

Capital Grand Tours

We've been telling you that just staying for the rally then bolting isn't long enough to get more than a taste of Canberra. Here are four tours that tell you why. Instead of one cruise around the capital, we've decided to break things up and give you four themed drives that will take in some of our best sights and sites.

Please let us know which tour you plan to take on Sunday so we can flag numbers with some of the venues, email us on morrisminorclubsnationalrally@gmail.com as soon as possible. That will ensure they're able to cope with an influx of 20 or 30 MMs and passengers looking for something to eat! **Note for people wanting to take a Segway ride during the Different Look at Canberra tour: numbers are limited and they need to be pre-booked, so let us know as soon as you can.**

Tour option one – Traditional Canberra

This tour heads out along Pialligo Ave and onto Parkes Way. As it reaches the Anzac Parade roundabout it takes a right turn and heads up Anzac Parade to the Australian War Memorial. While this memorial needs no introduction, there have been many changes and additions over the past ten years. Most of the dioramas have been replaced and new galleries reflecting recent wars have been established. As with many major museums, technology now plays an important role in their displays. Our guide will give us a 90-minute tour of the galleries. Lunch will be at the Landing Place Cafe.

After lunch we roll down Anzac Parade admiring the many roadside memorial sculptures and head to Constitution Ave to visit Floriade.

Many Aussies are now aware of this annual spring time display. Each year has a different theme and lay out. It is widely acclaimed as Australia's largest display of daffodils, tulips, poppies, pansies and many other colourful flower varieties. There are trade stalls, food outlets and entertainment.

Wandering complete then back to Parkes Way and back to the Sutton Road hill climb centre for our final goodbyes.

Tour option two – A Different look at Canberra.

Once again, this tour leaves the hill climb centre turns right onto Pialligo Ave and then onto Parkes Way. We pass through the Anzac Parade roundabout and take a left turn onto Commonwealth Avenue, cross the bridge and turn right at the Hyatt Hotel Canberra. We will stop outside the British High Commission and pay our respects to the country of the birth of our cars. By the roadside our guide will give an irreverent commentary on the different embassies and the way they work. The cultural differences are as interesting as the architectural aspects of each embassy. Then a drive by of about 20 embassies and conclude at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. We head to Questacon car park and walk across the road to lunch at the National Library's Book Place restaurant.

After lunch we stroll to the water's edge for one of the most amazing rides of your life ... a trip around the lake on a Segway...lean forward – go forward, lean back– go back, stand upright and you stop. It will cost \$65 for the hour's journey and the writer guarantees it will be close to the most unique experience you will have over the weekend. It's super safe and they get you on board, give you time to practice on the expansive Old Parliament House lawns before heading out with a supervisor for every five people.... there are only fifteen places so be quick. If your partner does not want to do it we will have an alternative visit for the hour at the Portrait Gallery.

Back over Commonwealth Ave Bridge, drop down onto Parkes Way and head to Sutton Road to say goodbye with a cuppa.

Tour option three – Canberra Country

We turn left exiting the hill climb centre to travel north on Sutton Road through small acre farms.

Traditionally this landscape was the home to sheep farms producing some of Australia's finest wool. (They did say that Canberra is a good sheep property ruined!). Then we join the Federal Highway heading towards

Sydney for a short time and our destination the Tulip Top Gardens is on the left. They cover 10 acres of a spectacular display of spring flowers. Hundreds of blossom trees nestle amongst the flowers and provide a magical pathway to the cascading waterfall and watercourse with classical music wafting through the air in this hidden valley. Morning tea (albeit instant) is included in the entry fee (\$16) or a Devonshire tea with freshly baked scones for an extra \$5.

From here we re-join the highway until we meet the Gundaroo/Bungendore Road. We head towards historic Bungendore (much older than Canberra). The Morrie gearbox and/or brakes will get a workout as we descend down Smiths Gap to the Molonglo Valley. This is rich farming land with many commercial cattle farms. Lunch is at the Lake George Hotel in Gibraltar Street. If it's cold the log fire will be roaring as you consume a Black Angus Pie or something else just as hearty from the bistro menu.

After lunch we walk to the Bungendore Wood Works Gallery ... one of Australia's best! The skill in these old crafts is amazing, some pieces take years to make, for example, the feature cabinet priced at a whopping \$350,000. Once you have finished being in awe of the fascinating array of wood craft products take time to wander around the other shops and market stalls to complete the afternoon. There are plenty of options for coffee etc.

Then it's back in the Morrie for a leisurely drive back to Queanbeyan and the Sutton Road hill climb centre via the Kings Highway.

Tour option four – Small Cars Small Places

This tour reflects our British heritage, our love of things small and ends showing us how Canberra's biggest suburban disaster, the bushfires of 2003, has led to the establishment of the National Arboretum. The tour leaves the hill climb centre, turns right onto Pialligo Ave which then becomes Parkes Way. (Three tours all head off this way and turn off at different points so vigilance will be required to ensure you stay with your tour group. We pass the very modern Canberra Airport with its equally modern business park and follow the Molonglo River on our left. This is the only stretch of water in Canberra where the public are allowed to use powered boats, so it has an active ski club. We pass the Australian Defence Force Academy on our right. Lake Burley Griffin comes into sight and we pass under Kings Avenue Bridge. Across the water you will have a glorious view of some of our National Institutions ... the National Art Gallery, the High Court and the National Library. As we move into the Anzac Parade roundabout to the north you will have a view of the Australian War Memorial to your right and to the south new and old Parliament Houses.

Our destination is Cockington Green. This display started in 1979 with a collection of English model villages and then in 1998 the Sarah family added international displays. Cockington Green is characterised by not only the painstakingly accurate built-to-scale miniatures but also the care and attention put into the gardens surrounding them. The display lawns are spectacular. The patriarch of the Sarah family, Doug had a sense of humour. If you look carefully you can see this interwoven into the delightful scenes ... for example, the dog scampering down the village street with a string of sausages whilst being chased by the butcher ... reminiscent of the comics from our childhood.

For lunch we wander across the road to the Tudor style George Harcourt Inn.

We leave the George via the Barton Highway and head down the Gungahlin Drive Extension until we reach the National Arboretum. This area was a Pinus Radiata Forest which was destroyed by the 2003 fires along with 500 Canberra homes. It is now 100 forests of rare, threatened or symbolic trees from around the world. It's a winding climb up to the stunning Visitors Centre and some spectacular views over Canberra. A volunteer will meet us and talk about its development and explain some of the majestic sculptures that appear in the landscape. The highlight is the National Bonsai Collection ... this is a world class display of both native and exotic trees ... some have been trained over a period of nearly 70 years yet still stand less than a metre tall.

Down the hill onto Parkes Way and back to ground zero ... the Sutton Road hill climb centre for a final cuppa and fond farewell.