



East Gippsland Victoria After the fires nature tour 21-28 October 2021

Gippsland High Country Tours



Nature tours and walks

Itinerary: Jenny Lawrence (Gippsland High Country Tours) and Dr Tonia Cochran (Inala Nature Tours) 22 March 2021

Stretching from the mountains to the ocean, Victoria's East Gippsland region provides a wide range of habitats for a wonderful array of flora and fauna. During the summer of 2019-20, bushfires tore through large swathes of East Gippsland under extreme weather conditions. Almost 18 months later, we are teaming up with local ecotourism operator Gippsland High Country Tours to offer a week of nature experiences, exploring both burnt and unburnt areas of East Gippsland from the Snowy River National Park in the mountains to the Gippsland Lakes and Croajingolong on the coast. Learn about threatened species recovery programs, discover birdlife and amazing spring wildflower displays as well as meeting local wildlife and gaining an insight into how both nature and local communities recover from fire. Add a generous sprinkling of history, a waterfall or two and plenty of time to pause and soak up breathtaking landscapes for a very rewarding and enlightening week.



Flying Duck Orchid (*Caleana major*). J. Lawrence

On this tour, Tonia is teaming up with long term friend and East Gippsland local resident Jenny Lawrence, who owns Gippsland High Country Tours which has been operating for about the same duration as Inala Nature tours (almost 30 years). This tour provides a great chance to visit a spectacular area with a knowledgeable and passionate ambassador, help the locals re-establish their livelihoods and contribute to local wildlife projects.

ITINERARY OUTLINE:

- Day 1. Thu 21 Oct 2021. Arrive in Melbourne. Transfer to Bairnsdale.
- Day 2. Fri 22 Oct 2021. Bairnsdale to Raymond Island: Aboriginal Culture and Flying Foxes.
- Day 3. Sat 23 Oct 2021. Raymond Island to Gelantipy: sub-alpine flora and vistas.
- Day 4. Sun 24 Oct 2021. Gelantipy to Marlo/Orbost: Karst systems, Snowy River and Koalas.
- Day 5. Mon 25 Oct 2021. Marlo/Orbost to far East Gippsland: estuary birding and post-fire bush regeneration.
- Day 6. Tue 26 Oct 2021. Gipsy Point & Mallacoota areas.
- Day 7. Wed 27 Oct 2021. Mallacoota and Croajingolong National Park: Lake crise to Howe wilderness.
- Day 8. Thu 28 Oct 2021. Gipsy Point to Merimbula and depart.

Inala Nature Tours

E: inala@inalanaturetours.com.au W: www.inalanaturetours.com.au T: +61 3 62931217

DETAILED ITINERARY:

B- breakfast, L- lunch, D-dinner

Day 1. Thursday 21 October 2021. Arrive in Melbourne. Transfer to Bairnsdale.

This morning has been set aside for arrival into Melbourne. Please aim to arrive by around midday. We will then transfer to a meeting place in nearby Burnley where we will meet our local Victorian guide Jenny at 12:30. We will then transfer to our accommodation in Bairnsdale (around 3-3.5 hours' drive), stopping at a few places en route and aiming to be at our accommodation at around 5:00pm, where we will settle in and regroup for a welcome dinner. **Accommodation:** Bairnsdale (en suite rooms). **Meals included: D**

Day 2. Friday 22 October 2021. Bairnsdale to Raymond Island: Aboriginal Culture and Flying Foxes.



Grey-headed Flying Fox. R. Lewis

This morning after breakfast, we will start exploring. Our first stop is Krowathunkooloong (The Keeping Place) aboriginal cultural museum where we will take a tour to gain an insight into Gunaikurnai country and the Aboriginal history here. Then we will take a short walk beside the Mitchell River for an opportunity to meet the local Grey-headed Flying Fox colony before lunch beside the river. Following the Mitchell River to the Gippsland Lakes, we will discover amazing landforms and should enjoy some nice waterbird sightings. At Paynesville we

cross on a ferry to Raymond Island to settle into our accommodation and enjoy some walking to see some local birds, wildlife and wildflowers, including several orchid species. **Accommodation:** Raymond Island (en suite rooms). **Meals included: B, L, D.**

Day 3. Saturday 23 October 2021. Raymond Island to Gelantipy: sub-alpine flora and vistas.

Today we rise early to enjoy the joys of birds and morning light on the lake. Today we have a bit of driving to take us from the coast to the mountains and along the way you will see many areas affected by the summer 2019-20 bushfires. Communities like Sarsfield and Buchan are re-building and nature is regenerating but the impacts are still clear. By lunchtime we will be at sub-alpine elevations in the Snowy River National Park and amongst the Snow Gums we should find some early spring wildflowers appearing. This was not burnt in the recent fires, but we are on the edge of a dry rainshadow area, with



Everlasting Daisy, Snowy River NP. J. Lawrence

rugged rocky geology a feature of our walks to Little River Falls and nearby, to a lookout over Little River Gorge. As well as any wildlife we may see today, there will be interesting stories of the conservation efforts for the Critically Endangered Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby. Return to Gelantipy for our accommodation on a High Country property. **Accommodation:** Gelantipy (farm-stay accommodation in a lodge with shared bathroom facilities). **Meals included: B, L, D.**

Day 4. Sunday 24 October 2021. Gelantipy to Marlo/Orbost: Karst systems, Snowy River and Koalas.



Koala. R. Lewis

Again, we will have an early start to enjoy a leisurely walk before breakfast; as well as birdlife, we will also be looking for the local Koalas that survived the fires. Leaving the mountains, we return to Buchan where we will have the option to join a guided tour of these renowned limestone caves. Walks through the reserve feature a variety of birds and wildflowers. Late afternoon we drive to a town on the banks of the Snowy River which is slow and sluggish as it nears the sea.

Accommodation: Marlo/Orbost (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D.

Day 5. Monday 25 October 2021. Marlo/Orbost to far East Gippsland: estuary birding and post-fire bush regeneration.



Royal Spoonbill. J. Lawrence

Orbost and Marlo were spared the direct impact of bushfires, but it was very close. The Snowy River flows out to sea at Marlo where we will start today and there are some nice walking tracks along estuary. Estuary birding varies depending on whether entrance is open or closed, but there will always be something of interest. Further along and we will enjoy a wildflower stop and walk in burnt coastal heathland at Cape Conran. In the afternoon, we will take a short walk at the Cabbage Tree Palms Reserve (created to protect *Livistonia australis* palms) before we re-join the highway and head to our

accommodation at Gipsy Point. **Accommodation:** Gipsy Point (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D.



Post-fire regeneration



J. Lawrence

Day 6. Tuesday 26 October 2021. Gipsy Point & Mallacoota areas. There is no rush this morning, so we will use this to relax and enjoy the lovely setting and explore Gipsy Point. After lunch we will travel to Mallacoota, a town badly impacted but the 2019-20 bushfire and slowly getting back on its feet. Mallacoota Inlet is a large lake, and part of an estuary system that opens and closes to the ocean. From the headland at Bastion Point we can see Gabo Island at the eastern tip of Victoria. The birdlife here is interesting with such a wide range of habitats, and species often associated with further up the east coast tend to appear here. We are visiting at the peak of the wildflower season and areas that have been burnt are likely to be still experiencing a post fire flush of wildflowers while the canopy is recovering, and more light reaches the forest (or heathland) floor. We return to Gipsy Point Lodge tonight, with an opportunity for some night spotlighting for mammals and owls.

Accommodation: Gipsy Point (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals included:** B, L, D.

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Day 7. Wednesday 27 October 2021. Mallacoota and Croajingolong National Park: Lake cruise to Howe wilderness. Today we will spend a full day exploring around Mallacoota and surrounding Croajingolong National Park. We will support the local businesses in Mallacoota by purchasing lunches and goods and visit a great range of habitats for birding and wildlife including ocean, sandy beaches, rocky headlands, estuary, tall coastal forests and coastal heathlands and should see an abundance of wildflowers here. Humpback Whales should also be passing at this time of year so we could get lucky with a sighting. This afternoon we will also take a boat trip from Mallacoota to the Howe Wilderness area. This area remained partially unburnt and is home to the Eastern Bristlebird so we will try for that in suitable habitat in this area. Species such as Southern Emu-wren are also thankfully recovering well here post-fire. There will be a chance for another night excursion tonight, searching for Sugar and yellow-bellied Gliders and Southern Boobook. **Accommodation:** Gipsy Point (en suite rooms) as for last night. **Meals included: B, L, D.**



Day 8. Thursday 28 October 2021. Gipsy Point to Merimbula and depart. We leave Gipsy Point this morning and travel to Merimbula (around 1.5 hours' drive). We will arrive in Merimbula in time to connect with our flights back to Melbourne ([suggest REX flight MIM-MEL 12:25-13:50](#)) or Sydney ([MIM-SYD 15:50-17:40](#)) flights not included in cost of tour but discounted flight options are available [here](#)). **Accommodation:** none. **Meals included: B.**

PRICING AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Group size: 10 participants + 2 guides (Tonia and Jenny).

Tour Price: AU\$4,950 per person twin share.

Single supplement: AU\$640

Price includes: Accommodation as per the itinerary, specialist guide and transport, meals, entrance fees and activities as mentioned in the itinerary.

Price does not include: Airfares, alcoholic beverages, snacks, internet, laundry or other items of a personal nature.

Please note:

- **Meals and drinks:** Breakfast generally consists of a continental style breakfast with cereal, fruit and yoghurt and tea/coffee. Full cooked breakfast is not generally offered at most locations. Lunch will generally consist of a packed lunch style meal eaten in the field, with sandwich/filled roll, fruit, and a drink. Dinner usually consists of several options for main with the choice of either an appetiser or dessert. Drinks (soft and alcoholic) are generally not included but at lunches and breakfasts juice may be made available.
- **The itinerary:** Whilst we aim to follow the itinerary as planned, please note that the itinerary provided should only be used as a guideline. Depending on individual trip circumstances, weather, and local information, the exact itinerary may not be strictly adhered to. The guides reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary as they see fit.