Take the tour through “Kelly Country” in North-eastern Victoria

Make a round trip from Melbourne, stopping at Beveridge, Benalla, Glenrowan, Beechworth, Greta, Power’s Lookout, Stringybark Creek, Mansfield and back to Melbourne. The total distance is about 460 kilometres, and your total driving time will be about 6 hours. You can stay along the way at any of the many accommodation places, and travel at your own speed. Visit places where Australia’s greatest folk story took place. You’ll also discover some of the district’s favourite destinations for food and wine lovers, and enjoy spectacular scenery along the way.

Melbourne to Beveridge

Drive north out of Melbourne and travel 42 kilometres along the Hume Highway to the township of Beveridge, where Ned Kelly was born in 1854. You can also take the old Sydney Road route which is marked in grey on the above map.

The town is named after a Scottish shepherd and grazier, Andrew Beveridge, who arrived in the district in the 1840s. The house where the Kelly family lived between 1850 and 1860 still stands on Kelly Street. Take the Beveridge exit off the highway then turn right under the freeway. Turn right into Stewart Street until you come to Kelly Street.

For years the old Kelly house was ignored and allowed to collapse into ruin, but slowly the town grew up around it. In recent times there have been signs that the government cares about this important site in Australian history. The sign outside the house says that it is the boyhood home of Ned Kelly. The house was built by Ned Kelly’s father, John ‘Red’ Kelly in 1859. It was where Ned lived for about four years of his boyhood and where his brothers Jim and Dan and sister Kate were probably born.

Before European occupation, the area around Beveridge was home to members of the Woiworung Aboriginal language group. The first Europeans into the area were Hume and Hovell who passed through on their way to Port Phillip Bay in 1824.
Beveridge to Avenel

Go back onto the Hume Highway and drive another 82 kilometres to Avenel. Leave the Hume at the Avenel turn-off, then turn right at the school and continue along past the war memorial to the town cemetery. Avenel was the hometown of Ned Kelly in his younger years. Ned registered his father's death in this town, and John 'Red' Kelly is buried in the local cemetery. The headstone is not the original and it is thought that Red was actually buried a few metres away.

Avenel plays an important part in the legend of Ned Kelly, who attended the local primary school. It was during this time that 10-year-old Ned saved a young Richard Shelton from drowning in the local Hughes Creek. For his bravery, Shelton's parents rewarded Ned with a green silk sash – Ned was wearing this at the Siege of Glenrowan, when he was finally captured. Elsau Shelton was one of Avenel’s most respected citizens. He and his wife Margaret took a strong interest in the customs and welfare of local aboriginals.

This area was originally occupied by the indigenous Ngurelban people, members of the Kulin nation - an alliance of five tribal nations in Central Victoria that spoke related languages. When foreign people passed through or were invited onto these tribal lands, the ceremony of Tanderrum – freedom of the bush – was performed. This allowed safe passage and temporary access and use of land and resources by foreign people. It was a diplomatic rite involving the landholder’s hospitality and a ritual exchange of gifts.

The Royal Mail Hotel Avenel

The Royal Mail Hotel (above) was originally built as a store before Hilet was granted a District Publicans licence in 1857. It is of historical significance as a prominent 1850s coach staging post on route to the Beechworth goldfields and the early overland route to Sydney, and remains a critical element in the understanding of the now relatively isolated old portion of the town of Avenel. Elsau Shelton, father of the boy Ned saved from drowning, took over the publican’s licence for the Royal Mail Hotel in 1862.

Ned’s father Red Kelly also had a clash with the law here, once charged but later acquitted of cattle stealing, although he was fined for illegal possession of a hide. His case was heard at Avenel Court House, which still remains today. Avenel also has one of Victoria’s most impressive bridges with a six-arch, stone crossing over Hughes Creek. Built by Hugh Dairymple in 1850, the bridge is still there.

Avenel to Euroa

Keep driving 38 kilometres further along the Hume Highway to the town of Euroa. Ned Kelly and his gang held up the National Bank here, getting away with 2000 pounds and taking the bank staff hostage.
Euroa was surveyed in 1849 and planned as a roadside resting place on the road from Melbourne to Wodonga. Drovers camped at the spot due to the presence of a permanent water supply. A very picturesque town, it has scenic drives, bush walks, creeks and waterfalls, birds and animals and breathtaking views from nearby locations.

The area was originally occupied by the Ngurelban Aborigines and there is an important Aboriginal art site in the Gardens Range about 10 km south-east of the town. The Ngurelban Aboriginal people knew they had something special here and named the land ‘Yera-o’ (meaning joyful) which then became Euroa. This lovely town sits at the foot of the Strathbogie Ranges and is rich in history, heritage and culture. Euroa is also a film-makers paradise that has to be seen to be believed.

Euroa earned its place in history as a premier wool-growing community. The first fine-wool Saxon merino sheep in Victoria were introduced in 1851 by Eliza Forlonge, who had bought the sheep from Saxony. The town remains closely connected with the wool industry, each year celebrating its success during the Wool Week Festival held in October.

The district’s prosperity also got the attention of bushranger, Ned Kelly. Ned, his brother Dan and Steve Hart robbed the Euroa Bank in 1878. Connection to the Kelly family is still very strong in the district. Reminders of Euroa’s colourful past are seen in the historical buildings and memorials. Walk the Heritage Trail and see the significant buildings and places that played a role in creating its history.

Euroa to Benalla

Continue another 49 kilometres along the Hume Highway to Benalla, situated along the banks of the Broken River. View the plaque on Arundel Street that describes how young Ned Kelly was charged with drunkenness and riding his horse on the footpath. He eventually gave himself up to the police and was marched across the road to the Benalla Courthouse, which is still used today.

In 1848 the town was surveyed and called ‘Benalla’ by the Port Phillip District Superintendent, Charles La Trobe. The name came from the local Aboriginal tribal group the Bhrenawilla people, a branch of the Yorta Yorta people, who occupied the area.

Benalla is a very attractive and wealthy rural centre. Called the ‘Rose City’, it is known for its beautiful gardens. There is a memorial sculpture of the famous wartime doctor Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop, who went to school here. He was widely admired and highly decorated for tirelessly attending the needs of prisoners of war who built the Burma railway. There are also fine Botanical Gardens, and the town’s close connection to Ned Kelly is celebrated in art and history. It’s one of the most impressive rural centres in Victoria.

There is a brochure available at the Visitor Centre listing interesting graves at the local cemetery. It shows the graves of the Kelly gang member, Joe Byrne, and Corporal Sambo (a racist nickname) who was a Queensland Aborigine brought down to track Ned Kelly. The cemetery is located west of town off Baddaginnie Road on Cemetery Road. There are also graves of Ned Kelly’s aunt, Jane Lloyd; his grandmother, Mary Anne Quinn, and hostage Martin Cherry who was killed by police firing at the Glenrowan siege.
Benalla to Glenrowan

Glenrowan is a small town in the northeast of Victoria, situated on the Hume Freeway, 16 kms from Wangaratta. Siege Street, the Railway Reserve and Ann Jones' Glenrowan Inn siege site, have State and National Heritage listing. Glenrowan is a focal point for anyone interested in the Kelly legend. In 1880, Ned Kelly was captured at the Glenrowan Inn after a bloody battle, bringing his bush-ranging days to an end. The Ned Kelly Museum and Kate's Cottage Museum tell the story of Ned's life and battles.

The siege at Glenrowan was the result of a plan by the Kelly Gang to derail a Police Special Train into a deep gully next to the railway line. The idea was to draw the police train through the township of Glenrowan, an area the Kellys knew closely. After that, the gang planned to ride to Benalla, blow up the undermanned police station and rob some banks.

However, Ned miscalculated, thinking the train would come from Benalla not Melbourne. Instead of the 12 hours he thought it would take from Benalla, the train took 31 hours to reach Glenrowan. This resulted in an unexpected long wait while holding the 60 hostages in the Ann Jones Inn. It also resulted in lack of sleep for the Kelly Gang and allowed for Thomas Curnow, a hostage who convinced Ned that he needed to take his sick wife home, to get away and warn the Police Special train of the danger.

Eventually, in the early morning darkness of Monday, June 28th, the Police Special train slowly pulled into Glenrowan Railway Station, and the police contingent on board disembarked. The siege of the Glenrowan Inn began, terminating with its destruction by fire in the mid afternoon, and the deaths of Joe Byrne, Dan Kelly and Steve Hart. Shortly after daylight on the 29th, Ned was captured about 100 metres north-east of the Inn.

Glenrowan to Beechworth

From Glenrowan, turn right into the Great Alpine Road, and enjoy a 50-kilometre drive to the charming 1852 goldrush town of Beechworth. You can visit the courthouse where Ned Kelly, his mother Ellen and many sympathisers were tried. Built in 1858 and in continuous service for 131 years, the Beechworth Courthouse still has its original furniture and fittings. It is has been the scene of some of the most fascinating court cases in Victoria’s history.

It was here that Ned Kelly, was tried for murder. His mother Ellen, brothers Dan and Jim and Uncle Jim Kelly also faced charges in this courtroom. Elizabeth Scott, the first woman hanged in Victoria, was sentenced to death in this courthouse. Still with its original furnishings and fittings, many other famous names of Australian history had links with the Beechworth Courthouse, including the explorer, Robert O'Hara Burke, Sir Redmond Barry (Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Victoria) and the first Australian-born Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs.
The famous explorer, Robert O’Hara Burke was also the Police Superintendent in Beechworth, and Justices Sir Redmond Barry and Sir William Stawell passed judgement on many defendants from the same Judge’s chair that is there today. Sir Isaac Isaacs started his legal career in this building and later became Australia’s first native-born Governor-General.

**Historic Beechworth Court House**

See the Beechworth Gaol where Ned and his mother were held, and learn about the history of Beechworth at the Historical and Cultural Precinct which includes the Courthouse, Telegraph Station, the Powder Magazine and Burke Museum, where a Ned Kelly death mask is on display. Beechworth offers a large choice of accommodation and gourmet local products served at the restaurants, making it the perfect place to spend the night.

The North-east region was home to a number of aboriginal clans. Beechworth was occupied by the Min-jan-butto people. Records show there are no remaining descendants of the original clan. The aborigines led semi-nomadic lives and followed a seasonal pattern of living, moving in early Spring onto the river flats, then onto the open plains where water and food were plenty.

From summer onwards, they shifted back to the river flats to gather with other local tribes along the river near Albury. Then they all moved into the Alps for the Bogong Moth Feast on the high plains and to spend summer in the cooler climate of the mountains. In February when it was time to return to the warmer lowlands, the aborigines would set fire to areas of the high plains to burn dry grasses and cause regeneration. Winter was spent in the foothills, with natural shelters amongst rocky outcrops and good tree cover.

Hume and Hovell crossed the hills near to where Beechworth is today, during their expedition in 1824. First named Mayday Hills, early settler David Reid grazed his stock in the district until the discovery of gold. By late 1852, thousands of hopefuls rushed to the alluvial gold fields in search of their fortunes and an exploding population escalated to 8,000. Miners came from around the world including Europe, UK, USA and Asia. From a small settlement of campsites and timber huts, rapid social and economic change occurred with their arrival. In 1853 the town was renamed Beechworth. By 1867 more than four million ounces of gold had been found.

Hardworking Chinese also came to the goldfields prepared to work abandoned claims. Their success was met with high levels of discrimination and abuse. Also, while many miners became immigrants, the Chinese were generally short-term visitors with intentions to earn money, provide families, and then return to China as rich men. By 1863, 7,000 Chinese were on the Beechworth fields. There is a special section in the local cemetery where Chinese burial customs were held, with special cremation fireplaces and chimneys.

Beechworth is recognised as Australia’s finest historic gold-mining town. Home to many talented artists and artisans from around the world, this town is filled with galleries, antiques, pottery and old wares that will delight you. Beechworth is a mixture of culture, adventure, mystery, history and passion. More information on the history of Beechworth can be found at the local Burke Museum.

**Beechworth to Greta**

Greta (pronounced 'Greeta') is a 45-kilometre drive via Wangaratta through bush where Ned and his famous gang rode. You can also go via Milawa if you wish to see more countryside. Visit Greta Cemetery to inspect some of the Kelly family graves, including Ned’s mother, Ellen. The Victorian government recently re-buried Ned Kelly’s remains there alongside his mother.

The police station at Greta was established in 1869 at the request of local squatters, who wanted suspected stock thieves dealt with. Constable Edward Hall, a hot-tempered Irish-born Senior Police Constable was placed in charge of the station and he set up a system of spies, and used threats and intimidation to control the locals. In 1871, Hall arrested sixteen year old Ned, accusing him of stealing a horse. He even tried to shoot Ned, who was unarmed, and gave him a severe pistol whipping when his gun failed. The arrest caused resentment in the community. Ned was sentenced to three years hard labour on perjured police evidence.

The Kelly Gang was formed in April 1878, following a confrontation at the Kelly family home in Greta. After an argument between Dan and the drunken Constable Fitzpatrick over an arrest warrant for Dan, during which the policeman was slightly wounded, Dan joined his brother Ned and they took off to hide in the nearby Wombat Ranges. The brothers were soon joined by two of their friends, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart. The police hunt for the gang over the next twenty months, and the final siege at Glenrowan, show both the military style of policing and the amount of mistrust for the police by the community.
Most local people thought Ned Kelly was a man who turned outlaw because of police persecution and injustice, and they refused to cooperate with police in the hunt. One local newspaper reported that three out of every four of the men in the area were on Kelly's side. Chief Commissioner Standish shared this view, saying: *The Gang members were secure of the goodwill of a great proportion of the inhabitants of these regions who look upon the police as their natural enemies.*

Unable to count on local people's help, police resorted to spies and arresting 'Kelly sympathisers' during the hunt. Search parties were heavily armed, and police finally caught up with Kelly and his gang at Glenrowan. During a siege lasting several hours police blazed away at an Inn containing the gang and about 60 unarmed civilians. Police bullets fatally wounded three civilians, including an old man and a child, and injured others, including a teenage boy who was shot in the back as he tried to escape from the Inn. One police officer repeatedly shot at a woman carrying a baby as she ran out of the building for safety, a bullet lightly grazing the baby's head.

While police showed no care for civilian safety, the gang tried unsuccessfully to negotiate safe passage for those trapped inside. After the siege, a journalist wrote: *The want of judgement displayed by the police was criminal. The indiscriminate firing into a house filled with women and children was a most disgraceful act. Nevertheless the government paid police involved in their capture big rewards.*

**Greta to Power's Lookout**

Explore the beautiful King Valley, young Ned Kelly's stomping ground. Aboriginal traditional owners the Taungurung people identify the Power's Lookout Reserve as their traditional country. Stop at the Whitfield Mountain View Hotel, 43 kilometres from Greta, for lunch before driving to Power's Lookout. The mountain ranges are spectacular and the lookout, a challenging 10-minute walk from the car park, was the awe-inspiring vantage point and mountain hideout of bushranger Harry Power, who was Kelly's mentor. To reach Power's Lookout, take the Mansfield-Whitfield Road. You'll see the turn-off to the left 16.5 kilometres along the road. At the Lookout's car park you'll find sign posts, shelter and toilets.

Harry Power was the last of Australia's famous bushrangers, and he was captured at his hideout/lookout in June, 1870. Today it's a popular spot to visit for the great view of King Valley 300 metres below, and for its part in Australian bushranger history. Transported in 1840 at the age of 21 for theft, Power served a seven-year sentence and had no trouble with the law for 13 years. One day he was falsely accused of horse theft by a pair of drunken troopers, resulting in an exchange of gunshots, for which Power received a 10-year sentence. He had been released and jailed again when he escaped from Pentridge Prison at the age of 50 years, and he decided to become a bushranger.

Harry had met some of Ned's uncles (Jack and Tom Lloyd) in jail and went to see them while on the run after his escape. Thus he met the Quinns (Ellen Kelly's parents) and made arrangements to build his base camp on the escarpment behind their property, which was surrounded by loop of the King River like a moat. The way to Power's Lookout lay across a small bridge which was just behind Quinn's and a peacock perched on their roof was always ready to shriek a warning of visitors.

Power liked storytelling and the Kelly boys would have loved the tales he told of his involvement in peasant uprisings against the British troops and Parliament back in Ireland (he had sabre scars on his face). Power's fame was guaranteed when he took young Ned as his 'apprentice'. They carried out robberies and holdups and Ned learned all the tricks of the trade. After his final release from prison in 1885, Power led an honest life for six years then accidentally drowned while fishing in the Murray River at Swan Hill in 1891.
Power's Lookout to Stringybark Creek

Continue driving along the Mansfield-Whitfield Road, and turn right at Tolmie into the road to Tatong to visit Stringybark Creek Reserve. This is where Ned Kelly went from being a horse thief to Australia’s most wanted outlaw after gunning down three Mansfield police officers. A plaque in the trunk of the enormous Kelly Tree marks the place where it all happened.

Following the deaths of the Mansfield police officers Lonigan, Scanlan and Kennedy, the Kelly Gang became the most wanted outlaws in Australia in the late 19th century. The shootings at Stringybark Creek started what was called the “Kelly Outbreak”, which reached a climax at Glenrowan in June 1880. All four members of the Gang came from Irish Catholic backgrounds, were the sons of selectors, and had been in jail for stock theft. All four were also young and single. Joseph Byrne, born in 1857, had become great friends with Ned some years earlier, while Steve Hart, born in 1869, was to be remembered as predicting he would have ‘a short life and a merry one’ as he rode off on his horse to join the other members.

Initially wanted by the police on smaller charges, the killings at Stringybark Creek made the Kelly gang’s crimes much more serious. The conflict was used by authorities to show the need for more police presence in the district. The Stringybark Creek site is now of great historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

The Stringybark Creek Restaurant and Winery

The Stringyark Creek site has swampy ground, ferns and speargrass along the creek, with a forest of gum and blackwood trees. The area was a rich timber harvesting and mining location, and old gold workings and open shafts are visible around the site. The ruins of two miner’s huts are located on the west bank of the creek, and the site includes the “Kelly tree” where the names of the three police officers were carved in the early 1930s. An iron helmet was set into a scar of the tree, but is now been covered by the tree’s re-growth.
Stringybark Creek to Mansfield

Mansfield is located 200 kilometres north-east of Melbourne, Victoria, in a really wide valley surrounded by mountain ranges. To the west are the Strathbogies and The Paps; north-west is Mount Samaria; north is Tolmie Plateau; east is the Great Divide with Mounts Buller, Stirling and Timbertop (once called Warrabamat); and to the south are the low hills of the Blue Range. These mountains feed the Broken, Howqua, Jamieson, Goulburn, Delatite and Big Rivers. The Aboriginal people who inhabited this area belonged to the Taungurung clan. They had alliances with several other language groups in Victoria, who together are known as the Kulin Nation.

The first European settlers came to Mansfield during the squatting boom of the late 1830s. In 1839, John “howqua” Hunter and Hunter Campbell were camped overnight close to the junction of the Delatite River and Brankeet Creek, and at night they were so frightened by sounds of an aboriginal corroboree nearby that they called the place Devil's River. Eventually, they moved cattle and horses to this new run which they called 'Wappan' (from the Aboriginal name for the Delatite River, Wappang).

In addition to sheep grazing, Mansfield had dairying and cultivation for oats, potatoes and fruit. A monument to the three policemen who were killed at Stringybark Creek was erected a year after the event in 1879 at the intersection of Mansfield’s two main streets. The monument stands at the front of a wide central plantation which runs down the main commercial street.

Graves of the fallen policemen in Mansfield Cemetery - Thomas Lonigan, Michael Kennedy and Michael Scanlan

In 1964, the State tourism authority began promoting Mansfield as the ‘Gateway to Leisureland’. Mansfield has also benefited from horse-riding holidays in the hills to the east. “The Man from Snowy River” was filmed east of Mount Buller in 1982, and the railway station has now been converted to a tourism and information centre. Mansfield is also the gateway to the ski fields, and it’s a great place to spend the night, with a range of accommodation offered including guesthouses, caravan parks and B&B cottages.

Mansfield to Melbourne

After leaving Mansfield, you can follow the Maroondah Highway, or join the Hume Highway at Broadford, back to Melbourne.
Places to Visit in Melbourne

Melbourne has a number of places where Kelly history can be explored. Visit the Old Melbourne Gaol on Russell Street, a chilling bluestone building and the scene of 135 hangings, including that of Ned Kelly. The Hangman's Box with all its weird contents is also on view to the public. You can also visit the State Library of Victoria, and the Victoria Police Museum.

Old Melbourne Gaol is located at 377 Russell St (between Victoria and La Trobe St). You can visit three sites at the one location including the original Gaol, former City Watch House and during school holiday periods you can visit Court One of the Old Magistrate's Court. Open every day (except Christmas Day and Good Friday) from 9:30am to 5:00pm.

State Library of Victoria is located in Swanston Street Melbourne at the corner of Little Lonsdale Street. It has many pieces of Ned Kelly artefacts, including the famous suit of armour and guns.

Victoria Police Museum is located at 637 Flinders Street, Melbourne, 3008 (enter via World Trade Centre in Siddeley Street) tells the story of 150 years policing in Victoria, including Ned Kelly memorabilia.