SEVEN DAYS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

ITINERARY

AT A GLANCE

2 nights Darwin
Darwin–Kakadu (2 hours drive), overnight Kakadu, return to Darwin
Take The Ghan train Darwin–Katherine (3.75 hours), overnight on The Ghan
Take The Ghan train Katherine–Alice Springs (17 hours), overnight on the Ghan
1 night Alice Springs
Drive Alice Springs–Uluru (4–5 hours), overnight Uluru
Drive Uluru-Kata Tjuta (1 hour)
Drive Kata Tjuta to Alice Springs (6.5 hours)

Darwin – Kakadu – Katherine – Alice Springs – Uluru

The Northern Territory is famous for two iconic attractions that can change the way you see the world. These are the vast wetlands and plains of Kakadu National Park, and the enormous sandstone rock formation called Uluru.

DAY ONE

Spend today exploring the tropical city of Darwin.
Take a stroll through Darwin Botanic Gardens, or visit the Darwin Waterfront precinct with its wave pool and swimming lagoon. You could also call in at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.
Get a close up view of Saltwater Crocodiles at Crocosaurus Cove, in the heart of the city. Bring your bathers and ‘swim with the crocs’, hold a baby crocodile and enter the Cage of Death — if you dare.
Alternatively take a trip to the Territory Wildlife Park. Walk through treetop aviaries, stroll around a natural lagoon and follow an underwater tunnel to come face to face with a 3.7m crocodile.

If you are in Darwin on a Thursday or Sunday evening in the Dry Season (April–October) don’t miss the Mindil Beach Sunset Markets.

Darwin Highlights

> Stroll through the palms, orchids and boab trees in the Darwin Botanic Gardens
> Learn about the local history and culture at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
> Come face to face with giant saltwater crocodiles at Crocosaurus Cove
> See wallabies, monitor lizards, giant stalks called Jabiru and more at Territory Wildlife Park
> Sample food from around the world at the Mindil Beach Sunset Markets
DAY TWO

Today, travel to the World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, stop at the Bowali Visitor Centre to gain an overview of the area, which has a rich Aboriginal heritage dating back more than 50,000 years.

Travel north to the East Alligator River and enjoy a Guluyambi Cultural Cruise. Learn about Aboriginal mythology, bush survival skills, and the local wildlife. Over 280 species of birds can be found in Kakadu.

Other options are a cruise on the Yellow Water Billabong, or a bushwalk to see one of Kakadu’s waterfalls, such as Jim Jim Falls.

A highlight of the park is definitely Ubirr, a major Aboriginal art site. Among the animals painted in the main gallery are various fish species, goannas, turtles, possums, and wallabies. Enjoy the view of the sun setting over the floodplains.

Kakadu Highlights

› Visit the Bowali Visitor centre and discover all the things you can do in Kakadu National Park
› Learn about Indigenous culture, traditional uses for plants and animals and the East Alligator River food chain on a Guluyambi Cultural Cruise
› See crocodiles, buffalo and a range of wetland birdlife on a Yellow Water Billabong Cruise
› Don’t miss the unforgettable sunset from the top of the rocks at Ubirr

DAY THREE

This morning you could take a scenic flight from Jabiru airport for a bird’s eye view of the Kakadu wetlands. Then travel south to explore the Nourlangie Rock shelter. Aboriginal people used the shelter and painted its walls for at least 20,000 years.

A short drive from here is the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre, where you can learn more about the local Aboriginal people and their strong cultural link to the landscape.

Travel back to Darwin in the late afternoon, and enjoy some fine dining at one of city’s top class restaurants perhaps.

Kakadu Highlights

› Take to the skies for magnificent views over Kakadu National Park
› Look through the window of a rich spiritual tradition at the Nourlangie Rock Art Site
› Discover Aboriginal Art and Culture at Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre
› Dine out Territory style. Balmy evenings make alfresco dining popular while menus offer contemporary cuisine featuring local produce and Asian flavours
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DAY FOUR

Hop aboard The Ghan for your trip south through the verdant green hues of the tropics to the red ochre dirt of the Red Centre. The Ghan stops in the Northern Territory town of Katherine and stays there for much of the afternoon. The big attraction here is the serene and ancient Katherine Gorge, also known by the Aboriginal name of Nitmiluk.

The gorge’s sandstone walls, which rise up from the Katherine River, are up to 70 metres (229 feet) high. There are dramatic waterfalls, and you can frequently see freshwater crocodiles resting on the sandy banks. Cruise boats drift along the waters of the gorge, and you can hire canoes too.

Upgrade you experience to a breathtaking helicopter or scenic flight experience over this natural wonder.

Katherine Highlights

› Travel one of Australia’s iconic train journeys The Ghan
› Enjoy a cruise on the idyllic Katherine River surrounded by the majestic sandstone walls
› Take in unparralled views of this geological wonder on a helicopter or scenic flight
› Gain an insight in to the culture and ways of the traditional owners of Nitmiluk, the Jawoyn people, with a tailormade cultural experience

DAY FIVE

This morning wake to an outback sunrise as you arrive in Alice Springs. Play a round of golf at the Alice Springs Golf Course surrounded by the Macdonell ranges or shop for Aboriginal art in one of the stunning art galleries.

Gain an insight in to outback life with a visit to the School of the Air. This ‘schoolroom’ is actually a radio broadcast hub that serves school kids living on Outback farms.

Other options include, a visit to the historic Overland Telegraph Station, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Alice Springs Reptile Center which has the largest reptile display in the Northern Territory.

If you want to see some of the local desert animals up close, including cute big-eared bilbies and thorny devil lizards, then visit the fascinating Alice Springs Desert Park.

Overnight Alice Springs.

Alice Springs Highlights

› Immerse yourself in Aboriginal culture at the various art galleries
› Discover the history of Alice Springs at the Telegraph Station
› Visit the School of the Air and learn how outback kids living in isolated locations receive their education
› Explore the interactive displays at the Royal Flying Doctor Service visitor centre
› See rare and endangered animals at Alice Springs Desert Park
DAY SIX

There are two routes you can take to Uluru today. The first is the direct highway, a four- to five-hour drive.

Alternatively, take a few days travelling the spectacular Red Centre Way. The road is partly dirt, so check on road conditions before you depart.

The Red Centre Way cuts through the west MacDonnell Ranges – ancient mountains sliced by gorges with refreshing waterholes. Continues past Cosse Bluff – created by an ancient meteor strike.

Then onwards to Kings Canyon, with its sandstone walls and magnificent views, before heading to Uluru.

Uluru is one of those places that can transform you, particularly at dawn and dusk when it changes colour.

Walk around the base alone or join an Aboriginal guide to hear about the Dreamtime stories behind its creation.

If you are feeling adventurous you can ride a camel, jump on the back of a Harley Davidson or take to the skies for a helicopter flight or skydive.

Uluru Highlights

- Travel one of Australia’s great outback drives, the Red Centre Way – allow 5-7 days
- Explore the spectacular scenery of Kings Canyon
- See waterholes and rock art caves on the 9.4 kilometre (5.8 mile) base walk of Uluru
- Hear stories of Dreamtime on an Aboriginal guided tour
- Watch Uluru’s dramatic colour transformation at sunset
- Dine under the stars, with views of Uluru, Voyages offers a range of dining options

DAY SEVEN

Make your way to Kata Tjuta, also known as the Olgas, it’s just a 50-kilometre (32-mile) drive from Uluru. These 36 giant ochre rock domes rise out of the desert just like Uluru and date back 500 million years. Some people find them even more mysterious and spiritual than Uluru.

Follow the Valley of the Winds Walk – a moderately difficult track with breathtaking views. It is very steep in places, but the 7.4km (4.6 mile) circuit is worth the effort – it takes you between the domes, through creek beds and away from the crowds.

You could drive back to Alice Springs afterwards, though make sure you aren’t on the roads at dusk, when kangaroos are at their most active. Alternatively fly out of Ayers Rock Airport to your next destination.

Kata Tjuta Highlights

- Hike around the soaring rock domes, which glow at sunrise and sunset
- Choose from a number of walking trails that range from easy strolls to more difficult tracks
- For an adventurous challenge take the Valley of the Winds Walk
- Take in magnificent panoramic views of Kata Tjuta from the dune viewing area

USEFUL LINKS

The Ghan
www.gsr.com.au

Kakadu National Park
www.kakadunationalpark.com

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park
www.environment.gov.au/parks/uluru

Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory
www.magnt.nt.gov.au

Crocosaurus Cove
www.crocosaurus Cove.com

Territory Wildlife Park
www.territorywildlifepark.com.au

Guluyambi Cultural Cruise
www.guluyambi.com.au

Alice Springs Golf Course
www.alicespringsgolfclub.com.au

School of the Air
www.assoa.nt.edu.au

Alice Springs Desert Park
www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au

Red Centre Way

Voyages
www.voyages.com.au