



Inala's Outback Queensland

**Birds, mammals and Australia's
ancient creatures**

15 -25 June 2024



Spinifex Pigeon A. Browne

Itinerary prepared by Dr Tonia Cochran & Dr Bronwen Scott, Inala Nature Tours, November 2022.

This 10-day tour takes us to an area of Outback Queensland which is internationally- significant for its rich Cretaceous fossil marine and terrestrial dinosaur finds, and home to a large variety of range-restricted extant bird and mammal specialties. Join our specialist guides as we visit collections housing huge, almost complete skeletons of ancient marine reptiles that lived in the ancient Eromanga Sea that covered much of inland Australia around 110 million years ago and the fossilised remains of 95-million-year-old terrestrial dinosaurs (including some cool footprints!). We will also try our luck at fossicking for our own Cretaceous fossils! During the tour we will also be searching for mammal specialties like the Purple-necked Rock-wallaby and bird specialties including several species of range-restricted Grasswrens, Grey Falcon, Red Goshawk, Bourke's Parrot and hopefully huge flocks of Budgerigars and Plum-headed Finches if there is any water about.

This tour has been designed to follow Inala's South West Queensland Tour (6 – 15 June 2024).

Inala Nature Tours

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ITINERARY OUTLINE:

Day 1. Sat 15 June 2024. Arrive Longreach. Meet for group dinner. Accom: Longreach
Day 2. Sun 16 June 2024. Longreach to Winton. Accom: Winton.
Day 3. Mon 17 June 2024. Winton area. Accom: Winton.
Day 4. Tue 18 June 2024. Winton area. Accom. Winton.
Day 5. Wed 19 June 2024. Winton to Hughenden Accom: Hughenden.
Day 6. Thu 20 June 2024. Hughenden to Richmond. Accom: Richmond.
Day 7. Fri 21 June 2024. Richmond area. Accom: Richmond.
Day 8. Sat 22 June 2024. Richmond to Mt Isa. Accom: Mt Isa.
Day 9. Sun 23 June 2024. Mt Isa area. Accom: Mt Isa
Day 10. Mon 24 June 2024. Mt Isa area. Accom: Mt Isa.
Day 11. Tue 25 June 2024. Depart Mt Isa.

DETAILED ITINERARY:



Plum-headed Finch A Schulte

Day 1. Saturday 15 June 2024. Arrive Longreach. Today has been set aside as an arrival day. Meet at 19:00 for a group welcome dinner and to chat about the details for the tour. We will join those guests who are continuing from our SW Queensland tour.

Accommodation: Longreach (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** D.

Day 2. Sunday 16 June 2024. Longreach to Winton. We will spend the morning in the Longreach area searching for birds and reptiles in the gidgee woodland associated with the Thomson River. The area is incised with channels that attract a range of wildlife and the deep cracks that develop in the soil are home to reptiles, frogs and sometimes small mammals. Depending on the amount of rain that has fallen recently, we might see Mallee Ringneck, Red-winged Parrot, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Brolga, Zebra Finch, Banded Lapwing, Red-capped and Hooded Robins. We will drive to Winton, which will be our base for the next two days, After lunch, we will visit the town sewage ponds for chances of crakes (Australian Spotted, Spotless and Baillon's Crake), Plum-

headed Finch, Little Grassbird, Australasian Reed Warbler and a variety of water birds. This evening we will also search for nocturnal species like Spotted Nightjar and Australian Owlet Nightjar. **Accommodation:** Winton (en suite rooms). Meals included: B, L, D.

Day 3 & 4. Monday 17 & Tuesday 18 June 2024.

Winton area. We will spend two full days in this area. On one of these days, we will visit Lark Quarry Conservation Park for a tour of the facility to view the only known evidence of a dinosaur stampede: the footprints of a large carnivorous theropod (*Australovenator*) hunting a herd of small, two-legged coelurosaurs (*Skartapus*) and ornithopods (*Wintonopsis*) at the edge of an ancient lake around 95 million years ago. On the other day we will visit the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History which houses the world's largest collection of Australian



Age of Dinosaurs Museum T Cochran

dinosaur fossils. During our tour here, we will see the fossil preparation laboratory, collection room and take a tour of the area in an open shuttlebus. We will also take a walk in a canyon where we can see 800-year-old

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living Cycads (*Macrozamia moorei*) whose Cretaceous ancestors grew in this area. The museum's interpretive display includes life-size bronze sculptures of many of the creatures that lived here 95 million years ago. On both days we will be searching for Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Rusty (Opalton) Grasswren and Grey Falcon as well as the newly split Purple-backed Fairy-wren, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, Horsfield's Bushlark, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Varied Sittella, Australian Bustard and Red-browed Pardalote. Black Honeyeater and Bourke's Parrot have also been seen on our past tours, as have Red-chested Button-quail. There may also be a chance to fossick for opals. We will stay in Winton both nights as there is no accommodation near Opalton (except camping). **Accommodation:** Winton (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D both days.

Australian Pratincole A Schulte



Day 5. Wednesday 19 June 2024. Winton to Hughenden. Today we drive NE to Hughenden across an expanse of Mitchell Grass downs, where we will look for Crimson Chat, Australian Pratincole, Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Budgerigar, Zebra Finch, White-winged Fairywren and Flock Bronzewing. Around Hughenden, the plains give way to sandstone hills capped with lava flows. The sandstone layers are of both freshwater and marine origin, reflecting the complex geological history of the area. Today we will have our first opportunity to look for fossils when we stop at a site that holds 100 – 110-million-year-old belemnites (an extinct order of squid-like cephalopods that existed in the late Triassic to late Cretaceous Period). We will

also make time to visit the Flinders Discovery Centre, which houses a large display of dinosaur fossils from the local area, including a replica skeleton of a 7-metre-long *Muttaborrasaurus* which was cast from the original bones of a 110-million-year-old dinosaur found to the south. **Accommodation:** Hughenden (en suite cabins). **Meals included:** B, L, D.

Day 6. Thursday 20 June 2024. Hughenden to Richmond. This morning we will spend some time exploring Hughenden searching for species such as Squatter Pigeon (red-faced *peninsulae* race), Double-barred Finch, Red-backed Fairywren and Brown Falcon. The area is good for raptors, so we will keep our eyes peeled for Peregrine Falcon, Black Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel and Wedge-tailed Eagle. Later in the day, we will head west along the Flinders Highway to Richmond, birding as we go. We hope to see species like Restless Flycatcher and Painted Honeyeater, Purple-backed Fairy-wren and Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo, Forest Kingfisher, Pale-headed Rosella, Pheasant Coucal if the creek crossings have any water. Red-backed Kingfisher and Brown Songlark are also possibilities here. The local sewage works are worth a visit with crakes, Little Grassbird, Plum-headed Finch, Pink-eared and Freckled Duck and Australian Reed-warbler possibilities. On our arrival in Richmond, we will also visit a Cretaceous (110-million-year-old) marine fossil collection from the local area which has yielded some of the richest vertebrate fossil-bearing deposits in Australia and provides a fascinating insight into the creatures that swam in the ancient Eromanga Sea. The display includes several almost complete skeletons of ancient marine reptiles (pliosaurs such as 10m long *Kronosaurus queenslandicus*, plesiosaurs, turtles and ichthyosaurs), fish, and elasmosaurs. **Accommodation:** Richmond (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D.





Fossil hunting B. Scott

Day 7. Friday 21 June 2024. Richmond. We will spend another day in the area today. This will include a visit to a 'bush-tucker' garden where we will view the plants and the birds attracted to the area. All plants are native to the region and are labelled with their traditional use in local indigenous culture. Moonrocks (limestone concretions) extracted from local properties are also found in the garden and around the town, showcasing the uniqueness of the region's landscape and prehistoric past. We will also participate in a fossil dig with a resident palaeontologist; fossils we may find here include bivalves (including *Aucellina* and *Inoceramus*), belemnites, fish, shark's teeth, turtles, ichthyosaurs (phalanges, vertebrae and teeth) as well as coprolites (fossil poo!). There is also a chance of uncovering pterosaur bones. **Accommodation:** Richmond (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D.

Day 8. Saturday 22 June 2024. Richmond to Mount Isa. Today will be mostly a travel day (around 4.5 hours' drive in total). We will of course stop at regular intervals to bird en route, looking for species such as Flock Bronzewing, Australian Pratincole and Australian Bustard. As we approach Mt Isa, the geology changes and plains transform into hills and gorges. If we have time after we check in to our hotel, we will visit a nearby gorge to look for grasswrens among the red rocks and spinifex. **Accommodation:** Mt Isa hotel (en suite rooms). **Accommodation:** Mount Isa (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D.

Day 9. Sunday 23 – Monday 24 June 2024. Mt Isa. We will spend two full days in the Mount Isa area searching for local specialties including Kalkadoon and Carpentarian Grasswrens, Pictorella Mannikin, Yellow Chat, Varied Lorikeet, Black-tailed Tree-creeper, Long-tailed Finch, Painted Finch, Spotted Bowerbird, Crested Bellbird, Singing, Grey-fronted and Black-chinned (Golden-backed) Honeyeaters and Spinifex Pigeon. Crimson Chat and Budgerigar are also possibilities. We will also visit a nearby lake for waterbirds such as Black-necked Stork, Plumed and Wandering Whistling-ducks and Green Pygmy-goose. We also have a good chance of seeing the rare Purple-necked Rock wallaby. **Accommodation:** Mount Isa (en suite rooms). **Meals included:** B, L, D.



Grasswren country B. Scott

Day 11. Tuesday 25 June 2024. Mt Isa. The tour will finish after breakfast. **Accommodation:** none. **Meals included:** B.

Group size: 3-4 people with one specialist Inala driver guide or 6- 8 people with 2 driver/guides.

Tour Price: AU\$7,635 twin share and **Single Supplement:** AU\$940

Price includes: 10 nights' accommodation, specialist guides and transport, meals, entrance fees and activities as mentioned in the itinerary including fossicking licenses.

Price does not include: International and domestic airfares, gratuities, alcoholic beverages, snacks, internet, laundry or other items of a personal nature.

We are pleased to offer a discount of \$250 per person (\$330 per single) for guests who wish to combine our south-western Queensland (6-15 June 2024) and Queensland Outback 'dinosaur' tours (15-25 June 2024), starting and finishing in Mt Isa.

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.

MAP OF ROUTE:

