DriveNow

Helping travellers since 2003 find the best deals on campervan and car rental

OUTBACK ROAD TRIP · 12 DAYS ONE WAY

Australia Bottom to Top – Adelaide to Darwin

One of Australia's most popular long distance adventures, this 12 day journey takes you up the Stuart Highway through the very heart of the Australian Outback, from the city of churches that is Adelaide to the tropical Top End and Darwin. Seasonal closures and 2WD road restrictions apply on parts of this route, so timing matters.

DISTANCE	DAYS	ROUTE	DRIVING TIME
About 4,115 km	12 days, 11 drives	One way, Adelaide to Darwin	About 57 h 30 min by campervan

LONGEST DRIVE	VEHICLE
540 km, Port Augusta to Coober Pedy	Campervan

This trip crosses the Country of the Kaurna, Barngarla, Nukunu, Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara, Aṉangu, Arrernte, Jawoyn, Bininj, Mungguy, Larrakia and other First Nations peoples. Traditional Custodians



Karlu Karlu (Devils Marbles), day 8 · Illustrative image



Planning overview, not navigation. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors · coastline Natural Earth · relief Terrain Tiles (Geoscience Australia, SRTM).

> Special caution and planning should be taken when travelling in remote areas to ensure sufficient provisions, fuel and prescribed medicines are carried. Weather conditions can make sealed roads impassable, particularly during the northern Wet season.

BEFORE YOU BOOK

Hiring a campervan for this trip

One way to Darwin

Adelaide to Darwin one-way fees: Apollo, Britz, Maui and Mighty charge $300, with a 14-day minimum, for pick-ups from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 ($310 from 1 April 2027). Let's Go charges $249. Campervan Village also has a 14-day minimum. Mighty Lite, Spaceships and Awesome Campers don't do this one-way. This trip is 12 days. With Apollo, Britz, Maui, Mighty and Campervan Village you can still travel for

When you can go

Apollo, Britz, Maui and Mighty close their Darwin and Alice Springs branches from 1 December to 31 March, so their one-ways into Darwin run from April to November. Campervan Village and Let's Go take one-ways into Darwin from December to March too. More on one way to Darwin.

12 days, but you'll be charged for 14. The extra days are yours for stops: a second night at Uluṟu and another at Kakadu fit well. The fee is in the total we quote: compare totals, not daily rates. More on one-way fees and minimum hires.

Your route
All rental vendors in Australia have restrictions on where their vehicles can be taken, so discuss your planned route with the rental company when you pick up. Get the rental company's permission before taking the vehicle somewhere it restricts. If you take it there without permission, you may lose your excess reduction and be fully responsible for any damage. You may also have to pay for towing and recovery, and for damage to other people's property. See road restrictions and when you are fully responsible. This itinerary keeps to sealed roads: between Kings Canyon and Alice Springs it takes the highways, not the partly unsealed Mereenie Loop.

Park passes
Visitors from outside the Territory need an NT Parks Visitor Pass for parks such as Watarrka (Kings Canyon), Tjoritja/West MacDonnell, Karlu Karlu and Nitmiluk. Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa and Kakadu have their own park passes. More on park passes in the Northern Territory.

Picking up in Adelaide

Most Adelaide branches hand over vans until about 3pm, and fewer are open at weekends. Apollo, Britz, Maui, Maui Elite, Mighty and Mighty Lite ask you to arrive by 3pm, and their branch closes on Sundays from May to August: pick up on the Saturday or Monday instead (pick-up times and late flights). If your flight lands after early afternoon, it's often easier to stay the night and collect next morning. More on campervan hire in Adelaide: branches, hours and each brand's rules.

Allow plenty of time at the branch for the paperwork, the vehicle inspection and the van demonstration, and bring every driver's licence. See what to expect when you pick up your campervan: choosing a pick-up time, the inspection and demonstration, the documents to bring and online check-in, and the Adelaide branches. Flying in? See airport pick-ups and what to do about late pick-ups.

DAYS 1–4

South Australia

PICK-UP DAY IN ADELAIDE

DAY 1

Adelaide

PICK-UP

Pick up your campervan in Adelaide today. Allow plenty of time at the depot so the rental company can show you how your campervan works before you leave.

Adelaide is the capital city of South Australia and offers something for everybody, whether that be arts, culture, sport or adventure, you will not be disappointed. Adelaide is also home to many festivals, including the very popular Fringe Festival, so check out what is on offer when you arrive. As well as the festivals, there are plenty of opportunities to go fishing, visit museums, try local produce or just relax in the city.

If you're a sporting fan, take a tour of Adelaide Oval. The tour will take you around the stadium, as well as the museum, which highlights cricket sporting legend Donald Bradman's career. For the adventurous, take a tour to climb the roof of the stadium and see Adelaide from new heights.

Stay Adelaide Caravan Park

DRIVE

310 km from Adelaide | **about 4 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Port Wakefield Highway**

DAY 2

Adelaide to Port Augusta

Depart this morning and take the National Highway A1 to Port Augusta.

Visit the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden and discover the plants and animals that are able to survive Australia's toughest conditions. Explore the vivid red sand dunes, woodlands and vast saltbush plains, and even enjoy mountain views from the top of the red cliff tops. After all of this, you can sit back and enjoy the information centre and have afternoon tea.

Spend the afternoon immersing yourself in the cultural works of the area at the Port Augusta Cultural Centre – Yarta Purtli. Enjoy the gallery spaces and see artworks from both local and interstate artists. Watch a show in the Institute Theatre and experience the artistic talent present in Port Augusta.

Stay Discovery Parks – Port Augusta (formerly Port Augusta BIG4 Holiday Park)

DRIVE

540 km from Port Augusta | **about 7 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 3

Port Augusta to Coober Pedy

LONGEST DRIVE

Depart this morning and take the National Highway A1. Keep right and continue on the Princes Highway/ Stuart Highway/ A87. Turn right onto Hutchison Street and follow signs to Coober Pedy.

Coober Pedy is a big mining town, so no visit is complete without exploring the history of mining. The Old Timers Mine offers an insight into how the opal miners would have to dig for opals all by hand, and the treacherous conditions they had to live through to find these precious stones. You can also experience what it would have been like to live underground, in one of the miners' family homes that have been preserved.

Long drive Start early and share the driving.

Stay Stuart Range Outback Resort

DRIVE

235 km from Coober Pedy | **about 3 h 15 min** by campervan

Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 4

Coober Pedy to Marla

Depart this morning and return to the Stuart Highway/ A87. Take the exit for Marla.

Marla is a stop over, before tackling the drive to Uluṟu. Use this time to refuel, relax and stock up before another day of driving ahead — it's about 500 km to Uluṟu with limited fuel stops, so plan your refuelling carefully. The town itself has a population of roughly 70 people, and derives its name from an Aboriginal word meaning kangaroo.

Stay Marla Travellers Rest

No bookings Marla Travellers Rest doesn't take bookings for its powered sites: they're first in, best parked, so arrive in good time.

DAYS 5–7

The Red Centre

DRIVE

500 km from Marla | **about 6 h 45 min** by campervan | Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 5

Marla (SA) to Uluṟu (NT)

Depart this morning and return along the Stuart Highway (A87). At Erldunda, turn left onto the Lasseter Highway (State Route 4) and follow it to Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park.

Visit Uluṟu, one of Australia's most famous attractions. Uluṟu is 348 metres tall and has a circumference of 9.4 kilometres (5.8 miles). An experience not to miss is to watch the sun rise or set over the rock. The range of colours contrasting against the rock will leave you speechless. Likewise, do not forget to take the time and learn about the histories and stories of Uluṟu and the people that have lived there for over 30,000 years.

Long drive Start early and share the driving.

Stay Ayers Rock Campground

DRIVE

305 km from Uluṟu (Yulara) | **about 4 h 15 min** by campervan | Via **Lasseter Highway**

DAY 6

Uluṟu to Kings Canyon

Depart this morning and follow the Red Centre Way to Petermann. Exit at Kings Canyon.

Kings Canyon is a part of the Watarrka National Park, and one of the best ways to see it is by foot. Try the challenging 6 km hike around the rim of the canyon. This allows you to see every view of the gorge from up above. There are tours led by Aboriginal elders, who will teach you about the local flora and fauna, and its significance to the traditional owners. Next, climb down into the Garden of Eden in the canyon. This waterhole comes to life with greenery and animals.

Stay Kings Canyon Holiday Park (Discovery Resorts, at Kings Canyon Resort)

DRIVE

480 km from Kings Canyon | **about 6 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Luritja Road, Lasseter and Stuart highways**

DAY 7

Kings Canyon to Alice Springs

Depart this morning and head back down Luritja Road to the Lasseter Highway, then east to the Stuart Highway at Erldunda and north to Alice Springs. This is the sealed way round. The Mereenie Loop along Larapinta Drive is shorter, but its unsealed section is off limits in 2WD vans. In a 4WD, Apollo, Britz and Mighty need their permission at pick-up and Campervan Village its written permission, and you also need a Mereenie Tour Pass. See outback and unsealed roads.

Go walking along the MacDonnell Ranges, which stretch for over 200 kilometres. Climb up the red rocky escarpments, climb down the gorges or cool off in one of the swimming holes. Simpsons Gap is one not-to-miss, where the dramatic cliffs frame the waterhole for a perfect but secluded spot (swimming isn't allowed there). Try the Larapinta bushwalking trails, which pass through the MacDonnell Ranges, for a way to discover the flora and fauna on foot.

Long drive Start early and share the driving.

Stay G'day Mate Tourist Park

DAYS 8–12

Up the Stuart Highway to the Top End

DRIVE

405 km from Alice Springs | **about 5 h 15 min** by campervan

Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 8

Alice Springs to Devils Marbles

Depart this morning and take the National Highway 87 to Devils Marbles.

The Devils Marbles (Karlu Karlu) are large ochre rock formations, and a sacred site to the local indigenous people. The juxtaposition of the stones against the sky makes for a beautiful picture, especially the contrasts found at sunset, when the sky turns a dark purple and orange colour. Use the many walking trails to take in the serenity of this area.

Stay Devils Marbles Hotel

DRIVE

520 km from Karlu Karlu | **about 6 h 45 min** by campervan

Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 9

Devils Marbles to Daly Waters

Depart this morning and head north on National Highway 87. Continue along National Highway 1 until you reach Daly Waters.

Daly Waters is the original Australian pub. Nowhere else will you find something so quintessentially Australian. From the décor, to the food and people, you will find something to love here. They serve the classic Aussie meals such as parmas and steaks, but also don't be afraid to try some kangaroo or crocodile.

Long drive	Start early and share the driving.
Stay	The Daly Waters Pub
No bookings	The pub doesn't take bookings for caravan sites: you get one at the bar when you arrive, so arrive in good time.

DRIVE

275 km from Daly Waters | **about 3 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 10

Daly Waters to Katherine

Depart this morning and take the National Highway 1. Turn right onto Chamber Drive, and then left onto First Street to enter Katherine.

Discover Katherine through its waterways, and take a cruise through the mighty Katherine Gorge. View the landscapes as they slowly change throughout your journey in Nitmiluk National Park, and try and spot the local wallabies. If you're up for something more adventurous, hire a canoe or kayak, and drift along the water.

The Top End is notorious for its crocodiles, so why not take a croc-spotting tour and see them for yourself. Kangaroos and feral camels are also common wildlife on outback highways through the Territory, so stay alert on the road.

Stay	BIG4 Breeze Holiday Parks – Katherine (formerly BIG4 Katherine Low Level Caravan Park)

DRIVE

305 km from Katherine | **about 5 h 45 min** by campervan

Via **Stuart Highway**

DAY 11

Katherine to Kakadu National Park

Depart this morning and take the National Highway 1. Turn right onto the Kakadu Highway/ State Route 21. Continue until you reach Kakadu. You need a Kakadu park pass (https://kakadu.gov.au/plan/passes/).

Visit the Kakadu National Park, and learn about the oldest living culture in the world, and how it connects to the sacred land. The national park is full of activities, so be selective in what you decide to do.

There is nothing quite like swimming in the natural pools around the park, including the Jim Jim plunge pool. Surrounded by the rainforest landscape, you are transported away from modern civilisation in this natural oasis. Jim Jim Falls, Twin Falls and Karnamarr campground are closed for all of 2026 while damaged roads are repaired, at the request of Traditional Owners. Parks Australia expects them to reopen for the 2027 dry season. In other years, the road to them is 4WD only, and rental companies restrict it, so check your rental terms or join a tour from Jabiru. Some sites and walks close at short notice, so check Kakadu's access and alerts (https://kakadu.gov.au/news/access-and-alerts/) page before you go. Take one of the many cultural tours, and learn everything from the rock art to searching for bush foods.

Stay Aurora Kakadu Lodge (formerly Kakadu Lodge), Jabiru

DRIVE

255 km from Jabiru | **about 3 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Arnhem Highway**

DAY 12

Kakadu to Darwin

RETURN

Depart this morning and head west on Arnhem Highway/ State Route 36 towards Point Stuart Road. Merge onto National Highway 1. Keep right and continue along Tiger Brennan Drive.

Welcome to Darwin, the capital city of the Northern Territory. Visit the Mindil Beach markets at sunset to try some good local food and buy some souvenirs. The Mindil Beach Sunset Market runs on Thursday and Sunday evenings from the last Thursday in April to the last Thursday in October. Here, you will be able to witness one of Darwin's world-famous sunsets, as the sky paints a picture of purple and orange haze. Visit one of the crocodile farms and research facilities, and watch the crocodiles jump out of the water as they are fed: Crocodylus Park is about 15 minutes from the city.

When you return your campervan, allow time for the return inspection. Return it by the time on your booking, as rental companies charge for late returns.

Stay BIG4 Hidden Valley Holiday Park (formerly Hidden Valley Tourist Park)

Returning in Darwin

Drop-off times are often earlier than people expect, so check yours. Apollo, Britz, Maui, Maui Elite and Mighty have no toilet or grey-water emptying service in Darwin, so return their vans with both emptied. Fill up near your branch before you return the van, with the fuel type your rental company specifies (returning the van). With an early flight, returning the van the day before can take the pressure off.

Plan your last day around your branch's drop-off time. See returning your campervan: choosing a drop-off time, late returns and early returns, and the Darwin branches.

Enjoy the trip from the bottom of Australia to the top.

Traditional Custodians

Adelaide: Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains (City of Adelaide (https://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/about-adelaide/our-city/reconciliation/))

Port Augusta: Barngarla and Nukunu peoples (Yarta Purtli, Port Augusta City Council (https://yartapurtli.sa.gov.au/))

Coober Pedy: Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara people (District Council of Coober Pedy (https://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au/latest-news-events/latest-news/open-letter-to-the-coober-pedy-community))

Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa: Aṉangu (Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park (https://uluru.gov.au/about/joint-management/))

Alice Springs (Mparntwe): Central Arrernte people (Alice Springs Town Council (https://www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au/residents/community/culture-history/local-culture.aspx))

The Barkly region: Warumungu, Mudburra, Jingili, Wakaya, Wambaya, Waanyi, Warlpiri, Warlmanpa, Alyawarr, Anmatyerre and Kaytetye (Barkly Regional Council (https://www.barkly.nt.gov.au/))

Katherine: Jawoyn, Dagoman and Wardaman (Katherine Town Council, Municipal Plan 2024/25 (https://www.katherine.nt.gov.au/Profiles/katherine/Assets/ClientData/Documents/Municipal_Plan/Municipal_Plan_2024-25_WEB.pdf))

Kakadu: Bininj in the north and Mungguy in the south (Kakadu National Park, DCCEEW (https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/national-parks/kakadu-national-park))

Darwin (Garramilla): Larrakia people (City of Darwin (https://www.darwin.nt.gov.au/community/about-darwin))

Country boundaries are approximate, and some are shared or contested. These names follow local councils and park managers. The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia (https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia) shows the wider picture.

Pay your respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which you are travelling, and to their Elders past, present and emerging. The Australian environment is fragile, so tread lightly: take only photos and leave only footprints.

DriveNow Disclaimer

DriveNow receives no money or commission for any holiday park, campground, hotel, restaurant, cafe, pub, tour or attraction named on this page. We include them because they suit a campervan trip, and we check them from time to time.

DriveNow's suggested itineraries help you plan your own trip. Distances and times are from mapped routes and are a guide only; campervan driving times are car times plus about 20%. Road conditions, closures, opening hours and prices change, so check them before you travel. Any reliance on this itinerary is at your own discretion.

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