



Coombe Wood Garden

# A Botanical Tour of Gardens of Southern Highlands with the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AAFBG)

29 October – 4 November 2023

1 night Sydney – 5 nights Bowral



Jon Baines  
tours





Fitzroy Falls

**Run in association with the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens, this boutique tour to the beautiful Southern Highlands of New South Wales explores the botanical, historical and culinary offerings of this historic area.**

With lush rolling hills, award-winning food, cool climate wines, gushing waterfalls, national parks, country markets and galleries in enchanting towns and historic villages and four very distinct seasons, the Southern Highlands is a destination like no other in NSW.

This bespoke tour with the AAFBG examines the diverse botany of the Southern Highlands, with visits to several important and historic gardens, including private gardens not usually open to visits, and a wide range of specialist visits and fascinating talks by botanical experts. There will be local guides on walks and at all Botanic Gardens (Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens, Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens and Mt Annan).

**There is the option to join the tour without paying for the hotel night in Sydney – please see the costs page for details.**



## Tour Leader

Now semi-retired, **Kate Heffernan's** career in horticulture spans more than 40 years. The last two decades have been spent in professional and volunteer roles with Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens (GCRBG) and as a consultant to other botanic gardens in Queensland and Victoria. Kate is a former Chair of BGANZ Queensland, later National Representative, and also a member of BGCI and AAFBG. She has made presentations at Australian and international conferences.

Kate was also a vocational horticulture and landscape teacher, undertaking the development of many community landscape projects on the Gold Coast and Brisbane as a practical component of student training. A feature writer from 2003, Kate wrote for journals including Horticulture Australia, weekly articles for Gold Coast papers and was Saturday Morning Garden presenter for ABC Gold Coast. Kate recently published a book 'Celebrating Regional Biodiversity,' which tells the story of the unique South East Queensland flora through the lens of GCRBG.



A keen traveller with an emphasis on garden-based travel, Kate has led tours to the gardens of France, United Kingdom, Ireland and a wildflower tour to Western Australia. She has travelled widely in Australia and overseas. Kate has been awarded the Gold Coast Australia Day Environmental Achievement Award for her role in the establishment of GCRBG; Queensland Australia Day Award for Vocational Training and was Gold Coast Teacher of the Year. With husband Alan Donaldson, Kate is an Honorary Life Member of Friends of GCRBG.

**"Kate was wonderful."**

Rosemary McDonald, AAFBG Botanical Tour of Tasmania, Oct 2021



Camden Park Garden



# Itinerary 29 October – 4 November 2023

**B** = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

1 night Sydney – 5 nights Bowral

## Day 1: Sydney (Sun, 29 Oct)

**D**

**Pm:** Check in to Radisson Blu Sydney and visit the nearby Royal Botanical Gardens (around 2.30pm).

**Eve:** Welcome drinks and dinner.

## Day 2: Sydney-Bowral (Mon, 30 Oct)

**B L**

**Am:** Drive to Menangle to visit Camden Park House, one of the most important historic houses in Australia, with one of the country's oldest and best-preserved colonial gardens. Hear an introductory talk, take part in a tour of the stunning house and visit the gardens. There will be a box lunch provided at Camden Park.

**Pm:** Visit Jeanne Villani's Highdown Cottage on Nott's Hill in Bowral. This historic garden boasts significant trees, sweeping lawns, perennials, a dam and a lake. Check in to Links Hotel in Bowral and at leisure.

## Day 3: Bowral (Tue, 31 Oct)

**B L**

**Am:** Visit the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens in Bowral to meet with the volunteers and enjoy a morning tea.

**Pm:** Lunch at Sturt Coffee, a boutique art café at Sturt Gallery. Visit the Florescence exhibition in the gallery, which is a joyous spring-themed vase and flower show featuring ceramicists, floral artists and painters. Visit Mount Gibraltar Reserve and take a walk, with excellent views of the area from three lookouts.

## Day 4: Fitzroy Falls (Wed 1 Nov)

**B L**

**Am:** Visit Fitzroy Falls National Park and explore the East Rim wildflower walking tracks.

**Pm:** Lunch at The Hearth Café before visiting lovely Coombe Wood Gardens in Sutton Forest, which has been developed under the philosophy of 'slow gardening' for over 37 years, much of the garden raised from seed or cutting. The owners aim for botanically interesting plants and the garden displays many influences. John Stowar writing in Highlife Magazine in an article on Coombe Wood in 2012 summarised it thus: "As the garden further matures Coombe Wood will be a treasure trove of the rare and beautiful, sought out by the horticultural cognoscenti."



Jeanne Villani's garden





Hydrangeas in Prittlewell Gardens

### Day 5: Berrima / Fitzroy Falls (Thurs, 2 Nov) B L

**Am:** Visit Berrima District Museum and visit the *Landscapes of the Southern Highlands* exhibition. Take a historic town walk of Berrima, visiting Harper's Mansion and accredited rose garden on the way.

**Pm:** Enjoy lunch at the charming book barn at Bendooley Estate, where a roaring fire warms a space lined by walls of books. After lunch continue to Fitzroy Falls to visit Prittlewell Gardens. Acclaimed as one of the loveliest gardens in the Southern Highlands, Prittlewell is sited on 29 acres adjoining Fitzroy Falls Reservoir and overlooking a beautiful lake.

### Day 6: Sutton Forest (Fri, 3 Nov) B L D

**Am/Pm:** Full day excursion at Oldbury Farm, Moss Vale. Oldbury Farm is a stunning heritage-listed residence, built between 1822 and 1828. Every section of its garden is impressive, with a very wide range of

cold climate styles, from formal parterres to woodland gardens, native plantings and topiary. Spend the whole day here, with a break for lunch at the lovely Southern Highlands Winery in Sutton Forest.

**Eve:** Farewell dinner.

### Day 7: Bowral / Sydney (Sat, 4 Nov) B L

**Am:** Check out of the Links Hotel before visiting the Australian Botanic Garden Mt Annan, which contains over 4000 plant species amidst more than 400 hectares of natural woodland, stunning gardens and wide, open spaces. Enjoy morning tea with the Friends of the Botanic Garden before a guided tour of the garden and the heritage plant bank.

**Pm:** Lunch at the gardens before returning to Sydney, arriving mid-afternoon.

**NB: All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.**





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Have lunch at Southern Highlands Winery





Waterlilies in Prittlewell Gardens (top); Prittlewell Gardens (above)

**The cost of the tour is \$3,392 per person sharing (\$3,120 without Sydney hotel night)**

**The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is \$4,082 (\$3,660 without Sydney hotel night)**

#### **The cost includes:**

- The services of tour leader, Kate Heffernan
- 6 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in medium grade hotels.
- Breakfast and lunch or dinner daily except on Day 1
- All specialist visits and admission fees
- GST
- All transport services

#### **The cost excludes:**

- Meals not mentioned and drinks with meals
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Arrival and departure transfers.

**This tour supports the work of the AAFBG.**



The inviting lounge at Links Hotel

### **Walking**

There is a significant amount of walking involved in this itinerary. It is essential that all participants have a good level of physical fitness and no impediments to walking strongly without assistance.



# About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney (top); Camden Park House, Menangle;  
Berrima River; Enjoy lunch in Bendooley Estate's book barn (above)



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