

ITINERARY

OUTBACK AUSTRALIA: PLAINS-WANDERER & MORE
September 11-October 3, 2010

We include here information for those interested in the 2010 Field Guides Outback Australia tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reading list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

The vast, remote, arid interior of Australia known simply as the Outback conjures up visions of a timeless, empty, and inaccessible land. This vision of barrenness and desolation, however, is not correct, and the visitor will discover life in surprising places, with specially adapted flora and fauna accordingly.

This tour has been designed following numerous enquiries about the likelihood of Field Guides running an Outback Tour again. It visits some of the wilder and more remote outback areas, far different from the regular tours we offer. It complements these tours very nicely and covers a distinct avifauna that we do not reach on the regular itineraries, without overlapping those routes. Some of the birds we shall seek are among the least known birds of the continent and are seldom seen due to the remote nature of their habitat.

Our outfitter, Rex Ellis, is a well-known local character with many years of experience in this area, where he has been running camel trekking and nature tours with access to various private properties that hold exciting species. He has written some 5 books about his travels in the region, and has made maps of the desert tracks he knows so well. Safety is a major concern in these arid zones, and our local agent has vast experience, meaning that we shall be in good hands for the logistics.

Some of the rarest and most seldom seen birds in Australia inhabit the Outback, and for the visiting birder it can provide a wealth of interesting species. The tour covers an area of the Outback in the "Corner Country" where the states of South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales meet. The variety of habitats encountered during this visit will offer a chance for us to see an avifauna that has been seldom encountered by organized groups. Five species of grasswren inhabit this area including the newly split Short-tailed Grasswren of the Flinders Ranges, as do whitefaces, quail-thrushes, scarce babblers, and little seen parrots, finches, chats, and honeyeaters. Raptors can be good, with a chance of rarities like Gray Falcon or Letter-winged Kite if it is an irruption year, and scarce species like Black-breasted Buzzard. We must not forget the bizarre Plains-wanderer nearby in New South Wales, a must for those collecting bird families of the world.

At this time of year the land has begun to warm up and though the day temperatures average between 70-90° F (25-30° C), the nights are cool, even cold pre-dawn when camping, but much more pleasant than during the seriously cold winter months. It can be cold, wet and windy around Melbourne and Deniliquin as it is still early spring here, but we are unlikely to encounter rain in the desert, though the weather patterns all over Australia have been disrupted in recent years and this cannot be ruled out.

Our tour begins in Adelaide, but we will immediately head north towards the Flinders Ranges, often described as one of the most spectacular semi-desert ranges in the world, in search of the endemic Short-tailed Grasswren. From the

Flinders Ranges we will travel north to Lyndhurst, famous as one of the few sites for the other rare South Australian endemic, the Chestnut-breasted Whiteface, and also good for Thick-billed Grasswren, and then head off into true desert country up the Strzelecki track.

Our route takes us through the Sturt Stony and Strzelecki deserts, home to the seldom seen Eyrean Grasswren, good raptors including two particularly difficult and sought after rarities, the Gray Falcon and the highly irruptive Letter-winged Kite, local nomads the Black, Pied, and White-fronted honeyeaters, Inland Dotterel, Chestnut-breasted and Banded whitefaces, Redthroat, Gibber Chat, Cinnamon Quail-thrush, and Chirruping Wedgebill.

We then head north into the Channel country, a region rarely visited by bird groups. Bourke's and Red-winged parrots, another chance of Gray Falcon. Hall's and Chestnut-crowned babbblers, Crested Bellbird, Chestnut breasted Quail-thrush, White-browed Treecreeper, Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Redthroat, the rare Painted Honeyeater, Plum-headed Finch, and Spotted Bowerbird are all possibilities in this area.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: This tour complements the regular Australian trips offered by Field Guides, and does not duplicate sites or many of the species expected on those trips. It offers a chance to visit areas that are very much off the beaten track and the chance to see birds that are rarely seen. This is some of the most striking desert scenery in Australia. Because of the remoteness of the areas we will be traveling through, accommodation will be varied. In some areas (Strzelecki Creek, Cooper's Creek drainage, Darling River, and Gluepot) camping is the best option and we will be using individual comfortable mosquito netted swags (bed rolls) in beautifully sited bush camps with bush showers and toilets, in order to be in the prime habitat at the prime time. This is a great opportunity to experience wild Australia at its finest, very different from the usual tours. In other places (Flinders Ranges, Bowra, Oak Bore, Murray River) sheep stations have converted their former shearers quarters. These are usually twin bedded rooms where we lay our swags on the beds, opening onto a verandah with a communal cooking and dining area and a separate outside ablution block. We may stay in authentic outback pubs at Lyndhurst and Innamincka, which are comfortable and friendly but usually pretty basic, having twin or double rooms but shared facilities. The motel at Thargomindah offers rooms with private baths, whilst the unusual underground hotel at White Cliffs has shared facilities, carved out of an old opal mine, so there will be opportunities to refresh in more conventional settings.

The tour involves a lot of driving on gravel roads, but by camping we will be able to be on-site during the cool part of the day at some of the more remote places. Otherwise, hotels and cattle stations are usually close to the bird sites, and this will be a unique opportunity for a genuine Aussie bush experience. Travel will mostly be done during the heat of the day, with birding concentrated on the cool early morning and late afternoon times. Packing up when camping can be time-consuming, so we may go birding while it is done, or assist to speed things up, depending on where we are and where we want to be. Patience is a great virtue on this trip as the time schedules are very different from urban ones, but a look at our trip lists will show how well we've done in the past. Australia is not a cheap labor country and there is no team of workers to do it all for us, so a little self-help goes a long way; our very willing operators have been doing this for many years.

Our primary vehicle is an Australian purpose-built 4WD bush vehicle called an OKA (derived from the Aussie slang ocker, meaning tough and bush-wise). It is air-conditioned, with comfortable seats and good visibility, and it also raised high off the ground for a good line of sight. It seats up to 9 persons and most people will be able to have window seats. There is also the chance to sit on the seats that are available on the roof, on slow sections of the track, a great opportunity to sightsee and bird in the desert. The secondary vehicles, which will be driven by Phil and another guide, have space for one or two passengers, and will be 4WD utility vehicles (utes or pick-ups), carrying supplies and camping gear. All vehicles have radios, and an EPIRB satellite safety beacon will be carried as an additional safety measure for remote terrain, as well as a satellite phone.

Birding will be along tracks and no long marches are envisaged, though some walking may be necessary among dunes and ridges to find various grasswrens. You will encounter the prickly spinifex grass, so gaiters or thick cloth jeans may be useful for those days. Moderate fitness is needed but the tour is by no means strenuous apart from long drives. Nocturnal birding will be limited, but there is a possibility of Spotted Nightjar and some neat species around Deniliquin. The immense starscapes of the remote outback will be wonderful, something we mostly lose due to light emissions from urban areas, and the Greater and Lesser Magellanic Clouds are a splendid sight, as is the great Dark Emu that winds across the Milky Way.

The usual desert area provisos apply—drink plenty, cover up well, use sunblock, and wear a hat. It is easy to get lost out here, especially in both mallee (*Eucalyptus* sp.) and mulga (*Acacia* sp.) areas where there are no sight lines, so keep the group in sight and notify the leader if you are stepping out for a moment. Nights will be cool or even cold and days quite hot, so a sweater and light jacket are advised, as well as stout walking boots suited to stony and sandy terrain.

About the Birding Areas

The Flinders Ranges—This area of spectacular upland scenery with gorges and rocky slopes lies some 500km north of Adelaide but can be easily reached mainly along sealed roads. We will spend the night by a conservation park where we hope to find the Short-tailed Grasswren. This has only recently been split from the Striated Grasswren but is now considered a full endemic. The elusive Yellow-footed Wallaby and the Euro, Australia's heaviest macropod, can be seen in this area.

The Desert—We will pass through the Sturt Stony Desert and the Strzelecki Desert, through rolling gibber plains home of the Gibber Chat, spectacular breakaways and areas of sand dunes blown into parallel lines by the prevailing winds. The dry but vegetated water courses are home to such species as the Thick-billed Grasswren, Chirruping Wedgebill, and Chestnut-breasted Whiteface. The gibbers are shiny, predominantly dark red stones coated with desert varnish and covering vast areas. They range in size from big boulders to gravel, and also help protect the vegetation. This is a good area for Inland Dotterel, Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Gibberbird, and Australian Pratincole. The nitre-bush sand desert of the cobbler country is home to the legendary Eyrean Grasswren, a species not seen for nearly a century until being rediscovered in 1962! This is very dry country where water is at a premium and the birds are concentrated where there is feed, with conditions varying from year to year and impossible to predict, so luck and recent rains play a big part. Many of the desert and semi desert species are nomadic or irruptive, and we will make good use of our guide's knowledge of the prime habitat areas at the time of our visit, varying the schedule if required.

Innamincka is a tiny Outback town (pop.13!) that is an oasis in the desert. Situated on the Cooper Creek it is one of the few areas of permanent water lined by huge old River Red Gum trees and is a haven for birds. Some amazing and very ancient aboriginal petroglyphs can be seen in the Innamincka area, well worth the walk. Not far from the town is the historic Burke and Wills Dig Tree, which is a link with tragic and dramatic part in the history of Australian exploration.

The semi-desert cattle country south east of Innamincka is so dry that the land can only sustain a maximum of one beast per square mile. It is here the Gray Grasswren (only formally discovered in 1967) makes its home, and we will look for it either in the Pyampa area on the NSW border, or at another new site in the Channel country. With luck Bourke's Parrot and Orange Chat may also be seen in this area depending on the season and the amount of water there has been.

The Channel Country—Still technically part of the Sturt Stony Desert, in this region the gibber plains and sand dunes are liberally dissected by coolibah lined seasonal waterways. The Paroo River, the main drainage in the area, is one of the last truly wild river systems in the world as there are no dams along its length. Mound springs and artesian wells are the only source of water during dry seasons and places such as Eulo Bore on the road to Cunnamulla tend to concentrate bird species such as Bourke's Parrot and Spotted Bowerbird. Also in this area are the more widespread (but erratic!) Plum headed Finch, Mulga Parrot, elusive Black-eared Cuckoo, Gray-headed Honeyeater, and Ground Cuckoo-Shrike. Mulga is a tree that covers more area in Australia than any other, and the mulga scrub of this region is also home to Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and the local Hall's and Chestnut-crowned Babblers.

The Mallee—Heading south through more semi desert country towards Hungerford we pass through an area of opal fields and the partially subterranean town of White Cliffs and on into the Mallee, a huge zone of dense multi-trunked small eucalypts. The Bookmark Biosphere of the Murray Darling basin is one of the few remaining areas of old growth Mallee bush. Here we will visit permanent lakes that can abound in waterbirds such as egrets, pelicans, cormorants, and ducks, and visit the remote Calperum and Gluepot Stations. Both of these have been de-stocked and turned over to birds for at least 10 years. It is a good area to see the rare golden form of Regent Parrot and Striated Grasswren, the highly endangered Black-eared Miner at its prime site, and with a chance at Red-lored Whistler and just possibly Scarlet-chested Parrot.

Deniliquin area—Located in southern New South Wales, this small town lies in farming and sheep country. Long-billed Corella, the local Yellow Rosella, and the exquisite Superb Parrot as well as numerous waterfowl are present here. We should also encounter several widespread Australian birds in the area, including White-faced Heron, Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Falcon, Masked Lapwing, and Galah. In the evening we will make a foray for the Plains-wanderer, the sole member of the family Pedionomidae. Once considered an enigma, the Plains-wanderer is now fairly reliable in native grass fields near Deniliquin. By spotlighting these fields in the evening from our vehicles, we have an excellent opportunity to see one of the world's taxonomic anomalies "frozen" in the light. Also in these fields we may encounter

Stubble Quail and Little Button-Quail, both once thought to be related to the Plains-wanderer, which now, however, is thought to be most closely related to the seedsnipes of South America.

While in the Deniliquin area, we will also bird the Ironbark forest where Black Falcon, Superb Parrot, the uncommon Eastern Shrike-tit, and Diamond Firetail are among the exciting possibilities.

Itinerary for Outback Australia: Plains-wanderer & More

Days 1-3, Sat-Mon, 11-13 Sep. Flights from the US to Adelaide. Flights will depart Los Angeles on September 11, lose the day of September 12, and arrive in Adelaide on September 13 at 10:45 a.m.

After checking into our rooms at the hotel, we'll meet for lunch. You may wish to spend the afternoon resting after the long flight, but there is also the option of some introductory birding around Adelaide. Night in Adelaide.

Day 4, Tue, 14 Sep. Adelaide to Willow Springs Station near Wilpena Pound. We'll begin this morning with a stop at the samphire saltmarsh near Adelaide for Slender-billed (Samphire) Thornbill, then continue through the Clare Valley, an area of rolling hills with vineyards and sheep. We'll pass through attractive towns with many old stone buildings and take a picnic lunch en route. We'll then head on up into the southern Flinders Ranges past Mount Remarkable, heritage pubs, and some amazing gnarled river red gum trees near Melrose. We'll pass through the town of Quorn, which boasts many two-story pubs and is famous for films shot there, and on out to Willow Springs (430 km on tar). This was originally a sheep station but is now a conservation park, and we will be the sole occupants of the comfortable shearers' style accommodation there. We'll spend the late afternoon in search of the Short-tailed Grasswren and the spectacular and very restricted-range Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby. Night in shearers' quarters at the Willow Springs Station.

Day 5, Wed, 15 Sep. Flinders Range. After an early morning spinifex bash for Short-tailed Grasswren and Elegant Parrot near Willow Springs, we'll continue on our journey through the Flinders ranges towards Lyndhurst Station. Following lunch somewhere near Blinman, we'll travel through the Flinders Ranges "chocolate box" scenery via, Parachilna Gorge, Leigh Creek, and finally Lyndhurst (150 km), where we will look for the rare endemic Chestnut-breasted Whiteface. We will overnight either at the outback-style Lyndhurst pub or probably at Lyndhurst Station itself, which gives us our critical access to the whiteface site.

Day 6, Thu, 16 Sep. Strzelecki Track to Montecollina Bore. This morning we will bird the site for the Chestnut-breasted Whiteface, as well as Thick-billed Grasswren, Rufous Fieldwren, Chirruping Wedgebill, and Cinnamon Quail-thrush out in dry country near an old mine. Then we'll set off along the Strzelecki track. The early section of the track runs through part of the Sturt Stony Desert. We will be able to see the top end of the Flinders Ranges to the south and we'll pass through gum-lined creeks and across rolling gibber plains where we have a chance of Gibber Chats and maybe Inland Dotterel. Depending on time, we may stop for a "smoko" (a tea break) at Murnpeowie Station with its historic round roofed stone buildings. We'll then continue through the "Cobbler Sandhills," a visually interesting but depressing manmade desert caused by the overgrazing of sheep and plagues of introduced European rabbits. We'll enter the Strzelecki Desert, camping at the Montecollina artesian bore, where there will be an opportunity for the very hardy among us to experience a natural health spa.

Day 7, Fri, 17 Sep. Montecollina Bore to Strzelecki Creek. Early this morning at the bore we'll look for Eyrean Grasswren, then drive the fairly short distance to our new camp at Strzelecki Creek. This dry watercourse is up to 3 km wide in places and has spectacular red and white sand dunes on either side. The surrounding vegetation is predominantly coolibah gums with some Sturt bean trees. This was once the epicenter for Letter-winged Kite, but they are now very rare here. We will explore the area with some walking and some driving using the OKA roof seats to gain extra good vantages. We'll watch out for a whole range of desert species and return to our camp at night, perhaps for a camp oven roast of succulent "saltbush" lamb, which is becoming something of a gourmet item in metropolitan Australia! Night camping at Strzelecki Creek.

Day 8, Sat, 18 Sep. To Innamincka (150 km). After breakfast we'll bird around Strzelecki Creek, then head north with a picnic lunch en route to the famous Cooper Creek. We'll spend the afternoon birding and visiting some fascinating ancient aboriginal rock carvings in a lovely birdy spot by the creek. Overnight at the Innamincka pub.

Day 9, Sun, 19 Sep. To the Channel Country (250 km). Today we'll travel through gibber plains, belts of red sand dunes, and cane grass swamps, which will be dry unless there has been a very good wet season. We plan to visit the historic Cooper Creek Dig Tree, the tree that marked the location of buried supplies for the ill-fated Burke and Wills Expedition but which can also be a good birding spot—we've seen Gibberbird and Bourke's Parrot nearby on previous trips. Then we will continue into the "breakaway country" of the Sturt Stony Desert, an area that can be full of surprises both ornithological (and otherwise!), with more chances of Cinnamon Quail-thrush and Bourke's Parrot. We'll camp tonight on a lovely claypan site near the Gray Grasswren habitat.

Day 10, Mon, 20 Sep. Pyampa Area to Sturt Stony Desert. We will spend some of the morning birding the grasswren area, hopefully before the flies wake-up, then we'll drive on through the Sturt Stony Desert via the Bulloo River to the town of Thargomindah (250 km, much on sealed roads). We'll overnight in a comfortable motel. Night in Thargomindah, one of the first places in the world to have mains electricity! (really!)

Day 11, Tue, 21 Sep. Channel Country (230 km roughly). Today we will be driving along sealed roads to Bowra Station (alternatively Carpet Springs depending on seasonal conditions) in the Channel Country, planning to arrive around lunchtime. We will be traveling through semi-desert which gets about 5 inches of rain a year; as a result, there is much more variety in the vegetation with mulga and many other species. We will use the converted shearers' quarters at Bowra as a base camp for the next two nights while we search for the Channel country specialties. Night in Shearers' quarters at Bowra.

Day 12, Wed, 22 Sep. Bowra Station. Today we'll visit Bowra Station, which has recently become an Australian Wildlife Conservancy Reserve, in search of some of the southwestern Queensland specialties including Bourke's Parrot, Hall's and Chestnut-crowned babblers, Crested Bellbird, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, White-browed Treecreeper, Ground Cuckoo-Shrike, Plum-headed Finch, and Spotted Bowerbird. There is a chance, too, for the very rare Gray Falcon, so we'll check all falcons, and Black-breasted Buzzard nests here. We'll return to our base camp in the shearers' quarters for the night.

Day 13, Thu, 23 Sep. Hungerford region and the Dog Fence. Today we'll travel south to the Hungerford region (500 km mainly on good dirt roads) where there is an outback pub with great character located on the Dog Fence (a dingo proof fence which acts as the State Border between Queensland and New South Wales). It is the longest man-made structure in the world. We'll travel through the sheep station country of the Paroo River and onto the Whitecliffs opal fields.

Whitecliffs is an interesting and unique small bush town that, like the better-known Coober Pedy, is partially subterranean. We will overnight in an underground hotel (with shared facilities), which has no need for air conditioning since it maintains a constant comfortable temperature without artificial help. This unique dwelling was converted from an old opal mine and staying here should be an unusual experience. Night at Whitecliffs Underground Motel.

Day 14, Fri, 24 Sep. Darling River (250 km). We'll travel south today birding en route through interesting semi-desert country to the historic mining town of Broken Hill. This is an area of idyllic waterholes surrounded by colorful gum trees on the Darling River, and the various wetlands here are always worth a check if they hold water this year. Night in a motel in Broken Hill.

Day 15, Sat, 25 Sep. Darling River to Murray River and Chowilla Station (350 km mainly on sealed roads). After checking some sites near Broken Hill, we'll drive through the town of Wentworth, where the Darling runs into the Murray River via Lake Victoria, and then on to Chowilla Station, which is situated some 30 km north of the town of Renmark. We'll spend some time looking for birds and exploring the historic Murray River Station, which incorporates the Chowilla wetlands (Bookmark Biosphere). We'll overnight in beautifully sited Victorian shearers' quarters right on the edge of the Murray River.

Day 16, Sun, 26 Sep. To Lake Merritee (50 km). We'll set off for Lake Merritee, which is part of the Murray River system and which offers excellent birding opportunities and surprises. We'll overnight in shearers' quarters at Oak Bore on Calperum Station.

Day 17, Mon, 27 Sep. Gluepot Station (120 km). Remaining in the Bookmark Biosphere, we'll bird on Calperum Station, looking in particular for the rare Red-lored Whistler, the delightful Striated Grasswren, and the endangered Black-eared Miner. Then we'll move on to Gluepot Station (now a reserve owned by Birds Australia) where we will have further chances for the Mallee specialties. Night on the *Murray River Queen* Paddleboat or in Waikerie Motel.

Day 18, Tue, 28 Sep. Return to Adelaide. After some early morning birding at Gluepot, we will visit a good local wetland near Waikerie called Stockyard Plains, and then on to the Murray River Camel Farm (Rex and Patti's home) for a cliff top lunch. After lunch we'll head back to Adelaide. Night in Adelaide.

Day 19, Wed, 29 Sep. Departure for Melbourne. We'll fly early this morning to Melbourne. On arrival, we'll load up our bus and drive to Deniliquin, stopping to bird at a few spots en route. Night in Deniliquin.

Day 20, Thu, 30 Sep. Deniliquin. We'll bird the Deniliquin area today, looking for Superb parrot, Striped Honeyeater, waterbirds, and nomadic species all very dependent on how much rain there has been. Let's hope the rains have reached here in 2010. Night in Deniliquin.

Day 21, Fri, 1 Oct. Deniliquin area; spotlighting at night. After some morning birding in the Deniliquin area, we may take an afternoon break before going out in the late afternoon for our Plains-wanderer hunt with some birding en route. We'll be passing through private farmland and pastures where we will use spotlights to try and observe a Plains-wanderer from the trucks. Night in Deniliquin.

Day 22, Sat, 2 Oct. Morning in Deniliquin; to Melbourne. We'll have the morning to bird again in the Deniliquin area, then we'll drive back to Melbourne, checking for Musk and Purple-crowned Lorikeet en route. We'll have dinner in Melbourne, where we'll spend the night. Night in Melbourne.

Day 23, Sun, 3 Oct. Departure for home. We'll catch our homeward flights this morning, leaving at 11:10 a.m. We'll regain our "lost" day as we cross the International Date Line, arriving in Los Angeles at 7:30 a.m. on the same day. Safe travels!

About Your Guide

Phil Gregory was born in Southampton, UK, and became a birder as a youth when the scrapping of the steam trains left him with nothing to look for! He has traveled extensively in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Pacific in quest of birds. He and his wife, Sue, worked as teachers for eight years in Nigeria and Zambia, where they continued the still on-going raising of their family and made serious inroads into the birds of Africa before transferring to the Falkland Islands for a two-year stint. In 1991 they relocated to Papua New Guinea where, for seven years, the 400-plus endemics proved a great challenge. Phil's major interests are field identification, vocalizations, and the geographic distribution of birds. He is a keen writer with contributions to many reference books and is currently working on a Bird of Paradise and Bowerbird title in the Pica/Helm series and doing some family accounts for the *Handbook of Birds of the World*. Phil and his wife now run the well-known Cassowary House, a birding and nature lodge situated in a great birding spot in the rainforest at Kuranda, near Cairns in the far north of Queensland.

Financial Information

FEE: \$8675 from Adelaide

AIRFARE: \$1822.50 from Los Angeles (includes flight Adelaide to Melbourne; as of January 2010; airfare subject to change)

DEPOSIT: \$850 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: May 14, 2010

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$700 (includes single rooms in hotels only)

LIMIT: 10

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: In several areas we'll visit camping is our best option; we will be using individual comfortable mosquito netted swags (bed rolls) in beautifully sited bush camps with bush showers and toilets in order to be in the prime habitat at the prime time. This is a great opportunity to experience wild Australia at its finest, very different from the usual tours. In other places sheep stations have converted their former shearers quarters. These are usually twin-bedded rooms where we lay our swags on the beds, opening onto a verandah with a communal cooking and dining area and a separate outside ablution block. We may stay in authentic outback pubs at Lyndhurst and Innamincka, which are comfortable and friendly but usually pretty basic, having twin or double rooms but shared facilities. The motel at Thargomindah offers rooms with private baths, while the unusual underground hotel at White Cliffs has shared facilities.

DOCUMENTS: A current **passport** valid beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Australia. In addition, US citizens must obtain a **visa**, which Field Guides will automatically issue for you through the airline computer.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Australian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Round-trip airfare Los Angeles to Adelaide and return from Melbourne is currently \$1822.50 (includes flight from Adelaide to Melbourne; subject to change). Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$8675 for one person in double occupancy from Adelaide. It includes all lodging from Day 3 through Day 22, all meals from lunch on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 23, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leader(s).

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Australia or the flight from Adelaide to Melbourne, airport taxes, visa fees, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$700 (includes singles in hotels only). If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$850** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by May 14, 2010. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US and Canadian citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at www.fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.htm and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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