Overview

Northern Territory is a place where the adventures are as vast as the horizons. Its wild beauty is incomparable to any other location. It pulls you in with wildly distinctive fauna, dramatic vistas and a fascinating indigenous culture which adds a real depth to any travel experience. Imagine experiencing versatile and extreme landscapes: from the tropical Kakadu National Park featuring extensive wetlands, canyons and magnificent gorges, to the Red Centre, a unique land of beautiful desolation in the heart of Australia.

There is no better way to make your way through the Northern Territory towards the central Australia than starting at the Top End. Your days on the road will be filled with adventure and you will perpetually be brimming with anticipation. This part of Australia is sure to capture any imagination.
A 4WD campervan is the ideal vehicle choice to allow you to successfully tackle this particular itinerary. Not only will it give you the confidence that you can get out of any unexpected tricky terrain issues, but it will also present you with the chance to see normally inaccessible hidden gems. A 4WD really adds another level to your Australian Outback experience without compromising on comfort.

**Please note:** some legs of this itinerary are suitable for all types of campervan vehicles, however, a few places can only be reached by 4WD campers. Off road sections of this journey will be clearly marked. Bear in mind that driving on unmarked roads and tracks in other types of campervans will not be covered by your insurance.

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### Leg 1  Darwin to Kakadu National Park

Your journey to the Red Centre begins in Darwin, Australia’s most northern city. Although you might already be eager to hit the road and start adventuring further south, do stick around here for at least a day. This is the only place on this road trip where you’ll be able to enjoy the view of the ocean, so let’s make the most of the time spent here.

**Darwin**

If you arrive in stunningly remote Darwin by air, you’re instantly welcomed by a hot and humid splash of air. Unmistakably, you’ve reached the tropics of Australia’s Top End. High rainfall and humidity make Darwin one of the world’s most lightning prone cities. Wet season (Nov-Mar) is the best time to observe some epic electrical storms in this area. They are often avidly awaited especially by locals, but you can of course plan this road trip for some other time of the year to avoid being caught up in extreme weather.
Its proximity to Asia gives Darwin a special feel. It's one of the fastest growing cities in Australia but it still manages to exude a fairly relaxed and laid back atmosphere. A visit to the waterfront will give you a taste of city's amazing café culture and culinary diversity. After all, tasty international cuisine lies at the heart of Darwin's identity.

Paying a visit to the colourful Mindil Beach Sunset Market is an absolute must if you happen to be in Darwin on Thursday or Sunday evening during the dry season months (Apr-Oct). As you find your way through more than 60 food stalls you'll be exposed to a variety of international and local cuisine - the incredible multicultural fusion which characterises this region truly shines out via the sensational food. You can also browse art and craft stalls, enjoy free entertainment from street performers and musicians, and finish the evening on the beach watching the sun sink into the ocean.

If you feel like starting the road trip on a more adventurous note, then visiting Crocosaurus Cove on Mitchell Street is an ideal choice for you. Here you will see and learn about many fish and reptile species from the Northern Territory's Top End and Kimberley region. However, the main attraction here are the saltwater crocodiles. They can grow to over six meters in length and are the largest reptiles on the planet. Did you know that there are almost as many saltwater crocodiles as people in the Australia's Top End? At Darwin's Crocosaurus Cove you will be able to feed them and get up close and personal with them. For the ultimate adrenaline rush, you can even plunge into the Cage of Death and have the chance to face crocodiles as well as your deepest fears. However, if you prefer seeing these giant reptiles in the wild, you will be able to join one of many adventures on an Alligator River further along in your road trip.

Darwin is home to The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) that features Australian and internationally renowned exhibitions and collections. It is also a great place to get a broad overview of both the rich history and the traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art from around the NT region. 'Cyclone Tracy', 'Sweetheart' (a notorious crocodile), 'Aboriginal Art' and 'Transformations' (evolution) are just a few of the gallery's permanent exhibitions you'll be able to see. You can also find your way to many of Darwin's other diverse galleries, museums, and exhibitions, where you can delve even deeper into what makes the Northern Territory unique.

If you're still looking for that one-stop-place, where you can harbour yourself for the day, then you'll be happy to discover that there are numerous activities you can choose from within Darwin's Waterfront Precinct. The waterfront city area is lined with shops, restaurants, tropical parks and beaches, and is quite a popular place to hang out and experience the local vibe.

On a hot day, you can cool off in the Darwin Wave Lagoon or even drop a fishing line directly off the wharf's edge. You can also choose to go on a scuba diving trip in Darwin Harbour and discover tropical fish and corals from this part of Australia. Sailing Darwin Harbour is another popular activity that will get you out on the water. You can finish your day with an evening harbour cruise and get introduced to the local marine habitats while you enjoy a tasty meal aboard a catamaran.
During the dry season, you might want to catch a movie at the Deckchair Cinema which is an absolutely amazing under-the-stars experience. Finally, you might wish to simply enjoy the ocean view and seal your stay in Darwin with an evening swim. It’s now time to say goodbye to the ocean and Australia’s stunning tropical capital for the next couple of weeks.

You will begin your drive down the Stuart Highway and then take the left turn to Arnhem Highway 33 kilometers southeast of Darwin. The Mary River Wilderness Retreat is a great choice if you need to settle down for the night as you’ll be able to incorporate a few early morning activities into your travel itinerary. One of them is hiring a boat and exploring the nearby Mary River. There’s a good chance you’ll spot a crocodile as you look out for some amazing wildlife. Or you could stretch your legs walking bush tracks around the retreat, exploring a lush bamboo forest and numerous billabongs.

**Leg 1 Highlights**

- Mindil Beach Sunset Market
- Deckchair Cinema
- Crocosaurus Cove

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**Leg 2  Kakadu National Park to Katherine**

**717 km**

**15:00:00 Est Driving Time**

Kakadu National Park will definitely awaken your adventurous spirit. This is a vast place for you to explore and lose yourself in. As you get into the heart of the park, you’ll get to put your 4WD camper vehicle to the test as you get the first feel of unsealed roads, visit gorgeous waterfalls and plunge pools, learn about the indigenous culture and discover a
stunning array of wildlife. The best time to visit Kakadu is during the dry season when there’s lower humidity and temperatures, little rain and many more options available for exploration. Remember, most of the 4WD tracks are closed during the wet season, so plan your visit and itinerary accordingly.

You can easily spend a week exploring this 20,000 square kilometer wide natural playground, encompassing savanna woodlands, sandstone escarpments, heathlands, forests, billabongs, wetlands, and mangroves. Outdoor activities and adventures are the main attractions and that’s what you’ll most likely come to the Top End to experience. River cruises, swimming holes, fishing, thermal pools and rock art – Kakadu has it all and you won’t be disappointed. A park pass is required to enter Kakadu National Park: you are able to buy it online and in few other places around the Top End.

Ubirr

Continue your journey from Mary River Wilderness Retreat on Arnhem Highway for 140 kilometers until you reach Jabiru, Kakadu's main service centre, where you'll be able to stock up on food and other essentials. Continue driving another 40 kilometers northeast until you reach Ubirr in the East Alligator region. This is one of the most important sites for indigenous rock art and heritage in this part of Australia. There are more than 5000 rock art sites that date back from just 30 years to more than 40,000 years. Some of them have been repainted through various periods and on your visit, you'll be able to see the layers of paintings.

You can also join a guided talk tour to learn about traditional knowledge and detailed paintings, or you might want to choose to visit one of the galleries in the area. Ubirr has also become popular for its amazing panoramic vista and sensational sunsets that can be viewed at Narab Lookout. You will be able to see far across the wetlands all the way to the untouched Arnhem Land. If you wish to witness some more amazing indigenous rock art sites and open-air galleries, then visit Nourlangie Rock, located 35 kilometers south of Jabiru.

Cruising Yellow Water (Ngurrungurrudjba)

Yellow Water is located near Cooinda village, 57 kilometers from Jabiru down the Kakadu Highway. If you're up to an adventurous few hours on the water, then hopping on one of the Yellow Water Cruises is a must while you’re visiting the heart of Kakadu. You can choose from more popular early morning and late evening boat cruises, as well as daytime ones. The park's wetlands of the South Alligator River boast with amazingly abundant wildlife and birdlife ecosystems. You’ll be able to spot eagles, jabiru, magpie geese, buffalo, wild horses and saltwater crocodiles in their natural habitat.

What’s amazing is that you can experience these waterways and dramatic scenery throughout the year and you're not limited to a wet season when only some parts of the Kakadu are accessible. Advance bookings are highly recommended for this popular adventure.

Kakadu National Park’s Waterfalls
Jim Jim Falls (4WD)
As you travel from Yellow Water towards your next destination, turn back left to Kakadu Highway for 9km and then right to Jim Jim Falls Road at around 43 kilometers. Here begins one of the best routes in Kakadu for experiencing an off-road adventure. On this 57 kilometer long unsealed road you’re truly able to put your 4WD vehicle through its paces and get pristine views of the majestic landscape that surrounds you.

Jim Jim hiking track starts at the car park and follows the creek through a monsoon forest with giant boulders for about 1 kilometer until you reach the iconic Jim Jim Gorge waterfalls with swimming holes and a beautiful plunge pool. The beginning of the dry season is the best time to visit this deep gorge when it's easily accessible and there is still water flowing over dramatic 200 meter high cliffs. During the tropical summer, when the roads and the track are inaccessible, it is only possible to see these fully flooded thundering waterfalls from the air on a scenic flight.

If you have some time left and wish to explore more waterfalls in the area, then Twin Falls Gorge (4WD) is going to be another great adventure for you. It is located only another 10 kilometers on from Jim Jim Falls and is accessible by a boat shuttle service that will take you through the gorge and drop you close to the falls.

Maguk (Barramundi) Gorge (4WD)
Maguk Gorge is located in the southern Mary River area of Kakadu National Park. The 14 kilometer road off the Kakadu Highway which leads to this hidden gem is an unsealed bumpy track and you'll be very glad to be driving a 4WD vehicle. On an easy one kilometer hike through lush rainforest with native Anbinik trees, you'll have to jump over a few rocks to cross the shallow Barramundi Creek. Although Maguk's a bit secluded and certainly less well known, it's actually a quite nice place to visit. Take time to just relax and enjoy the amazingly beautiful landscape which surrounds you. There are not too many people visiting this gorge - if you're lucky you'll have it all to yourself.

Gunlom (Waterfall Creek) Falls (4WD)
Stopping at Gunlom Falls might just be the best decision you make during your trek across Kakadu. Out of all the waterfalls and plunge pools you've visited so far, this is the one you'll feel absolutely safe to swim in and won't have to worry about a potential saltwater crocodile encounter. Don't be discouraged by the almost vertical climbing track and be sure to take this steep lookout walk to the absolutely beautiful (and all natural) infinity plunge pools at the top of the waterfall. You'll be rewarded with amazing views of the southern ridges and hills, relaxed atmosphere, natural rock pools and small waterfalls with overall crystal clear water. If the short climb seems too much of a challenge, then head to the serene plunge pool at the bottom of the waterfall that is just minutes away from the parking area: it's just as refreshing as the pools at the top of the waterfall.
Leg 2 Highlights

Leg 3 Katherine to Mataranka

Katherine with its surroundings is the perfect place to find a true wilderness adventure and take the chance to visit numerous gorges, thermal springs, and waterfalls. You'll discover many opportunities for nature-based activities including canoeing and kayaking, bushwalking, fishing, camping, and caving. The spectacular Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) is perhaps the most famous landmark around here which you definitely need to include in your itinerary.

Leliyn (Edith Falls)

For a short detour before heading to Katherine you'll want to check out Leliyn (Edith Falls). As you leave Kakadu National Park on Kakadu Highway and turn left onto Stuart Highway at Pine Creek, you'll need to drive another 67 kilometers to reach Leliyn on the western side of Nitmiluk National Park. The highlight of Leliyn is cascading waterfalls with natural pools at the base where you can take a refreshing swim. Also, this place offers many opportunities for bushwalking, with a short 2.6 km Leliyn Trail, a 9 km return walk to Sweetwater Pool which features natural swimming holes, and the demanding Jatbula Trail which ends here at Leliyn.

Katherine
Katherine is set on the banks of the Katherine River and serves as the central hub of this subtropical region. Katherine is well known for its crystal clear thermal springs (Katherine Hot Springs), filled with natural minerals that offer great relaxation and many healing properties. It truly is a beautiful spot quite close to the town where you can enjoy swimming in one of the 6 pools while being surrounded by lush native vegetation.

As you go on a tour of discovery around the town, you'll come across many museums, historic sites and art galleries where you'll get an insight into the rich local history, heritage, and indigenous art. If you've planned to buy some authentic Aboriginal art or even a didgeridoo on this travel to the Red Centre, then this is the place to make it happen. You can also stop at the Katherine Low Level Nature Reserve for a picnic and swim before heading out further to your adventures in Nitmiluk.

**Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge)**

Katherine Gorge is an amazing sight to experience, one you most definitely won't want to miss out on. It's located in Nitmiluk National Park and just 30 km drive from the Katherine town centre. Here you'll be transported to a unique natural system of 13 interconnected gorges. Geographically Nitmiluk sits right between Northern Territory's tropics and arid desert and was formed some 20 to 25 million years ago. Rugged and colorful sandstone cliffs extend more than 70m high and 12km deep into the lush rainforest.

Most of the activities at Nitmiluk are organised and will bring you right to the very heart of the picturesque gorge system. Depending on how you want to spend the day here, you can choose to paddle a canoe or kayak, cruise up the gorge, swim the Katherine River waters or hike one of the many walking tracks to witness Jawoyn Aboriginal rock art. Self-guided canoeing and kayaking tours between towering rock walls carved out by Katherine River, have become extremely popular and especially memorable adventure activities. Note that swimming and canoeing will be restricted during the wet season when the waters become powerful and fast-flowing.

While there are many ways to experience the awe-inspiring river system of 13 gorges, taking the scenic helicopter flight over this spectacular landscape for the aerial view will allow you to fully appreciate the immensity of this ancient gorge system and most likely leave you speechless. The magnitude of this place is breathtaking.

**Cutta Cutta Caves**

There is just one more thing to experience before you start your long desert driving adventure down south on Stuart Highway. Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park, located just 30 kilometers south of Katherine, boasts spectacular stalagmites and stalactites formed millions of years ago. You will be able to explore this cave system with its fascinating limestone pillar formations found 15 meters below the surface on one of the private guided tours that are run here throughout most of the year. You will have the chance to see a variety of native wildlife in this karst limestone landscape,
including the rock wallaby, the brown tree snake and a few varieties of bats.

**Leg 3 Highlights**

- Edith Falls
- Katherine Gorge
- Cutta Cutta Caves

**Leg 4  Mataranka to Alice Springs**

**Stuart Highway**

Your longest driving day of this road trip starts in Mataranka. The extended 1,075km drive to Alice Springs sure seems like a big and lonely challenge to tackle, but you'll be making a few much-needed stops along the way, and the journey certainly won't be a boring one. You'll be missing out on some amazing experiences if you decide to do it in one go. However you wish to approach the long drive, be sure to prepare well: fill up on gas, buy food and water, and if possible take turns driving the campervan with another person.

As you're heading south, you might want to first stop at the beautiful Mataranka Thermal Pool, located in the Elsey National Park about 87 km down the Stuart Highway from Cutta Cutta Caves. This is an ideal place to swim, relax or take a break from the journey if you've been driving long hours. The tropical Elsey National Park is also perfect for stretching the legs as it offers numerous walking trails.

The next perfect opportunity to take a break will show up at the Daly Waters township, 168km
from Mataranka, where you have the chance to pay a visit to an iconic and colourful Daly Waters historic outback pub. As you stop for a tasty meal, beer or coffee, you'll also be surrounded by some cheeky memorabilia left on the walls by visitors from all corners of the world.

Newcastle Waters, Elliot and Renner Springs are a few small locales further down the highway where you may be able to find accommodation, food, and gas. 11km before Tennant Creek, you can turn right to the unsealed Pebbles Quarry road (4WD), and next 6km will lead you to amazing rock formations. This is an Aboriginal women's dreaming site known as Kunjarra (The Pebbles). Sunrises and sunsets are perfect times to visit this sacred site of granite boulders, as you'll be able to witness a spectacular display of changing stone colours.

Tennant Creek (Jurnkurakurr) is located about halfway to Alice Springs down the Stuart Highway and is an ideal stopover on your long drive. The town was mostly shaped by its gold mining heritage as well as enormous cattle stations. It is also a place with quite a strong indigenous culture and history. At the award-winning Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre you'll get the amazing opportunity to learn about indigenous life, history, art and their ancient connections to the land. You'll also find restaurants and shops to replenish supplies before you continue your journey.

There's something utterly captivating about long desert roads and boundless horizons, a certain sense of endless possibilities. Driving through these stunning landscapes will undoubtedly provoke some emotions in you – either sheer amazement at this incomparable and unique environment or anticipation of the next attraction. And that one is coming soon when you leave Tennant Creek behind. Only 105km south are Devil's Marbles (Karlu Karlu), a widespread group of huge round granite boulders, scattered across the landscape, similar to those you had the opportunity to visit earlier at Kunjarra. The area here is much bigger and boulders reach up to 6 meters. They've continuously kept changing their appearance over 1,500 millions of years to form the present landscape. A self-guided tour will allow you to discover and learn about the spiritual importance and the ancient indigenous mythology which surrounds this geological phenomenon in Australia's desert. If you plan to visit Karlu Karlu at sunrise or sunset, you'll be amazed by the glow that the low-angled light brings out of them at these specific times of the day.

If outer space and extraterrestrial life stir your imagination, then you definitely need to take a break at a service stop in Wycliffe Well. This place claims to be the UFO Capital of Australia for the hundreds of UFO sightings recorded around this area. On your break, you'll be able to fuel up, try one of the many beers they serve, explore a quirky alien restaurant or decide to camp for the night here at the Holiday Park for a chance to spot your own UFO.
Leg 4 Highlights

As you’re approaching the southern stretch of your leg rolling down the Stuart Highway, you’ll be slowly getting familiarised with the Outback character of the Red Centre. In this remoteness, you’ll be eager to wave to the rare few travelers that journey the opposite way, and you’ll silently become part of this landscape’s contrasts. This unspoken bond will be abruptly but only temporarily broken as you arrive in the lively Alice Springs.

Alice Springs
You’ll want to break your journey and stay in vibrant Alice Springs for at least a day or two. This true Outback town is like an oasis, enclosed within the stunning MacDonnell Ranges. There are numerous attractions that you can visit here: from world-class galleries to surprisingly diverse ancient landscapes with unique local flora and fauna. For 360-degree views over the town and MacDonnell Ranges head to the Anzac Hill Lookout just north of the town centre. This landmark is a memorial to lives lost in major world conflicts and is especially popular with both visitors and locals at sunrise and sunset.

You’ll next want to visit Alice Springs Desert Park, situated 5km west of town at the base of the MacDonnell Ranges. Here you’ll be able to enjoy a self-guided walk through a park that simulates Sand Country, Woodland and Desert Rivers ecosystems, and learn about local flora and more than...
200 desert animals. Nocturnal House will be especially engaging as you'll be trying to spot rare and endangered animals like Mala, Bilby and the Thorny Devil. If you're particularly fond of reptiles and want to learn more about them as well as get right up close to them, then a visit to Alice Springs Reptile Centre in the town centre is a must. For a very special experience with orphaned kangaroos, you'll definitely want to visit The Kangaroo Sanctuary. Booking ahead of time is essential.

As you'll soon be traveling further down to the heart of Australia, stopping at the Alice Springs Cultural Precinct to discover the historical and cultural importance of Central Australia is a must. Four galleries of Araluen Arts Centre focus on timeless visual and performing art of Central Australian artists plus contemporary Australian Aboriginal art. In this area, you'll also discover a popular Museum of Central Australia that features exhibitions of unique natural and geological history of central Australia. Additionally, Alice Springs is an ideal location to replenish supplies for your further travels into the wild, with several supermarkets located around the city centre. There are also plenty of cafés and restaurants, many of which you'll find are located around Todd Mall.

**West MacDonnell Ranges (4WD)**

The expansive West MacDonnell Ranges are possibly the best-kept secret of central Australia and are easily accessible to anyone traveling towards the Centre. These ridges are estimated to be around 340 million years old, forming when two tectonic plates collided. Consequently, some of the tallest mountains in the Northern Territory, along with numerous gorges and waterholes, are found within this National Park, and provide a striking backdrop to Alice Springs.

Some places of interest here are very popular with hikers and day-trippers, and you'll definitely appreciate spending at least a couple of days exploring many breathtaking gorges along these ranges. You'll find some of the most beautiful spots along corrugated unsealed tracks, and a 4WD is definitely recommended to get the most out of these visits. Simpsons Gap gets a lot of attention as it's located only 25 kilometers to the west of Alice Springs. You'll spot endangered black-footed rock wallabies in this area if you're lucky. Just 35km further down the Larapinta Drive is Standley Chasm (Angkerle), a narrow but quite impressive gap with near-vertical walls that rise 80 meters above the floor of the chasm. This is also the only place here that requires a small entry fee.

You'll be now turning northwest to Namatjira Drive that is dotted with another spectacular series of gaps and gorges in the West MacDonnell Ranges. First, you might have an impression that this is solely an arid region, but you'll soon find out that you're actually visiting the area of the ancient waterways. Gorges here are many times the places of permanent and semi-permanent waterholes which are also great spots for a cool dip. First in a line of such permanent waterholes along Namatjira Drive is Ellery Creek Big Hole. It's surrounded by high red cliffs and is an ideal place for a swim on a hot day. Serpentine Gorge, a narrow gorge with a water hole at the entrance, is found 13km further on but is not suitable for swimming.
Another opportunity for a stop is the site of Ochre Pits, located just off the road 11km west of Serpentine. This site used to be a quarry for colorful ochre pigments that desert Aboriginal people used as a source of paints. Among all the gorges in the West MacDonnell Ranges, Ormiston Gorge must be the most spectacular one. A short but very rewarding Ghost Gum Lookout Walk to the top viewing area will open up the amazing sight of the valley for you. The inviting waterhole at the base will be ideal for swimming, and the campground is one of the nicest around here. It’s where you'll want to make an overnight stay, as you'll be able to appreciate the gorge lit by a sunset as well as sunrise the next morning.

Leg 5 Highlights

Alice Springs Reptile Centre  Kangaroo Sanctuary  Ormiston Gorge

Leg 6  West MacDonnell Ranges to Kings Canyon

There are still a couple of amazing places of interest waiting to be discovered as you drive further along the Larapinta Drive in West MacDonnell Ranges. You'll be visiting a few more gorges in the western part of the MacDonnells, hike one of the highest points in Central Australia, then journey to the area of the meteor impact, and finally, take your 4WD campervan for a fresh spin in the wilderness before you reach the beautiful Kings Canyon. So let's fill another day or two with adventures.

As much as you'll enjoy staying in the Ormiston Gorge area, you'll eventually want to pack and
move 11km further down the road to the scenic Glen Helen Gorge, a wonderful oasis in the desert. This is where the world’s oldest river, Finke River, cuts through the MacDonnell Ranges and makes its way further into the Simpson Desert. Glen Helen boasts amazing local wildlife and breathtaking views of massive sandstone walls, the permanent Finke River waterhole and Mount Sonder in the distance. Aside from booking accommodation or staying at the campground, you’ll also be able to go on a scenic helicopter flight over the gorge to get an aerial view of the picturesque MacDonnell Ranges.

It’s now time to check the last of the gorges in this area, the Redbank Gorge (4WD), located at the foot of Mount Sonder. This is a 4WD access only spot with a deeply corrugated road that is impassable after heavy rain. Additionally, you’ll need to take a 1 kilometre walk from the car park to reach the gorge with a semi-permanent hole, where you'll also be able to take a dip in a cool water. If you feel like overcoming a bit of a bigger challenge for the day and feel fit enough, then you’ve come to the right place. Mount Sonder Summit Hike starts here and will bring you to the the highest point (1380m) of the entire Larapinta Trail. Be sure to head out well prepared with enough water and food for the day, so you'll be able to fully enjoy some of the most impressive views in the West MacDonnell Ranges. The view of Mount Sonder itself from a distance is particularly striking, especially in the evening when its colour changes even more dramatically.

As you continue to follow the Namatyira Drive to the west, it will take 50km to reach Tnorala (Gosse Bluff Crater, 4WD). You'll definitely want to make a stop at this spot where 140 million years back a comet crashed to Earth and blasted a crater in the earth. You'll find that aside from the rocky and thrilling 6km off-road drive, this area gives off quite a pleasant and relaxing vibe, and is perfectly suited for a picnic right in the heart of the crater.

The drive between Tnorala and the next big attraction (Kings Canyon) is a long one, not due to the distance itself, but mainly because of the 200km of rough unsealed corrugated road. As you leave Tnorala, you’ll soon come to an intersection where you turn right and continue further west to one of the most scenic routes in the Northern Territory, named Mereenie Loop Road (4WD). The road is part of the Red Centre Way which passes through Aboriginal land for which you’ll have to purchase a permit (issued at the Visitor Information Centre in Alice Springs, in Glen Helen, Kings Canyon or Hermannsburg). We recommend you start this drive well prepared, with a full fuel tank and plenty of food and water. It’s now time for you to enjoy the Outback ride as you travel through this dune countryside and witness breathtaking nature and wildlife encounters that can only be found in such a remote and unique landscape.

Kings Canyon

As you steadily approach the Watarrka National Park from the north, one of the most spectacular sights in central Australia opens up for you. Kings Canyon Rim Walk is a must when you arrive in this area. The 6km (3-4 hours) loop track follows an easy surface that won't be too strenuous apart from the initial challenging and steep climb. This will definitely be one of those few epic hikes in your
life you are called to take, and we highly recommend it to anyone that feels drawn in by the canyon's 100m-high walls, sheer sandstone cliff faces, and weathered plateaus. More than anything else, you'll be amazed by sweeping views of the powerful canyon's walls and edges, its secluded Garden of Eden chasm and its tranquil pools, and the series of eroded sandstone domes (Lost City). As an alternative to the Rim Walk you can go on a shorter South Wall Return Walk, Kings Creek Walk, or Kathleen Walk, where you'll still be able to access some of the raised platforms, view the captivating canyon's rim and experience many striking changes of scenery.

Sunset viewing platform at Kings Canyon Resort is another location where you'll get to view the canyon's striking grandeur, the Carmichael Crag, and the rugged surrounding landscape. It's absolutely amazing to witness the evening red glow of the canyon from afar. Watching the sunrise from this place won't be as crowded, but will be just as beautiful. If you're keen to see the incredible Kings Canyon from above, you have the chance to book one of the scenic helicopter tours that depart from Kings Canyon Resort. If time allows, make a short stop at the isolated Kathleen Springs for a walk to a sacred Aboriginal waterhole before you leave Watarrka National Park, anticipating bold new adventures ahead.

Leg 6 Highlights

- Glen Helen Gorge
- Gosse Bluff Crater
- Kings Canyon

Leg 7  Kings Canyon to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

Arriving in the heart of Australia is a long time dream come true for many. After such a lengthy drive across the Land Down Under, you will have experienced some amazingly diverse landscapes. All this will prepare you for an mesmerizing place of dazzling blue skies and clear desert air, unreal contrasts and immeasurable vastness. This is the final leg of your journey and you'll want to stretch the time and fill it with as many memorable moments as you can.

Following Luritja Road south from Kings Canyon will eventually bring you to the intersection with Lasseter Highway where you'll turn right and continue for another 140km. Along this road you'll spot a large tabletop mountain (Mount Conner) that many people mistake for Uluru. It sits on a
private land (Curtin Springs Station) and you'll need to book a guided tour if you want to admire it from up close. The same rule applies for access to visit the nearby vast salt lakes.

As you continue along the Red Centre Way to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, you'll soon get your first glimpse of an ancient rock which rises spectacularly in the distance. You'll most likely be staying at the Yulara, Ayers Rock Resort, and explore the entire area from this service village lying just outside the national park (21km from Uluru and 53km from Kata Tjuta). This oasis in the desert is built around a circular drive and offers a variety of accommodation, services and facilities, among which is a campground. The airport is located just 5km north of Yulara.

Remember that the best time to visit is the dry season, especially the transitional times of spring (September-October) and autumn (April-June) to avoid intense summer heat and extreme humidity with torrential rains. If you happen to witness one of the storms that bring quite a lot of rain to this region, then you'll also be able to see the desert transform into a green field of sprouting wildflowers. Although it might seem that activities in the Australia's Red Centre are limited by the region's remoteness, there are still some great ways to explore and see the sights. You'll find plenty opportunities for walking, touring the area by motorbike or camel, in a balloon or helicopter. You'll quickly realize it's easy to spend several days here and explore the beating heart of the Australian Outback without being bored at all.

Anangu are the traditional owners of Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park and they manage it jointly with the Department of Environment. This entire semi-arid area is of deep cultural and spiritual significance to the owners, especially because of the permanent waterholes that became their most valuable source of water. This has always been a special place to them and their stories are alive in this landscape. On your visit, you'll need to buy a pass at the national park entry station, which will grant you an unlimited access to this area for three consecutive days.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is home to two of the world's most impressive rock formations and you'll be eager to get up close to both of them. Surrounded by a sea of red sand, Uluru will look invitingly interesting right away as it undoubtedly dominates this Outback landscape. The viewing areas of the park around Uluru become especially alive during the sunrise and sunset hours. It is during those times that you are able to witness The Rock illuminated with ever-changing hues of browns, oranges, and reds. The world's biggest monolith will never look the same no matter how
often you see it during your stay.

There are a few good walking tracks around Uluru. The 10km Uluru Base Walk will take you right around the perimeter of the Rock and bring you close to its ribs, ridges, hollows, domes, valleys, and caves. Most of Uluru's features were shaped by weathering, erosion, and rainstorms. It's only when you come close to the rock that you notice these unique textures and uneven surfaces. If you wish to make a full circle around Uluru's base but feel the distance is too challenging for you to manage on foot, you'll be able to hire a bike or book a guided Segway tour. The shorter Kuniya Walk (1km) or Mala Walk (2km) which are centered around Uluru's indigenous stories and a permanent waterhole, are good alternatives to get close to the monolith.

There are many activities available near Uluru throughout the day for you to engage in, including Maruku Arts Dot Painting Workshop, free astronomy experiences, plus camel and motorcycle tours. You can skydive for the spectacular views and the adrenaline rush, or fly over this breathtaking landscape on one of the available scenic flights. An evening dining experience in the desert with the epic views of the rock formations has also become a hot pick for visitors. One thing that truly stands out as part of the Uluru experience is Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park's Cultural Centre. You will receive extensive insights into the history of the land, flora, fauna, and the lives, art, and culture of the local Anangu people.

Kata Tjuta is just as much a part of this impressive outback scenery as Uluru is. It is located 45km west of the park entrance and is, at its tallest point, almost 200m higher than Uluru. The most popular of the trails here is the Valley of the Winds Walk, which is 7.4 km loop track through the captivating landscape of narrow valleys, gorges, and rounded domes. Kata Tjuta consists of 36 huge rocks and you'll be taken aback standing so close to them. For a shorter walk, you might want to visit Walpa Gorge which is tucked away between the two tallest towering domes of Kata Tjuta. To get the best sunrise and sunset views of Kata Tjuta you can choose from a few different lookout locations: a sunset viewing area and Kata Tjuta dune viewing area. Both are most visited at the sunset when, like Uluru, the hulking rocks are at their striking, fiery best.

Road tripping across Australia is an absolute adventure and there's no better way to journey through this versatile landscape than in a campervan. From the tropics to vast stretches of the Outback – you'll go away from this road trip filled with wonder and happy memories. In reality, nothing can truly prepare you for the epic experiences to be found in Australia's remote reaches, so why not take the journey and see for yourself.

**NB:** You cannot drop off your campervan in the Uluru area, so you will need to continue on to somewhere like Adelaide or return north to Alice Springs or Darwin.
Leg 7 Highlights

Curtin Springs

Uluru

Kata Tjuta