



Red Centre Expedition

Enjoy 9 days of stunning touring through Central Australia's most dramatic and inspiring cultural landscapes. Explore the best parts of the Larapinta trail in the West MacDonnell Ranges, the less visited East MacDonnell Ranges, postcard perfect Rainbow Valley, iconic Chambers Pillar and the picturesque "Namatjira country" around the Finke River & Palm Valley. This trip combines challenging & scenic 4wd routes along with great day walking opportunities & carefully chosen camping locations with awe inspiring settings.

8 nights: Camping (single travellers get their own tent at no extra cost guaranteed!)

Maximum group size is 12 passengers

Includes:

- **Experienced & Professional Guide**
- **Comfortable 4WD transport**
- **All meals - 8 Dinners, 9 lunches & 8 breakfasts**
- **Trail snacks for hiking**
- **All camping gear including comfortable swags with clean linen & quality tents**
- **Pick up and drop off at your pre and post tour Accommodation**

Not Included:

- Flight or transport to and from Alice Springs
- Pre or Post tour accommodation
- Alcohol
- Soft drinks, ice creams and souvenirs at roadside stops

DAY 1 - West MacDonnell Ranges (around 7 km walking)

Departing Alice Springs at 8:00 am this morning for a journey along the iconic West MacDonnell ranges. We explore a number of sites whilst travelling today with walks at Simpsons Gap, Ellery Creek Big Hole & the Ochre Pits.

We set up camp for the next three nights either beside the Finke River or at Redbank Gorge. Whilst there are no facilities at the Finke River it is still our preferred camping location. It's worth noting though that being a river bed at times it may not be suitable for us to camp here and we would chose to camp near Red Bank Gorge instead if this was the case. Red Bank has a toilets but other than this there are no other facilities. You don't need to be worried though as there will be the opportunity to freshen up once or twice at Glen Helen Homestead and possibly Ormiston Pound. Having little to no facilities is a small price to pay for the experience of camping in remote and pristine areas. We're sure you'll agree!

DAY 2 – Mt Sonder & Red Bank Gorge (16 km walking)

An early start today as this is one of the most exciting walks on our touring calendar. Starting at Red Bank Gorge we embark on one of the most stunningly beautiful and rewarding walks in the Western Macdonnell Ranges.

Mount Sonder lies at the end and final stage of the Larapinta trail and offers walkers one of the most amazing summit views in Central Australia. It's a 15.8 km return walk that involves following a well worn path to the ridge line before traversing to the summit itself. From here you will witness a simply breathtaking view over the entire length of the MacDonnell Ranges. This is a linear walk and returning from the summit gives a great view over the Mereenie loop 4wd track and Tnorola.

For those of you who feel like a less strenuous walk there will be plenty of time to explore Red Bank Gorge, have a swim and enjoy the stunning surroundings whilst observing the comings and goings of birds and wildlife to this vital waterhole.

DAY 3 – Ormiston Pound (7 km walking)

This morning we start with a short drive to Ormiston Gorge where we spend the morning walking the highly rewarding 7km Pound track. In afternoon we stop in at Glen Helen Homestead to freshen up and see Glen Helen Gorge. You might like to jump on an optional Helicopter flight or have a drink at the bar whilst admiring the surrounding landscapes.

DAY 4 – Tnorala & Finke Gorge National Park (5 km walking)

Travelling the via Tyler's Pass and the Mereenie Loop we'll detour into Tnorala (Gosses Bluff) where we go for a walk to explore the meteorite impact zone and the dreamtime stories that relate to it's being.

We'll pass by Albert Namatjira's house near Hermannsburg mission before continuing along the bumpy 4wd track into the ancient landscape of Palm Valley along the worlds oldest watercourse, the Finke River. Access to Finke Gorge National Park and Palm Valley

involves negotiating the sandy river bed and rocky gorge 4wd track. This journey into the park is quite stunning in it's own right and a real trip highlight. We arrive to set up camp here for the next two nights beside the tranquil Palm Creek. You'll have time to explore your surroundings before sunset.

Our campground is in beautiful natural surrounds with hot showers and toilets. Tonight we dine again in overlander style by the camp fire.

DAY 5 – Palm Valley Walks (around 12 Km walking)

Today will be spent walking a number of great tracks including the valley loop walk. We explore the micro habitats of Palm Valley and learn about the Western Arunnda culture & traditional plant uses. A chance to really explore this very unique landscape.

DAY 6 – Owen Springs & Rainbow Valley 4wd tracks (up to 5km walking)

After packing up camp at Palm valley you'll have time to walk the Finke River bed before being picked up along the track by our 4wd vehicle. We will pass through Hermansburg community and mission before detouring off into Owen Springs Nature Reserve. This 4wd track crosses some very unique country rarely seen by visitors to Central Australia.

In the afternoon we travel along a quite bumpy track into Rainbow Valley where we setup camp and watch sunset over the stunning outcrop. It's a absolutely magic place to see on sunset!

There are toilets at tonights camp but no showers.

DAY 7 – Chambers Pillar 4wd tracks (5 km walking)

You'll have time to explore Rainbow valley on foot this morning before we negotiate more sandy tracks and sand dunes to Chambers Pillar. After a break to see this iconic feature we'll probably keep moving and head on via the South Track to the East MacDonnell Ranges.

We plan to set up camp at Ross River Homestead for the next two nights. Great facilities, showers and flushing loos are on hand here.

DAY 8 – Explore Trepina Gorge (around 10 km walking)

Today we're off to explore John Hayes rock hole and some interesting sites around Trepina Gorge. In the afternoon we'll return to Ross River Homestead and have some time enjoying the surroundings. Tonight we'll dine out "homestead style" for our last night with the friendly folks here at the Homestead. It's a great chance to reflect on the journey and share stories with others whilst we have our final evening meal together. Dinner is included in the trip price.

DAY 9 – N'Dhala Gorge & Arltunga historic site (around 7 km walking)

Packing up camp for the final time we're soon off to explore N'Dhala Gorge on foot and witness the thousands of petroglyphs that adorn the rock surfaces here.

We'll travel onto Arltunga where we walk and explore the historic gold mining town ruins before starting our Journey back to Alice Springs. We'll break up the journey with a couple more worth while sites to explore before arriving back in Alice Springs around 4:30 – 5:30 pm.

Further details about the trip

How we operate

You can expect expert guiding, custom built 4wd vehicles and camp equipment designed for the region.

About the weather

May is one of the most comfortable months of the year to be touring in the centre and we have chosen this time carefully to maximise your experience and comfort in the region. For Central Australia in May you can expect average day time temperature around 25 degrees, the average low is 8 - 10 degrees but it can get colder so please prepare for low single digit temps overnight.

Coping with the conditions

Much of our walking will be structured around having time to relax at water holes or shaded areas during the heat of the day. You will be required to carry at least 2 to 3 litres of water for even a half days outing. We find most guests prefer a camel back type drinking bladder and the 3 litre one is perfect. Alternately you can bring standard drinking bottles. Please make sure your day pack can accommodate 3 litres of water along with your lunch and other daily requirements. We find that most participants will drink between 4 to 5 litres of water per day. If you are someone who readily suffers salt depletion then it would not hurt you to have a few things such as sachets of "Gastrolyte" in your travel kit.

You'll need to be healthy, able bodied and possess a reasonable level of fitness and agility. You'll need to be able to walk more than just a few kilometres on undulating terrain. The terrain is rocky and very uneven underfoot so we expect this will slow the walking pace at times.

Camping Equipment

You'll be sleeping in canvas swags with a comfortable foam mattress. These will be provided with a fresh bottom sheet, pillow and pillow case and sleeping bag on day one which you use through out the trip. When we move camp you simply roll your swag up with your bedding protected inside and arrive at our new camp and unroll your bed. It really couldn't be simpler and is very comfortable. Each guest will also be provided with an easy to pitch lightweight 3 person dome style tent. This allows the flexibility to choose if you would like to sleep under the stars or put your swag inside your tent to have a more privacy and protection. We use One Planet hiking style tents that are designed to be very easy to setup for one person, light but robust and very comfortable in all weather conditions. If your travelling as a couple our tents have plenty of room for two.

We do not advertise that we provide stand up room in tents as we have found through experience that these tents are useless in rain and wind. Have a look at any serious tent at

good outdoor stores designed for 3 – 4 season use and you wont find any that have comfortable standing height. In our opinion It's just silly and far from practical to offer this especially when wind or rain is a possibility. Trust us it can happen, even in the desert!

Walking terrain

We have graded this trip to be moderate in nature. The gradient on some trails is moderate and it's the rocky terrain that can be challenging for some.

There are times where you will need to negotiate particularly rocky, uneven and often wet terrain to get to some of the amazing gorge waterholes. You will need to be able to clamber over rocks at times to get past an obstacle. Be ready to help each other at times and listen to your guide as he show's the best and safest way though some sections of track.

We recommend if you are training for this trip to walk in areas with lots of uneven rocky terrain if possible. A good pair of hiking boots or shoes is paramount and it's very important to check the condition of the glue that holds the sole together. We have had to perform countless shoe repairs on trails throughout Australia and this can be avoided 99% of the time by checking your boots prior to the trip and replacing if necessary. Don't keep using them just because they're 10 – 15 years old and are comfortable! Check the glue as it deteriorates over time. Especially 10 year old Scarpa's! Ask a good outdoor store if you're unsure of your hiking boots condition.

Communication while away in the Central Australia

Don't expect phone range at all whilst on this trip. If you're lucky (and you're with Telstra) you might pick up signal at Hermansburg mid trip. Outside this there is a pay phone at both Ross River & Glen Helen homestead. Limited & slow internet is available at Glen Helen homestead.

Safety

We carry a satellite phone, a PLB and have a UHF radio fitted in our vehicle for emergency use. We also carry vehicle based and hiking first aid kits. Our 4x4 vehicles carry recovery equipment in the unlikely event we get into a sticky situation.

Charging Cameras

240v power is not available during the trip. You can charge cameras, phones etc in the vehicle whilst travelling. This is available via USB or cigarette style plugs only.

Transport

We travel in our 4wd vehicle which has been designed for travel in rugged and remote areas. Air conditioning, air vents and forward facing coach seats will ensure your comfort whilst travelling with us. Our vehicle is big enough to be comfortable yet small enough to travel the tight 4x4 tracks allowing us to access the best walking locations within the region.

Meals

We love good food, and cooking in the bush! The fire, the coals and our cast iron kitchen is an authentic bush experience all should enjoy. Real good wholesome tucker will be served up throughout the tour. You will be surprised with how well we eat. Guaranteed!

Most meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and hiking snacks) are included unless otherwise mentioned on the itinerary. We provide drinking water, quality tea & coffee and cordial.

Everyone has their favourite beverages and we encourage guests to bring these along if they wish to "have a couple" in the evening. Although often few and far between we

encourage you to support local businesses en route if you feel like extra snacks, soft drinks, ice creams etc.

Breakfast will often include (not limited too) brewed coffee and tea, oats, toast, cereals, juice and fresh fruit. Lunch will often include cold meats, salads along with an array of condiments and quality breads. We will also have fresh fruit. Dinner in the bush could be many things from camp oven prepared roast lamb, chicken or beef, shepherd's pie, freshly caught fish, curry and rice dishes or perhaps a yummy overlander camp stew. We accompany our meals with plenty of salads or vegetables and we often cook up steaming hot damper, savoury or sweet cakes and popcorn on the fire to accompany our main meal.

We understand that some people may have special meal requirements and we are experienced in catering to these requests. As our guest it is important that you understand that we are often travelling in remote areas and therefore a certain degree of planning is required to cater for our groups. If you have any food allergies or dislikes you must advise us at least three weeks prior to travel. We are unable to amend the menu or make special dietary considerations once we are on the road.

Alcohol

Most guest's like to have a beer or wine in the evening around the camp fire and we are more than happy to provide a cool box with ice to ensure you can have a cold beer after a long day out on the tracks. Ross River has bar facilities where you can have a drink however outside this there is no opportunity to purchase alcohol whilst on tour. We suggest you go to the bottle shop in Alice Springs the day prior to tour to purchase drinks.

Please be aware that we have to carry rubbish out from our camps and glass does not travel well nor is compressible hence we ask you to purchase drinks in cans where possible. Bottles of wine are ok.

Here is a list of what we recommend you bring with you

- Sturdy, comfortable, worn in walking boots (**please check the condition of the glue and sole if your old, faithful boots are to be worn**)
- A pair of all terrain sandals or trail runners to wear around camp and on days where the walking is less demanding.
- Socks for walking
- Hat and sun-glasses
- Water bottle or "camelback" – to carry up to 3 litres when walking
- Sunscreen
- Trousers or shorts
- Casual clothing T-Shirts, to wear and spare for night
- Shirts, long sleeved and loose fitting
- Warm jacket or polo fleece
- Underwear / Thermals / Beanie & Gloves (**very important**)
- Fly net (drops over hat) - optional
- Swimmers, bathers or board-shorts

- Towel
- Thongs or sandals for relaxing in
- Toiletries
- Personal hand sanitiser
- Insect repellent and anti-histamine tablets or creams (if required)
- First aid, bandaids, headache tablets,
- Prescription medicine, spectacles (**including a spare set**) etc
- Tissues
- Camera and film - extra batteries, memory cards, charger cables etc.
- Head torch and batteries (**this must be a head torch as free hands are required when moving around camp and eating meals around the fire etc.**)

Please make sure your luggage is no more than 15kg and in a soft bag. No suitcases please. Soft bags, duffel style or backpacks are best. Your bag may get dusty at times whilst travelling outback roads.

Please make sure you have comprehensive travel insurance. And also check that you are adequately covered for ambulance cover.