

OUTBACK TRAVEL

It's big, it's weird, it's wonderful, and it's our backyard...

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

We Australians have a special name for the interior of our continent. We call it the Outback. It's our backyard and it's made up of some of the oldest terrain on the planet, dotted with some of its most amazing landforms. Australia's heart, and much of its landmass, lies in its outback. See kangaroos cross the road and rugged, remote landscapes occasionally sprinkled with bush, scrub, grasses and gum trees.

Adventure beyond the black stump¹ to the back o' Bourke or the back of beyond to experience the people, places and wide-open spaces of our Outback. It's here you'll find the true Outback spirit that made this country great

Out in the Never, Never with the sun, heat and flies, the road stretches ahead for ever. Outback stations and towns are separated by huge distances; your nearest neighbour is hundreds of miles away and the only changes in the vast landscape are from parched red earth to grey brown dusty and flat.

To go to the outback is to go to the heart of Australia, to the big expansive colourful beyond – out there to the great outdoors where you'll find authentic Australia.

You'll need to head away from the cities and the trappings of civilisation; away from the green and blue to the brown, red yellow open spaces and treeless plains. From glowing red sunsets to the rich ochre soil and the infinite black of the night sky, the Outback is the ultimate Australian experience.

Our Outback has a spiritual feel to it, an undeniable energy that recharges and replenishes your very soul. Our Outback is mythical Australia – red dust, empty tracks, unique wildlife, tall tales and larger than life characters. It's not just about lifeless desert. So give it a go and head up-country and Out-Back, to discover what lies beyond the black stump, out in the Never-Never.²

Some Outback facts

- Australia is an ancient land. Parts of its mass are estimated to be at least 1,500 million years old. Processes of weathering, volcanic and plate movements have produced the amazing landforms seen today.³
- Outback residents wear wide-brimmed hats to protect them from the Australian sun; temperatures can soar to over 40 degrees on a hot day.
- Vast, mysterious and often silent, the Nullarbor Plain is an awesome place. The name is Latin for 'tree-less' and it's bigger than Belgium.

- Much of inland Australia – the Outback – is made up of deserts, including the Simpson, Strezlicki, Great Stony, Sturt and Gibson deserts.
- Many of our Outback roads are rough and unsealed, so you'll need to tackle them in a 4WD. Or you may prefer to traverse the Outback in cool comfort, by train or air.
- The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides aeromedical emergency and health care services for people in regional and remote Australia. This non-profit organisation is the oldest and largest airborne health service of its kind in the world. The callout area for doctors is seven million sq km (or 4/5th of the continent).
- The Min Min Light is an Outback legend and the stuff of bush yarns. Out of the dark night sky, this unexplained phenomenon appears out of nowhere on Outback roads. Greenish in colour, it seems to float in mid-air surrounded by a mysterious glow mesmerising viewers.⁴
- The Overland Telegraph (linking Adelaide to Darwin) was completed in 1872. The 'bush telegraph' is Australian slang, a reference to the unofficial communication network by which rumours and news are spread in the bush.
- The Northern Territory brands itself as "Australia's Outback". Darwin, its capital, only has a population of 200,000, which is very small for a city.
- Bollywood recently filmed a movie in outback South Australia, 'Hey Baby'.
- At 700,000 sq km, Australia's biggest lake (Lake Eyre) is 10 times the size of Singapore. Our longest fence (the Dingo Fence) stretches 5,300km to the Queensland coast. Our biggest cattle station (Anna Creek) is 24,000 sq km.

Uniquely Australian

- Explore the immense desert plains of red sand and white salt pans, colourful gorges and unusual monoliths.
- Drive a golf ball over a grassless fairway in Coober Pedy.
- Drive along the iconic Birdsville Track from Birdsville to Marree.
- Go camel trekking through pristine desert landscapes at Uluru or in the Lake Eyre Basin.





- **Watch a camel race.** Meet and mingle with real life Outback characters trackside as you cheer on the camels on the red dirt track at the famous Boulia Camel Races.
- **Share a drink with fellow travellers** as the Spirit of the Outback train leaves the city behind, bound for the wide open plains of Outback Queensland.
- **Drive through the outback.** Nothing gives a sense of the vastness and character of the Outback like driving through it on seemingly endless roads that stretch for miles into the distant horizon. On an Outback driving adventure on the Matilda Highway, you'll start to notice fewer vehicles, friendlier people and colder beer. Every day brings genuine Outback characters and natural beauty that will take your breath away.
- **Get a bird's eye view of the Outback.** Vivid sunrises and sunsets and the contrast of wide open spaces, never-ending sand dunes and pristine wetlands teeming with birdlife, will be life-long memories of your Outback flying adventure.
- **Play 'postie' for a day** when you take off from Cairns airport to deliver mail by air to inland outposts on the world's longest one day mail service. Feel the true remoteness of the Outback, then the thrill of delivering a much-needed link to the outside world as you come into land on vast stations and share a cup of tea with the station families.
- Get a taste of the real outback on the **Outback Mail Run tour**, from Coober Pedy to Oodnadatta and William Creek. Travelling over 600km a day over unsealed roads in an airconditioned 4WD, you'll accompany the mailman as he delivers post to some of the desert's tiniest towns and largest cattle stations, meeting more than a few of the local characters along the way.
- Head off on a Gawler Ranges Outback and wilderness safari led by some genuine South Australians.
- In the Pilbara region, see the desolate vastness of North-Western Australia, the interminably flat landscape of spinifex bush; and the oldest rocks in the world.
- **Marvel at ancient dinosaur footprints** at Lark Quarry National Park, the world's only preserved tracks of a dinosaur stampede.
- **Kayak Katherine Gorge.** Get up close and personal with a water monitor as you canoe the tranquil waters, or stop off and take a dip in one of the many rock pools.
- **Join thousands of visitors** who fly into the tiny Outback town of Birdsville for its annual race meeting. The remote location lures colourful characters who love the atmosphere of the country races, cheering on the winners and sleeping in a 'swag' under the stars.
- **Go to the bush races.** Country race meets are the events on the Outback calendar. Locals will drive for hours for race days and when they arrive, it's party time. Fashions, food and race tips are taken as seriously as any city event.
- **Visit the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and School of the Air** in Alice Springs. You can tour the aircraft hangar or the radio room, which handles calls to and from remote towns and stations. Covering 80 per cent of Australia, the RFDS treats about 160,000 patients each year.
- **Gaze at the stars.** Stand out in the outback and gaze at an unbroken 360 degree horizon, an immense dome of sky, and the Southern Cross and other constellations not visible in the northern hemisphere. Whether you're gazing through a massive telescope or sitting around a campfire, the Outback's crystal clear skies create world-class star gazing conditions.
- **Meet the ancestors at Mungo Park in NSW.** Some scientists consider this location in outback NSW could have been the dawn of modern man.
- Join in the fun of the unique **Cow Poo Throwing Competition** or the fly-catching competition at the quirky Dirt 'n Dust Festival at Julia Creek in Queensland's Outback, also famous for its Outback triathlon and rodeo.
- **Take a Great Aussie Pub Crawl** on horseback through the spectacular New England region of northern NSW.
- **Go outback ballooning in Broome.** Only from the air can you appreciate just how vast the Australian outback really is.
- Learn the ins and outs of four-wheel driving with Australian 4WD Driver Training and Tours or get off the beaten track on one of their 4WD tours.
- Take a side trip to The Combo Waterhole outside Winton. This peaceful billabong is lined by paperback gums and is the real birthplace of Australia's national folk anthem, **Waltzing Matilda**. The song was first performed here in a local hotel.

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1 There is a black stump, and you can find its remains at Blackall in central Queensland; the term generally means far off in the backcountry, far from civilization.

2 The Never Never Country, Henry Lawson, 1906

3 <http://www.australia.com>

4 http://www.boulia.qld.gov.au/attractions/min_min_encounter.shtml