

Hidden Italy King Valley and the Victorian High tour

With its rolling hills covered in vineyards operated by second and third generation Italian families and its charming villages, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in Tuscany rather than the King Valley in North East Victoria. Located at the foothills of the Alpine National Park, the 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. The area also has a rich 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; four guided walks through some of the most beautiful 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.

Discount of 5% for private groups of 10 or more people. 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.

Food and wine:

Food and wine are some of the highlights of this tour. The beautiful King Valley is a prosperous cool-climate wine region. It is home to twenty-six vineyards, twenty-two of them run by second and third generation Italian families, specialising in Italian varieties and offering fine Italian food. The King Valley is also part of the Milawa Gourmet Region. The tour includes all meals and wine accompanying the meals.

Walks:

We have included a variety of walks to highlight the natural beauty and diversity of the Alpine National Park and surrounds. They range from 8 to 12 kms and will take from 3 to 4 hours. They follow well-defined, marked trails over generally even surfaces. There are a couple of climbs but nothing dramatic, walks not hikes! You will be accompanied by two guides for each walk.

Inclusions:

- 6 nights' in 4-star accommodation in a vineyard
- 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
- 4 guided walks, accompanied by two guides

King Valley and the Victorian High Country Itinerary

Day 1:

Arrival at your 4-star hotel in Milawa. After checking in, we'll have an aperitivo and then dinner at a celebrated nearby restaurant, that is all about local produce and local food.

Day 2:

The first walk is a loop that covers many of the Mount Buffalo Plateau's most recognisable landmarks. We start at the gorge, with its spectacular views north, pass pretty Lake Catani and then follow a small trail that loops through beautiful alpine bush to a lookout, where we'll have lunch. **12 kms, 4 hours.** On the way back to base we will stop to visit Bright, one of the prettiest towns in the region. We'll have dinner at the hotel's excellent restaurant.

Day 3:

This morning we continue our exploration of the King Valley, driving to the south of the valley for beautiful walk that goes along the ridge that divides the King Valley from the Myhree Valley, enjoying spectacular views across the valleys and mountains. **11 kms, 3.5 hrs.** We'll have one of the most important wineries in the valley for a hands-on cooking class. After a wine-tasting, we'll enjoy our lunch. Back at base the rest of the afternoon is free. We'll have dinner at a nearby restaurant a short walk from the hotel.

Day 4:

After a short drive (30 mins) we come to the gorgeous goldrush town of Beechworth. We'll start our visit by taking a pretty walk through the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park past cascades, waterfalls, rocky granite outcrops and farmlands to Beechworth. **8 kms, 2.5 hours.** You'll have time to browse the shops before a light lunch. After lunch, we'll be taken on a guided walk around the town. We'll have a dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 5:

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 6:

The last walk is a spectacular finale: a loop walk above Falls Creek following a trail that starts at a small lake and meanders across classic high country, with spectacular views to Feathertop, Hotham and even Kosciuszko, if we are lucky. We'll have lunch at an historic hut, before heading back. **9 kms, 4 hours.** After driving back to base, the afternoon is free. Our final dinner will be at our accommodation's restaurant.

Day 7:

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