



## **11 Day McDouall Stuart Explorer 4wd Self-drive Adventure**

Stark, white ghost gums contrasted against red, sandstone gorges reflecting the last rays of the afternoon sun are the images that make Central Australia a must for visitors. The gorges of the Western MacDonnells and Kings Canyon give way to the red sand dunes of the desert as you make your way to Uluru (Ayers Rock), Australia's red heart. Returning to the Stuart Highway, you head south along the Oodnadatta Track and the amazing mound springs. You explore Lake Eyre and the Flinders Ranges, with its fantastic red gorges, before finishing in Adelaide.

### **Itinerary Suggestion**

#### **Day 1 Alice Springs to Glen Helen (Western Macdonnell Ranges)**

Departing Alice Springs at about 8am, head west along Larapinta Drive and stop on the left at Namatjira's Twin Ghost gums, said to be where one of his most famous scenes was painted. Continue on to a sign-posted turnoff to the right and drive down for a walk into Simpson's Gap. Hopefully there will be some Black Flanked Rock Wallabies to see. Your next stop is for a walk between the sheer walls of Stanley Chasm, lighting up a fiery red in the middle of the day.

After lunch, return to Larapinta Drive and turn right. At the road junction veer right at Namatjira Drive and continue on with many optional detours available, to a turn off to the right to spectacular Ormiston Gorge and to your overnight stop at Glen Helen Homestead. You can explore the gorge this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

**Overnight Camping, Glen Helen Homestead. (Full facilities- shower, toilet & washing machine)** (170km (3 hours) driving, 2 hours walking)

#### **Day 2 Glen Helen to Kings Canyon**

Pick up your permit to travel through Aboriginal Lands on the Mereenie Loop Road before departure. The vertical cliffs of Redbank Gorge, with its icy pools, make an enjoyable if somewhat chilly diversion. Continuing along the highway, you turn to the right and stop at Gosse Bluff, suspected to be a huge meteorite crater. Turn right at the road junction and begin the Mereenie Loop Road. This unpredictable nature of surface of this track is responsible for more road accidents than any other in the NT, so be very careful. There is the option here to detour to Palm Valley (64km each way). Continue through to Watarrka National Park and spend the afternoon exploring Kings Canyon. Walk up the steep access to the top and be rewarded with stunning desert Canyon views.

**Overnight camping Kings Canyon Camp Ground. (Full facilities)** (238km (4 hours) driving, 3 hours walking)

#### **Day 3 Kings Canyon to Uluru (Ayers Rock)**

This morning you are bound for the heart of Australia, Uluru. Continue along the Ernest Giles Road past Kings Creek Station to the Uluru turnoff and turn right down the Luritja Drive until you come to the Lasseter highway. Stop at the Mt Connor Lookout and Curtin Springs Roadhouse. Travel through Yulara and turn right to the Kata Tjuta (the Olgas). Walk up Olga Gorge between the huge domes before making your way back for one of Australia's most iconic sunsets- sunset on Uluru.

**Overnight camping, Yulara. (Full facilities)** (407km (5&1/2 hours) driving, 2 hours walking)

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### Day 4 Uluru to Erihdunda

This morning you awaken early and watch the new day dawn on the rock. Make your way to the base of the rock. The Aboriginal Traditional Owners frown on the climb up the rock so most visitors prefer to walk around the base or talk a walk with the Aboriginal guides to learn its significance to this ancient culture.

Departing Uluru, you return to Yulara and along the Lasseter Highway to Curtin Springs. Continue through Mt Ebenezer Roadhouse and on to your

**overnight camp at Erihdunda Roadhouse. (Full facilities)** (284km (3 hours) driving, 5km walking.)

### Day 5 Erihdunda to Coober Pedy

Continue the southwards journey through to a morning stop at Kulgera. Continue through past Sundown Station and on to the town of Marla for lunch. Travel south past Cadney Park to Coober Pedy and spend some time this afternoon 'noodling' in the designated opal fields' noodling area or seeing some of the underground sights of this opal-mining town.

**Overnight camping, Coober Pedy. (Full facilities)** (448km (5 hours) driving)

### Day 6 Coober Pedy to Coward Springs

Continue south for a few kilometres before turning left to William Creek, travelling past a lake with the longest place name in Australia, Lake Cadibarrawirracanna. Further on you pass Anna Creek Station, the world's largest cattle property. Greater in size than Belgium and half the size of England, this huge cattle station is over 30,000 square km and runs over 15,000 head.

Reaching the Oodnadatta Track, turn right and stop at, ironically, Australia's smallest town, William Creek, population 7, and its iconic bush pub. Another 7km down the road, is a left turn to Lake Eyre. This access is to one of the bleakest landscapes on Earth, which is interesting in itself, but a more interesting access is available from Marree. Continue down to

**Coward Springs for your overnight camp. (Shower and toilet facilities)** You can explore the old Ghan Railway, bird-watch or soak in the 29 degree artesian spa. (233km (5 hours) driving).

### Day 7 Coward Springs to Muloorina

After 6km further down the Oodnadatta Track, you come to the Wabma Kabarbu Conservation Park and have the opportunity to explore the amazing Mound Springs of Blanche's Cup and the Bubbler. These artesian springs have formed their own hills and also formed a water lifeline for John McDouall Stuart as he forged a path to the Centre of Australia. Pass through the ruins of Curdimurka, on the old Ghan Railway and the expanse of Lake Eyre South to travel on to the frontier town of Marree, once an important railhead and southern terminus of the famous Birdsville Track. Head north to Muloorina Station and on to Lake Eyre, at 8000sq km Australia's largest lake, but usually a dry saltpan. Return to

**Muloorina for your overnight camp**, where swimming may be available. **(Toilet facility)** (275km (5 & 1/2 hours) driving)

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### Day 8 Muloorina to Brachina Gorge

Return to Marree and continue down the Oodnadatta track through the ruins of Farina, once thought to be viable for growing wheat! The town of Lyndhurst is the junction of the Strzelecki Track, another important early droving route. Continue south past the Leigh Creek coalfields to the mining town of Leigh Creek. A few kilometres further south, a detour to Beltana is worthwhile to explore the restored historic buildings. Turn left at Parachilna and travel through Parachilna Gorge to Blinman. Turn right here and head through Gum Creek Homestead. Turn right to Brachina Gorge and find a delightful stop to Bush camp. Another option is to the north at Aroona Valley.

**Overnight bush camping Brachina Gorge (No facilities)** (425km (6 & 1/2 hours) driving)

### Day 9 Brachina Gorge to Wilpena Pound

Travel south through Bunyeroo Gorge through the Flinders Ranges National Park. You emerge on the main road and turn right to Wilpena Pound for your overnight camp and walks through the pound. St Mary's peak is energetic but rewarding. Another day could happily be spent in the area if desired.

**Overnight camping, Wilpena Pound. (Full facilities).** (42km (1 & 1/2 hours) driving, 4 hours walking)

### Day 10 Wilpena Pound to Burra

There are a number of 4wd Scenic Treks available in the area if you want to further explore the Ranges. Head south to Hawker and on through the small towns of Craddock and Carrieton to Orroroo. Continue through to Peterborough, where lunch may be had. As you are crossing the railway line, observe the 6 tracks denoting three different gauges used by 3 different states in their railway lines.

Head south along the Barrier Highway to Burra and spend the rest of the afternoon exploring this early copper mining town with its fascinating old buildings.

**Overnight camping, Burra. (Full facilities)** (251km (3 & 1/2 hours) driving)

### Day 11 Burra to Adelaide

Travel south to Hanson and deviate to the right to Clare, a fertile agricultural area also renowned for its wine. There are numerous wineries that can be visited, but be careful of drink driving. There are other wine areas that can also be visited in the region. Continue south to Gawler and on to Adelaide at the end of a wonderful trip in the footsteps of the explorer John McDouall Stuart. An extension of 2-3 days can also be taken down to Kangaroo Island. (220km (3 hours) driving)

### Recommended References

The above itineraries are not intended as the sole guide to the details of your route. Four Wheel Drive Hire Service recommends the following referenced be consulted or purchased prior to departure.

### Maps

Hema Maps – The Flinders Ranges, Great Desert Tracks of Australia SE, Central Australia.

### Guide Book

*The Flinders Ranges- An Adventurers Guide* by Ron and Viv Moon

*Discover Australia by 4WD* by Ron and Viv Moon.

### **Background Reading**

*The Explorers* by Tim Flannery

*The Flinders Ranges and Beyond* by Ronald Coudrey and Richard Land

*A Town like Alice* by Neville Shute

### **Websites**

Moon Guidebooks- [www.guidebooks.com.au](http://www.guidebooks.com.au)

Hema Maps for an idea of the range of maps and information on suppliers -

[www.hemamaps.com.au](http://www.hemamaps.com.au)

NRMA Outback Tracks information

[www.mynrma.com.au/travel/go/outback\\_tracks/index.shtml](http://www.mynrma.com.au/travel/go/outback_tracks/index.shtml)

SA Desert Parks- [www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks)

Uluru (Ayers Rock)- [www.ea.gov.au/parks/index.html](http://www.ea.gov.au/parks/index.html)

Other NT National Parks- [www.nt.gov.ai/ipe/paw/parks/index.html](http://www.nt.gov.ai/ipe/paw/parks/index.html)