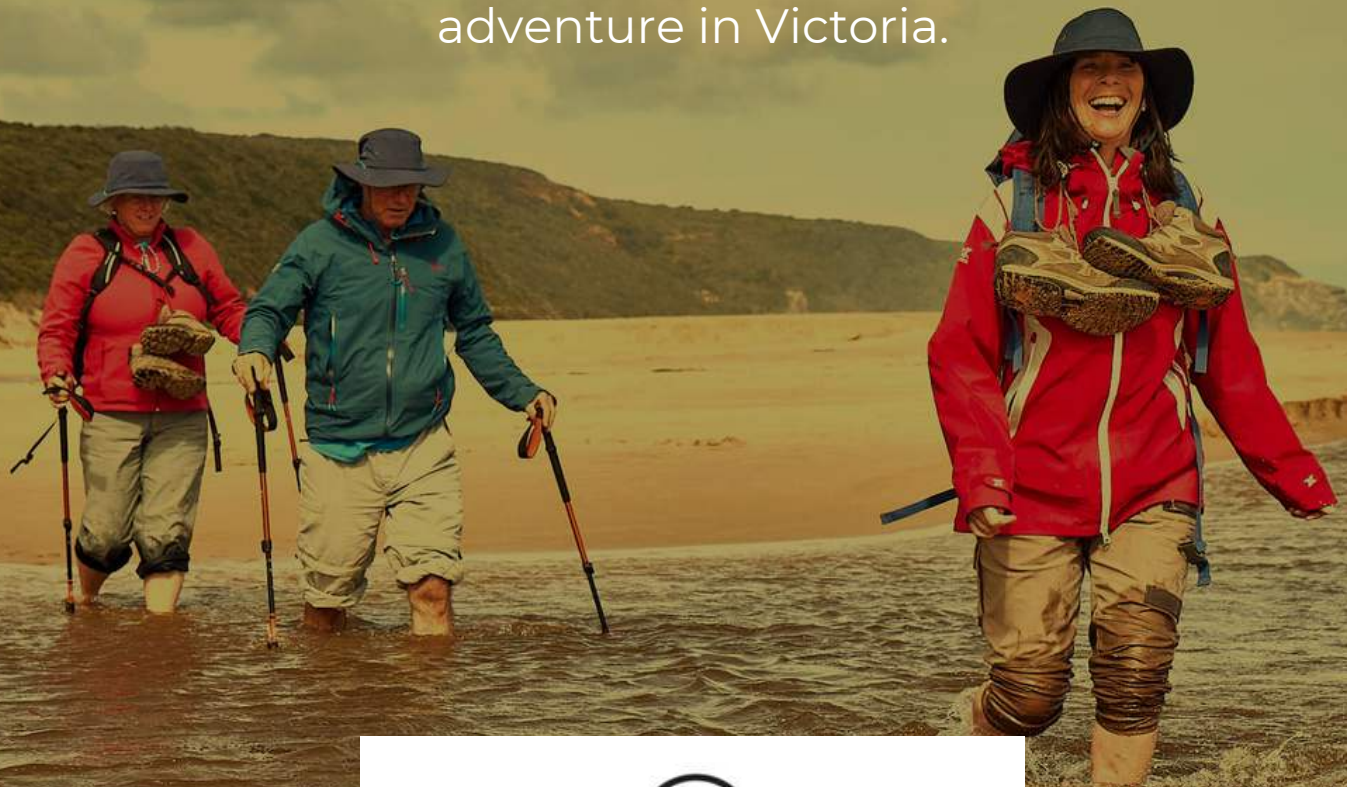


YOUR ALL-PURPOSE GUIDE TO THE GREAT OCEAN WALK

An all-purpose resource for your upcoming
adventure in Victoria.



Tripadvisor
Travellers' Choice Awards
Winner 2024

WALK 91
GREAT OCEAN WALK TOURS

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



We'd like to start this guide by saying thank you for downloading it! Everyone at Walk91 has a genuine passion for the Great Ocean Walk and the communities surrounding it, so we hope you love everything as much as we do.

We have created this guide as an all-purpose resource for your upcoming adventure in Victoria. The information presented in these pages will be invaluable during the planning of your trip and will certainly come in handy as you pass along the trail.

Having come this far, we will assume that you have a basic understanding of the Great Ocean Walk. As such, we'll keep the introduction brief so we can dive straight into the good stuff!

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The most important information you should know before hitting the Great Ocean Walk includes:

- It is a 104-km hiking trail set mostly within Great Otway National Park
- The path starts in Apollo Bay and finishes at the iconic Twelve Apostles
- The trail is split into 11 separate sections along Victoria's stunning coastline
- The route is well-signposted, making it ideal for self-guided walks
- There is no accommodation on the walk itself
- Walk 91 provides Guided and Self-Guided tours of the route for those wanting expert support.

As there is no accommodation along the Great Ocean Walk, you only have two options to fully experience the magic of this route: you can camp, or you can stay in local cabins, cottages, and B&Bs.

The team at Walk91 are genuine locals, so we can find the perfect overnight accommodation for anyone on our [Great Ocean Walk Tours](#).

We're always happy to help. If you have any questions or would like more information about the Great Ocean Walk and our tours, please [contact us](#).

Ready to make your Great Ocean Walk adventure a reality? Book your tour today!

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SECTIONS OF THE GREAT OCEAN WALK



The Great Ocean Walk is split into various sections along its 104 km length.

If you have enough time, you can pass through each section from start to finish. But if you only have two or three days to spare, you can focus on specific sections that appeal to you — and then come back and complete the rest at a later date!

The sections vary in length and walking difficulty. For an enjoyable time that you remember for all the right reasons, you must prepare for the section(s) you plan to tackle appropriately.

From start to finish, the camping sections of the Great Ocean Walk are:

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Apollo Bay to Marengo

Approx. 3 km / 1 Hour / Easy

Marengo to Elliot Ridge Campsite

Approx. 7 km / 3 Hours / Easy to Medium

Elliot Ridge Campsite to Blanket Bay

Approx. 12 km / 4 Hours / Easy

Blanket Bay to Cape Otway

Approx. 11 km / 3.5 Hours / Easy to Medium

Cape Otway to Aire River

Approx. 10 km / 4 Hours / Medium

Aire River to Castle Cove

Approx. 6 km / 2.5 Hours / Medium

Castle Cove to Johanna

Approx. 7 km / 2.5 Hours / Medium

Johanna to Milanesia

Approx. 4.5 km / 2 Hours / Medium

Milanesia to Ryan's Den

Approx. 9.5 km / 3.5 Hours / Hard

Ryan's Den to Devil's Kitchen

Approx. 13 km / 5 Hours / Medium to Hard

Devil's Kitchen to Twelve Apostles

Approx. 16 km / 5 Hours / Easy to Medium

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Our [Great Ocean Walk Tours](#) vary in length and cover all sections of the trail, so we have something for everyone!

And remember, if you join a Walk91 tour, we provide prompt drop-offs and pick-ups at either end of your day's hike. And while you're on the trail, we transfer your bulkier luggage from the previous night's accommodation to the next one.



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BEST ATTRACTIONS ON AND NEAR **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



One of the most exciting parts of planning a trip on the Great Ocean Walk is discovering all the fascinating attractions on this epic walking route.

And while there are many on the path itself, our local team knows plenty of detours that lead to incredible hidden gems!

We have briefly introduced some of our favourite highlights on and near the Great Ocean Walk below. It's important to keep in mind that if you want to explore various lookouts and detours, you will add more time and kilometres to your walk.

While we have included Shelly Beach here, you can find even more recommendations for the best beaches along the route later in this guide.

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RAINBOW FALLS



While the word 'falls' may evoke an image of a huge waterfall, this is more of a charming stream escaping from a tall rocky platform.

It's called Rainbow Falls because you can see the colours of the rainbow floating out of the mist created by the natural spring which feeds it from above.

The detour of 1.6km from Station Beach is worth it for this alone, but you can also take a moment of peaceful rest with the sounds of trickling water, bird song, and the ocean.

Taking some time out to enjoy the peaceful vibes here is always rewarding — just make sure that you don't attempt this detour when there is large surf and the tide is high.

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SHELLY BEACH



On our [6-day Whole Walk](#) and [3-day Cape Hike](#), you will pass by Shelly Beach on the first day.

This beach is beautiful and tranquil, making it a wonderful detour for anyone who isn't in a hurry and wants to stop and appreciate the views — which is pretty much the whole point of the Great Ocean Walk!

Even the track from the car park down to the beach is a highlight. It is lined with big tree ferns and offers tantalising views of the ocean.

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CAPE OTWAY LIGHTHOUSE



Cape Otway Lighthouse was built in 1848 to help keep ships safe on this dangerous stretch of Victoria's coastline.

There were many shipwrecks at that time, so the lighthouse has probably saved hundreds, if not thousands of lives since it was built.

As the oldest intact lighthouse in mainland Australia, you'd be forgiven for expecting it to be in a state of disrepair after over 150 years. But it's actually in remarkably good condition for its age.

We highly recommend visiting Cape Otway Lighthouse, both for the lighthouse, radar station and for the incredible scenery surrounding it. Standing proudly on the tip of Cape Otway, the views of the rugged cliff faces are breathtaking.

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CAPE OTWAY LIGHT STATION CEMETERY



On many of our tours, you will pass the old Light Station Cemetery. In addition to taking a moment to appreciate the haunting beauty of the cemetery, we recommend venturing in and checking out a few of the graves.

It's equally fascinating and touching to read about those who lost their lives on this historical shipwreck coast.

It gives you a sense of the extremely tough life the early European settlers had in this part of Victoria.

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THE TWELVE APOSTLES



You'll find the Twelve Apostles close to the western end of the Great Ocean Walk, not far from the Great Ocean Walk viewing platform at Glenample.

It is perhaps one of Victoria's most famous natural landmarks, and the prestige is absolutely deserved.

This formation of several large limestone stacks is the jaw-dropping jewel on this already dramatic coastline. When people want to enjoy epic seaside views in Victoria, the Twelve Apostles is usually the first destination on their list.

This is why almost all our tours tend to finish with the Twelve Apostles — it gives walkers something amazing to look forward to while making sure the walk ends on a massive high.

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BEST BEACHES ON AND NEAR **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



This stretch of Victoria's coastline is home to some beautiful beaches, many of which are accessible on the Great Ocean Walk.

In fact, as the entire walk takes place along the coastline, there are simply too many nice beaches along the trail to list here.

Instead, we have included some of the very best that we know you will absolutely want to spend time on.

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STATION BEACH



Station Beach, near Cape Otway Light Station, is wild and wonderful, and with driftwood scattered all about, there's a real sense of forgotten wilderness on this beautiful stretch of beach.

You cannot drive your car anywhere near here, so this isolated shoreline is truly a hiker's delight.

Station Beach is also unique as it is the gateway to Rainbow Falls, a hidden gem on the Great Ocean Walk trail.

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MILANESIA BEACH



Milanesia Beach is perhaps as rugged as Station Beach. But what sets it apart are its beautiful white sand and dramatic seacliffs and huge rock formations.

We guarantee that Milanesia Beach will be among your many highlights on the Great Ocean Walk. It will also probably take up a disproportionate chunk of your camera's memory card!

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WRECK BEACH



Wreck Beach is a short walk northwest of the Gables Lookout and it is well worth a visit even though there are 366 steps down to the beach!

It's wonderful looking back into the past and discovering the history of this spectacular shipwreck coast. However, if you do need more time to see specific places like Wreck Beach, Walk91 can customise any of the tours we offer, giving you the time and freedom to see the places you are most interested in.

Some local knowledge is required to visit Wreck Beach as you can only do so safely during low tide. We are more than happy to offer all the advice you need.

This beach has a particularly fitting name as it is the sight where two famous ships were wrecked off the coast.

Today, the anchors of both ships, the Fiji and the Marie Gabrielle, can be found on the beach as a grim reminder of the rocky, treacherous waters along Victoria's coastline.

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JOHANNA BEACH



The term 'last but not least' certainly applies here. Johanna Beach is named after the small brig that wrecked there in 1843. It is also well known by locals for its spectacular sunsets.

Once again however, local knowledge is the key. The tides and swell predict when you can pass the river crossing on Johanna Beach. But not to worry. Our wonderful Walk91 team are here to support you all the way.

With sloping sea cliffs, pristine sands, and a backdrop of greenery, this is exactly the kind of beautiful beach people have in mind when they come to Australia.

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BEACH WALKING AND HIGH TIDES ON **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



Many of the beaches on the Great Ocean Walk are exposed to large waves, high tides, and other dangers like rips, ocean currents, and reefs.

You must consider the weather, tides, and ocean swell before walking along the coastline or on a beach. Conditions can change quickly, so only do so when the tide is low and the sea is calm.

There are alternative inland routes in all walking areas except at Parker Inlet, Milanesia Beach's first section, Johanna Beach, and West of Bald Hill.

At Walk91, we prioritize your safety at all times. We provide you with an EPIRB (safety beacon) and a mobile phone if needed.

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THE MOST IMPORTANT RIVERS ON **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



Rivers and streams are the lifeblood of the Great Ocean Walk. There are many small creeks along the route that burst into life after rain.

Even as you walk alongside impressive rock faces on the Great Ocean Walk trail you will see fresh water springs seeping through the undergrowth and trickling onto the sand. Some lovely examples of this are on Wreck Beach, Gibsons Steps and of course Rainbow Falls.

For now, though, let's look at the most important rivers on the Great Ocean Walk.

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PARKER RIVER



The first river you will have to pass is at Parker Inlet. Take your shoes off and enjoy getting your ankles wet as you wade through the water.

It's usually less than knee deep at most (but don't worry as Walk91 will check the tides and swell for you), and the crossing is where the brown, tree-stained river flows into Parker Inlet.

Give a thought to the Lighthouse Keepers who for years had to wade through this water to collect supplies delivered by cargo ships before climbing up the steep steps!

If you are lucky enough and the sands have shifted, you might even see the hull of 'Eric the Red', a large clipper sailing ship shipwrecked here in 1880.

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AIRE RIVER



One of the two largest rivers on the Great Ocean Walk is the Aire River, and it is the only river in the Otways listed under the Heritage Rivers Act.

The river has important nature conservation and cultural value. For example, the river mouth was an important food source for Indigenous Australians as it provided a varied diet of wildlife and fish.

Sometimes the river mouth can close up causing the river levels to rise, but if this is the case the our Walk91 team will assist you in planning for this eventuality!

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JOHANNA RIVER



As you descend onto Johanna Beach, you will encounter the Johanna River as it flows into the ocean. The river mouth water levels can change in depth depending on the rush of swell into the river mouth and on the tide levels. The sand also shifts constantly with the ebb and flow of the surf, so the best 'crossing spot' is not always in the same place.

However, it is usually no more than shin to knee deep.

You do have to cross here as there is no other way forward, but Walk91 can support and advise you here.

It does however feel great wading through this crystal-clear water on a warm day, but it is a good idea to bring a small hand towel in your day pack to dry your feet off afterwards.

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MILANESIA BEACH



There is another creek crossing at Milanesia's wild and isolated beach. You can cross this creek using the stepping stones before you walk onto Ryan's Den.

Milanesia Beach is named after the ship that was stranded there in the shallows for over a week in 1902, and look out for the little hut sitting close to the beach - built by a WW1 veteran on his return home to Australia.

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GELLIBRAND RIVER



Lastly, you can find the Gellibrand river at Princetown. It is similar to the Aire but with a larger estuary.

Dr Charles Ryan made the Gellibrand River famous in the early 1900s when he floated down the river on a log for 4 days after he broke his leg on Milanesia Beach whilst camping.

Keep your eyes peeled as you pass as platypus have been spotted here in the past.

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RIVER CROSSINGS ON **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



Please note that there are no pedestrian bridges over the Park Inlet, Eliot, Milanesia, and Johanna Rivers.

Occasionally, king tides, rough seas, and heavy rain can make crossing these rivers difficult, so please carefully assess river flow and depth before attempting a crossing.

As with beach walking, our team are only ever a call away if you need any support, help, or advice.

Click below to explore our self-guided tours in more detail and begin taking the first steps on your Great Ocean Walk adventure!

BOOK NOW

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ANIMALS AND INSECTS ON **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



Given that the Great Ocean Walk plunges straight through the Great Otway National Park, it's hardly surprising that you will encounter an array of animals and insects on your trek.

Some of the animals that call this part of Australia home include:

- The Carnivorous Otway Snail (be careful where you step!)
- Swamp Wallabies
- Grey Kangaroos
- Echidnas (approach very quietly!)
- Platypuses (you may see these in the early morning as you head out of Apollo Bay in the Barham River - near the Recreation Reserve.)
- Tiger Quolls (you will see only if you are very lucky indeed!)
- Potoroos (sadly also endangered so rarely seen)

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- Koalas (especially around Cape Otway)
- Australian Fur Seals (there are at least 100 at Haley Reef & they like to rest up on the isolated beaches)
- Southern Right Whales (we see many in the winter months)
- White & black Cockatoos
- Rosellas
- Wedge Tailed Eagles
- Magpies
- Spiders
- Snakes
- Otway Panther! (This creature has been spotted by many, but is it really just a very big cat?! The mystery continues.....)

What About Snakes?

When you think of travelling in Australia, it's understandable that your mind may stray to snakes.

In short, yes, there are snakes in the area around the walking trail. But the reality is, they aren't interested in you! They don't like people.

All you have to do is try and avoid them. Given the opportunity, snakes will happily choose to escape rather than attack.

Just be aware of where you rest your hands and feet and don't walk barefoot in the long grass. If you see a snake in your path, stop; don't touch it, don't threaten it and try not to frighten it.

The best thing to do is to stay still or back away slowly to give it a chance to retreat.

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FLORA AND FAUNA ON **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



Hiking along the Great Ocean Walk is a great way to immerse yourself in nature. That includes plants, trees, and forests as much as it does animal encounters.

- Some of the flora you will likely encounter include:
- Manna Gums
- Mountain Ash & Mountain Grey Gums
- Rough and soft Tree Ferns
- Hard Water ferns and Pouched Coral Ferns
- Drooping Sheoaks

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- Messmates
- Southern Blue Gums & Swamp gums
- Mountain Pepper
- Blackwoods
- Banyalla
- Kangaroo Grass
- Wallaby Grass
- Silver Tussock
- Tall Sedge
- Cumbungi
- Austral Grass Tree
- Kangaroo Apple
- Musk daisy bush
- Prickly Moses



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WHEN TO HIKE THE THE GREAT OCEAN WALK



If you come prepared, you can usually head out on the Great Ocean Walk at any time of year. There's no such thing as a bad walk, just bad preparation!

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SPRING



If you prefer to hike in slightly cooler weather and don't mind a possible rain shower here and there, spring is a perfect time to consider walking.

September to November is a wonderful window for trekking. This is also a fantastic time to see the spring flowers emerge and the wildlife and birds spring back to life.

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SUMMER



You will find that December in this part of Victoria can start warming up quite a bit, but it is still a lovely time to explore the Great Ocean Walk.

By January and February, however, the weather can get hot and the flies come out in force! However, each year is so different you can expect hot sun or rain.

However, if you are not used to walking long distances in the heat and have not been training for your walk in the hot weather, we would suggest avoiding these peak summer months just incase.

In addition, February, in particular, can be affected by fire warnings.

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AUTUMN



Going into March and April, the weather starts cooling down a little, so it's the perfect time to walk if you enjoy the sunshine but don't want to be out in extreme heat.

Easter is a really nice time to walk, but it is also our most popular time of year. If you want to guarantee a spot with Walk91, we advise booking early!

May and June start cooling down further, so you may experience the odd light shower, but it's still a great time to enjoy walking the track.

Walk91 still operates at this time. In fact, this is one of our favourite parts of the year.

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WINTER



In July and August, we start to get a lot of rain (if we're lucky!). The wet weather is perfect for refilling the water tanks on the track and rejuvenating the rainforest. But it can be harder work than usual if you're walking in it every day!

However, if you come prepared with good-quality wet weather gear and sturdy walking boots, there is no reason why you shouldn't consider a walk at this time.

Problems you may experience walking in winter are the track becoming muddy in sections and the rivers swelling, making them less easy to pass.

However, the Great Ocean Walk offers several decision points where you can choose to walk the high-tide or low-tide route, so this should not prevent you from completing the trail from Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles.

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WHAT TO PACK FOR THE GREAT OCEAN WALK



Preparation is key to having a fun and comfortable time on the Great Ocean Walk.

Which Shoes Should You Pack?

It's always best to bring proper walking boots. We recommend wearing a supportive walking boot that is waterproof because you just never know what the weather will have in store for you on the Great Ocean Walk.

However, we would certainly not recommend buying a pair of walking boots just before your arrival. We have had walkers trying to walk barefoot as their blisters have got so bad! Don't let this be you — comfortable well worn footwear will be your best friend on this walk

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If you are planning a last-minute trip, we suggest bringing a couple of pairs of shoes that you can alternate. Many people have worn runners/trainers on the trail, but we would only suggest this if it has been quite dry in the summer months and the weather forecast is looking good.



Do I Need to Bring Gaiters?

This is a question that is a bit tricky to answer. Most people choose not to wear gaiters on the Great Ocean Walk, but that's not to say that they don't have their advantages.

If it's muddy and you're walking in the winter months, they help to keep the mud off your legs and trousers. They also help to keep you dry too.

However, many walkers report that they find gaiters uncomfortable to walk in — especially in summer.

But, if you are the type to get nervous about snakes, maybe wearing them is the way to go for you!

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Would You Suggest Bringing Sticks/Walking Poles?



Walking poles are also a personal choice. Some walkers swear by them, saying that they couldn't have done the walk without them.

They tend to help on longer distances and on hills where the track might be a little slippery.

However, other walkers find them cumbersome and uncomfortable to carry if they decide they don't need them halfway through the day.

Our suggestion would be to have a practice with them before you arrive. If you're not sure you need them, you can always borrow them from us here at Walk91. And if you decide not to use them after all, you can leave them in our vehicle.

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Save Space for Layers, Waterproofs, and Sun Protection!



No matter what time of year you plan to hit the Great Ocean Walk, save space in your bag for a waterproof jacket at the very least.

If you are caught in a downpour, you can at least stay drier and warmer than you would without one! (You can't have beautiful rainforests without the rain, so its worth the inconvenience!).

When it comes to clothing, prioritise layering. Removing or adding layers is by far the best way to control your temperature.

And always remember to bring sunscreen! While you may walk through shaded areas, you should always apply sunscreen in case you find yourself exposed for prolonged periods (and don't forget the reflection of the suns rays from the sand).

For much the same reason, make sure you pack a sunhat too!

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WHERE ARE THE BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES ON **THE GREAT OCEAN WALK**



Whether you simply want to preserve wonderful memories or you're thinking of your Instagram, the Great Ocean Walk has plenty of spots to take incredible photos.

Some of our favourites include:

- Anywhere around the Twelve Apostles
- Gibson Steps leading to Gibson Beach
- Any rainforest trail in Great Otway National Park
- The picturesque Cape Otway Light Station
- The rusting anchors on Wreck Beach
- Milanesia Beach and Moonlight Head
- Johanna Beach

The truth is, photo opportunities are plentiful on the Great Ocean Walk. Realising that there could be a perfect photographic moment on every twist and turn on the trail makes this walk even more exciting!

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ENJOY YOUR TIME ON THE GREAT OCEAN WALK

We hope you find the information set out in this guide useful, reassuring, and practical. With this resource close at hand, you can focus on creating unforgettable memories on this world-famous walking route.

Remember, Walk91 provides real-time support for anyone on our Great Ocean Walk Tours.

We're here to make your walking holiday seamless and stress-free!

If you have any questions for us, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



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