THREE DAYS
ALICE SPRINGS AND SURROUNDS

Called 'Mpwante' by its traditional owners, the Arrernte people, Alice Springs is situated 200 kilometres north of the geographic centre of Australia. Alice can be easily reached by road, on commercial airlines, or on the legendary Ghan train. This three-day itinerary introduces you to a vibrant contemporary city set against the dramatic MacDonnell Ranges and the sandy, desert landscape, its history of camels, pastoralists and gold, and ancient and prominent Aboriginal art and culture.

DAY 1.

Get your bearings and let someone else do the driving – take in the sights of Alice Springs on board the Alice Wanderer bus. This hop-on hop-off tour takes you to the historic Alice Springs Telegraph Station, the Royal Flying Doctor Service Base, the School of the Air, Anzac Hill lookout and more. During the drive a guide will talk about local history and the sights you will see.

Alice Springs is home to Australia's only arid zone botanic garden. The Olive Pink Botanic Garden is a great place to visit for lunch. Wander along trails to see the hundreds of plant species that are native to the Red Centre, or spot some of the 80 bird species which have been recorded at the park.

Tonight your dinner will be cooked in a bush setting and served under the Milky Way. Local Arrernte man Bob Taylor introduces you to bush foods and traditional cooking for this special three-course meal set in the West MacDonnell Ranges.

DAY 2.

Take to the skies around Alice Springs for a panoramic view of the vast, spectacular beauty of Central Australia. Drift into the pastel blues, purples and yellows of an outback sunrise in a hot air balloon.

For more desert scenery, drive into the West MacDonnell Ranges. The famous Larapinta Trail follows the course of the road – if you coordinate a lift you can walk a section. The route is dotted with places to see: Simpsons Gap, Standley Chasm, the red cliffs at Ellery Creek Big Hole, and Serpentine Gorge and its semi-permanent waterholes.

The Ochre Pits have been used for generations by Aboriginal people to gather ochre for painting and ceremonial body decoration. Turn off to Ormiston Gorge and Pound for a picnic lunch and to cool off in the permanent waterhole (estimated to be 14 metres deep).

At Glen Helen Gorge look out over the ranges and watch for the migrating waterbirds that stop at the waterhole. Today's final destination is Glen Helen Resort, where you'll stay overnight.

DAY 3.

If travelling by four-wheel-drive, be sure to visit the Aboriginal community of Hermannsburg, which started as a Lutheran mission and was the first town in Central Australia. Today much of it is National Trust-listed. Be sure to call in at the tearooms, museum and art gallery.

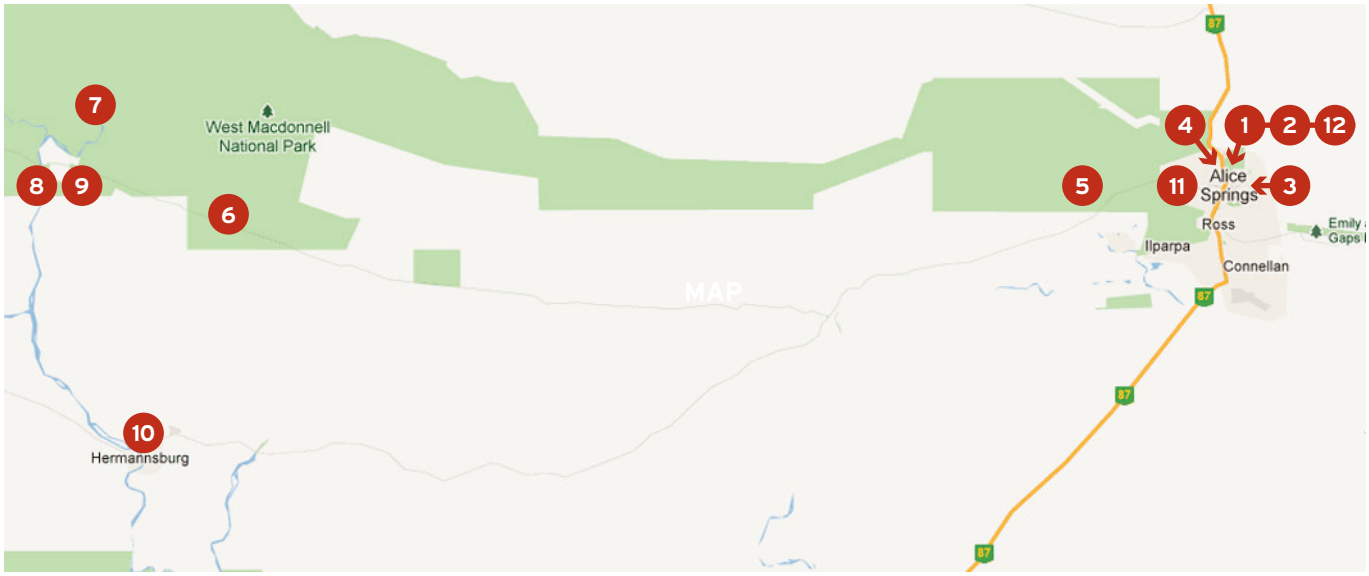
Hermannsburg is best known as the birthplace of artist Albert Namatjira, who painted the local landscape in Western-style watercolours. Today, Namatjira's house is open to visitors.

Take the time to stop at Finke Gorge National Park to see Palm Valley, which shelters groves of cabbage palms – botanic remnants from millions of years ago.

Before returning to town, stop at Alice Springs Desert Park to learn about local plants and animals. Wander into the low light of the nocturnal house and dodge the star attractions at the free-flying birds of prey show.

This evening's entertainment is the Sounds of Starlight show, a powerful combination of imagery of the region and Didgeridoo music that is performed at the Todd Mall in town.

THREE DAYS
ALICE SPRINGS AND SURROUNDS



1 RT Tours Australia
Todd Street, Alice Springs, Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8952 0327
W: www.rttoursaustralia.com.au/

2 Alice Wanderer & Centre Sightseeing
Shop 7 to 9, 91 Todd Street
Opposite the Tourist Information Centre, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8952 2111
Toll Free: 1800 722 111 (Australia)
W: www.alicewanderer.com.au

3 Olive Pink Botanic Garden
Tuncks Road, Alice Springs,
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8952 2154
W: www.opbg.com.au

4 Outback Ballooning
35 Kennett Court, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8952 8723
Toll Free: 1800 809 790 (Australia)
W: www.outbackballooning.com.au

5 Simpsons Gap
18 kilometres west of Alice Springs
via Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8951 8250

6 Ochre Pits
Namatjira Drive, 110 kilometres west of Alice Springs, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8951 8250
W: www.nretas.nt.gov.au

7 Ormiston Gorge and Pound
Namatjira Drive, 135 kilometres west of Alice Springs, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8951 8250
W: www.nretas.nt.gov.au

8 Glen Helen Gorge
139 kilometres west of Alice Springs
via Namatjira Drive, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8951 8250
W: www.nretas.nt.gov.a

9 Glen Helen Resort
Namatjira Drive via Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8956 7489
W: www.glenhelen.com.au

10 Hermannsburg Historic Precinct
Larapinta Drive Hermannsburg
Northern Territory 0872
T: +61 (8) 8956 7402
W: www.hermannsburg.com.au

11 Alice Springs Desert Park
Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8951 8788
W: www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au

12 Sounds of Starlight Theatre
40 Todd Mall, Alice Springs
Northern Territory 0870
T: +61 (8) 8953 0826
W: www.soundsofstarlight.com