

EXPLORER'S WAY

14-Day ITINERARY

The Explorer's Way follows the route of John McDouall Stuart, a famous Australian explorer who was the first to traverse the continent in 1862. This drive connects Australia's south and north, from Adelaide in South Australia to Darwin in the Northern Territory, and takes in many of Australia's best-known icons, including the Flinders Ranges, Alice Springs, Uluru (Ayers Rock) (as a detour), Kakadu National Park (detour) and Darwin.

Day 1 - Day 6

Adelaide to Coober Pedy. Set off from Adelaide, through South Australia's winegrowing and picturesque farming country, to Coober Pedy, just south of the Northern Territory border.

Day 7

Coober Pedy to Alice Springs, 690 kilometres. Depart Coober Pedy and travel over the state / territory border to Alice Springs. At Cadney Park take the detour east to the stunning Painted Desert (allow at least three hours for this side trip). From Marla, the highway heads north through grasslands, granite country and over the Finke River and on to Alice Springs, the heart of the Red Centre of Australia. You might also consider a detour of traveling to Uluru-Kata Tjuta (Ayers Rock) National Park and Kings Canyon via the Red Centre Way tourist drive, which branches off the Explorer's Way at Eridunda.

Day 8

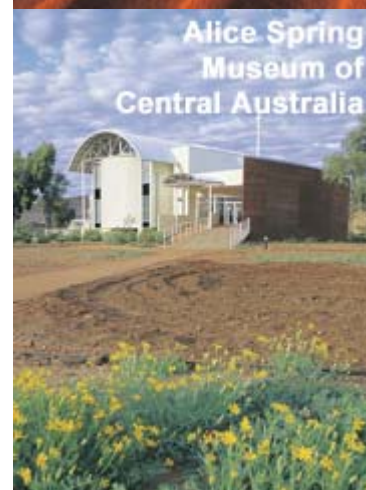
Alice Springs to Wycliffe Well, 375 kilometres. Heading north from Alice Springs, visit the Alice Springs School of the Air and hear a lesson being broadcast to students in a 1.3 million square-kilometre classroom. Stop off at Ti Tree and sample fine table grapes and sparkling mango wine produced in the outback by visionary farmers. Enjoy the rich colours of the desert traveling north to Wycliffe Well - reputed to be Australia's UFO capital - accommodation ranges from pitching a tent to three-star rooms.

Day 9

Wycliffe Well to Tennant Creek, 130 kilometres. Marvel at the extraordinary Devils Marbles, finely balanced piles of huge boulders believed by Aboriginal people to be the eggs of the Rainbow Serpent (it's explained at the Nyinkka Nyunyu Culture Centre). Explore the friendly town of Tennant Creek in the afternoon. The site of Australia's last major gold rush in the 1930s, the town offers many opportunities to experience gold fever - with tours, heritage sites, fossicking and panning for gold. Cool off with a dip in nearby Mary Ann Dam.

Day 10

Tennant Creek to Daly Waters, 400 kilometres. Explore the scenic Elliott and Newcastle Waters Discovery Trail, a network of roads (some are four-wheel-drive only) branching off the main highway to huge cattle stations, character-filled outback pubs and landmarks of World War II. Spend the night at a wayside inn, at the junction of the Stuart and Carpentaria highways, the gateway to the fishing paradise of the Gulf region, or continue on to Daly Waters, a tiny hamlet built around the Territory's oldest pub.



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Day 11

Daly Waters to Mataranka, 165 kilometres. Call in at the historic Larrimah Wayside Inn for a cool drink - and make time for a visit to the Larrimah Museum for a fascinating look at the area's World War II heritage. Continue to Mataranka for a pleasant dip in the warm thermal springs. Stay at a motel or campsite at Mataranka, or camp overnight in Elsey National Park.

Day 12

Mataranka to Katherine, 105 kilometres. Explore the Katherine region, especially spectacular Nitmiluk National Park (Katherine Gorge). Boat cruises and canoeing are great ways to experience the grandeur of this special place, or go bushwalking in the area. A short drive from Katherine is Springvale Homestead, built from sandstone by explorer and pastoralist Alfred Giles in 1878. Enjoy a Devonshire tea while learning more about the area's history.

Day 13

Katherine to Lake Bennett, 260 kilometres. You might also choose to head to Kakadu National Park on the Nature's Way Tourist Drive, which branches off the Explorer's Way at Pine Creek. Meet some local characters at wayside inns on the way to the historic World War II township of Adelaide River.

Day 14

Litchfield to Darwin, 130 kilometres. Visit nearby Litchfield National Park and see stunning waterfalls and amazing termite mounds - and swim safely in crystal-clear swimming holes. Enjoy the first glimpse of the Timor Sea by following the Explorer's Way right into the heart of Darwin.

