

Uluru and Australia's Red Heart

Dates: *Saturday, 2nd September, to Sunday, 10th September, 2006* (9 days)
Cost: \$1,900 **Style:** *Camping* **Start & Finish:** *Alice Springs*

Discover World Heritage values of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. This safari includes spectacular desert scenery and explores the Outback's precious and resilient nature at the continent's heart. Discover the rich cultural (especially Aboriginal) heritage, while exploring some stunning parts of this red landscape. A rare opportunity to discover this absorbing part of Australia with expert guidance.

John Sinclair, who first led a safari group to Uluru in 1984, will again lead this safari. He has led more than 1000 safaris to Australian World Heritage sites since 1968.

Guide: Ian Morris, O.A.M., is an outstanding naturalist, great raconteur, a superb photographer and an interpreter of Aboriginal culture. Ian, is a long-standing Territorian. His background includes being superintendent of Uluru National Park before becoming an environmental and education consultant 20 years ago. Ian will provide his expert background local knowledge.

The safari is limited to a maximum of 20 safarists, who will travel in a 22 seat air-conditioned bus with the leaders.

Friday, 1st September: The safari gear is due to arrive at the Heavitree Gap Tourist Park from Darwin about lunchtime. Safarists, particularly those arriving on flights, are invited to join the camp after lunch. Although the safari doesn't officially start until Saturday an informal barbeque will be provided for all safarists who arrive on Friday.

Draft Itinerary

Day 1; Saturday, 2nd September: The introduction to this stunning arid environment begins with an exploration of the best features of the East MacDonnell Ranges which, although less famous than the West MacDonnells, are equally as impressive. Excursions include the old gold town of Arltunga, as well as Trephina Gorge and Emily and Jessie Gaps, along with significant relics of Aboriginal heritage.

Camp: Heavitree Gap Tourist Park, Alice Springs.

Day 2; Sunday, 3rd September: This is a day to discover the secrets of the Australian deserts, the plants and animals, and their traditional use by Aboriginal people. These are all impressively presented at the Alice Springs Desert Park. We also plan to visit the Old Telegraph Station next to the springs which gave the town its name.

Camp: Heavitree Gap Tourist Park, Alice Springs.

Day 3; Monday, 4th September: We break camp to explore the West MacDonnell Ranges. This is Namatjira country and true to the famous artist's colours. Visit many features along this dazzling drive, including Simpson's Gap, Standley Chasm, the ochre pits and Glen Ormiston, before settling in at Glen Helen. The West MacDonnells landscapes are internationally famous.

Camp: Glen Helen.

Day 4; Tuesday, 5th September: Travel via the Mereenie Loop Road to visit Tnorala (Gosse Bluff), where a comet crashed to earth 142 million years ago forming a mammoth crater surrounded by tall rock hills. This area is now a conservation reserve. Travel from here on to Hermannsburg, the site of an old Lutheran Mission, and once the home of great Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira.

Camp: Heavitree Gap Tourist Park, Alice Springs.

Day 5, Wednesday, 6th September: Make an excursion to the Finke Gorge National Park, where tall cabbage palms and other

rare plants grow along the several water-courses which cut through this park's dry stony hills. The remarkable scenery includes the picturesque Palm Valley. From here we return to Alice Springs. Camp: Heavitree Park Alice Springs

Day 6; Thursday, 7th September: We head south along the Stuart Highway with a diversion to visit the Henbury Meteorite Reserve. The small craters result from the impact of meteorites from outer space. We then follow the Lasseter Highway west to Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park, where we settle into the camping ground before setting off to watch the sunset over Uluru. Camp: Yalara Village.

Day 7; Friday, 8th September: The only way to truly experience Uluru (Ayers Rock) is to visit it. No picture can show the magnificence of the size and colours of the rock (348 m high). Like the Olgas, Uluru is set within the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, and the same pass that you use for the Olgas covers Ayers Rock. Take a wonderful day walking around "The Rock" inside this World Heritage National Park without climbing it out of respect for the traditional owners. In the afternoon we will also explore the interesting and sculptured Kata Tjuta (the Olgas), a mass of smaller nearby monoliths, full of legends. Enjoy the spectacular scenery and watch the sun set there. Camp: Yalara Village.

Day 8; Saturday, 9th September: Travel to Watarrka National Park (Kings Canyon), a wonderful area for walking through a colourful and sculptured landscape. This is an area of grand scenic vistas. Breathtaking, 300 m, sheer cliff faces, a geological "lost city" of sandstone domes, and a cycad-fringed waterhole are among the special highlights and are a spectacular climax to this scenic Red Centre safari. Celebrate the last night with our traditional party. Camp: Kings Canyon.

Day 9; Sunday, 10th September: Explore around Kathleen Gorge within the Watarrka National Park. This is one of the most spectacular spots in Central Australia. Discover something about the Aboriginal life and traditions of this region. Planned arrival back in Alice Springs by about 6.00 pm. The bus will continue towards Darwin, arriving the following evening.

