times and during activities); each member of the group will be provided with surgical face masks, disposable gloves and a bottle of hand sanitiser.

**Inclusions:**

- 6 nights' accommodation in 4-star accommodation (an historic guesthouse in village centre)
- All breakfasts, all lunches and dinners with wine included (see itinerary for details)
- All transfers listed in the itinerary
- Private cooking lesson
- Private guided tour of a number of vineyards and food producers
- All paid admissions during the tour
- 3 guided walks, accompanied by two guides

## King Valley and the Victorian High Country Getaway Itinerary

### *Day 1: Sunday*

Arrival at your 4-star hotel in Milawa. An aperitivo and then dinner at our hotel's excellent restaurant.

### *Day 2: Monday*

The first walk is a loop that covers many of the Mount Buffalo Plateau's most recognisable landmarks. The mountain was formed millions of years ago when volcanic activity created a highland almost triple the height of the current plateau. Since then erosion and weathering have shaped the park's granite spine that we see today. **12 kms, 4 hours.** After a cut lunch, we head back to base, stopping at a historic pub on the way. Dinner will be in a small, family-run restaurant that specialises in local produce.

### *Day 3: Tuesday*

This morning we continue our exploration of the King Valley, driving to the very south of the valley for an easy walk through forest to a spectacular waterfall **12 kms, 3 hrs.** We will have lunch in a marvellous café/bakery in a neighbouring village (all ingredient locally grown and produced).

After lunch we'll back north, stopping visit Powers lookout, before heading to one of the most important wineries in the valley for our hands-on cooking class. The lessons are held in a purpose-built kitchen which overlooks the cellar door and vineyards. After a lazy dinner, we will return to our base.

### *Day 4: Wednesday*

After a short drive (30 mins) we come to the gorgeous goldrush town of Beechworth. We'll start our visit by taking a loop walk from the town into the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park past beautiful cascades and waterfalls, rocky granite outcrops and historical mining sites. **14 kms, 4 hours.** We'll have lunch at a delightful main street bistro. After lunch, we'll be taken on a guided walk around the town. On the way home, we'll stop to visit lovely Yackandandah. We'll have a light dinner at our accommodation.

### *Day 5: Thursday*

Taking advantage of a range of microclimates, from the warmer valley floors to the bracingly cool upper slopes, the King Valley has become known as Australia's home of Italian wine varietals. Neighbouring Milawa has been classified as Australia's first 'gourmet region' for the equality and diversity of its produce. More than enough to fill today's wine and food tour, which includes a generous lunch at one of the Italian vineyards. We'll have a light dinner at our accommodation.

### *Day 6: Friday*

The last walk is a spectacular finale: a loop walk around the summit of Mt Stirling, which meanders through different vegetation zones along cross country skiing trails, passing historic huts and refuges and experience classic alpine views from the top. **16 kms, 5 hours.** We'll have a cut lunch along the way. After driving back to base, the afternoon is free. Dinner will be at our accommodation.

### *Day 7: Saturday*

After breakfast, you'll be free to continue your holiday.