

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.

The accommodation:

The accommodation for the six nights is in 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 elegant decorated in classic country house style. We use garden rooms, however, it is possible to upgrade to 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 varietals. 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 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

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 varieties. 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 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

Today we will drive into the King Valley for a private cooking lesson based in one of the most important vineyards in the valley. The hands-on classes are held in a purpose-built kitchen, opened in 2010, which overlooks the cellar door and will leave participants 'feeling empowered and inspired by the end of each session'. After a lazy lunch, we will return to our base, where the rest of the afternoon is free. Dinner will be in a local 'smokehouse' operated by a family of Slovenian origin.

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.