

# TOURS OF THE OLD MELBOURNE GAOL

Duration: 45 – 60 mins



OLDMELBOURNEGAOL  
Crime & Justice Experience

## OVERVIEW

The severity of prison routine comes to life within the cold, dimly lit bluestone confines of the Old Melbourne Gaol cell block and provides students with a realistic insight into the experience of imprisonment. During a visit to the Old Melbourne Gaol students explore the objectives of punishment and the role of prisons in the legal system. The haunting death masks of those executed within the prison and their stories will stimulate students to question the operation of the legal system in the achievement of justice.

The Old Melbourne Gaol, the scene of 136 hangings including that of infamous Ned Kelly, is a chilling environment for studies of 19th century prison life. As Victoria's oldest surviving remand prison, the Gaol has links with some of Australia's most significant historical moments or iconic figures, including the Gold Rush, the Eureka Stockade Rebellion and the Second World War and Ned Kelly.

Students investigate what conditions were like for men, women and children in the Gaol and are encouraged to reflect on ideas about crime and punishment both then and now. During their visit they will see the whipping triangle, cat of nine tails, birches and canes, and other displays of the Gaol's grim history.

## THEMES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

### • Laws and Rules

Students examine the differences between laws and rules in the penal system and the consequences for felons when the laws and rules were broken. Students will discover 19th century laws and prison rules.

### • Ned Kelly and the Bushrangers

Ned Kelly, the Kelly Gang, and the influence of the bushranger Harry Power on young Ned. The stories of George Melville, Wilson and Atkins, the McIvor Gold Escort Robbery and also the Plenty Bushrangers Foggarty, Jepps and Ellis' dramatic gunfight.

### • Crime and Punishment

The Gaol has an extensive display on penal life and punishments. Students discover how a model 19th century prison operated - the use of silence, religion, work and punishment to reform inmates. Consequences of broken rules and laws are discussed.

## THEMES SECONDARY ONLY

### • Women and Families

Explores many issues to do with women's lives and the difficulties they encountered in the 19th century. Topics examined include: illiteracy; the impact of the gold rushes; the Married Women's Property Acts; Baby-Farming; prison conditions; refuges, Ellen Kelly, Ned's mother; and attitudes of the press and society.