



OUTLINES

December / January 2007/ 08

"Away, away, from men and towns, to the wild wood and downs, to the silent wilderness, where the soul need not repress its music." Percy Bysshe Shelley

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For those receiving this newsletter for the first time, welcome. If you are interested in past copies they are stored on our website www.outdoortravel.com.au under 'What's New'.

For those dreaming of a white Christmas: <http://www.thecompassgroup.biz/merryxmas.swf>

A WALK IN UNDULATING UMBRIA

A small group tour – travelling with a donkey

Departs 15th – 22nd June and 6th – 13th September 2008 from \$3850

Umbria is one of the most important and beautiful walking areas in Italy. It has some of the loveliest hills to walk in, scattered with beech wood spinneys and woods and with outstanding views. Not only does it have stunningly dramatic landscape but one of the best cooking cultures of Italy and also some of the greatest wines. It is the birthplace of two of the most important saints in Christendom which adds a spiritual air to the quiet paths and it is home to some of the most beautiful medieval churches and villages built on Roman sites and which are little changed since the thirteenth century.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

With our small group guided walking holidays there is a chance to sample some of the great things that Umbria has to offer. They involve the usual attention to gastronomy. Italian gastronomy has to be the best in Europe. The French of course would beg to disagree but one only has to go to a French restaurant to see that they do not know how to deal with vegetables. It is extraordinary for a nation that prides itself on its cooking, and which has a list of famous chefs as long as your arm, that they have no concept of '*le legume*'. French cuisine is based it seems on savoir-faire and sauce. In Italy there is lots of everything and served with loads of "Mama mia!" Italian hospitality is always based around the delights of the table. Generosity knows no bounds.

In the week in September as well as breathtaking walking, you will meet three chefs who differ enormously in approach. Gentile is a farmer's wife. She met Giuseppe when she was six and they have not moved from their village since ... for nearly seventy years. Going abroad for them is going in to Assisi to see the doctor! Gentile shows you, before a sumptuous picnic lunch with Diana, how she makes pasta for Giuseppe every day.

Assù has travelled well and is a real *Slow Food* operator. Her salads take her all morning to chop by hand and there is an exquisite sense of attention to detail. All is fresher than fresh and the flavours she mixes and the wines she serves are the best one could ever wish for and all this in the most beautiful of settings in the Umbrian plains. Lastly there is Rachid who has come from Tunisia. He is head chef of the Grotta Azzurra hotel in Norcia; a pretty walled fortified town nestled at the foot of the Sibillini Mountains. Rachid has the more international approach to Italian cooking and you will join him one morning and make tortellini before setting off for the mornings walk!

Not only are food, wine and walking on the week's menu but also of course some of the most beautiful works of art that Italy has to offer. A morning visits to the great masterpiece San Francesco to see the frescoes of Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti. Also visits to fabulous works by Perugino, Gozzoli and Pinturicchio.

The walking in this part of Italy is stunning, healthy and moderately tiring. There are definitely hills but nothing that would make it too much of a task. The mules and horse are there to help on the tougher days and there is always the chance to take it easy and take an alternative route.

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And all this in very carefully chosen hotels. You stay three nights at Le Silve. This is a charming sophisticated four-star hotel sitting very isolated in its own 600 hectares of forest where pigs and deer are reared. The writer Phillipa Davenport has written much of the excellent quality of cuisine and meats from this estate. The bedrooms are beautifully designed with fabulous views over the Subasian foothills. After this three nights are spent in the centre of the historic village of Norcia nestled at the foot of the Sibillini Mountains. The accommodation here is very Felliniesque with a mass of action and bedrooms full of idiosyncrasies.

Your last night is spent in four-star slightly modern splendour overlooking the thirteenth century viaduct designed by Gattapone. The bedrooms have large glass windows with a spectacular view over the gorge.

FRANCE - A WEEK WALKING IN THE LOT VALLEY

Small Group Walking Party holidays

Departs 1st – 8th May, 8th – 15th May, 15th – 22nd May, 29th August – 5th September 2008

8-days / 7-nights - A total of @ 47½ miles

Cost from: AU\$3785 per person

"In May this countryside is full of earthly delights of new-mown scents and nightingale valleys, filled with the purring of turtledoves and fields so full of wild orchids that you can hardly walk without treading on them."
Brian Jackman for the Haut Quercy Walk, Daily Telegraph (UK)

“On St Thomas’ Day, if you have a pig, kill it. Whoever hasn’t got one just go and steal one, St Thomas will forgive you”. Old Quercy saying

The Quercy is a unique little known part of France which is even more beautiful than its better known over trodden neighbour, the Dordogne. It is our home and we would not want to live anywhere else in the world. The traditions brought about by history and man’s basic need to survive have seeped into the very rock that acts as bones to this land only to be thrown back as the rock relentlessly resurfaces like a blazing defiance. These traditions will never disappear and in a world where tradition is losing grip as ‘unified’ Europe tries to sweep it into oblivion, we remain in awe and enjoy the quality of, and the love for, life that the Quercy gives us.

It is a land where Cro-Magnon man dwelled in caves measureless to man creating masterpieces some twenty five thousand years ago. A land where many a bloody battle has passed over. Where Caesar eventually conquered Gaul at Uxellodunum. Where Simon de Montfort (father of the better known English version) slaughtered the Cathars in the name of God. Where the Lombards settled to make Cahors a den of dirty dealing so renowned that Dante assimilates Cahors to Sodom in his ‘Inferno’. Where the sons of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine bloodied the soil for personal gain the one against the other. Where Catholics and Protestants enjoyed the word ‘massacre’ to an awesome degree resulting in the Bartholomew’s Day frenzy in Cahors. Where the Ducs and Seigneurs abandoned their lands and their workers for the pleasures of the new ‘drawing room of Europe’ at Versailles. Where the Revolution (in this area centred in Montauban) stemming from this abandonment, struck terror in the hearts of all as did the Gestapo and the ‘collabos’ (collaborators) a hundred and fifty odd years later.

It is a land where the pig is king. It is said that the best ornament in the house is the pig hanging from the beams. One good pig (250 kilos normally, sometimes 300 kilos) was one family’s meat intake for the year. Not force-fed like the goose, but stuffed with as much as possible. The higher quality the feed, the longer the longevity of the cured hams and the better quality the meat. The three important festivals of the year have been known as ‘The Ascension, The Assumption and the Fête du Cochon’. Killing the pig was as important to the French *paysan* as mummifying the Pharaoh was to the Egyptians. Each organ had its pot almost, and all was preserved to last the year. Everything was eaten. It is interesting to note that the French devote one shop to the pig, being the charcuterie.

It is a land of the Peasant Farmer. The term peasant in the French language is by no means derogatory as in English. It has always been a term of respect. In the old days it meant worker of the land (*pays* = land *paysan* = peasant) as opposed to Baron. Someone who would work on and live off his farm. Here we are in the heart of peasant farming land. Not only does the subsistence farming maintain a beauty of landscape but also it now represents a mark of unadulterated goodness versus the idea of plastic globalisation. The market places on market day in the Quercy Blanc are teeming with fresh produce bursting with flavour. Sights may not be appealing to the eyes of animal lovers as young fowl are stuffed into baskets for a couple of hours waiting for prospective buyers but these are practices that go back centuries and these are birds that, if not sold, will be running and scratching around the farmyard until the following week.

It is a land of truffle, of confit, of snails, of foie gras many of the practices in French cuisine renowned today have come from the south west of France. Traditions of cuisine that have been brought about by a basic necessity to survive; the art of preserving meat by slow cooking the marinated pieces in their own fat and allowing the meat to last by letting the fat solidify around it creating an air-impregnable seal; it keeps the meat for months. Smothering the pieces in coarse salt and ashes in vast stone or stoneware vessels has the same success in preservations. Every morsel that could last was made to last. In the old days, the farms were so poor in this area that the cows were made to work the fields. Oxen were too expensive ... a cow would at least give a calf Snails were eaten not because someone had the idea they might be fantastic to eat. A snail was free meat. The art of the cuisine of the southwest was how to make it appealing to the palate!

Lastly it is a land where the accent sings. The syllables are pronounced as if the Lotois enjoy every bit of the word. Wine is ‘vang’. Twenty is ‘vang’. Tomorrow is ‘demang’. Always hitting the G with pride. Bread ‘pang’.

Our walking guides in the Lot, **James and Diana Tamlyn** moved to their 18th century farmhouse in France 15 years ago, enthused by the romance and beauty of the area. James’ love of the flora and fauna, their combined fascination for the food, wine and local traditions and personal contacts make the week a special experience that you could not enjoy as an individual traveller. This area of southwest France, known as the ‘Quercy’, was given by Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henri d’Anjou in 1152, two years before he became Henry II of England, and its beauty and timelessness has changed little since. Not only that but it is still known today as being the gastronomic heart of France.



Day 1 After meeting James and the rest of the group in the afternoon at Toulouse airport you will be driven to Château Couanac owned now by the Count and Countess d'Armagnac de Castenet and once owned by the Prince Bishops of Cahors. It is a splendidly majestic chateau that greets you after a short drive through the large oaks of the estate. There is time to wind down before dinner and a wander at leisure through the grounds with the grazing sheep. We will spend two nights in their simply and beautifully restored out buildings and eat traditional French gastronomy cooked by the Countess herself. Candlelit dinner at Couanac.

Day 2 The first days walk will be a good stretch through the surrounding *causses* seeped in ancient history. We will meander between dry stone walls, the paths littered with Early Purple Orchids and look at interesting gariottes, dolmens and wells which are landmarks of this well grazed *cause*, before returning to Château Couanac for the first of Diana's picnics beneath the massive oaks and maples. After lunch, a stroll around the grounds for those keen on walking otherwise you can take it easy and just enjoy your surroundings at leisure. Another candlelit dinner at Couanac with James. **Walk: 7 miles**

Day 3 The first day with Daniel and his donkeys. We leave the majesty of Couanac for a walk through the *cause* with its typical stone walled paths and wonderful flowers before we arrive in the middle of nowhere for a lovely al fresco picnic with Diana in a pasture surrounded by Lombardy poplars and cliffs.

A big hill in the afternoon and soon you find yourselves in the medieval cliff hanging village of St Cirq Lapopie. This has an outstanding position over the river Lot and is surrounded by iron red and manganese blue cliffs. It is cited as being one of the most beautiful villages in France and as we are their off-season it is a truly magical experience, especially at night: beautifully floodlit and quiet. You stay at La Pelissaria for the next three nights in easy comfort and with wonderful views. Dinner at L'Oustal in St Cirq Lapopie. **Walk: 10 miles**

Day 4 We cross the river Lot and walk up to get outstanding views of the river valley. Donkeys will be in tow again with all the kit and masses of drink. We walk to the sixteenth century Chateau of Cénévières where we will picnic on the terrace perched above the river overlooking the Lot valley and across to the hilltop village of Calvagnac. This beautiful chateau is steeped in history. First built by the famous Gordon family of Scotland, it has been in the hands of the de Braquilanges family since they bought it from the Comte de La Tour du Pin in 1793 shortly before he lost his head at the guillotine as he was Minister for War to Louis XVI.

We have a privileged visit with the owner, Monsieur de Braquilanges who is now the proud grandfather of twenty-four! In the afternoon we wander back along the river valley, keeping an eye out for kingfishers, to return to St Cirq. Dinner L'Atelier, St Cirq. **Walk: 11.5 miles with vehicle option**

Day 5 We drive to St Sulpice from where we walk with donkeys and kit for the 'Four Bridges' walk along the cliffs and down the Célé valley littered with lofty poplars and chequered with fields where corn can be seen stacked in stooks. Lunch at 'Chez Pierrette', in the historic village of Marcilhac, for a delicious local feast on her terrace beneath the cliffs. This is where Pompidou regularly ate when on holiday. Its beautiful ruin of a Romanesque abbey overlooks the river. A chance to take the afternoon off at St Cirq to relax, paint, read, swim etc. Otherwise we set off in the afternoon towards Sauliac where the last of the stone bridges spans the babbling brook. Drive to St Cirq. Dinner at St Cirq. **Walk: 4.5 miles + optional 4.5 miles**

Day 6 We walk to Bouziès along the towpath, carved into the cliffs alongside the Lot, where slid the heavy barges trailed by slow horses and which is a famous part of the equally famous Chemin de St Jacques. We

then meet up with our vehicles and drive along roads chiselled through the cliffs before reaching the ancient city of Cahors.

Excellent haute cuisine at the Vieux Cahors restaurant before a drive through the Quercy Blanc landscape. We shall visit the famous medieval masterpiece of the Pont Valentré and the tiny bastide of Castelfranc before arriving at Le Vert, Mauroux where you will stay for your last two nights. **Walk: 3 miles**

Day 7 A drive in the morning to be dropped off for a long walk through the gentleness of the Quercy Blanc. We will pass through pastures full of orchids and other wild flowers and should hope to see the golden oriole, hoopoe and hear the nightingales. We visit a local lavender distillery before arriving at Château Figeac to be welcomed by Diana before a table laden with local produce. We eat and drink here in plenty. Château Figeac is a beautiful private château with a charming history and home of the equally charming de Roaldès family. The de Roaldès have been in the Quercy since the sixteenth century. A drive then after a long leisurely lunch to an unknown fourteenth century frescoed church before returning to Le Vert for tea and the pleasure of Bernard Philippe's cuisine for our 'farewell' dinner. **Walk: 7 miles**

Day 8 You leave in the morning for Toulouse airport. You will lunch at Moissac renowned for its famous abbey dating from the twelfth century and eulogised by Kenneth Clark in his magnificent series 'Civilisation'. We will talk about the tympanum before lunch at *Le Cloître*. After lunch you will be driven to Toulouse airport.

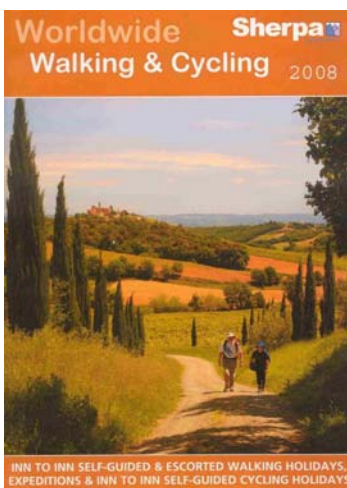


NOTE: This tour starts & ends at Toulouse airport. The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

NEW SHERPA BROCHURE NOW AVAILABLE

Self-guided or small group walking or cycling holidays in Europe



Call today for a copy of the new 2008 brochure – (03) 57551743 or email info@outdoortravel.com.au

BIKE & BARGE IN EUROPE UPDATE

What do we have available?

Bike & Barge cruises combines two popular ways of exploring Europe (cycling & river cruising), it allows partners of different abilities & interests to holiday together (trips are just as interesting for non-cycling partners, leisure cyclist OR enthusiasts), you unpack once & come 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom.

Demand is fast outstripping supply with these barges & early bookings are absolutely essential. Here is what we still have available:

FRANCE	Fontainebleau /Seine region 12 th April (very limited cabins available) from \$2395 Loire Valley Saturday departures April - October (September now full) from \$1550
BELGIUM/FRANCE	Bruges to Paris 22 nd March (just 2 cabins available) 2-weeks from \$2555
GERMANY	River Moselle 5 th July & 13 th September (very limited spaces) from \$1650
GERMANY/HOLLAND	Repositioning cruise Koblenz to Amsterdam 18 th October from \$1460
HOLLAND/GERMANY	Around Ijsselmeer 3 rd May (just 6 cabins available) from \$1385 Amsterdam to Rotterdam 17 th May from \$1650 River Maine, Rhine & Neckar 14 th June from \$1650 Ludwigburg to Koblenz 5 th July (limited space) from \$1650 River Moselle – Saarbrücken to Koblenz 18 th October from \$1460
GREECE	Weekly tours in Cyclades, central or southern Aegean April to October \$1930
CROATIA	Weekly departures Dalmatian Coast island hopping - April to October from \$1595
TURKEY	Weekly departures Lycian coast from Marmaris to Fethiye April to October \$1930

Contact us for day-to-day itineraries - costs include twin share or single cabin (with supplements) accommodation (with own bathrooms), buffet breakfasts, dinner, bed linen, bike rental, and tour guide. Cycling days are graded easy, moderate or challenging with free time to explore cities or places of interest

BIKE & BARGE IN FRANCE – FONTAINEBLEAU & THE UPPER LOIRE

Departs 12th – 19th April 2008 at \$2395 per person

For any one who loves the unspoiled French landscape, good food and a good glass of wine, a cruise on the canal barge Fleur is a very good decision. The Fleur is exactly tailored to the small French canals and locks and we have a few places available on our springtime Bike & Barge cruise that starts at Paris following the River Seine. This region has a rich, royal history and the castles of Vaux-le-Vicomte and Fontainebleau are magnificent examples of a glorious past.

Just as impressive are the royal gardens, which the French kings had their royal architects lay out for them. The perfectly symmetrical gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte are a fine example.

We cruise the woods of Fontainebleau heading for the artists village Barbizon. We follow the Seine up to Moret-sur-Loing, a cosy village on the banks of the Loing. From there we follow the canals Du Centre to our final destination Chatillon-Coligny, a picturesque town with a medieval fortress.

This central region of France is ideal for a quiet and relaxed Bike & Barge holiday. There is much to see, the terrain is friendly towards cycling and the easy pace of life, mild climate and gorgeous wines make this a wonderful region to explore.

Early bookings are absolutely essential – call 1800 331 582 for details or info@outdoortravel.com.au

WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT OUR HOLIDAYS

News & comments this month

Walking in Tuscany with Sherpa - I too, had some reservations about the hills in Tuscany but convinced myself that the bushwalking I did in Perth would see me through; well, the first couple of days into the walk I thought I was going to die! The trip leader very kindly offer to take my pack up and I very enthusiastically let him! Seriously, the hills are there but if clients do regular walking (bushwalking) or some other aerobic fitness they should all be ok. We had a couple who were in their middle sixties and another couple who were just 60 and they managed. Some days were easier than others but by the end of the week I think we could have tackled anything! The group ages ranged between 37 (my room mate) through to 40's, 50's, 60's and even one fascinating New Yorker man aged 85 who DIDN'T make 1 hour of the walk but nonetheless added fun and humour to the group when we met up at breakfast and dinner. He was shuttled between villages along with the luggage and amused himself during the day while we walked – think his spirit was willing but the body not.

Trip leader was very good as well, a very funny easygoing guy – mature enough to cope with the age spread of people. The hotels were all good and the towns were simply gorgeous, we all enjoyed buying food and drink for the walk plus the dining out in the evening.

Volterra was especially spacious and well appointed.

San Gimignano hotel was gorgeous – I had a top room and beautiful views to the valley and town square. Wasn't very impressed with their evening meal. They had a market the very morning we were leaving late so we all had the opportunity of wandering around and shopping (I certainly contributed to the economy by buying up local wares). And the Perla handbag shop is to die for.

Monteriggione room was in an old farmhouse type building – very provincial. The group had to be split up here and some stayed at an Agro-Tourismo nearby – they said it was stunning so we were all happy but it was a shame to break up the group. Actually most nights we broke up into smaller groups to eat dinner as some of the towns couldn't cope with 14 people turning up at once – but that was a nice way to spread around and enjoy the group. I liked having so many people to mix around in and we all got on from the very beginning.

Siena was the icing on the cake, simply wonderful (although I had spent a couple of days there before) – the Minerva Hotel had the best shower out of all the hotels! But there is another place called Borgo Grondaia in Siena, which has lovely rooms.

The week was wonderful although I could have done with another day of walking. The distances were well calculated and it did seem to get easier in the latter part of the week. It needs to be a challenge otherwise you don't feel as though you've achieved anything. One English couple (in their '40s) had never done a walking holiday and now they are already planning their next one! Laura

Walking & cooking in the Lot Valley, France - I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed the Cooking/Walking tour I attended in The Lot/Quercy region - it certainly exceeded my expectation.

We enjoyed Diana and James company very much and their organisation was very professional. They both had a lot of knowledge regarding the region, food and wine and also made us very welcome at their home, we also met their children and they were great as well. I really cannot think of one complaint, I know that Andrea also enjoyed herself and has contacted you as well.

The accommodation was very good and we also met some very nice people including locals who we would probably not have met if we were travelling by ourselves.

I will be recommending this tour to my friends and if you need my recommendation for any others please let me know.....I felt I should send a congratulations where credit is due! Diane

The **French Cooking Week** was great fun, Diana and James were wonderful hosts and everything they organised for the week was interesting and enjoyable. There was enough walking to offset the over-indulgence of the rich food and the accommodation was charming. I would recommend it to anyone interested in sampling a slice of French life.

I think their trips need some more promotion because there were only eight of us on that one and they could have easily taken more people. I took some great photos and will send James a copy of the DVD when I get organised. (He asked for them). Andrea

Self-guided walking in Italy - *I would love to tell you more about the trip. Can't stop raving about it and I am sure people are sick of listening to me. We took some fantastic photos. The route notes were really precise and we found them very easy to follow. You needed to pay attention at some points but that made it all the more adventurous and made you feel good at the end of the day when you had achieved the walk especially the big days.*

The hotels were awesome. The first accommodation at Dievole was beautiful. Scenery spectacular. Christine

Self-skipped Canal cruising in France - *The Canal Du Mini cruise was very enjoyable. Of course the canal and the various villages/towns are compelling and the arrangements for the cruiser were flawless and the cruiser ran well, although it proved a little smaller than we should have booked.*

The fact that it was a return cruise didn't matter as we rather enjoyed the 7 locks at Beziers and with the car we were able to see many places remote from the canal, as well as return to Montpellier for the matches.

The test I suppose is whether we would do it again. The answer is an unequivocal yes but we would seek to learn from our cruiser size experience and be careful, as careful as one can be, about the time of the year. Thanks for your suggestion of a cruise, rather than 'fixed' accommodation, in the south of France. George

Paris Accommodation - *Hotel Brebant was very convenient, being right next to a Metro Station and the staff were helpful. Loire Valley Self-Guided Bike Tour* - *The organisation was faultless, but the accuracy and clarity of the instructions about where to ride, varied in quality: some being plain wrong; however, it was a marvellous trip and exposed us to everything the Loire Valley had to offer, and a great range of accommodation. Alsace Lorraine Hotel Barge Cruise* - *the barge was a delightfully restful and relaxing week to follow the cycling.*

Overall a marvellous holiday. Thank you for all your help. Michael & Rosalie

Self-guided Cycling in Burgundy - *Thanks very much for organising the cycle trip for us. We had a great time. Everything went well. The sites and countryside are breathtaking. The accommodation was appropriate and all the hotel owners friendly, the food (and wine of course) was sensational. What can we do next year? Thanks again. Pat*

ARMISTICE DAY IN THE SOMME TOUR

A commemorative tour - departs Paris 9th November 2008 – limited places available

At 11am on the 11th November 1918 the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than 4 years of continuous warfare. On the 11th November 2008, a group of Australians will be at the Australian Memorial at Villers Bretonneux to stand in silence and to remember those who gave their lives in the pursuit of freedom.

Our tour is escorted by military historian Colonel Graham Fleeton & hosted by Major General Gordon Maitland, AO, OBE, RFD, ED (Retired) - a noted military historian.

Based on share twin or share double: AU \$2,495 per person (single supplement \$440) includes:

- Accommodation for 4 nights in the Somme
- 4 full breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners
- VIP seating at the Armistice Day ceremony
- 3 days of battlefield tours with military historian
- Cocktails where specified in programme
- Special Armistice Day luncheon
- All transport by air-conditioned coaches
- Hospitality vehicles for special cemetery visits as per the itinerary
- Transfers to/from Paris airport as outlined in programme

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

WALKING IN NEW ZEALAND

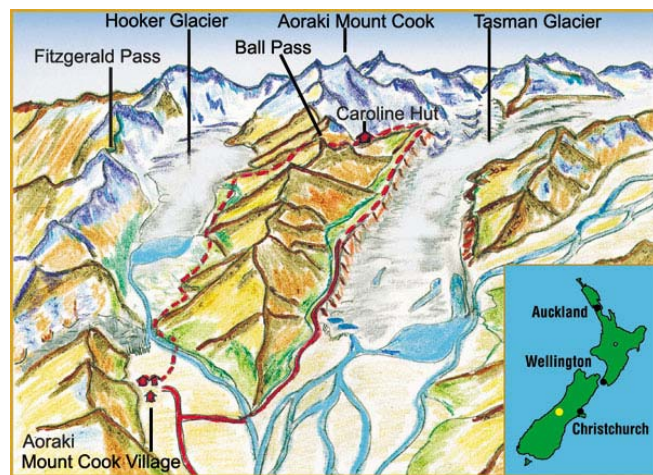
Mount Cook National Park– a most challenging walk across Ball Pass

A New Zealand walking holiday is something you can do to prepare yourself for one of our many walks in Europe from April to October. New Zealand's walking season is from November to March and there are still places available on the following walks:

- * **Milford Track – guided or self-guided**
- * **Grand Traverse**
- * **Abel Tasman Guided Walk**
- * **Stewart Island Kiwi Trek**
- * **Dusky Track**
- * **Hump Track**
- * **Mount Cook Ball Pass Trek**

- * **Routeburn Track – guided or self-guided**
- * **Hollyford Track**
- * **Queen Charlotte Walkway**
- * **Akaroa Walk**
- * **Heaphy Track**
- * **Nelson Lakes Traverse**
- * **Walks at Tongariro / Mount Ruapehu**

Mount Cook National Park offers New Zealand's most spectacular alpine scenery. With all but one of its 29 peaks over 3000m, it is New Zealand's climbing 'Mecca'. Most peaks are accessible only to experienced mountaineers. However, hiking or trekking is possible close to Mount Cook on the guided Ball Pass Trek.



Ball Pass is a demanding 3-day trek, which crosses the Mount Cook Range from the Tasman to the Hooker Valley. The route follows the Ball Ridge, vis a vis the Caroline Face of Mount Cook, and overlooks the Tasman Glacier. Guided hikers spend two nights at the fully furnished Caroline Hut at 1830m.

Breathtaking views of Mount Cook and New Zealand's highest mountains, rich alpine flora and unique bird life. Moderate snow and glacier travel. You need to have previous hiking, backpacking, tramping or bushwalking experience & a high level of fitness is required. For experienced hikers or trekkers only. All equipment is provided.

Places are still available on the Ball Pass Trek at just \$665 for 3-days / 2-nights from Mount Cook Village.

Places also available on the Milford Track in 2008 – ask our staff to check the weekly status reports.

WALKING IN OUR BACKYARD

Alpine Adventures in North East Victoria

Departs 17th - 21st January OR 21st - 25th February, 2008

Imagine leaving work early and in just a few hours dining amongst the grape vines with a stunning backdrop of the Australian Alps in North East Victoria. Imagine joining a small group of like-minded souls, most strangers to each other but whilst feasting on the fabulous cuisine of this much acclaimed gourmet region the conversation will flow along with a selection of fine wine. After dinner return to luxurious boutique accommodation where, sated, sleep should come easy.

The following morning you'll feel as if you've been on holiday for days. After a healthy, yet hearty, breakfast take to the hills to climb Mt Bogong, Victoria's highest mountain. Two guides carry large bulging rucksacks but

you only need carry a water bottle and waterproof in a small daypack. The relaxed and friendly attitude of the guides, entertaining you with stories of the local history and sustaining you with delicious homemade biscuits, is sure to banish any lingering sense of trepidation. The real reason for the bulging rucksacks becomes apparent when the summit is reached. Sit in awe admiring the view whilst the guides set out what seems like a banquet at such an altitude. Euphoric, descend by an alternative route and head back to your accommodation to sink into a spa before another fabulous meal at a nearby restaurant.

The next day travel on to the historic Blue Duck Inn. Imagine hiking down from the Bogong High Plains, feeling akin to former cattle drovers, to arrive, tired and dusty and in need of a cold beer. The pub, nestled into a bend in the Cobungra River, seems a long way from the nearest civilisation yet the cosy bar fills up with locals and travellers alike. Dine on magnificent fresh river trout and fabulous home-cooked puddings. Stay in delightful wooden en-suite cabins alongside the pub – an easy walk in the bright moonlight. Wake on Sunday to the smell of freshly brewed coffee and breakfast being prepared by the guides. Choose between a horse ride, fly fishing, relaxing by the river or a combination of all three.

On the final evening sit around the campfire under the stars and reflect on what we have achieved in so short a time. The office desk will seem light years away, yet you can be back there – refreshed, relaxed and inspired – by Monday afternoon if you wish!

Join these small group guided 5-day walking tours for just \$1440 per person – departing from Albury. Included is quality twin-share accommodation (with private bathrooms) all meals, experienced guides, luggage transfers & support vehicle (flight connections to Albury via Melbourne or Sydney are available).

WALKING VICTORIA'S GREAT OCEAN ROAD

Reasons to Celebrate

Departs 8th - 16th March 2008

In November of this year the Great Ocean **Road** turned 75. It was hand built by 3000 returned soldiers to commemorate the bravery of their fallen comrades in the Great War. A worthy memorial, the coastal drive has blossomed to become, in the view of Conde Nast Traveller, one of the Top 20 journeys of a lifetime.

In January 2008 the Great Ocean **Walk** will turn two. Parks Victoria and volunteers constructed the entire 91km walk by hand with basic tools. Already the hike ranks amongst the great walks of the world yet it still retains the thrill of the unknown. The Great Ocean Walk is Victoria's answer to the Milford Track in New Zealand and the Overland Track in Tasmania.

The road heads inland at Apollo Bay but the walk hugs the rugged coastline, taking you to places never experienced before. Only a few hours from Melbourne and you can hike along a sandy beach where your footprints will often be the first of the day. Much of the walk is through pristine National Park and there are many parts where you feel incredibly remote from civilisation in places that people don't even know exist. Throughout the duration of the walk you may only see a handful of other walkers.

The walk is intertwined with a lively, sometimes tragic, history. Walking across remote Wreck Beach, anchors from historic shipwrecks embedded in the rock shelf are a sharp reminder of the fate of less fortunate visitors to these shores. With help from our walking guide it is not difficult to imagine the trials and tribulations of some of the early settlers. The relaxed pace of this holiday allows time to appreciate the wonderfully diverse flora and fauna, the spectacular scenery, expansive ocean vistas, thick forests and Australia's highest sea cliffs.

The walk is a challenge not to be under-estimated, but the rewards are endless. Moreover, when the challenge becomes almost too much to bear, as if by magic you turn a corner and there is a sumptuous spread for lunch and delicious cool drinks – including a well-earned glass of chilled wine arranged by the back-up crew. Revived, continue on (or take a lift if you prefer) and at the end of the walking day you are whisked away to some of the best accommodation close to the trail to relax before a delicious dinner of local produce. Despite the sense of isolation on this iconic walk, this exclusive holiday ensures you are never far from indulgence.

Will you be celebrating your Great Ocean Walk in 2008?

Small group guided 9-day departure available **8th - 16th March 2008** at just \$3385 per person based on quality twin-share accommodation (with private bathrooms) fully inclusive of all meals, experienced guides, luggage transfers & support vehicle – departs from Melbourne.

AUSTRALIA'S GREAT SOUTHERN CYCLE TOUR

Places available departing 4th February 2008

Duration: 9 Days/ 8 nights, ex Melbourne

Tour Grading: Moderate

Group Size: 10

Accommodation: Twin/shared rooms in hotels, motels, lodges and cabins

Victoria's Great Ocean Road and Grampians - The Great Ocean Road is one of the world's great scenic highways. It has surf beaches, secluded coves, rain forests, tall eucalypt forests, waterfalls and lush farmland. There are famous landmarks like the Twelve Apostles and Loch Ard Gorge; pretty fishing villages at Port Campbell and Port Fairy; lighthouses and the Shipwreck Coast. You can even ride into the floor of an extinct volcano at Tower Hill.

It is an excellent cycling route, with a couple of vehicle transfers over steep sections.

After leaving the Great Ocean Road, a short drive through lush farmland takes us to the Grampians. These are an ancient range of uplifted sandstone famous for their waterfalls, Aboriginal rock art sites, and viewpoints. Wildlife is prolific, and there are some superb touring routes for cyclists

Our relaxed itinerary will give you plenty of time to enjoy swimming on pristine beaches, taking in the vistas from viewpoints along the route, watching wildlife and discovering the nautical and pioneering heritage of two fascinating regions.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

NARROW BOAT HOLIDAYS IN ENGLAND

Traditional Hotel Barge cruises - 7-Days / 6-Nights from just \$1790

When most people think of canal boat holidays they picture in their mind the traditional British narrowboat constructed during the industrial revolution in the 1700's to carry cargo long the narrow, shallow canal networks built to link industrial centres. These barges are a part of the English countryside today as floating accommodation that moves at a snails pace through some of the most fascinating, historical and attractive regions such as the Midlands, North Wales or northern England.



Narrowboats are available as self-skippered holiday options but for those interested in joining a *small group holiday* with a captain and crew to manage the boat, preparation of meals and explanations of the places you visit along the way this *NEW* Narrowboat Hotel Barge holiday aboard the *Katie* may be for you.

Starting in, Birmingham, Great Haywood, Worcester, Stratford upon Avon, Warwick, Stoke Bruerne, Market Harborough, Hinckley or Shardlow we offer a comprehensive choice of holidays based aboard a 70 ft long and 6ft 10ins wide hotel boat which is just about the biggest that can go through the locks on the English System.

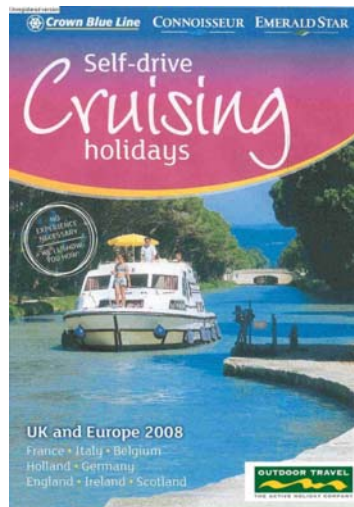
- 7-day holidays starting on selected Monday or Thursday afternoons.
- Includes full board – breakfast, lunch & dinner – twin share / double cabin accommodation with private or share bathroom, return transfer back to start point (if required).
- Price AU\$1790 per person based on two people sharing a twin or double cabin or AU\$1875 for a single person occupying a cabin.

Spaces are limited with just three cabins available on each departure. Shorter cruises also be available.

CROWN BLUE LINE – LE BOAT

Self-skipped motor cruisers in France & Europe 2008

The new brochure for 2008 is now available – new destinations & new bases are on offer in France, Italy, Germany, Holland, England, Ireland, Scotland & Belgium.



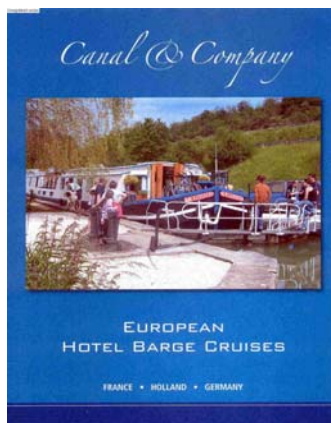
2008 brochure now available – request your copy now info@outdoortravel.com.au

HOTEL BARGE DISCOUNTS IN EUROPE

SAVE \$500 PER PERSON ON SPRING DEPARTURES

Cruise Picardy from Compiègne - St Mammès or v. v. aboard the hotel barge **Anacoluthé** on either **22nd or 29th March 2008 & save up to \$500** per person (in a twin share cabin) on this fully inclusive cruising & sightseeing tour.

Also save \$500 per person (on a twin share basis) on the **Charlemagne** on a Tulip Cruise in Holland on 22nd or 29th March 2008, save \$500 per person on the **Libellule** in Burgundy on **22nd March 2008** or the **Lorraine** in Alsace on either **22nd or 29th March 2008**. Upper deck cabins are available (with a supplement) on several departures



Cruises depart every Saturday – ask for a copy of the new 2008 **Canal & Co** brochure

EUROPEAN WATERWAYS

Early - booking offers for 2008 cruises in Europe

FRANCE - Reine Pedauque in Burgundy – **SAVE \$500** discount per cabin if booked & deposited by 31st December 2007 (Discount based on 2 people sharing a suite)

VENICE, ITALY - La Dolce Vita in Venice – **SAVE \$200** discount per person if booked & deposited before 31st January 2008 for **ANY** 2008 departure.

Latest updates: L' Impressionniste & Belle Epoque will have single cabins next season without a single supplement. We have also increased our fleet in France by adding the Bonne Humeur travelling under her new name of 'Renaissance' cruising in the Upper Loire/Burgundy region.

Ask for a copy of the new **Go Barging – European Waterways** brochure – call 1800 331 582 or email info@outdoortravel.com.au

EARLYBIRD AIRFARE OFFERS TO EUROPE

What's New from our Fares Desk fares@outdoortravel.com.au

BRITISH AIRWAYS AND QANTAS - SUPER SAVER WORLD TRAVELLER PLUS

Look forward to more space than normal economy seating – but save on the cost of full business class fares. **World Traveller Plus** airfares start at \$4532 per person for return flights to Europe inclusive of taxes (fare shown is based on a departure from Sydney to London) - taxes may vary upon destination and stopovers.

Travel from most Australian capital cities to Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Frankfurt, Rome, Helsinki, London, Manchester, Milan, Paris, Zurich, Vienna - many other destinations within Europe can be included in the **World Travelled Plus** airfare.

Worth the difference: A separate cabin with up to a maximum of 5 rows, wider, more comfortable seats with more legroom, complimentary on board newspaper, complimentary drinks from the bar (excluding champagne), priority meal service offering fresh contemporary meals, in-seat power for laptops and individual in-seat telephones, eligible for entry into the British Airways Executive Club.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES 2008 EARLYBIRD FARES TO EUROPE

Take off to Europe flying economy from only \$1739* per person return (plus taxes) including a credit of \$300 towards selected accommodation or car hire.

Fly from most Australian capital cities to Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Istanbul, London, Manchester, Milan, Moscow, Paris, Rome or Zurich

THAI AIRWAYS 2008 EARLYBIRD FARES TO EUROPE

Take off to Europe flying economy from only \$1579*pp (plus taxes) including a credit of \$300 towards selected accommodation or car hire.

Fly from most Australian capital cities to Athens, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan, Moscow, Munich, Paris, Rome, Stockholm or Zurich.

Prices available upon request for the following destinations: Amsterdam, Berlin, Bilbao, Bologna, Bordeaux, Bratislava, Bremen, Brussels, Budapest, Cologne, Dresden, Dusseldorf, Florence, Geneva, Gothenburg, Graz, Hamburg, Hanover, Leipzig, Linz, Lisbon, Lyon, Marseilles, Nice, Nuremberg, Oslo, Prague, Stuttgart, Toulouse, Turin, Verona, Vienna and Warsaw.

* Conditions apply on all fares ask for details – call Yvette (03) 57501441 or email fares@outdoortravel.com.au

OR see our SmartFares airfare search engine on our website <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>

DID YOU KNOW.....

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO - For walkers or cyclist on the Camino De Santiago in France or Spain at the cathedral in le Puy en Velay, the traveller's blessings are as follow:

Monday to Friday: 07.00am benediction
9h00 am pilgrims blessing
Saturday: 07.00am pilgrims blessing
Sunday: 11.00am pilgrims blessing

At the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela blessings are every day at 12.00noon

EUROSTAR - Eurostar is the world's most advanced train, whisking you under the sea through the famous English Channel Tunnel (travel time 20-minutes) between **Paris, London and Brussels** in record time and in luxurious surroundings.

London to Paris: 2hrs 15mins – Departs hourly
London to Brussels: 1hrs 50mins – 9-services daily

Fares include the price of the ticket and seat reservation. Meals are included for in Business and First Class.

Did you know.....the CO² emissions from a **Eurostar train** on a London Paris sector are 5.4 kg as opposed to 67 kg on a **flight** between London and Paris?

TRAVELLERS CHEQUES IN FRANCE - This message just to let you know that Travellers cheques are not welcome in France. Many shops will refuse them and most banks will refuse to cash them. Cash dispensers are available in all towns and will accept all major credit cards (Visa, Mastercard), as most shops will do.

We regularly have to deal with passengers on our cruises who do not know what to do with their traveller's cheques, which finally end up as tip, transferring the problem to the crewmembers! Marc Baron-Joly - LE PHENICIEN.

WHAT'S ON IN ITALY IN 2008

Genghis Khan and the treasures of the Mongols

Treviso, Casa dei Carraresi - Until 4th May 2008

<http://www.laviadellaseta.info>

This exhibition is taking place as part of the "La Via della Seta e la Civiltà Cinese" (The Silk route and Chinese Civilisation) project that aims to illustrate the history and evolution of this important civilisation. For the first time in the world there will be over 300 precious and extremely rare findings that come from Chinese museums and recent archaeological excavations in the northern regions, from both sides of the Great Wall of China, exhibited at the Casa dei Carraresi. .

Dinosaurs

Fiera di Cremona, Cremona - 15th December- 25th March 2008

<http://www.cremonamostre.it>

This exhibition that includes Brontosaurus, Triceratops, Protoceratops, T-Rex and Stegosaurus has been organised in collaboration with the Natural History Museum of London. It will show numerous still and moving recreations of reptiles that have been extinct for more than 60 million years.

Stefano Della Bella in Brescia

Brescia, Pinacoteca (Picture-gallery) Tosio Martinengo - From 10th November- 17th February 2008

<http://www.bresciamusei.com/>

This exhibition is totally dedicated to one of the protagonists of the European Baroque scene, the Florentine engraver Stefano Della Bella. It will recount the career of the the artist who lived between 1610 and 1664, following his stays in Paris, Rome and Florence and it includes some of the most significant works that have been conserved in the Pinacoteca (Picture-gallery) Tosio Martinengo in Brescia.

Brescia during the age of Manerism

Brescia, Pinacoteca (Picture-gallery) Tosi Martinengo - From 10th November- 4th May 2008

<http://www.bresciamusei.com/>

Until 4th May 2008, the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo will be host to an exhibition dedicated to the most significant works from half way through the 16th century. The exposition is made up of a pictorial series of sacred and secular pieces from the period of Manerism. Among the works that are on show for the first time will be a series of frescoes by Lattanzio Gambara, native of Brescia whose works deal with themes such as mythology from Roman history to the Old Testament. There will also be the productions by Giulio and Antonio Campi, creators of the decorations in the Collegio dei Giudici with themes of classical iconography from the Bible and ancient history.

America! Stories of painting from the New World

Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia - From 24th November- 4th May 2008

http://www.artebresciana.com/artebresciana.php?sez=mostra&mostra=america_storie_di_pittura_dal_nuovo_mondo

This exhibition is unique; for the first time in Italy, American paintings from the 19th century will be on show with 200 masterpieces from the most important museums in the United States on display. The event will be divided into eight sections: one hundred years of painting that illustrate evolution from the romantic dream the Arcadia di Doughty and Cole to the portraits of 20th century. The principal themes regard nature, the view of the Hudson River School painters, the exploration of the Western territories, the story of the lives of cowboys and native Americans as well as impressionist painting and the great portrait painting in the last part of the century.

A WONDERFUL PHOTO?

Put yourself in the picture.... Hot air ballooning on a hotel barge cruise in Burgundy



Happy to receive & publish your photos or comments about your active holiday in our next newsletter!

WHERE ON EARTH IS.....

Internet map & route finders

Looking for a map to get you from A to B then you now have 4 great Internet choices:

- 1) Click-on to our website & the Michelin Guide link on our Active Europe page <http://www.AlltheWeb.com>
- 2) Go to the <http://www.mappy.com/> website for a host of easy to read options
- 3) Go to <http://www.googleearth.com/> for a graphic view of the world we visit walking or cycling
- 4) Want help in finding you way around Australia – <http://www.travelmate.com.au/> for help from Travel Mate Mapmaker to generate a map of your proposed trip along with driving directions.

Call our travel experts & talk to us about our personal recollections – we regularly visit the areas we offer – call Martyn, Lucie or Sue directly on (03) 57551743.

ORDER YOUR NEW TRAVEL BROCHURES FOR 2008

Please tick below & email, fax or post your brochure request & we will send the new brochures to you:

- () SHERPA EUROPE INN TO INN - Independent self-guided walking in France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy Spain & most countries of Europe also mountain expeditions worldwide including Morocco, Nepal & Sth America
- () SHERPA CYCLING HOLIDAYS - Self-guided France, Italy, Spain, the UK, Ireland & most places in Europe
- () FRANCE WALKING HOLIDAYS - Small Group Guided Walking with a donkey to carry your lunch in the Lot Valley & in Tuscany, cooking, truffles & wine tours also available
- () CAMINO DE SANTIAGO – Walking or cycling the Way of St James (France or Spain)
- () WALKING SAFARI COMPANY - Small group themed walking holidays in France or Spain – with a donkey
- () ONE-HOTEL GUIDED WALKING HOLIDAYS – in (please specify destination)
- () FRENCH CYCLING HOLIDAYS – Small group hotel based cycling holidays
- () GO BARGING – EUROPEAN WATERWAYS – All-inclusive Hotel Barges in France, Germany, UK & Ireland
- () CANAL & CO – Hotel Barges in most regions of France and Holland
- () CROWN BLUE LINE - Self-skippered cruising holidays in France, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Italy & UK
- () BIKE & BARGE CRUISES – France, Holland, Belgium, Croatia, Turkey
- () CASTELLARE DI TONDA – Tuscan farmhouse self-contained apartments
- () SUNSAIL – Yacht Charter or MileCatcher cruises in Queensland, Croatia, Vietnam, Tahiti & Thailand

OTHER DESTINATION – Please specify:

NEW ZEALAND WALKING / CYCLING

- () Milford Track Guided or Freedom Walk or the 8-day Ultimate Hike
- () Abel Tasman
- () Tongariro Trek
- () Routeburn Walk
- () Grand Traverse
- () Hollyford Valley Walk
- () Stewart Island Kiwi Trek
- () NZ Cycling Tours

AIRFARES – Please quote for flights as follows: From:To: Class:

Departing:One-way / Return (please indicate)

NAME:DAYTIME CONTACT:

ADDRESS:P'CODE: EMAIL ADDRESS:

OTHER REQUESTS:

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details, travel brochures and reservations:

- Call Toll free 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright 3741
- Travel Agent Licence No 31102

CARBON & THE HOLIDAY & WORK ENVIRONMENT

What we can do to make a difference?

With the release of reports into the global impact to the environment by carbon emissions & the use of cars, planes & of power generation there have been some creative new information sites that can give you some ideas about how you can look at a personal contribution to the issue of global warming.



Offsets made simple - '[Carbon Offsetting Explained](http://www.climatecare.org)' (website homepage – <http://www.climatecare.org>)

PC Power Consumption, Does it Really Matter?

More than **30 billion kilowatt-hours of energy are wasted because many of us simply forget to shut down our computers** when we're not using them. If we could just improve the efficiency of how we use our PCs, the savings in energy costs would be over \$3 billion dollars! The CO2 emissions from just 15 computers are equivalent in energy terms to the gas consumption used by one car.

[Learn More About PC Power Consumption...](#)

Our goal is to introduce 100,000,000 PC users into the Local Cooling community. If just 100 million of us optimise the efficiency of our computers' energy consumption, we could prevent over 300 billion kg of CO2 gas emissions, equivalent to over 1.8 billion gallons of oil, in just the first year alone. [Take Part in Our Project to Spread the Word about LocalCooling](#)



See: <http://www.localcooling.com/facts/> & please spread the word



A Victorian based solution - <http://www.treesmart.com.au>

Each year, the average Australian vehicle emits about 4.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide - the major Greenhouse Gas. While various attempts are being made in the transport sector to reduce vehicle use and emissions, through programs such as [TravelSmart](#), an alternative way of reducing Greenhouse Gases in the atmosphere is to remove them after they have been emitted via carbon sequestration in trees.

The **TreeSmart** program aims to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by planting, maintaining and harvesting plantation eucalypt trees. The **TreeSmart** program is different to some other carbon sequestration programs that plant trees and leave them un-maintained as a perpetual forest.

The **TreeSmart** program will operate by selling subscriptions to Australian travellers ([motorists](#), [road freight operators](#), [public transport travellers](#), [air travellers](#), [conference attendees](#)) to enable the CO2 emissions from their travel to be absorbed (sequestered) in eucalypt trees grown for eventual harvesting and replanting.

OUTDOOR TRAVEL Pty Ltd do not specifically endorse any of these options & do not vouch for their effectiveness or credibility but we believe this information will help make an informed decision: