

Alice Springs & surrounds

Seven-day itinerary



Glen Helen Gorge



With a whole week in the Red Centre you will discover that Alice Springs really is the adventure capital of Australia. This itinerary will take you along a journey filled with desert wildlife experiences, pioneering history and outback waterholes surrounded by jaw dropping scenery.

Discover the raw beauty of the MacDonnell Ranges, learn about Aboriginal desert art traditions and meet resident artists along the Territory Art Trails. Try local bush flavours straight from the land or taste the native infusions at a local café – a highlight of Alice Springs' contemporary cuisine.




*Driving time is estimated from Alice Springs.

DAY 1

There is so much to see and do in and around Alice Springs and having your own reliable mode of transport will mean you won't miss a thing! Make your first destination the **Alice Springs Desert Park**. Situated on Larapinta Drive, the Desert Park is a must see for every visitor to the Red Centre. Spot rare and endangered animals in the low light of the nocturnal house and witness the star attractions at the free-flying birds of prey show. Check out one of the informative talks throughout the day. Make your way around the park at your leisure and then relax with some refreshments at the onsite café.

Make your way to the **Alice Springs Telegraph Station** and explore the desert trails on a mountain bike tour, leaving from the Trail Station. Tours depart daily (led by an experienced local rider) and all gear is provided. No prior mountain biking experience is needed.

Check into your **accommodation**. There are many accommodation options available, from luxury hotel rooms to camping under the stars. Take your pick and get a good night's rest ready before taking on a big day tomorrow.

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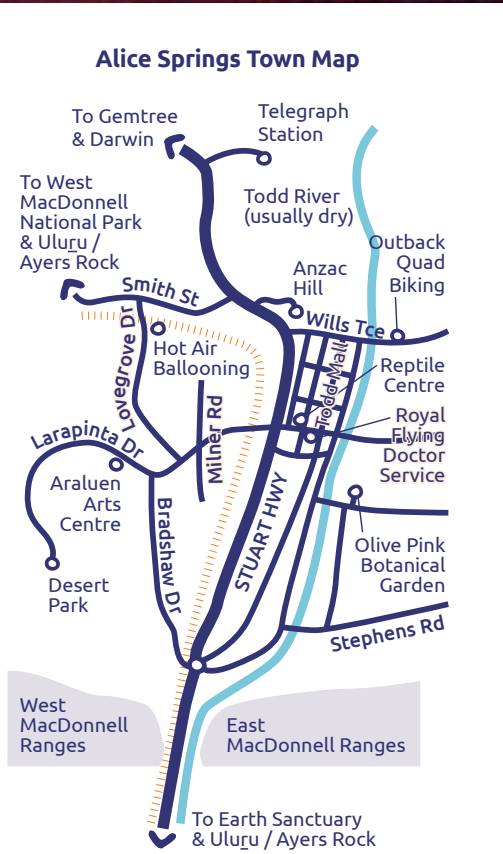
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TOP 10

1. Discover the abundance of desert life at the **Alice Springs Desert Park**
2. Get your body moving on a mountain bike tour from the **Telegraph Station**
3. Get amongst the interactive displays at the **Royal Flying Doctor Service**
4. Discover the many reptiles of the Red Centre at the **Alice Springs Reptile Centre**
5. Try your luck at **gem stone fossicking** and take part in a range of other activities and attractions at Gemtree
6. Immerse yourself in Aboriginal culture along the **Territory Arts Trail** in Alice Springs
7. Explore and swim in the many gorges and waterholes along the **West MacDonnell Ranges**
8. Ride like a camel and join a sunset tour with **Pyndan Camel Tracks**
9. View Alice Springs from above and pay homage to the fallen warriors at **Anzac Hill**
10. Get the blood pumping with an outback off-road with **Finke River Adventures!**



DAY 2

Rise early and take to the skies in a **hot air balloon** for a magnificent bird's eye view of Alice Springs and the Red Centre. As you drift into an outback sunrise of pastel blues, purples and yellows, keep an eye out for local wildlife such as the iconic red kangaroo hopping down below.

Once your feet are planted firmly again on the ground, it is time to indulge in a cooked breakfast at the Bean Tree Café which you can find nestled in the **Olive Pink Botanic Garden**. It is Australia's only arid zone botanic garden and the perfect place to relax for breakfast or lunch amongst the native surrounds. Take the time to wander along the walking trails to see the hundreds of plant species that are native to the Red Centre or spot some of the 80 bird species which have been recorded at the park.



Next stop is the **Royal Flying Doctor Service** (RFDS). Get amongst the interactive displays and step inside a full-sized replica on a modern PC-12 airplane, part of the exciting new collection. Here, you will gain an insight into the iconic Australian outback service established by pioneers in 1928. There is an onsite café, where you can dine under the original verandah and enjoy the amazing blue skies Alice Springs is known for. Sit back and relax with a coffee, specifically blended for the RFDS by a local coffee roaster.

Get a close look at some of the Northern Territory's favourite wildlife at the **Alice Springs Reptile Centre**, which is home to the largest reptile display in Central Australia. Here you will get to meet Terry the Saltwater Crocodile, see huge perentie goannas, thorny devils, frill-neck lizards and some of the world's most venomous snakes. Join one of the daily shows to learn more about lizards and pythons, which is followed by a supervised handling session – a perfect photo opportunity!

Finish off your night with dinner from one of the many restaurants in town and be sure to get a good night's rest in preparation for your camping adventure.

Cafe Uccello, Todd Mall



West MacDonnell Ranges



DAY 3

Rise early to embark on today's adventure to **Gemtree Caravan and Tourist Park** – 140km north-east of Alice Springs, Gemtree is a true oasis in the mulga country and the gateway to the Central Australia's gem fields.

Arrive in time to join a Fossicking Tour to try your luck at finding your own gems, and have them appraised on-site by experts. If you would like to stretch your legs and further explore the area, Gemtree has 250 acres of natural bushland for you to enjoy and is perfect if you would like to head out on one of the many self-guided nature trails or drive tours.

A set menu is on offer each evening in the Camp Oven Kitchen, followed by many entertainment options, including Campfire Karaoke on Sundays, quiz and movie nights and drinks by the pool.

Accommodation ranges from air conditioned cabins, on-site caravans to camp sites, however make sure you call ahead to book in, as cabins are very popular during high season.



DAY 4

Make your way back to Alice Springs and spend the day learning about local Aboriginal art along the **Territory Arts Trail**. First stop is the Araluen Arts Centre. Here you will get to see contemporary works by the region's most famous artists including Albert Namatjira. The centre also plays host to the annual Beanie Festival held in June each year, which is a much-anticipated quirky and colourful exhibition and competition and a must if you're in town during this time.

Head back into town to the Todd Mall, which is lined with commercial galleries dealing in Aboriginal art. Stop at Papunya Tula Artists to see the renowned dot paintings, then at Mbantua Art Gallery and Cultural Museum, which has one of the largest collections of Aboriginal art in Australia and specializes in art from the Utopia region. While you are in the area, enjoy lunch at one of the many trendy cafés dotted throughout Todd Mall.

Enjoy your dinner cooked in a bush setting and served under the Milky Way. Your host, a local Arrernte man with **RT Tours**, will introduce you to bush foods and traditional cooking for this special three-course meal set in the West MacDonnell Ranges.



DAY 5

Today, get to know the outskirts of Alice Springs and hit the road heading west. Make sure you pack an overnight bag and some walking shoes as you will be camping this evening. Camping equipment can be hired in town if you require. Drive 18 kilometres west of Alice Springs along Larapinta Road to Simpsons Gap, which is an impressive opening between the towering cliffs of the **West MacDonnell Ranges**. The area is also an important spiritual site to the Arrernte Aboriginal people, where several dreaming trails and stories cross. Be sure to get up close for a great photo opportunity.



Yaye's Cafe, Araluen



Mbantua Art Gallery

Ormiston Gorge



Glen Helen Gorge

Continue on along Larapinta Drive, turning right at Namatjira Drive. Approximately 80km along the Drive you will arrive at Glen Helen Homestead Lodge. The landscape around Glen Helen is truly spectacular with towering sandstone walls greeting you as you arrive. Enjoy your lunch teamed with a cold drink as you relax on the back verandah of the restored homestead overlooking the majestic **Glen Helen Gorge**.

If you are feeling adventurous, sign up for a 4WD tour or a scenic helicopter flight to discover more of the area. Enjoy dinner at the Namatjira Gallery Restaurant before retiring for the night at one of the accommodation options including fixed tents or motel.

DAY 6

Rise early and drive 10 kilometres back to Ormiston Gorge and Pound. This is a great place for a cool dip in the near permanent waterhole surrounded by the towering red walls of the gorge. If you are feeling active, take on the 3-4 hours Ormiston Pound Walk which completes a full circuit from the Walks Information Shelter and finishes at the main waterhole. Take in the beautiful local birdlife and admire the amazing Red Centre landscapes.

If you would rather enjoy a shorter walk, the 20-minute hike to the Ghost Gum Lookout is a must-do and is most popular with visitors. The view across the gorge and down into the waterhole is a sight to behold. Enjoy some light refreshments at the on-site kiosk before making your way back east towards Alice Springs. Stop over at **Ellery Creek Big Hole** where you can enjoy a refreshing swim. This location is one of the most popular and picturesque camping, swimming and picnic spots in the region, and you will understand why when you set eyes on the spectacular waterhole surrounded by high red cliffs and the sandy creek.

Arrive in Alice Springs just in time for a sunset camel tour at **Pyndan Camel Tracks**. A camel ride will definitely be an experience you will want to tell your

friends about. The camel ride starts at Pyndan Camel Tracks yard, through White Gums Station and follows an avenue of Iron Bark and Mulga trees across a clay pan flat and climbs a slight incline to get sweeping views across the MacDonnell Ranges. You will be led on your ride by one of Pyndan's camel experts who will tell you more about these iconic animals.

DAY 7

A visit to the top of **Anzac Hill** is a must-do for a panoramic view of the town. Sunrise is the perfect time to do this, as you watch the sun slowly rise to light up the MacDonnell Ranges and beautiful desert town below. You can drive your car to the top, or if you are feeling active, you can walk to the top via the 'Lions Walk'.

Before you say goodbye to Alice Springs, make the most of the clear skies in the Red Centre and gaze at the thousands of stars overhead at the **Earth Sanctuary World Nature Centre**. Learn how to navigate and identify the zodiac and constellations in the night sky and hear ancient Aboriginal stories of creation, followed by an outback dinner.

Anzac Hill

Pyndan Camel Tracks



Earth Sanctuary World Nature Centre



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Road report: roadreport.nt.gov.au/home
NT Parks: nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves

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