



Namatjira Landscape – 5 Day 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 explore the remote Chambers Pillar and Rainbow Valley before completing the loop to Alice Springs.

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 into 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 on to our 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 and 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, 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)

5 Day Namatjira Explorer

Day 4 Uluru to Rainbow Valley

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 along the Lasseter Highway to the Stuart Highway at Eriunda and turn left. A detour of 16km to the left can be made to the Henbury Meteorite Craters and a stop made at the Virginia Camel Farm. Head 15km further up the Stuart Highway before turning right for 24km to

Rainbow Valley for your overnight camp. (No facilities) Ensure you get there for sunset. (452km (6 hours) driving, 2 hours walking)

Day 5 Rainbow Valley to Alice Springs

Return to the Stuart Highway and head south (left). 10km past the camel farm, turn left along the Hugh River track and make your way 38 km along the sandy track to the Hugh River and New Ghan Railway crossing. After a further 33km, you will arrive at the Old South Road and you turn right to Maryvale. Another 45km will take you through to the remarkable Chambers Pillar.

Retrace your steps back to the Hugh River Track along the Old Ghan Railway Line and continue north to the Eravinga Rock Carvings. Rejoin the Stuart Highway south of Alice Springs and turn right. Drive through Heavitree Gap to Alice Springs and complete your Central Australian circuit and a great NT adventure. (360km (5 hours) driving 1 hour walking)

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 – Central Australia.

Guide Book

Discover Australia by 4WD by Ron and Viv Moon.

Background Reading

The Explorers by Tim Flannery

A Town Like Alice by Neville Shute

Websites

Moon Guidebooks- www.guidebooks.com.au

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

www.hemamaps.com.au

NRMA Outback Tracks information

www.mynrma.com.au/travel/go/outback_tracks/index.shtml

Uluru (Ayers Rock)- www.ea.gov.au/parks/index.html

Other NT National Parks- www.nt.gov.ai/ipe/paw/parks/index.html