Taking in the full spectrum of Australian landscapes, from the arid hills to lush rainforest and the sun-soaked Coral Sea, we’ll experience some of the country’s most fascinating areas blessed with unparalleled diversity. Along the way we’ll encounter vibrant aboriginal culture, friendly locals, a mosaic of wildlife and a host of colorful characters.

Our very important volunteer work at a wildlife hospital and refuge will help countless Aussie animals recover from injuries and illnesses, preparing them for their eventual return to the wild. In addition to our work, we will explore The Great Barrier Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here we will experience the incredible underwater universe and swim with a kaleidoscope of color and life. We’ll also discover the Wet Tropics, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, where kookaburras laugh and giant fan palms touch the sky.

**Day 1 – Arrive in Sydney, Australia**
Welcome to Australia! Upon arrival, our Sustainable Horizon Group Leader will meet us at the Sydney International Airport, and we’ll travel to our accommodation located in “The Rocks”—the historic district where Sydney began, and the location of the famous weekend market. Built above archaeological remnants of colonial Sydney, this hostel combines state-of-the-art facilities with a unique heritage experience of Sydney. Once settled, we will have a welcome orientation by our Group Leader, and enjoy a delicious dinner on our first night Down Under. We may also want to make our way to the rooftop terrace with a spectacular view of the Sydney Opera House.

**Day 2 – Exploring Sydney**
Today we will enjoy the cultural, historic and natural sites of Sydney as we walk the city streets, cobblestone lanes and seaside paths. We’ll take in sites like Chinatown, Darling Harbor, Kings Cross, and The Rocks historic district. Our Group Leader will show us where history happened, where movies where filmed and how locals life and enjoy life. We will also visit the Royal Botanic Gardens, which occupy one of Sydney's most spectacular positions, and are considered to be one of the great botanic gardens of the world.

Later we visit one of the world’s most recognizable buildings, and the icon of Australia – The Sydney Opera House. We will learn about its amazing structure - a work of art that came into existence against impossible odds, and stands as a miracle of architecture and engineering.

**Day 3 – Hunter Valley Wine Tasting**
Australia’s Hunter Valley enjoys the distinction of being one of the earliest planted vine areas in the country, and is now celebrated for its shiraz, chardonnay, and semillion. We will take the back roads to this bountiful region, regarded as the Napa Valley of Australia. Along the route we will learn about Australian history, wildlife and aboriginal culture, travel through beautiful national parks and colonial townships.
During our visit to Hunter Valley we will sample a variety of wines, some of which are not available anywhere else in the world (optional cheese and chocolate tastings available). We will have the opportunity to meet some of the winemakers themselves at small boutique wineries, as well as visit a larger winery known for its variety. After our day of wine tasting, we head back to Sydney for the evening.

**Day 4 – Fly to Cairns – Wildlife Hospital & Refuge**

This morning we fly to tropical Cairns. Upon arrival, we head into the tablelands of the Great Dividing Range to a non-profit wildlife hospital and refuge. Located on five acres of rural property, this refuge serves as a hospital and rehabilitation center for countless injured, sick, and orphaned animals. The goal of the refuge is to eventually re-release the animals into the wild if they are not deemed “unreleasable” for various reasons. Hundreds of animals are housed here as this is the only wildlife animal hospital in the region. Consequently, the hospital can become overwhelmed with the number of injured animals brought in for treatment and rehabilitation. For example, 70 kangaroos are now housed, all in various stages of rehabilitation. That said, our time and effort will be greatly appreciated by those that run the refuge as well the animals.

We’ll settle in and enjoy a family-style dinner, and an orientation to the center and our work for the next few days. If we need a break from the heat of the day, we can take a dip in the nearby swimming hole.

**Days 5 – 8 – Wildlife Hospital & Refuge**

Today we begin our volunteer work at the refuge. For the next four days we will have the opportunity to care for wildlife including kangaroos, wallabies, birds of prey, goannas, quolls, snakes, lorikeets, cockatoos, owls, a koala or two and an assortment of other Aussie animals.

Some of the work may include injury assessment for newly admitted animals, administering antibiotics and/or other medication, changing bandages, and bottle feeding orphaned kangaroos and other marsupials. We will also help with the animal “de-humanizing”, and work that simply helps keep the wildlife hospital functioning such as making signs, repairing enclosures, tending the vegetable garden for the animals’ food, etc.

**Day 9 – Wooroonooran National Park and Reef Presentation**

This morning we say goodbye to the refuge our new animal friends and head down the Great Dividing Range. We descend into Wooroonooran National Park, one of the most diverse places in the Wet Tropics and host to some of the oldest continually surviving rainforest in the world. More than 500 rainforest trees thrive here, including black bean, milky pine, and red tulip oak. We will take an easy walk through the jungle, listening for the call of the king parrot and the bowerbird and emerge at Josephine Falls, where Josephine Creek plunges down a gorgeous set of waterfalls. Below the falls, boulders surround a fun swimming hole and a natural water slide down a smooth sloping rock face.

In the late afternoon we arrive at our accommodations in the centre of Cairns’ restaurant and shopping district, and only a few blocks from the waterfront. This evening we will attend a fun and dynamic presentation by a marine biologist designed to help us understand coral biology and ecology, the major invertebrate groups and the different types fish that live at the Great Barrier Reef. In addition, we will lean about threatened species and the consequences of climate change on the reef. We will discover fish that you can watch change color, fish that change gender, which animal breathes through his bum,
and how and where to find “Nemo.” There’s plenty of hands-on time, a great way to enhance our reef experience. (B, L, D)

**Day 10 – Great Barrier Reef Snorkeling and Optional Scuba Diving**
No trip to Cairns is complete without a visit to the outer Great Barrier Reef, easily one of the world’s top natural wonders. On this journey, we’ll avoid the crowds and take on the reef in style on a 115-foot live aboard catamaran. We will enjoy delicious buffet meals aboard our boat and sleep four to a cabin. Cabins will have air-conditioning and TV.

Early this morning we travel to the outer Great Barrier Reef. Our captain will choose between fourteen permanent moorings (including Norman and Saxon reefs) that allow snorkelers fantastic access to this underwater universe. Upon arrival at the reef, we will delight in viewing the incredible array of life and colors that exist just below the surface.

We also have the option for resort diving, which is a one-on-one with the instructor, and a fantastic way to see the reef without having a certification. Divers can log seven dives during our two days at the reef. We will dive along bommies and coral walls with mysterious swim-throughs that dance with light. Divers can also experience the magic and glow of the reef at night.

**Day 11 – Great Barrier Reef Snorkeling and Optional SCUBA Diving**
Today we rise early for a fantastic sunrise over the ocean with a cup of hot coffee in our hands. We will spend another day exploring the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef, snorkeling or diving at the reefs that offer us exclusivity and a variety of underwater features.

Coral thrives in this clear water, creating spectacular gardens and drawing a mosaic of marine life. Among the 1,800 species of fish and 450 species of coral, we can expect to see turtles, Wally the gigantic wrasse, giant clams, fan corals, sea cucumbers, stag horn coral gardens, and just about the whole cast of Finding Nemo. On the way back to Cairns, we are likely to see dolphins swimming and playing in the wake, and in June and July both humpback and minke whales often make appearances.

**Day 12 – Tablelands and Nighttime Wildlife Spotting**
Mareeba Wetland Reserve, located on the East Asian-Australasian flyway, is a rich and diverse sanctuary for almost all of Australia’s tropical water birds. It is also the site of a re-introduction program of the nearly-extinct Gouldian Finches. As a ranger takes us on a boat ride, we can expect to see many birds including sea eagles, black swans, magpie geese, cranes, whistling ducks in the hundreds, pelicans, pink-eared ducks and even Australia’s only stork, the jabiru. We learn how staff rescue native wildlife and then facilitate their release into this untouched natural wonderland. We will also have several hiking options into the tropical savanna woodlands that boast eastern grey kangaroos, agile and whiptail wallabies, wallaroos, possums and gliders.

Once we settle into our highlands cabins and have dinner, we will prepare for our night spotlighting activity. At Mt. Hypipamee National Park we explore a rare type of volcanic pipe (the Crater) and the abundance of nocturnal wildlife that appears in this high-altitude rainforest once the sun goes down. We will search with flashlights for unique mammals and marsupials like Lumholtz’s Tree-kangaroos, Green Ringtail Possums, Sugar Gliders, Musky Rat-kangaroos and numerous other kangaroo and wallaby species that hide in the forest.
Day 13 – Platypus Spotting, Giant Trees, Crater Lake and Aussie BBQ
In the early morning we look for the unique and elusive duck-billed platypus, one of the most interesting mammals on earth, in its natural habitat. Seeing a platypus in the wild is a truly fascinating experience. The unique features of the platypus (an egg-laying mammal) make it an important subject in the study of evolutionary biology and a recognizable and iconic symbol of Australia. Later, we will pay tribute to some local high-profile residents as we take in the beauty of the massive curtain fig trees, and learn how these giants “strangle” their hosts.

Next we will take a walk at Lake Eacham, an ancient volcanic crater (or maar) now protected within a national park. A 2.7 mile trek around the lake passes through several different rainforest communities offering us a glimpse of some of the area’s ten known species of rare and threatened plants, as well as 25 species of flying foxes. We will learn about and search for the enchanting creatures of the rainforest like the brilliant blue Ulysses Butterfly, the Dainty Green Tree Frog, and the Bearded Water Dragon which are commonly spotted in this area. After our walk, we will take a plunge into the cool clear waters of the crater.

We return to Cairns late this afternoon and at the Cairns swimming lagoon we will have a farewell dinner celebration with a traditional Aussie BBQ.

Day 14 – International flight home
After breakfast, our Australian adventure comes to a close as we travel to Cairns International Airport for our flight home.

WHAT IS INCLUDED
Beautiful Australia
All meals (except one lunch and one dinner)
All lodging
All transportation within Australia
All activities
Experienced Group Leader
Snorkel and wetsuit rental

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED
International and Domestic airfare
Cost of obtaining a passport
Vaccinations
Personal spending money
Travel & medical insurance
Alcohol
Great barrier Reef Marine Park fee $30