



Mungo Outback Journey 3 Day Private or Group Touring Module

Echidna Walkabout fact sheet

Mungo National Park and Mungo Lodge Wildlife and Aboriginal Culture in the Outback

MUNGO OUTBACK JOURNEY

Tour code: MOP

Tour Duration: 3 days

Style: Private Party or Special Group touring

Operates: March thru November

Departs: Mildura Airport at 10:15am on:- Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu and Sat (Fri & Sun by arrangement)

Returns to: Mildura Airport late afternoon on Day 3 to meet return flight to Melbourne.

Other Pick ups/drop offs: can be arranged from/to Mildura and surrounds.

Flight Information: *Flight IS NOT included in our price.*

All scheduled flights to Mildura originate in Melbourne. At the current date (May 2009) both Qantas and Regional Express (REX) run regular services between Melbourne and Mildura. If you are travelling from Melbourne on Day 1 you must book a flight out of Melbourne to arrive in Mildura no later than 10am. If you wish to return to Melbourne on Day 3 your flight should not depart before 4:30pm. Please carefully check luggage requirements for both airlines before booking your flight.

Overview: [see page 7 for suggested brochure/website text]

Discover the animals and history of the Outback with premier wildlife tour operator, Echidna Walkabout, at Lake Mungo in the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area.

Share your private journey with experienced Nature and Aboriginal Guides* who reveal Mungo's arid land wildlife and ancient Aboriginal heritage.

Experience the peace of the Australian Outback whilst staying at 4 star Mungo Lodge for 3 days and 2 nights in the bush beside the vast dry bed of Lake Mungo.

Australia's Aboriginal People have lived and hunted beside Lake Mungo for 50,000 years. In the mid 1900's ancient camps and burial sites were exposed by erosion creating tremendous excitement throughout the scientific world. Aboriginal occupation of Australia was pushed back many thousands of years by the discovery of ritual burials sites that are evidence of the oldest organised human culture on earth and the reason the region was proclaimed a World Heritage Area. Mungo National Park is also home to many arid land animals and birds including kangaroos, rare species of parrots and cockatoos, birds of prey, reptiles and many others. Skeletal remains of extinct marsupials, the forebears of Australia's unique suite of wildlife, are another example of the huge significance of Lake Mungo.

* Expert guidance is provided by a top level Echidna Walkabout Nature Guide working in collaboration with a Harry Nanya Aboriginal Guide (from the local Paakantyi Tribe) to provide a genuine overall understanding of the significance of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area.



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Introduction:

Australia's Mungo National Park is one of the most significant human heritage sites on earth where unequivocal evidence of humanity's oldest organised living sites lie in a semi desert environment containing unique wildlife and vegetation. Mungo National Park is at the heart of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area (WHA), proclaimed in 1981 after the discovery of Aboriginal camp grounds and burial sites on the old shoreline of a dry lake called Lake Mungo. The WHA protects a vast (24,000 hectare) "fossilised" lake system that dried out about 18,000 years ago. Mungo National Park is located in eastern Australia 700 kilometres north of Melbourne.

Archaeological evidence at Mungo shows that Aboriginal occupation of the Mungo region has been continuous for at least 40,000 years, making this one of the longest continuously-used living sites in the world. During your stay a **local Aboriginal Guide** will share the history of Aboriginal Culture in this most significant region.

Many native Australian birds & animals inhabit the beautiful dune fields and saltbush plains of Mungo. At dawn and dusk Red and Western Grey Kangaroos graze together in the low vegetation – heads raising and lowering silently in the solitude of the vast dry lakebed. Bird life at Mungo is both rich and rare – resident Wedge-tailed Eagles soar overhead and nest in the few desert trees, giant flightless Emus swagger about the plains in small bands. Falcons & Kestrels hunt low flying birds and insects. Most beautiful of all is the Pink Cockatoo with its fabulous multicoloured crest – a remarkable bird to see in this arid land. Some of Australia's most vividly colourful parrots are seen at Mungo, often in the desert pines where noisy Babblers also live & make their large communal nests. Shingleback & Bearded Dragon lizards are often seen basking in the sun in these delicate arid ecosystems. Our Nature Guide will place you in locations at the right time to see many of these creatures.

For two nights you will stay at Mungo Lodge in beautifully appointed cabins deep in the Australian bush. The Lodge is the perfect base to explore this magnificent region on foot & by vehicle, escorted by your personal guides. Delicious meals are served at the Lodge and are included in the tour price.

Day by Day Description (Note meal inclusions shown thus: B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)

Day 1 Introduction to the Outback – Mungo National Park

Depart Melbourne airport in the morning on a short flight (flight by others) to Mildura on the edge of the Outback. Upon arrival you will meet your Echidna Walkabout Nature Guide and begin your private Outback journey. Your first stop will be at the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens where your guide will introduce you to the landscapes and vegetation of Outback Australia.

Next we drive away from civilisation into the dry country ending at your accommodation for the next 2 nights at Mungo Lodge. After settling in your Nature Guide will introduce you to the Outback on a walk which overviews the significance of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area - a vast dry lake system which only gave up its 50,000 year old secret in the middle of last century! Birdlife will be finishing its foraging for the day and calling into the great Australian silence – you may hear the distinctive liquid notes of the Crested Bellbird and, if you are very lucky, you may even see this common but shy bird of the Australian deserts. Dinner tonight will be at Mungo Lodge.

O/n Mungo Lodge (L,D) (you will stay at the same accommodation for tonight and the following night)

*This tour itinerary is the property of - **Echidna Walkabout** PO Box 370 Port Melbourne 3207 AUSTRALIA
Web: www.echidnawalkabout.com.au Email: enquiries@echidnawalkabout.com.au Tel: +61 3 9646 8249*



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Day 2 Lake Mungo – Wildlife & Culture on a 50,000 year Journey

This morning if you rise early look out for Pink Cockatoos in the desert pines outside your door! These birds may come to the Lodge for a brief morning sojourn then move on - have your binoculars and camera ready so you don't miss them! Depending on the weather and timing your Nature Guide will take you on a short early morning bird watching walk near the lake's edge. Vivid parrots regularly frequent these parts as do emus, fairy wrens and the (hilariously funny) communal Apostlebirds.

At breakfast you will meet your Aboriginal Guide from the local Paakantyi Tribe who will travel with us for the rest of the day to interpret the culture of this region. We drive across the dry bed of Lake Mungo to lunettes (wind-curved sand dunes) to begin a "story line" through 50,000 years of Aboriginal History beginning at the lake bed and rising high into the eroded dunes. You will learn about the people who lived at this place, see evidence of their camp sites, view the remains of their cooking fires and, depending on the movement of the sand and soil, you may even help with the discovery of new site. Your guide will also point out evidence of extinct fauna. It will become obvious that this now dry arid area was once a thriving wetland where large numbers of waterbirds and animals coexisted beside a vibrant population of Aboriginal People for tens of thousands of years. Where people lived they also died and not far from where you will be walking is the oldest recorded human cremation in the world. Burial sites continue to be exposed throughout the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area and are monitored carefully by local Aboriginal People to minimise disturbance and engender respect for their ancestors. We cannot take you to these sacred areas but it is wonderful to know that the person who is guiding you is a descendent of these enduring people whose culture is the oldest in world.

NB - Australian Federal and State laws forbid collection or removal of Aboriginal Artefacts.

At the end of the morning we will begin a circumnavigation of Lake Mungo by vehicle and on foot. This afternoon our Nature Guide and Aboriginal Guide collaborate in a cross cultural interpretation of the land and its wildlife. You will travel through 4 ecosystems ranging from dry lakebeds to rich sandy bush country. As we travel we'll stop often to search for birds and animals and learn about the vegetation in this constantly changing landscape. You will learn how the Willandra Lakes System dried out over the thousands of years as the climate warmed – you will even see the course of the archaic Willandra Creek. Because the country is flat any rise places you on top of a world that stretches from you direct to an endless 360 degree horizon – a profound peace emanates from the ancient land. As the day subsides we re-cross Lake Mungo and spend time walking in the saltbush with the kangaroos of Mungo. On cloudless evenings the coats of male Red Kangaroos vibrate in the sunlight. Your Nature Guide will point out the distinctive white ear marks of the Western Grey kangaroos. Vivid parrots and Cockatoos may join us. This is also the perfect time to serenade the evening with the evocative vibrations of the Didgeridoo – your Aboriginal Guide will share this unique instrument with you before we head back to the Lodge.

After dinner you may like to spend a little time with your Nature Guide (or on your own) studying the stars of the Southern Hemisphere - including the Southern Cross. The stars in the Outback on a clear night they shine so brightly you can almost reach out and touch them!

O/n Mungo Lodge (B,L,D)



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Day 3 Life in the Red Sand Dunes

Red sand dunes are one of the signature emblems of Australia. They sweep in endless moving waves across vast areas of the country engulfing all before them, sometimes settling briefly when vegetation ties them down. On the western shore of Lake Mungo desert pines, stunted eucalypts (called Mallee) and spiky spinifex grass have managed to hold a large meandering dune in place – at least for the time being.

This morning we'll take an early breakfast then head out into the red dune country of Mungo for an extended nature stroll through this magnificent bright red landscape. Here we will search for some of the birds of the deserts – the most obvious are the Babblers. There are two species that live here in family groups building large communal nests in the desert pines in winter and racing about on the sand searching out insects and grubs. Their crazy antics and calls will endear you to them. The fluting call of butcherbirds and honeyeaters echo through the sandhills and kangaroos rest in the shade as the day warms. Nearby a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles regularly nest in a stunted pine and we may see these huge birds as they rise on thermals to begin a day of hunting. Here to we often see the inland parrots: Yellow Rosellas, Mulga Parrots, Mallee Ringnecks & Blue Bonnets – sometimes resting or foraging for seeds on the ground or flashing past in a vivid splash of colour across the dunes. Emus may approach us in small bands to see what we are up to – they are naturally very curious. Your Nature Guide will show you how to attract their attention – with luck, these proud birds might walk right up to you!

After our walk we'll have lunch, pack up and depart Mungo Lodge to Mildura for your return flight to Melbourne (flight by others).

(B,L)

INCLUDES:

Full interpretation by experienced guides, meals and accommodation as described below, entry fees and transport

Expert Nature Guides: You will be guided on this journey by our friendly, experienced and knowledgeable Echidna Walkabout Nature Guide. Many hours of research work precede the tour to ensure that you see and learn about native wildlife in its natural environment.

First class standards in guidance are the hallmark of Echidna Walkabout. Our in-house Nature Guide training program ensures that all guides have an in-depth working knowledge of the wildlife and environments you will see.

Aboriginal Guide: Aboriginal interpretation is provided by a traditional Paakantyi Tribe person from Harry Nanya Tours.

Accommodation: Accommodation is at Mungo Lodge located in the bush abutting the boundary of Mungo National Park. The Lodge provides high quality 4 star accommodation. Breakfasts and dinners are provided in the dining room.



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Meals on tour: Meals are provided as noted in the itinerary. Dinners are 2 courses. Breakfasts are Continental style buffet. Picnic lunches are provided on tour.

Note: Alcoholic beverages are not included in the price but are available at the bar at Mungo Lodge.

NB Vegetarian or other food preferences should be noted at the time of booking.

Transport: In comfortable air conditioned vehicle

What to bring: Strong walking shoes or boots, clothing to suit variable weather conditions (please check weather forecasts for expected temperatures or call us), sun hat, rain proof coat, small torch, insect repellent, sunscreen, day pack and 1 litre water bottle.

Weather: Be prepared for extremes in both seasonal and daily temperatures in Outback Australia. Winter days are cool to warm and nights cold to frosty. Spring and Autumn days are warm to very hot. Desert winds can be penetrating, very cold in Winter and hot and dusty at other times of year. Shelter from the elements is minimal.

Cancellations or Modifications by us:-

Before the tour

On the rare occasions when rain does fall at Mungo dirt roads into the area may become waterlogged and impassable meaning that the tour must be cancelled prior to the tour date. If you have booked and paid for a tour that is cancelled by us due to rain prior to the departure date we may do **one only** of the following:

- Offer you the tour on another occasion
- Offer an alternative tour
- If neither of the above is possible we will refund the amount you have paid us for the tour (this amount does not include flight)

During the tour

Echidna Walkabout will always attempt to run your tour as per our itinerary. However Outback travel can be influenced by a wide range of conditions and factors that are often out of our control and which may cause us to disrupt or change the tour. On some occasions we may have to modify the itinerary due to extreme heat or unusual weather or road conditions. We will always try to get you back for your flight out. However you must be aware that **we will not compensate you in any way whatsoever for any losses or liabilities you may incur.**

Not Included in your tour price

- Flights to and from Melbourne
- Airport transfers to and from Melbourne Airport
- Alcoholic beverages



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About Us: Janine Duffy and Roger Smith are the founders of Echidna Walkabout, based in Melbourne, Australia. Our business is based upon a deep respect of nature, indigenous cultures and environmentally sustainable living. Our fantastic team of Nature Guides – Tim, Bill, Paul, Joanne, Martin and Janine & Roger – and Koala Researchers – Mary, Melinda and Alison – ensure that every tour is a special, once only experience. No two tours are ever the same with wild animals!

Echidna Walkabout have, and have always had, a serious commitment to running sustainable tours. Our comprehensive environmental code is available for viewing on our website.

On this tour our Nature Guides work very closely with Aboriginal People to assist with cross cultural exchange.

NB - This tour is also available for specialised Group touring.

BOOKINGS/INFORMATION

Echidna Walkabout
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SUGGESTED BROCHURE/WEBSITE TEXT:

Mungo Outback Journey Private 3 day tour *[7 words, 48 characters incl. spaces]*
Discover the animals and history of the Outback at Lake Mungo in the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. Share your private journey with experienced Nature and Aboriginal Guides* who reveal Mungo's arid land wildlife and ancient Aboriginal Heritage.

Experience the peace of the Australian Outback whilst staying at 4 star Mungo Lodge for 3 days and 2 nights in the bush beside the vast dry bed of Lake Mungo.

Australia's Aboriginal People have lived and hunted beside Lake Mungo for 50,000 years. Mungo National Park is also home to many arid land animals and birds including kangaroos, rare species of parrots and cockatoos, birds of prey, reptiles and many others. Skeletal remains of extinct marsupials, the forebears of Australia's unique suite of wildlife, are another example of the huge significance of Lake Mungo. If you really want to see Australia's true Outback, and find out how it came to be the Outback, this is the place to be! *[158 words, 947 characters incl. spaces]*

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Why is Mungo so important?

Mungo National Park is where the oldest cremation site of any human was discovered – dating back 50,000 years. The region has been continuously occupied by Aboriginal People since that time – the longest known occupation of any land by any people on earth. Ongoing research found the area to be so important it was listed as a World Heritage Area in 1981. Mungo also contains a unique insight into climate change and its effect of human habitation and the environment over many thousands of years. The wildlife of Lake Mungo is also uniquely Australian – the flora and fauna have evolved through dramatic changes in climate encompassing total inundation, rich wetland and desertification. The bones of the ancestors of Australia's unique marsupials are often found protruding from the ground at Mungo! Today the land holds 2 of Australia's 5 species of great kangaroos, many rare and beautiful parrots, birds of prey, reptiles and a rich arid land flora. If you really want to see Australia's true Outback, and find out how it came to be the Outback, this is the place to be!

Updated: July 2009 For more details about this tour contact: roger@echidnawalkabout.com.au