

Fair Dinkum

Day 1 Brisbane, Queensland

Welcome to Brisbane, Australia's third largest city. Straddling the Brisbane River, the city quietly executes its evolution in true, casual Queensland style. It feels no need to advertise its virtues – locals know how good they've got it. After transferring to the hotel, located at the area known as South Banks, take a walk along Sandy Beach and picnic at one of the fabulous grassy public areas. Maps will be provided in your welcome packet. Dinner tonight will be on your own. To avoid jet lag, drink lots of water and get to bed at a reasonable hour.

Day 2 Archerfield, Brisbane

Transfer for the day to Archerfield to meet your plane and our crew. A CFI will be on hand to perform the check rides, sign off for your Australian licensing, and conduct the tour briefing. Afterward, enjoy a tour around the region and a “welcome” dinner with your travel companions.

Day 3 Brisbane to Coff’s Harbour

The Home of the Big Banana anticipates your arrival. It’s foremost icon is a 13 meter (36 foot long), bright yellow banana that rests outside the World of Bananas plantation, where you can almost literally find everything banana you’ve ever wanted to eat. An elevated skywalk through the Plantation provides spectacular views of the city, hinterland and Pacific coastline. The Plantation also offers a candy kitchen and the largest puzzle outlet in Australia. From May to September, the families of southern humpback whales, who migrate south to Antarctica after calving in northern waters, stop to play. Often, they can be seen from the beach.

Day 4 Coff’s Harbour to Sofala

Land at Bathurst airport and transfer to Chesleigh Homestead a 3000 acre wildlife preserve. This property is amazing in that it has never been forested. The massive and ancient trees provide homes for a plethora of Australian native creatures. The region is hilly, providing valleys, pristine creeks, waterfalls, lookouts and caves. Want to pan for gold or go horseback riding? Just say the word. By the way, come hungry to the table.

Day 5 Sofala to Mildura

The streets of Mildura provide a clue as to the economic basis of the area, having names like Orange, Lemon, Lime, Valencia, Avocado, Cherry, Muscat, Vineyard, Olive and Walnut. The district supplies 80% of Australia's dried fruit, 15% of its citrus fruit, 85% of the state's winemaking grapes and it possesses the second and third largest packing companies in the world. Mildura is also a riverside community, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. It is, literally, an oasis in the desert. Its paddle steamers, lush golf course and other attractions are a welcome site after many kilometers of consistently dry, brown terrain and wheat fields. Our tour today is of the citrus groves and the largest packing facility in Australia. Free samples, anyone?

Day 6 Mildura to Adelaide

Welcome to Adelaide, South Australia, the city of churches. The organized tour for the day includes the renowned Barossa Valley, home to some of the best wines in the world. Dinner will be in the Gungellen Hotel, the pub featured in the massively popular Australian drama “McLeod’s Daughters.” Should you decide to skip the wineries, then the day is yours to enjoy. Spend the day relaxing and enjoying the sister city to Austin, Texas. Walk through Rundle Mall, the southern hemisphere’s largest outdoor pedestrian shopping mall. Stroll along the River Torrens to the unique Festival Theatre and the many parks within walking distance of the hotel. Catch the Circle Bus…it’s free. Maps are readily available onboard. If you’d like to see the city from the river, take a cruise on the “Popeye”. Ride the tram down “the bay” to the seaside area of Glenelg, the town whose name is spelled the same backwards or forwards, and chat with the locals fishing along the jetty while enjoying the sea view. You are on your own for dinner and your options are limitless. . If you’re feeling really brave, a pie floater from a street “pie cart” is hard to beat. If you’re feeling lucky, the casino is located in downtown Adelaide, behind the train station. It’s easy to find, because the Adelaide city centre is only one square mile. In Glenelg, dine at the HMS Buffalo, a fully restored floating vessel that, at one time, transported immigrants to Australia. Or try the pub by the beach; it’s always an Aussie favorite.

Day 7 Adelaide to Woomera

Depart Parafield Airport en route to Woomera, a town rich in history of rockets and space research. Until 1982, Woomera was restricted to the public. After checking into the ELDO hotel, and having lunch, it’s off to tour the Rocket Range as well as the Missile Park, located at the Heritage Museum. The Heritage Museum contains historical displays relating to the Woomera Range and to the closed U.S. Joint Defense Facility at Nurrungar, along with photographs and descriptions of Range activities, including the most recent NEXST-1 and HyShot trials. Dinner will be at the Hotel.

Day 8 Woomera to Coober Pedy

Welcome to the opal mining capital of Australia. A city where you will not only be able to purchase opals and see where they are mined, but you will be “noodling” for them as well. Our accommodation tonight is entirely different than anywhere you have probably ever slept before. The Desert Cave Hotel is the World’s only underground

international hotel. Don't worry above ground rooms are available if you don't relish the idea of spending the night sleeping in a five star rabbit's warren. It's said to be the one of the quietest, most peaceful night's sleep you'll ever have. Tours of the hotel are available, if desired.

Day 9 Coober Pedy to Yulara (Uluru/Ayers Rock)

Touch down in Yulara early enough in the day to see Uluru as an orange-red mound. As the day goes by, the sandstone that composes Uluru absorbs the heat from the sun and changes to an incredible shade of deep red. As a sacred Aboriginal site, and by request of the local tribe to prevent damage to the rock, the local government limits the number of tourists allowed to climb the massive monolith on a daily basis. Those who chose to climb to the top should be in extremely good health. For those of us who decide not to attempt the climb, we will enjoy the fly over the top of the rock as we are coming into Yulara "village." Get the same view, without the workout. The caves located at the base of Uluru have Aboriginal artwork believed to be 2,000 years old. Dinner that night in the ""village" of Yulara with Uluru as a distant backdrop. Talk about a Kodak moment!

Day 10 Yulara (Uluru) to Alice Springs

Land in the town lovingly called "The Alice" by locals. Transfer to the hotel and relax by the pool, the bar, or explore on your own. In the evening, the award winning "Spirit of the Night Sky" tour will take you on a journey through space and give you a new perspective on our place in the universe. The craters of the moon, rings of Saturn and neighboring galaxies will all be visible through high powered telescopes. With the isolation of Outback Australia, the star shows at night are so clear that it's common to see the passing satellites.

Day 11 Alice Springs to Mount Isa

Depart Alice Springs and head east to the town the Guinness Book of Records claims to be the largest city in the world. Mount Isa, Queensland, boasts not only the largest most efficient silver, lead, copper and nickel mine in the world, producing a massive 35,000 tons of ore per day, it also has a "city limit" area of 40,977 sq kilometers (25,462 miles). Population: 20,000. Golfer Greg Norman hails from Mount Isa. After lunch, a tour of the mine awaits, followed by an optional tour at the Riversleigh Fossil Centre, which holds fossils ranging from the expected to the obscure. If you decide to bypass the tours, there are plenty of things to see on your own. The Kalkadoon Tribal Centre offers Aboriginal art tours and your guide can help to arrange them. A round of golf is also possible. You decide.

Day 12 Mount Isa to Longreach

Fly over the world's only dinosaur stampede, 200k of perfectly fossilized dinosaur tracks in the outback rock near Winton. Arrive in Longreach just after lunch. Transfer to the Jumbuck Motel which boasts a Qantas history room as well as barramundi, kangaroo and emu on the restaurant menu. Enjoy a tour of the Stockman's Hall of Fame and see how the Australian Jackaroos and Jillaroos tamed the Australian outback. A sunset campfire dinner cruise caps off the evening. By the way, it would take two days to get from Mount Isa to Longreach by bus… isn't it great to be a pilot?

Day 13 Longreach to Yeppoon

Land at nearby Rockhampton (the Beef Capital of Australia) airport and take a 45 minute ride to the gorgeous little seaside town of Yeppoon. Be sure to watch out for kangaroos being chased off the golf courses! The day is yours…do you want to hang out on the beach, go scuba diving, skydiving, shopping, golfing, or explore the surroundings? There is a small crocodile farm at neighboring Emu Park and let's not forget the Singing Ship memorial to Captain Cook that provides an enchanting view of the bay. True Blue Skies will happily arrange the golf, diving or sightseeing excursions as requested.

Day 14 Yeppoon to Caloundra

Southern humpback whales return to Caloundra every year on their migration route back to Antarctica. Keep an eye out for them as we pass over the beach. Today we visit world famous Australia Zoo, home of the late Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter. Australia Zoo has more to offer than just crocodiles. There is a bird aviary, snake exhibit, (don't worry they are all behind glass), tigers, Asian elephants, and wombats as well as kangaroos that you can cuddle. The park closes at 5pm so there is plenty of time for evening activities back in the city. After dinner, go for a walk along one of Caloundra's beautiful beaches, or try your luck at the racetrack nearby.

Day 15 Caloundra to Coolangatta

It is only a short hop from Caloundra to the Coolangatta airport, but the flight follows the beautiful coastline from the Sunshine Coast, over Brisbane, and along the Gold Coast. Upon landing in Coolangatta, the tour is officially over, but return transportation to the hotel will be provided. A farewell feast is planned for tonight.