

Itineraries: Uluru

Uluru/Ayers Rock, 5 hours drive south-west of Alice Springs, is one of the world's most recognisable landmarks. The monolith rises abruptly out of red sand and spinifex to a soaring height of 348 meters, and this overwhelming enormity, coupled with the strong sense of spirituality and amazing changing colours at sunrise and sunset, ensures it's always a highlight of a visit to Australia. 30 miles west is Kata Tjuta/The Olgas, 36 massive domed peaks thought to be 500 million years old. Kings Canyon completes the trio of natural landmarks in this area. Located in the Watarrka National Park, the sandstone canyon rises to over 900 feet and frames the 'Garden of Eden', a waterhole framed by palms and ferns.

Day 1

Arrive at Uluru and settle in to your accommodation. Explore the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre and learn about this World Heritage-listed national park. Jump in a helicopter or light aircraft for a scenic flight over the desert plain to Uluru and Kata Tjuta. Aerial views are the only way to fully appreciate the enormity of these natural icons that dominate the landscape. Celebrate sunset basking in a rainbow of colours. Each afternoon, sunlight bathes the wide open desert landscapes with shimmering golds, brilliant purples, vivid reds and burnt oranges. In the evenings, the heavens transform as the velvety night sky is lit up by a million stars.

Day 2

Start early this morning and trek around Uluru. This easy-going walk does a complete loop around the 6 mile base and takes around three to four hours to complete. Interpretive signs tell the stories of Kuniya (the woma python) and Liru (the poisonous snake man); ancestral beings that helped shape this spiritual place. Alternatively, for a more cultural experience, join the Anangu traditional landowners on a guided tour. You'll learn about flora and fauna, bush foods and the cultural significance of the area. This afternoon, head to Kata Tjuta, a cluster of 36 weathered domes, approximately 30 miles from Uluru. The name means 'many heads' in the local Anangu language. Allow three to four hours and take the Valley of the Winds Walk - the best way to experience the grandeur of Kata Tjuta up close.

Day 3

Head to Watarrka National Park for the day. Watarrka is an important conservation area that's rich in wildlife, but it's best-known for Kings Canyon. The sheer red rock face of Kings Canyon soars over 300 feet above dense forests of palms, ferns and cycads. Take the 4 mile Canyon Rim Walk that takes in magnificent views of the canyon and surrounding landscape. You'll also see the weathered domes of 'the Lost City' and the 'Garden of Eden' - a sheltered valley with permanent waterholes and lush vegetation. The walk is suitable for the relatively fit and can be completed in about three to four hours. For the less energetic, the shorter and easier Kings Creek walk leads into the centre of the Canyon.

Day 4

Rise early and pick one of the more unusual options for exploring the region. Ride a camel through red sand dunes as the sun slowly rises over the horizon, or circle the Rock on the back of a Harley Davidson. This afternoon, meet your outgoing flight or continue on to Alice Springs to continue exploring Central Australia.