

Itineraries: *Alice Springs*

As you're flying into Alice Springs, the famous outback town in the heart of Australia, the first thing you notice is the caterpillar-like MacDonnell Ranges that erupt from the red desert floor and snake their way east and west of the town. Alice Springs is the gateway to one of the world's most iconic treasures, but the town itself has plenty of attractions—like the Royal Flying Doctor Service base, the School of the Air and the world-class Alice Springs Desert Park. The region offers a range of adventurous experiences, like riding a camel to dinner, seeing the sun rise from a hot air balloon and exploring an outback cattle station on a quad bike. There is also a scattering of gorges, chasms and waterholes in the MacDonnell Ranges that can be explored on a number of day tours.

Day 1

Arrive in Alice Springs and settle into your accommodation. Spend the rest of the day exploring Alice Springs' many attractions on a hop-on, hop-off bus ride. You'll gain a good insight into the area's outback heritage by visiting the Telegraph Station, the School of the Air and the Royal Flying Doctor Service, among many others. The town is easily explored on foot; climb ANZAC Hill and enjoy a 360-degree panorama of the town and the surrounding MacDonnell Ranges. Explore the Aboriginal Art and Culture Centre to join a didgeridu lesson, buy local indigenous arts and crafts and browse educational displays about the local Arrernte Aboriginal people.

Day 2

Spend a day exploring the West MacDonnell Ranges that stretch to the west of town. The Ranges hide beautiful gorges, peaks and chasms. Keep your eyes peeled for black footed rock wallabies at Simpsons Gap and prehistoric cycad species at Standley Chasm, then head to Ellery Creek Big Hole for an invigorating swim. Other highlights include Serpentine and Ormiston Gorges and the Ochre Pits, where Aboriginal people once sourced colours for their ceremonial body painting and artwork. Head back to Alice and sample the town's nightlife in a saloon bar, at the casino or in an Irish pub.

Day 3

Wake early to greet a magnificent desert sunrise from aboard a hot air balloon. Touch down to a gourmet breakfast of chicken and champagne, then head out to the Alice Springs Desert Park and explore its award-winning exhibitions. It's 10 minutes from the town, and you'll need the whole morning to see it all. Don't miss the nocturnal house and the free-flying birds of prey at the nature theatre. This afternoon explore Alice Springs on wheels. Ride over red sand dunes as you explore an outback cattle station on a quad bike. Alternatively, jump on the back of a Harley Davidson and cruise to the nearby ranges to watch the changing colours of sunset.