

# Tjoritja

A TRAVEL GUIDE TO THE  
WEST MACDONNELL RANGES

2021



## DISCOVERING TJORITJA

No matter what your travel style, this region has something to offer for everyone.

*p. 04*

## CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

What's your travel style? Self drive or guided tours? There is so much on offer in the region!

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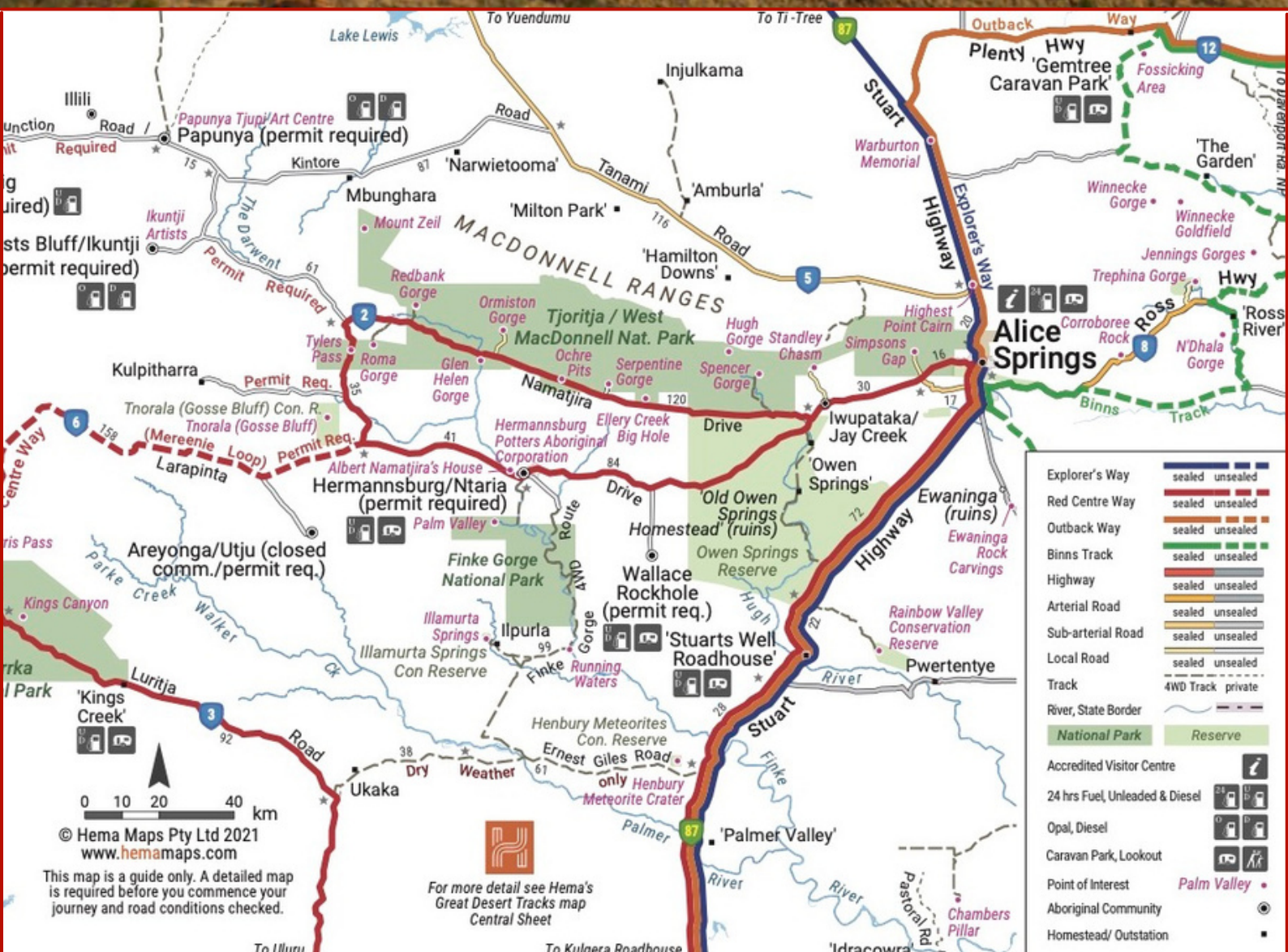
## GUIDED TOURS & ITINERARIES

Choose from a handful of unique guided tours or check out our 2WD & 4WD itineraries.

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# Map of Tjoritja





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# DISCOVERING TJORITJA



West of Alice, stretching out over 161 kilometres, lies the heart beat of adventure, culture, history, art and immersive landscapes.

Welcome to Tjoritja - the West Macdonnell Ranges.

No matter what your travel style, this region has something to offer for everyone.

Walk the Larapinta trail, swim in fresh cool waterholes, immerse yourself in aboriginal art, drive a buggy along the Finke River, camp under the stars or visit the historical sites scattered throughout the region

From off the beaten track adventures to guided multi day tours. The West Macdonnell Ranges promises an adventure that is educational, inspiring and rich in unique experiences.



# Culture

Wurtai (welcome) to the traditional lands of the Arrernte people. Tjoritja supports and sustains one of the world's oldest living cultures. It's hard to believe that anything can survive out here, but when you look closely, you see that it's not just the landscape that's alive and thriving but that the Arrernte culture thrives with it.

Look more closely, and you'll see the intricate, symbiotic relationship between the country and its people. A relationship that has flourished for tens of thousands of years. Maintaining a connection to the land by the continuation of cultural practices, is the responsibility of Arrernte people to the land to which they belong. And, as a result, you'll find cultural sites so well preserved that you'll feel like a time traveller.

Hermannsburg, the birthplace of world renowned Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira, has at its heart, the Hermannsburg Historic Precinct (Ntaria). Here you can experience what life was like for early settlers, and how the Arrernte people survived the many challenges and setbacks of colonisation. Arid landscapes give way to cool palm littered gorges, and art, both contemporary and ancient, can be found in galleries, in streets, and on the walls of gorges. Visiting Tjortjia is cultural immersion.



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# Art

## HERMANNSBURG POTTERS

The Hermannsburg Potters are a dedicated group of Western Arrarnta artists who bring the landscape and spirit of Central Australia to life with their vibrant handcrafted terracotta and underglaze pots. The renowned Aboriginal owned and run organisation has been operating for 30 years, with artworks being exhibited and held in collections across the globe. The Hermannsburg artists continue to create works that speak to their cultural beliefs, traditions and values, often working with a style of painting reminiscent of Albert Namatjira, whose legacy continues to inspire the local community. The Hermannsburg Potters support the local artists and their families, fostering the growing local economy of Hermannsburg community.

The best time of year to visit Hermannsburg Potters is from March – August as it is closed for 6 weeks every year over the summer period.



## IKUNTJI ARTISITS

Ikuntji Artists is a not-for-profit Indigenous-owned and -run art centre located in Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji), 230kms west of Alice Springs. Situated in the spectacular West Macdonnell Ranges and only 58km off the sealed road, Ikuntji Artists offers an insight into the creation of contemporary Indigenous artists from Central Australia. Day visitors welcome, but please make an appointment in advance.

Ikuntji Artists was the first art centre established by women in the Western Desert Art Movement in 1992. The art centre was initially set up to fulfil the role of a women's centre providing services such as catering for old people and children in the community. After first experiences made in printing T-shirts, the artists began producing acrylic paintings on linen and handmade paper, which quickly gained the attention of the Australian and international art world as well as earning the centre an impressive reputation for fine art.





# Art

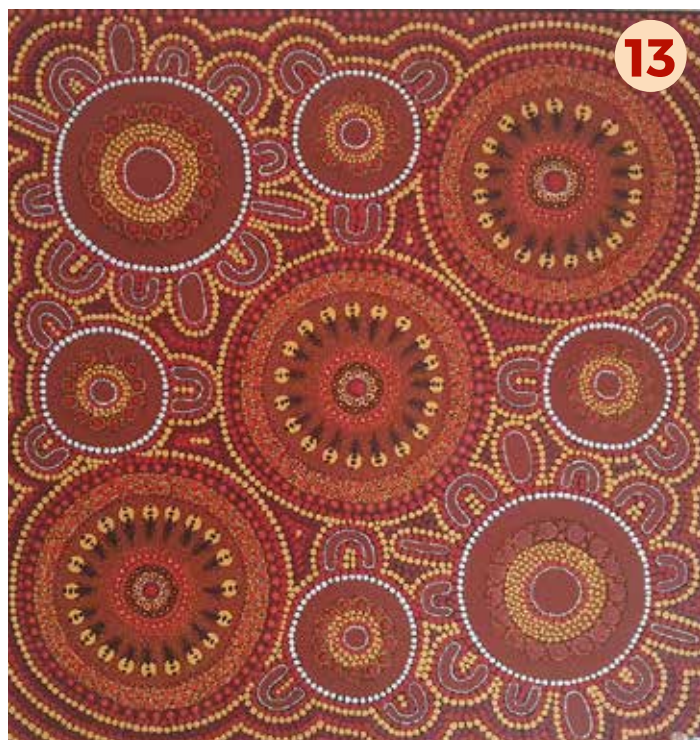
## KATHLEEN BUZZACOTT ART

Kathleen Buzzacott is an artist, poet, designer and entrepreneur, of Pitjantjatjara Scottish and English heritage, born in Alice Springs Central Australia. Kathleen's fine Central Desert Dot Painting style celebrates her discovery and connection to her indigenous heritage. Happy childhood memories of her son's growing up on the land are shared through aboriginal story telling on canvas, and feature native bush creatures.

In 2014 Kathleen Buzzacott Art Studio was established, and continues to operate with the assistance of Kathleen and husband Keith and sons Kyle and Klinton. The tranquil studio is located just 18km West of Alice Springs in the beautiful scenic West MacDonnell Ranges. Home to the Arrernte People, this is Keith's Traditional Maternal Land.

All artworks and handcrafted jewellery are available for purchase, and eftpos/credit card facilities are available for your convenience. All artworks are packaged for travel to prevent damage.

Visitors are welcome at the studio and bookings are required. Please phone in advance to arrange an appointment.





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# History

## HERMANNSBURG HISTORIC PRECINCT

Experience a truly remarkable part of Central Australia's history.

Hermannsburg Historic Precinct is a curious and uniquely preserved landmark providing a historic glimpse into the establishment of a Lutheran mission, and the beginnings of a thriving community with local Aboriginal Western Arrarnta people. Located in Hermannsburg, 125 km west of Alice Springs, your drive through the beautiful West MacDonnell Ranges will be further rewarded when you stroll through the restored Hermannsburg Historic Precinct and learn about Lutheran mission life dating back to its establishment in 1877.

Walking through the historic buildings, you will see how the Lutheran missionaries and the local Arrarnta people came together to live, teach, learn from each other, and thrive in the harsh Central Australian landscape. You will learn more about one of Australia's best-known artists, Albert Namatjira, who was born in Hermannsburg.

You can visit the Kata-Anga Tea Rooms and taste delicious apple strudel or scones with jam and cream, while over-looking the oldest river system on the planet – the Finke River.

We support our local Indigenous artists. You can purchase beautiful, intricate paintings by local artists in our recently renovated retail shop.



## OCHRE PITS

10 kms West of Alice Springs lies a popular destination steeped in time. For thousands of years (and still continuing today) lies this active Ochre Pit site. Used for ceremonial purposes, the vivid colours of red yellow and white make an incredible backdrop to the natural surrounds.





# Landscapes

## ORMISTON GORGE

Located within the West McDonnell National Park, Ormiston Gorge is must-do when visiting the West Macdonnell Ranges. Located just 135 km West of Alice Springs, Ormiston is easily accessed by a sealed road and generally open all year round.

Ormiston (named Kwartatuma by the local Arrernte people) offers a popular swimming spot and some wonderful walks to take in the breathtaking surrounds. Walks vary from 20 mins to four hours and the perfect way to take in the local flora and fauna.

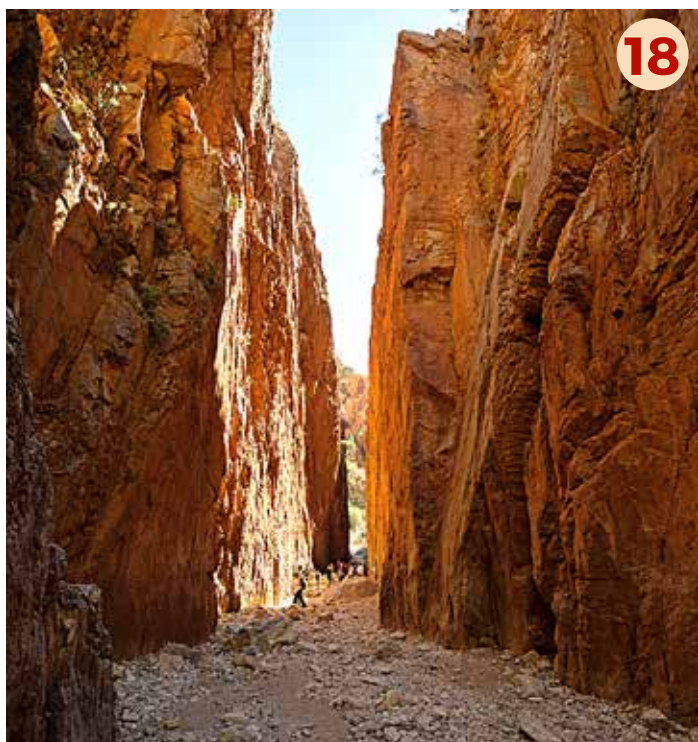
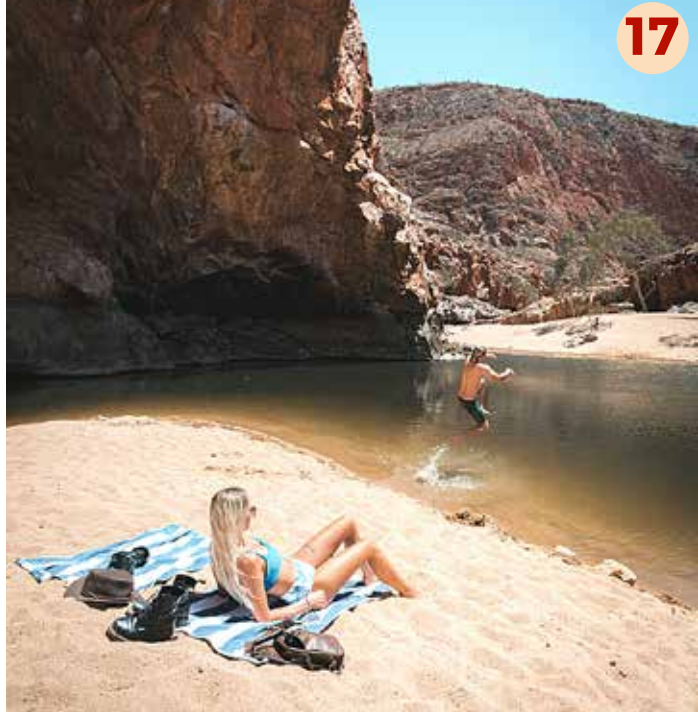
Camping is available and booking fees apply. Grab a refreshment from the Gorge Kiosk (open seasonally) or browse the local arts and crafts for sale.



## ANKERLE STANDLEY CHASM

Standley Chasm is a 3-metre-wide, 80-metre-high gorge that forms a picturesque natural alleyway. This beautiful site is at its most impressive in the middle of a sunny day when the light illuminates the chasm's magnificent colours. A natural spring feeds the gully floor of the chasm where you can find lush delicate ferns, cycad palms and tall gums. Standley Chasm is 100% Aboriginal owned and operated by Aboriginal family members that are direct descendant who have lived in this area for thousands of years.

Angkerle Cultural Experience tours was created to provide an enriching and engaging experience for visitors to this ancient and fascinating world. It is an opportunity to appreciate the deep understanding the Arrernte people have of the local plant and animal life, and their spiritual connection to this hallowed land. The tours give traditional owners an opportunity to share and teach their culture to tourists, thus raising cultural awareness, which has lasting benefits for society in general.







# Hermannsburg

## Hermannsburg Historic Precinct

The Hermannsburg Historic Precinct is one of the few remaining evangelical bush missions in Australia. It was the home of renowned Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira which functioned as a refuge for Aboriginal people during the early pastoral settlement in central Australia. The structures and landscapes show the changing phases of government policies towards Aboriginal people from 1877 to 1982.

However, due to major conservation work and significant infrastructure upgrades, it will remain closed to the public until March 2021. Upon reopening, visitors can travel to Hermannsburg on an organised day tour from Alice Springs or the multi-day Mereenie Loop from Alice Springs to Uluru (more detailed description outlined on page 28).

## Hermannsburg Potters

The Hermannsburg Potters are some of Australia's most significant Indigenous artists working today. They are based at the remote foothills of the MacDonnell Ranges, 130 kilometres west of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Their pottery is made from terracotta clay working with the hand coil-pinch technique and finally painted with ceramic underglaze.

The Potters depict family, birds, animals, stories of the Country and current life in Ntaria speaking to traditions and values, contemporary settings, and cultural beliefs.





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# Choose Your Adventure

## Guided Adventure (Tours)

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Choosing a guided adventure in the region is a fabulous way to experience a taste of what Tjoritja offers. Depending on your interests, the guided experiences are diverse and unique, promising a bunch of memories to last a lifetime. If adventure is what you are seeking, then you have chosen the right region. Rugged and relatively undiscovered, Tjoritja offers many guided adventures to choose from. If walking is your style, we recommend the newly launched Walking Country Tours. If you prefer a faster paced adventure then picture yourself racing alongside the iconic Finke River in a buggy with Finke River Adventures. Or browse the tours on offer with Emu Run, there's sure to be one that feels just right for the adventure you're seeking.

## Self-drive Itineraries (2WD & 4WD)

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Experiencing the Tjortjia region at your own pace gives you the flexibility to slow to your own clock and pick your adventure as you go. There is so much on offer in the region, ranging from an easy day trip to multi day trips, with either a 2WD or 4WD. We've given you a bunch of Self Drive Itineraries to get you started. Once your on the road, there will be no turning back! Road tripping the region opens way to a sensory overload and plenty of photographic opportunities. Experience the gorges, history, culture and art on offer at your own pace. Pack your camping gear and take advantage of the many camping spots dotted throughout the region. Read on for all you need to know!





# Guided Adventures TOURS

## BENEFITS OF A GUIDED EXPERIENCE

Choosing one of the many tours on offer in the region means that you will be in very capable hands, with guides that have a long history in the area. Guided experiences also offer local knowledge of the surrounds that, depending on the tour, can include culture, local history, flora and fauna. Tours are crafted to make the most of the time that has been allocated and see some pretty amazing sites along the way.

## WHICH TOUR IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

With so much on offer, it can be overwhelming trying to choose! We recommend writing down a list of places you would like to experience, and how you prefer to travel (in style or roughing it?). Once you have an idea of the places you would like to experience, then begin researching each company and begin to narrow down your choices.

If there is a tour that captures your attention but you feel a little nervous stepping outside your comfort zone, we recommend to bite the bullet and go for it! A guided tour has guides that cater to a wide variety of needs, and stepping a little outside your comfort zone may just end up being the greatest memory of your life.

## THE EXPERIENCES ON OFFER

The guided tours on offer vary so much that there is bound to be an adventure that feels like it has been crafted just for you (OR you can choose a tour with Emu Run that is designed just for you)!

The choices are endless!



# GUIDED ADVENTURE

## WALKING COUNTRY TOURS

Walking Country was established to provide small group experiential walking tours of the now famous Larapinta Trail which is considered one of the best wilderness walks in Australia. With maximum group sizes of approximately 8-14 passengers, clients gain a true understanding of the unique landscape, history and wildlife of this stunning region.

We operate 5, 7 and 14 day treks where guests will immerse themselves in the rugged beauty of rocky outcrops, scenic gorges and expansive plains. All tours include a trek leader, support vehicle, swags, tents and other camping equipment, transport, park and trek fees as well as one nights motel accommodation.



## FINKE RIVER ADVENTURES

How would you like to drive yourself through the stunning landscapes made famous by Albert Namatjira in an incredible Can-am ATV? Our tours are an exciting mix of adventure, culture & history and a truly unique way to experience the rugged beauty of Central Australia. Finke River Adventures offer the most amazing tours, working with local Aboriginal guides through private tracks on their own lands, to travel along the oldest river in the world to secluded water holes and the amazing Organ Pipes rock formations and beyond. Come and join us for an experience you will remember forever.



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# GUIDED ADVENTURE

## EMU RUN EXPERIENCE

Locally owned and operating since 2001, Emu Run Experience is an award-winning tour experience operator specialising in premium day tours and private touring experiences across Central Australia. Their tours operate all year round and take travellers to the world-heritage listed Uluru and Kata Tjuta National Park, as well as Kings Canyon, West MacDonnell Ranges, Palm Valley and Aboriginal Communities. Offering air-conditioned comfort, engaging storytelling, scenic walks and great food, on their sight-seeing adventures. Let their passionate guides show the magnificence and beauty of Outback Australia like only a true local can.

## TOUR ITINERARY AND DETAILS

Experience the magnificent grandeur of the West MacDonnell Ranges on our fascinating one day tour. Marvel at towering fiery red walls set aglow by the desert sun as we drive along the ranges. Its panoramic landscapes are extraordinary for their immensity and the spectacular array of sunburnt oranges, maroons, and purples on display. In the winter months, these mighty ranges light up in brilliant oranges and reds at sunset. We tour through the amazing ranges all day, stop at beautiful gorges and waterholes and provide morning tea, Fresh Bushmans Lunch, accommodation pick up and drop offs, experienced, friendly tour guides, air-conditioned vehicle and entry fee to Standley Chasm.

During summer, you may even get the chance to go swimming at some of Central Australia's most pristine waterholes - Ellery Creek & Bighole. All activities on and during the tour are considered very safe for all age groups and don't require a high level of fitness or agility.





# 2WD ITINERARY

## HOW TO ACCESS THE ROADS

West Macdonnell ranges is a region bursting with history, landscapes and culture where lush forests survive deep in the folds of mighty rock formations. Tjoritja / West Macdonnell ranges offers great 4WD and 2WD adventures, camping grounds, swimming holes and world-class hiking trails.

## DAY TRIPS

- 1 Alice Springs / West Macdonnell Ranges

## MULTI-DAY TRIPS

- 2 Alice Springs / West Macdonnell Ranges and the surrounds

## WHAT TO TAKE

- In the summer months, bring shorts and swimming suits and a towel for swimming at the waterholes
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Sunscreen, hat and comfortable clothing
- Camera and some snacks
- Jacket in cooler months
- Plenty of water

It's important to keep up to date with road conditions. For more information click [here](#).



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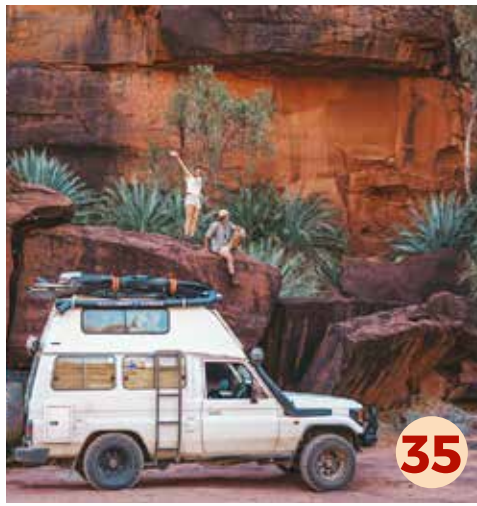


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## ALICE SPRINGS / WEST MACDONNELL RANGES

[DOWNLOAD SELF DRIVE ITINERARY WITH MAP](#)

### ALICE SPRINGS - ORMISTON GORGE

Approx 1.5hrs / 135km

Get up at the crack of dawn and get on the road to head to Ormiston Gorge. Driving as the sunrises will provide the perfect introduction for your day, as you watch the sunlight up the ancient jagged edges of the West MacDonnell Ranges. Once you get to Ormiston Gorge, get your hiking boots on and pack a bag with lots of water and set out to begin the Pound Walk.

The Pound Walk is a 3-4-hour loop (8.5km) which dips and slopes the expanse of the gorge, it offers views of the surrounding ranges and finishes at the main waterhole. Once you've finished the walk, grab a bite to eat from the kiosk and enjoy it sitting by the peaceful waterhole.

### ORMISTON GORGE - OCHRE PITS

Approx 18mins / 24km

From Ormiston, then head to the Ochre Pits. The Ochre Pits are a colourful outcrop along a cliff face, that show off the vivid colours of the naturally occurring ochres in the rock. Take the walk around the jagged cliff face and learn about the way Ochre has been used as a source of material for Arrernte people. The brilliant colours make for some excellent photos!

### OCHRE PITS - NEIL HARGRAVE LOOKOUT

Approx 5mins / 5km

Make a quick pit stop to Neil Hargrave lookout, stretch your legs, take in the views and a few snapshots!



# ALICE SPRINGS / WEST MACDONNELL RANGES

## NEIL HARGRAVE LOOKOUT - ELLERY CREEK BIG HOLE

Approx 15mins / 20km

Ellery Creek Big Hole is a spectacular waterhole in the mighty Ellery Creek which cuts through a gorge in the West MacDonnell Ranges. Grab a floaty, and drift along the surface of the waters amongst the red rock walls. If you're not fond of having a swim, there are a range of walks available ranging from 5 minutes to 1-hour return loops that offer great views of the waterhole and flora and fauna.

## ELLERY CREEK BIG HOLE - STANDLEY CHASM

Approx 45mins / 60km

Standley Chasm is your next stop, and a must to all visitors to the West Macs. Known traditionally as Angkerle Atwatye, Standley Chasm is a 3-metre-wide, 80-metre-high gorge that towers above head. Take the 2.4km (30 min return) trail and then grab some lunch at the café afterward. Note there is an entry fee to the chasm.

## STANDLEY CHASM - KATHLEEN BUZZACOTT ART STUDIO

Approx 25mins / 33km

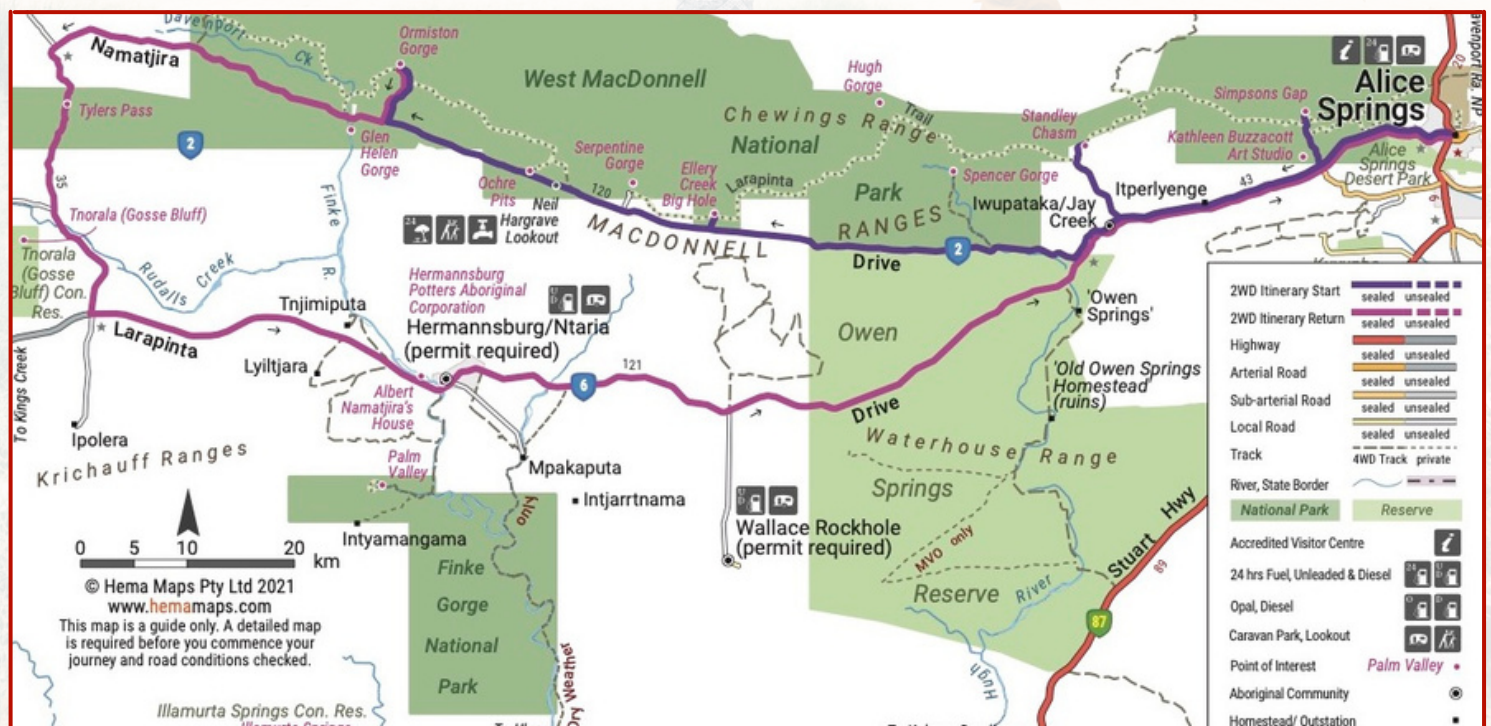
Say hello to Kathleen at Kathleen Buzzacott Art Studio, an indigenous owned and operated family enterprise, situated on Traditional Arrente Land in the stunning West MacDonnell Ranges. Visitors are invited to enjoy the tranquility and hospitality of Kathleen's unique home studio. Be inspired by Kathleen's beautiful artworks and join one the Yia Nuka Aboriginal Cultural Experience.

## KATHLEEN BUZZACOTT ART STUDIO - SIMPSONS GAP

Approx 11mins / 8km

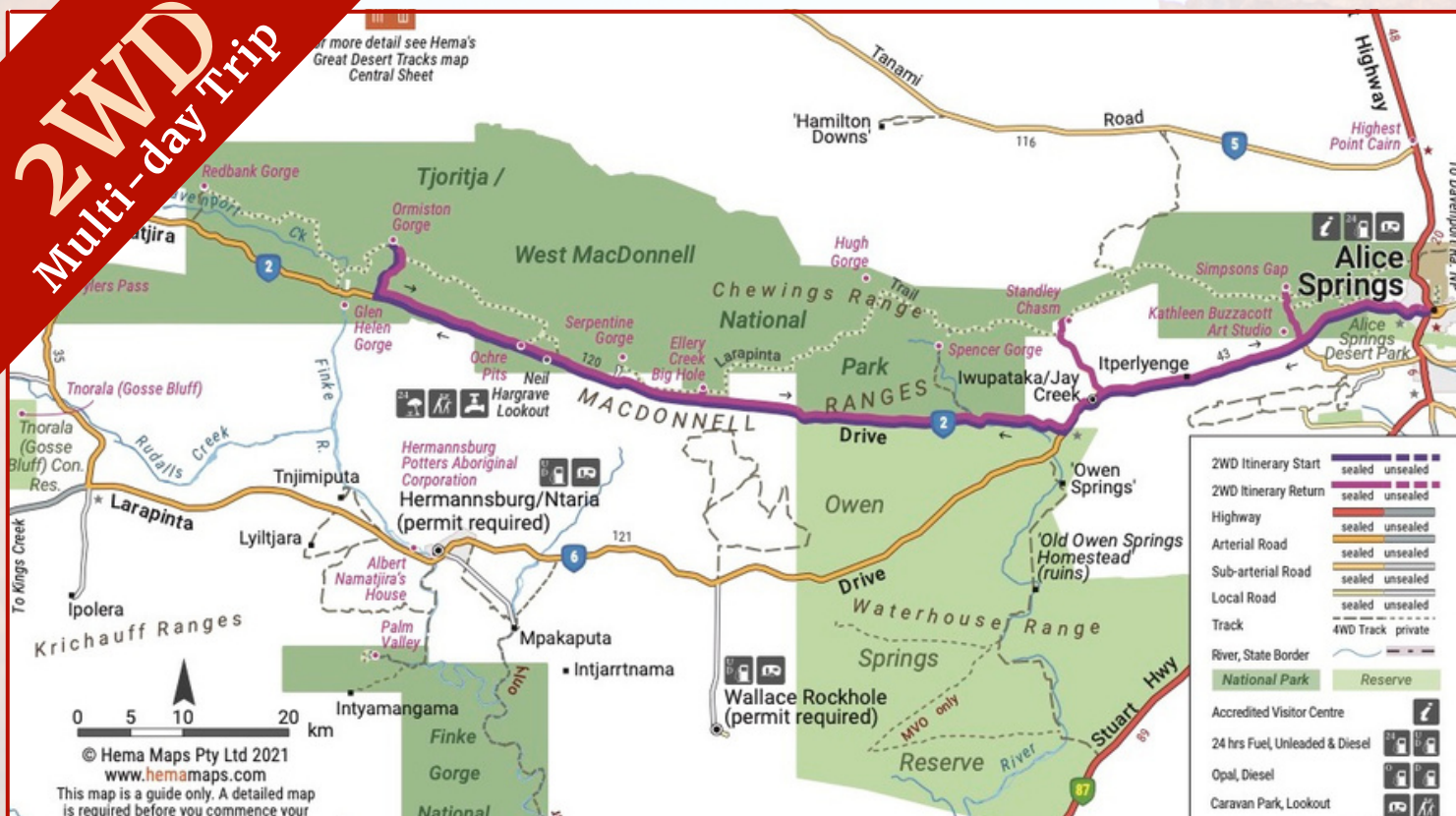
The last leg of your day will take you on a scenic drive to the Simpsons Gap where you can walk through the towering cliff walls of Simpsons Range. Take in the serenity and see the cliff walls light up as the sun dips close to the horizon amongst the permanent waterhole (no swimming), and keep your eyes peeled for Black-footed Rock Wallabies that call the area home!

Return to Alice Springs (Approx 25mins / 23km)





# 2WD Multi-day Trip



## ALICE SPRINGS / WEST MACDONNELL RANGES AND THE SURROUNDS

**Day 1 – Alice Springs / Standley Chasm / Ellery Creek Big Hole / Ochre Pits / Ormiston Gorge**

### ALICE SPRINGS – STANDLEY CHASM

Approx 40 mins / 50km

Begin your two-day adventure at Standley Chasm, an icon of the West MacDonnell Ranges. Known traditionally as Angkerle Atwatye, it is 100% owned and operated by the local Arrernte community. Grab some breakfast and a coffee at the café, then take the 30 min return walk into the 80m high sandstone gorge, which narrows to just 3m in some places. *A small entry fee applies to visit the chasm.*

### STANDLEY CHASM – ELLERY CREEK BIG HOLE

Approx 45 mins / 60km

Ellery Creek Big Hole is a spectacular waterhole in the mighty Ellery Creek which cuts through a gorge in the West MacDonnell Ranges.

Grab a floaty, and drift along the surface of the waters amongst the red rock walls. If you're not fond of having a swim, there are a range of walks available ranging from 5 minutes to 1-hour return loops that offer great views of the waterhole and flora and fauna.

### ELLERY CREEK BIG HOLE – OCHRE PITS

Approx 20 mins / 25km

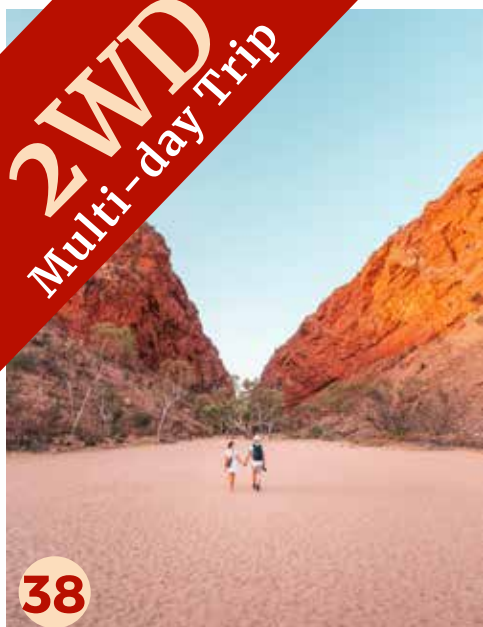
The Ochre Pits are a colourful outcrop along a cliff face, that show off the vivid colours of the naturally occurring ochres in the rock. Take the walk around the jagged cliff face and learn about the way Ochre has been used as a source of material for Arrernte people. The brilliant colours make for some excellent photos!

### OCHRE PITS – ORMISTON GORGE

Approx 18 mins / 24km

Head out to Ormiston Gorge, this will be your base for the evening. Grab a spot in the campgrounds and set up your site. For a nice afternoon walk, take the Ghost Gum Lookout walk (2.5km loop). This loop walk curves up the side of the gorge and up to the Ghost Gum Lookout. Continue by following the path around the western side of the Gorge and return via the main waterhole.





## ALICE SPRINGS / WEST MACDONNELL RANGES AND THE SURROUNDS

**Day 2 - Ormiston Gorge / Tylers Pass Lookout /  
Hermannsburg / Simpsons Gap / Alice Springs**

Wake up early and get your hiking boots on and start the Ormiston Gorge Pound Walk. The Pound Walk is a 3-4-hour loop (8.5km) which dips and slopes the expanse of the gorge, it offers views of the surrounding ranges and finishes at the main waterhole. Once you've finished the walk, grab a bite to eat from the kiosk and enjoy it sitting by the peaceful waterhole, or even jump in!

### ORMISTON GORGE - TYLERS PASS LOOKOUT

Approx 40 mins / 55km

Your next leg of the adventure will take you to Tylers Pass Lookout. This impressive lookout provides views of Tnorala (Gosse Bluff), a large crater that was created 142.5 million years ago by a comet believed to be 600 metres wide!

### TYLERS PASS LOOKOUT - HERMANNSBURG

Approx 50 mins / 70km

The small town of Hermannsburg is a place where you can soak up Central Australian culture and history. Visit the Historic Precinct, where you can have a glimpse into early pioneer life in a Lutheran mission of the 1880s. Hermannsburg was home to the famous Aboriginal water colourist, Albert Namatjira, you can visit his home located in the precinct and learn about his life. Pop into the tea rooms for some of the delicious Apple Strudel! Be sure to pop into the Hermannsburg Potters to checkout their unique hand-built terracotta pots, adorned with colourful sculpted animals, birds and bush.

### HERMANNSBURG - SIMPSONS GAP

Approx 1.25hrs / 117km

Take in the beautiful scenic drive, taking you into the last leg of your adventure to Simpsons Gap. Take the short return walk into the gap and be swallowed by the towering cliff walls of Simpsons Range. Take in the serenity and see the cliff walls light up as the sun dips close to the horizon amongst the permanent waterhole (no swimming), and keep your eyes peeled for Black-footed Rock Wallabies that call the area home! Return to Alice Springs (Approx 25mins / 23km)



# 4WD ITINERARY

## HOW TO ACCESS THE 4WD ROADS

West Macdonnell ranges is a region bursting with history, landscapes and culture where lush forests survive deep in the folds of mighty rock formations. Tjoritja / West Macdonnell ranges offers great 4WD and 2WD adventures, camping grounds, swimming holes and world-class hiking trails.

## DAY TRIPS

- 1 Palm Valley and Hermannsburg Historic Precinct
- 2 Owen Springs Reserve
- 3 Birthday Waterhole & Hugh Gorge inside Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park

## MULTI-DAY TRIPS

- 4 Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park, Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) & Palm Valley
- 5 Mereenie Loop / Alice Springs, West Macdonnell ranges, Kings Canyon and Uluru

## WHAT TO TAKE

- In the summer months, bring shorts and swimming suits and a towel for swimming at the waterholes
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Sunscreen, hat and comfortable clothing
- Camera and some snacks
- Jacket in cooler months
- Plenty of water

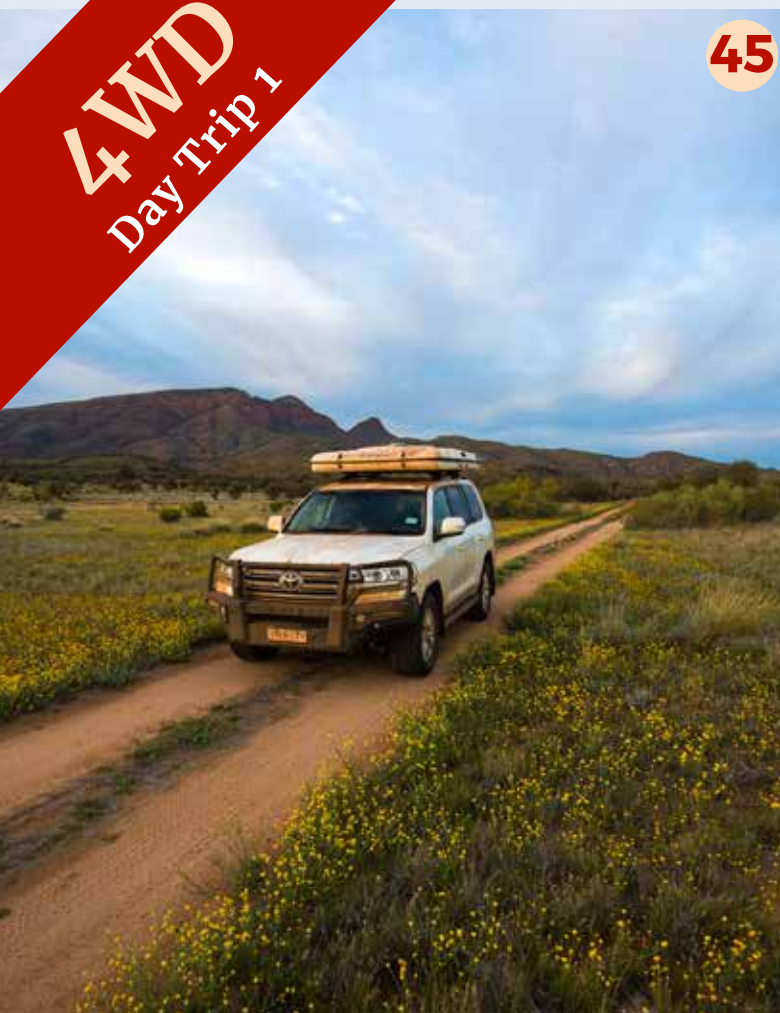
It's important to keep up to date with road conditions. For more information click [here](#).

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## PALM VALLEY AND HERMANNSBURG HISTORIC PRECINCT

### THE PALM VALLEY TRACK

Approx 2hrs / 138km

The Palm Valley Track is located in Finke Gorge National Park, 138km (2 hours) west of Alice Springs. Access to Palm Valley is just west of the Finke River bridge at Hermannsburg.

The 22km access track is graded with sandy and rocky sections following the Finke riverbed, and **may be impassable after rain**. A high clearance four-wheel drive vehicle is required. Note the track from the picnic area is not suitable for trailers. For day access there is a separate trailer parking area just past the campground.



### ARANKAIA WALK

Approx 1hr return / 2km

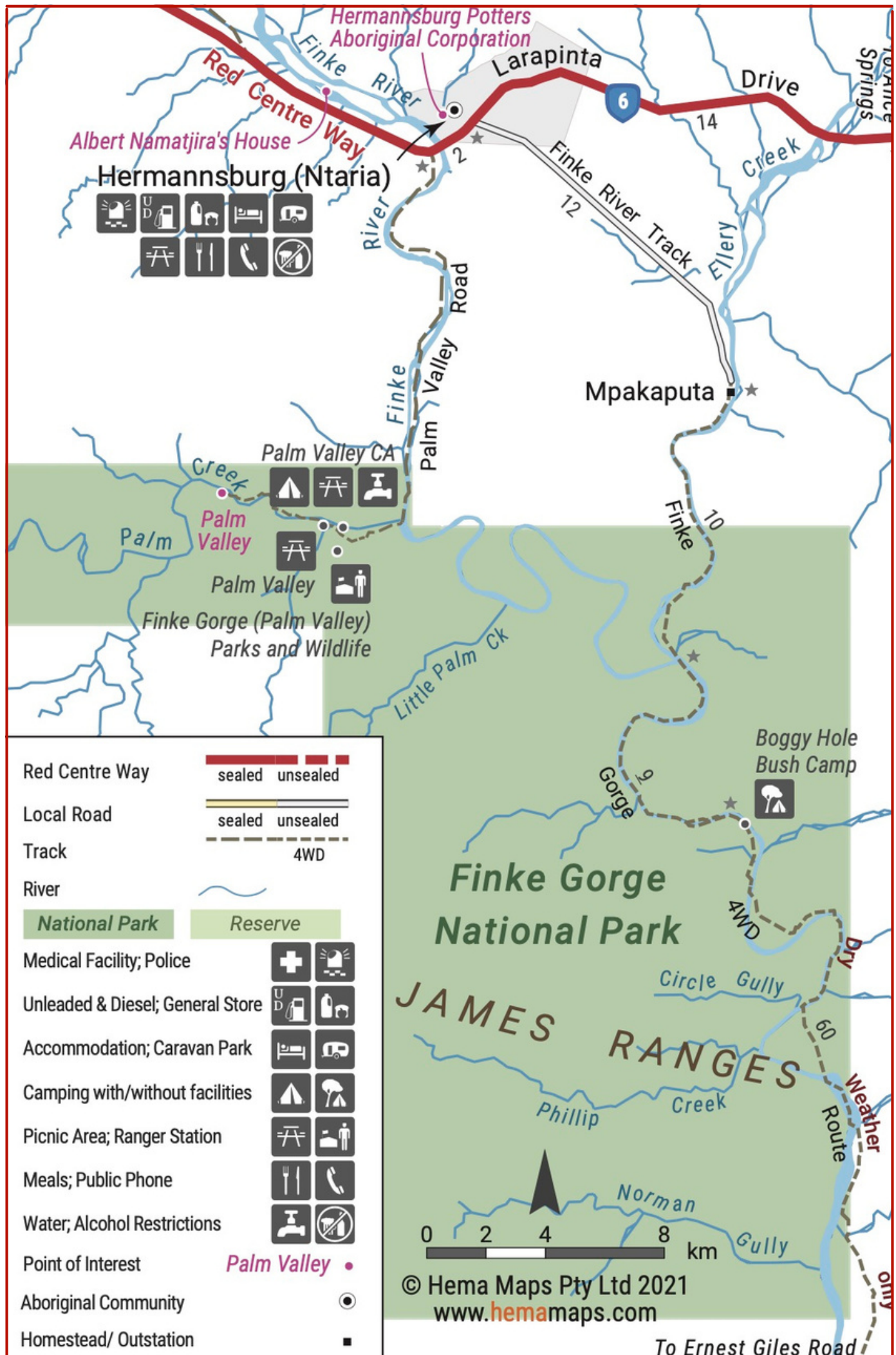
Palm Valley is home to a diverse range of plant species, many of which are rare and unique to the area, including the Red Cabbage Palm. In Palm Valley, the Arankaia Walk (2km, 1-hour return) and the longer Mpulungkinia Walk (5km, 2 hours return) meander among a lush oasis of slender palms.

### HERMANNSBURG HISTORIC PRECINCT

Approx 126km west of Alice Springs

The Hermannsburg Historic Precinct is located in Ntaria (Hermannsburg) on Larapinta Drive, 126 km west of Alice Springs. The Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission was the first Aboriginal mission in Central Australia established in 1877. The mission and the land were handed back to the Aboriginal people in 1982, Hermannsburg was also the home of famous Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira. Today you will find the old mission's buildings restored to their 19th century condition and showcase a museum, tearooms and art gallery that houses some of Namatjira's original work.







# OWEN SPRINGS RESERVE

Approx 40 min / 50-66km

**4WD**  
Day Trip 2

Owen Springs Reserve, south-west of Alice Springs, can be accessed via two routes. It is a 40-minute drive from Alice Springs to the entrance of each route: Larapinta Drive, 50 km west or the Stuart Highway, 66km south.

The track covers 47kms from the Larapinta Drive entrance to the Stuart Highway and takes about 90 minutes. A four-wheel drive is essential.

Some sections of the track follow the sandy riverbed and can be impassable after rain. Vehicles must keep to the main track, except to access campsites. **Camping is permitted in Lawrence Gorge and at Redbank Waterhole. No camping facilities are provided, and no fees apply.**





# BIRTHDAY WATERHOLE & HUGH GORGE INSIDE TJORITJA / WEST MACDONNELL NATIONAL PARK

Approx 56 km West of Alice Springs

Located 56 km west of Alice Springs on Namatjira Drive inside Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park, 9.6km from the Larapinta Drive turn off, no formal signage is provided on the road. A safety and pre-visit entry information sign is located at the start of the track. The access track follows and crosses the Hugh River with soft sandy and rocky sections. **A high clearance four-wheel drive vehicle is required.**

The access track to Birthday Waterhole is 15 km from Namatjira Drive. The Lange River Red Gums fringe Birthday Waterhole is a semi-permanent pool that is rarely suitable for swimming but is a true oasis to the wildlife and birds of the area.

Travel back 2 km then turn west to Hugh Gorge. This 10 km track is a very scenic drive.

Birthday Waterhole and Hugh Gorge are trailheads of sections of the Larapinta Trail, a 210 km walking trail through the Park, Sections 3,4,5 and 6 can be walked from here. Visit [here](#) for more information. **Camping is permitted. No camping facilities are provided, and no fees apply.**





# TJORITJA / WEST MACDONNELL NATIONAL PARK, TNORALA (GOSSE BLUFF) & PALM VALLEY

Day 1 - Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National  
Park

Simpsons Gap is 18 km west of Alice Springs on Larapinta Drive. Visit early morning or late afternoon to see the rare Black-footed Rock-wallabies. There are also numerous walking opportunities. **Day access only - no camping is permitted.**

Kathleen Buzzacott Art Studio is located close to Simpsons Gap, 20 km from Alice Springs. An excellent stop for Aboriginal artworks and her handcrafted jewellery art tour.

Angkerle Atwatye Standley Chasm is Aboriginal owned and operated, entry fees applies. The chasm walls are spectacular and truly glow when the sun is above the chasm (an hour either side of noon on a sunny day). Enjoy the 20-minute one way walk into the chasm. Food and drinks are available at the kiosk café. **Camping fees apply and are payable onsite.**

Ellery Creek Big Hole's high red cliffs, large waterhole and a sandy creek fringed by gums make this one of the most popular and picturesque picnicking and swimming spots in the West MacDonnell Ranges. It is 92 km west of Alice Springs on Namatjira Drive. **Camping fees apply and are payable onsite.**

Serpentine Chalet Dam is a trailhead for Sections 8 and 9 of the Larapinta Trail. Access track is four-wheel-drive only. The ruins of the chalet are from one of the first tourism buildings built in 1958 and still offers a quiet, out of the way camping spot. Camping is permitted. **No camping facilities and no fees apply.**







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## TJORITJA / WEST MACDONNELL NATIONAL PARK, TNORALA (GOSSE BLUFF) AND PALM VALLEY

Day 1 - Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park

The Ochre Pits have been used by the Aboriginal people for many generations as a mine for the rich mineral, ochre. View this stunning rock formation that looks almost like a painting with the earthy colours of the ochre spilling out of it. **Day access only no camping is permitted.**

Located 135 km west of Alice Springs on Namatjira Drive, you will find the towering red walls of Ormiston Gorge. Within the gorge is a permanent waterhole, which provides a refreshing (very cold) swim. Take the Ghost Gum lookout walk (20 minutes one way) to give you a great view of Ormiston Gorge. For the more adventurous take the Ormiston Pound walk 3-4 hours to complete the circuit. A kiosk is available for food and drinks. **Campground has showers and flushing toilets, camping fees apply and are payable onsite.**

2-mile is located in the Finke River, just past the Glen Helen Lodge turn off. As the track is along the sandy riverbed, a high clearance four-wheel drive vehicle is required. Water is usually found at 2-Mile and is a haven for a wide range of birds. Camping is permitted. **No camping facilities are provided, and no fees apply.**

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## **TJORITJA / WEST MACDONNELL NATIONAL PARK, TNORALA (GOSSE BLUFF) AND PALM VALLEY**

**Day 2 – Redbank Gorge, Roma Gorge, Tnorola (Gosse Bluff), camp in Palm Valley campground**

The turn-off to Redbank Gorge is 20 km past Glen Helen Gorge and the car park a further 5 km on a gravel access road, **a high-clearance vehicle is recommended**. It is then a 20-minute rocky and sandy walk along the river to the gorge. The gorge is fantastic to swim in during the warmer months, the water is deep and cold due to the rock walls towering above, so swimmers should use a floatation device and wear a wetsuit. **Camping is permitted. Camping fees apply and are payable onsite.**

Roma Gorge is accessed from Namatjira Drive, west of Glen Helen, and is 5 km past the Redbank Gorge turnoff. The road follows a sandy and stony riverbed for about 8 km. **A high clearance four-wheel-drive is required**. The Gorge itself has beautiful scenery and features ancient Aboriginal rock carvings (petroglyphs). **Day access only no camping is permitted.**

Enjoy the 360-degree views from Tylers Pass lookout including views of Tnorala (Gosse Bluff). Travel of to Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve, a place of great cultural significance to the Western Arrernte Aboriginal people and one of international scientific interest. Located 175 km from Alice Springs, the last 10 km of the access track **requires a four-wheel-drive vehicle**. Enjoy the short walks for views of the crater's interior. **Day access only no camping is permitted.**

Continue around Namatjira Drive, turning east at the Larapinta Drive intersection. Travel into the Finke Gorge National Park, the 22 km Palm Valley access track is gravel with sections along and across the Finke River riverbed which are sandy and rocky; may be impassable after rain. **A high clearance four-wheel drive vehicle is required.**

Palm Valley is home to the rare and unique Red Cabbage Palm along with a diverse range of other plant species. **The campground offers toilets, showers and gas barbecues – camp fees are payable on site.**



## Day 3 - Cycad Gorge, Hermannsburg, return to Alice Springs

**Note: The track from the picnic area is not suitable for trailers. For day access there is a separate trailer parking area, just past the campground.**

As you travel back to Alice Springs, stop for fuel or supplies from Hermannsburg. Visit the Hermannsburg Historical Precinct, the Lutheran Mission established in 1877. The old mission's buildings showcase a museum, art gallery and tearooms.





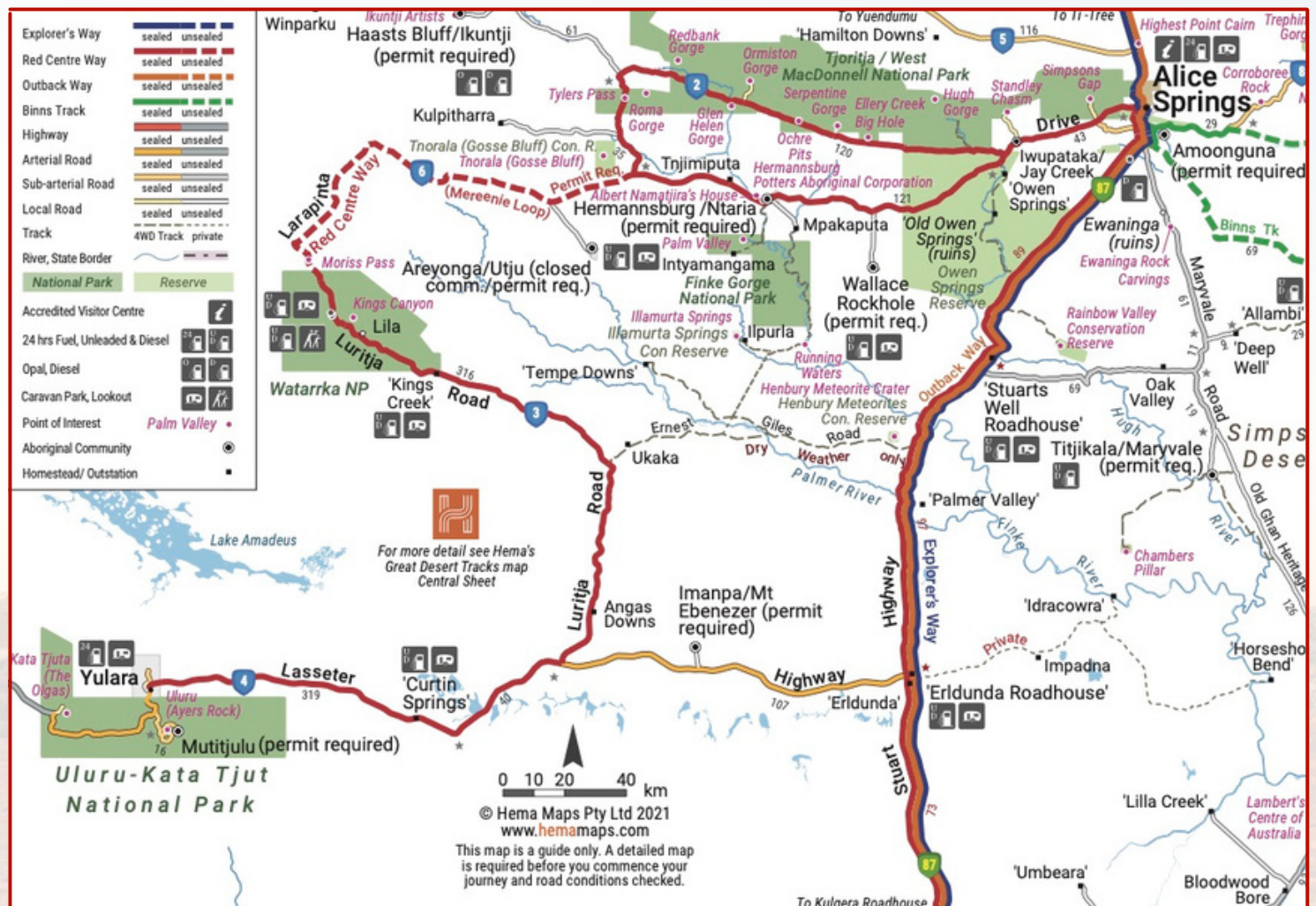
# MEREENIE LOOP / ALICE SPRINGS, WEST MACDONNELL RANGES, KINGS CANYON AND ULURU

The Mereenie Loop, also known as the Red Centre Way is a grand tour of the very best of Central Australia. It is the alternate (and preferred) scenic route from Alice Springs to Uluru via the West Macdonnell region, passing through rich history, landscapes, sand dunes, gorges and beautiful waterholes. **The loop is recommended for 4WD vehicles as weather conditions make the road conditions difficult for 2WD's.**

## 5 Day Itinerary

1. Alice Springs to Ormiston Gorge, 135 km.
2. Ormiston Gorge to Kings Canyon, 245 km.
3. Kings Canyon to Uluru, 324 km.
4. Uluru to Hermannsburg, 523 km.
5. Hermannsburg to Alice Springs, 127 km.

**Note fuel is available at Hermannsburg, Kings Creek Station, Ayers Rock Resort, or Glen Helen Lodge. A permit is required to travel the Mereenie Loop and can be purchased for \$5 from the Central Land Council in Alice Springs, Hermannsburg Petrol Station and Kings Canyon Resort.**







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## MEREENIE LOOP / ALICE SPRINGS, WEST MACDONNELL RANGES, KINGS CANYON AND ULURU

Day 1 - Alice Spring / Simpsons Gap / Standley Chasm / Ormiston Gorge

This short day trip from Alice Springs to Glen Helen will pass through the Macdonnell Ranges where you'll spend considerable time visiting Simpsons Gap, Standley Chasm and Ormiston Gorge.

### SIMPSONS GAP

Located 24 km west of Alice Springs on Larapinta Drive, you will find one of the most spectacular gaps in the West MacDonnell Ranges. At dawn and dusk, you might see Black-footed Rock-wallabies along the walking track into the gap. **Camping is permitted for Larapinta Trail walkers only. The Simpsons Gap has no entry fee, is open 24 hours a day and contains several facilities such as a barbeque, picnic area, public toilets, lookouts and more.**

### STANDLEY CHASM

Located 40 km west of Simpsons Gap, on Larapinta drive, you will find a unique gorge unlike no other. Standley Chasm is 100% Aboriginal owned and operated and a "must see" geological and culturally significant icon. **Please note there is a small fee for accessing the chasm via a 2 km walk.**

### ORMISTON GORGE

Located 104 km west of Standley Chasm, you will see the vibrant colours of the mineral Ochre Pits that have been mined for centuries by the local Aboriginal people. **This attraction is open 24 hours a day, has free entry and contains facilities such as a barbeque, picnic area, a Kiosk (open in peak season), public toilets, walks, accessibility and more.**



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## MEREENIE LOOP / ALICE SPRINGS, WEST MACDONNELL RANGES, KINGS CANYON AND ULURU

Day 2 - Ormiston Gorge / Kings Canyon

Located 245 km south-west of Ormiston Gorge via Mereenie Loop Road, you will find the breathtaking Kings Canyon - a magnificent destination featuring 300-metre high sandstone walls, palm-filled crevices and views that stretch as far as the eye can see across the desert.

But before you enter the national park you'll find the Kings Canyon Resort, which is where most people decided to camp (even though it is a bit expensive). **However, please note a 4WD is required to access this attraction via the Mereenie Loop Road.**

Things to do at the Kings Canyon include; The Rim Walk which is said to be 6km, but there are two detours away from the main walk to a lookout and the Garden of Eden waterhole that most people like to venture off too - making it an 8km walk in total. The first part of the walk is a steep climb, but after that, it's not particularly challenging (and even some young children participate in the walk).

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**73****4WD**  
Multi-day Trip**74**

## MEREENIE LOOP / ALICE SPRINGS, WEST MACDONNELL RANGES, KINGS CANYON AND ULURU

### Day 3 - Uluru

Located 324 km south-west of Kings Canyon, you can expect to find the infamous Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) which is a large sandstone rock formation and one of the greatest natural wonders of the world.

Uluru / Kata Tjuta National Park is a world-class tourist destination and a central component of Australia's iconic Mereenie Loop.

The large sandstone formation stands 348 m high (863 m above sea level) and measures 9.4 km in circumference. It has many springs, waterholes, rock caves, ancient paintings and cultural and spiritual significance. Because of this, Uluru is listed as a World Heritage Site and is extremely sacred to the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara, the Aboriginal people of the area.

Uluru alongside Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) are the two 'must see' main attractions when visiting central Australia. Therefore, regardless of whether you visit Kata Tjuta on Day 3 or 4, it is definitely worth a visit.

[Click here](#) to view the Top 5 things to do in Uluru.

However, after day 4, make sure you tick these two attractions off your bucket list!

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## MEREENIE LOOP / ALICE SPRINGS, WEST MACDONNELL RANGES, KINGS CANYON AND ULURU

### Day 4 - Hermannsburg

The Mereenie Loop offers a change of scenery on your way back to Alice Springs (or visa versa) with an alternative route via Larapinta Drive (instead of Namatjira Drive) which passes through Hermannsburg and Palm Valley.

Located 523 km north-east of Uluru, you will discover the Aboriginal settlement of Hermannsburg - which is where you can explore the restored historic town and see the amazing work of local and famous artists. **Note that there is a \$12 adult and \$10 concession fee upon entry to the Hermannsburg Historic Precinct, but please refer to page 10 for more information.**

### Day 5 - Palm Valley / Alice Springs

Situated within Finke Gorge National Park (which is 22 km west of Hermannsburg) you will find the breathtakingly unique Palm Valley.

The best way to conclude this 5-day road trip through the most spectacular parts of central Australia is with a drive along the oldest river in the world, stopping along the way to explore the various walks and the valley itself. **Note a high clearance four-wheel-drive is required.**

From here, continue 147 km along Larapinta Drive to Alice Springs.

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# FAQS

Tjortjia is a rugged and remote part of Australia. Travelling there will take careful planning and there are some important points to factor in when planning your travel journey. Roads in the area are affected by weather conditions and fuel stops can be limited.

## WHAT ARE THE ROADS LIKE?

The most up to date road conditions are found here <https://roadreport.nt.gov.au/>

## STOCK AND WILDLIFE

Many roads in the Northern Territory are not fenced. Animals (kangaroos, dingos, horses, eagles, cows) are most active at sunrise, sunset or at night. If you encounter stock or wildlife you should slow down and sound your horn but do not swerve around them as this can lead to you losing control of your vehicle and the possibility that it may roll over. If you do drive off the side of the road, don't over correct or brake heavily. Slow down and return to the road when the vehicle is travelling at a safe speed and the road is clear of other traffic.

## SPEED LIMITS

Speed limits are enforced in the Northern Territory and fines and demerit points will be given. Maximum speed limits are clearly signed and must be obeyed at all times. The default speed limit on open roads is 110km/hour unless otherwise sign posted. On the Stuart and Barkly Highways the maximum speed limit is 130km/hour. The default speed limit in built up areas is either 50km/hour or 60km/hour unless sign posted otherwise. You should always drive at a speed that suits the road, the vehicle and the weather conditions.

## FATIGUE AND LONG DISTANCES

If you're not used to driving long distances in high temperatures, you'll be affected by driver fatigue. As a general rule, you should stop for a 15-minute rest break every two hours of driving. While you stop, take a walk and drink some water. Plan your trip to include these regular breaks and use the clearly signposted rest areas along highways.

## HANDY INFORMATION SOURCES

**Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre:** Crnr of Todd Mall and Parsons Street, Alice Springs, NT 0870 T: 08 8952 5800 or 1800 645 199 E: [info@discoverca.com.au](mailto:info@discoverca.com.au)

**NT Gov Website:** <https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/find-a-park/find-a-park-to-visit/tjoritja-west-macdonnell-national-park>



# Credits

## PHOTO CREDITS

- 01 Memory Hill, Haasts Bluff  
*Tobias Titz Photography*
- 02 Haasts Bluff  
*Ikuntji Artists/Dr Chrischona Schmidt*
- 03 Haasts Bluff  
*Ikuntji Artists/Dr Chrischona Schmidt*
- 04 Exploring Standley Chasm  
*Tourism NT/Shanaa McNaught*
- 05 Herman Whiskey, Haasts Bluff  
*Tobias Titz Photography*
- 06 Fabric Designs, Haasts Bluff  
*Ikuntji Artists/Dr Chrischona Schmidt*
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- 08 Colourful pots of Hermannsburg  
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- 47 Old church at Hermannsburg  
*Tourism NT/Yuri Kardashyan*



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**This travel brochure was produced by Tourism Tribe on behalf of Webnoise as a initiative of Northern Territory Tourism & Tourism Central Australia.**

