

# The Stawell Gift Easter Tour

8 Days - Autumn Colours & Easter in Bendigo



This tour is a great opportunity to experience one of the world's richest foot races, the Stawell Gift Footrace, which started in Australia in 1878. Tour includes accommodation in Bendigo for four nights, with visits to Bright & Beechworth to see the Autumn Colours, a visit to Shepparton to the Ardmona SPC cannery to pick up some bargain tinned fruit and vegetable goodies, a visit to the famous Beechworth Bakery, and a cruise on the Murray River at Echuca. Another highlight of the tour will be the chance to see the Bendigo Easter Fair & Parade, including the Awakening of the Dragon, an event which is unique to Bendigo. The tour goes over Anzac day, and includes the opportunity to participate in Anzac Day Services should you wish to do so, and for those who wish, there will be rides on the famous Bendigo Talking Tram.

## Day 1: Home—Albury (LD)

Departing from the Hunter, we will pick up in Tuggerah, Hornsby and Strathfield before our lunch stop near Goulburn. We will take the Hume Expressway to the twin town of Albury, for the next two nights.

**Sundowner Albury Paddlesteamer 02 6042 0500 (2 nights)**

## Day 2: Bright & Beechworth (BD)

We head to the mountains, to Bright, with spectacular views of Mount Beauty and Mount Bogong, and best known for its colourful display of deciduous trees and many craft shops (we will visit some, but not all!). We continue to Beechworth, stopping at the famous Beechworth Bakery, made famous by motivational speaker Tom O'Toole. A local guide will come on board for a tour of the highlights, and to visit a nut farm, as this area is famous for walnuts, chestnuts and hazelnuts.

## Day 3: Albury—Bendigo (BD)

We head west through the river towns of Corowa, Yarrawonga and Cobram, the start of the Victorian Fruit Bowl with many market gardens, plantations and crops. The Cobram region is renowned for its golf courses and wineries in particular the Cobram Cream liqueur. In Echuca we have organised a cruise on the Murray River, with much of its charm and nostalgic ties to its romantic days as the busiest river port in Australia. At Bendigo visit the Chinese Museum, showcasing the role the Chinese played in the development of Bendigo, and home to some of the oldest and longest dragons in the world.

**Colonial Inn Golden Square 03 5447 0122 (4 nights)**



## Day 4: Bendigo Easter Fair & Parade (BD)

We wake up this morning after a little visit from the Easter Bunny. We will enjoy Australia's longest continuous running festival, the Bendigo Easter Fair, started in 1871. With over 100 floats the highlight is the Awakening of the Dragon, unique to Bendigo. A lot of noise is required to awaken "Sun Loong" who will slowly rouse himself from his year long slumber to walk in the Gala Parade. The famous Southern Lions perform accompanied by the clash of cymbals and the beating of drums. This culminates in the explosion of tens of thousands of firecrackers. The rest of the day will be full of entertainment, dancing and music before dinner.

## Day 5: Bendigo: Anzac Day & Talking Tram (BD)

This morning those who wish to, may join the local Anzac Day Services. In the afternoon there will be time to explore the town, and we take a ride on the famous Bendigo Talking Tram.

## Day 6: Stawell Gift (BD)

We head to Stawell for one of the world's richest footraces. The first Stawell Gift was in 1878, as a fun race between miners at the end of the gold rush. It has been raced every year since, except for four years during WWII. Originally a local event, today it is the most prestigious footrace in Australia, with a \$40,000AUD first prize. The race is handicapped and gambling on the race is allowed with a good field of bookies on course.

## Day 7: Bendigo—Albury (BLD)

We will spend the morning in the fruit town of Shepparton, with a visit to the Ardmona SPC Cannery and Campbells including their factory outlet, where good bargains can always be found. From here we stop in Benalla, home of the beautiful rose garden and statue of Sir Weary Dunlop. We will have some time to take in the city before continuing onto Albury.

**Sundowner Albury Paddlesteamer 02 6042 0500**

## Day 8: Albury—Home (BL)

We make our way north to Holbrook the town now famous for its submarines. Learn why as we stop for photos, and if you like you can take the opportunity to climb upon a genuine submarine. We continue to Sydney arriving mid afternoon and back to the Hunter around 6pm.