



SIMPSON DESERT EXPEDITION

ALICE SPRINGS – ALICE SPRINGS

SAMPLE ITINERARY

This is a sample itinerary and may be subject to change. We may need to alter or amend itineraries, excursions, accommodation, or sightseeing arrangements from those published, with little or no notice. This may be due to road conditions, weather, cultural considerations, safety factors and other operational considerations or government regulations. Final itineraries are sent to passengers approximately 2-3 weeks before travel.

DAY 1 – Alice Springs

Today you will be greeted by our friendly and professional Tour Directors.

After checking in to the Mercure Alice Springs Resort, the remainder of the day can be spent at your leisure. Tonight, enjoy a welcome dinner and tour briefing at the hotel restaurant. (D)

DAY 2 – Alice Springs – Tapatjatjaka Art and Craft Centre – Chambers Pillar

Today the adventure begins as we depart Alice Springs and follow the Old Ghan Railway south. Stop to view the Ewaninga Rock Carvings, a highly-concentrated series of petroglyphs which provide a valuable link to the activities of early Arrernte Aboriginal people.

Sandstone outcrops form natural galleries which contain a great variety of symbols and motifs. Later this morning we continue heading south to Titjikala and visit the Tapatjatjaka Art and Craft Centre. Browse through the gallery and chat to some of the artists before heading west towards the Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve.

Here we'll set up camp and your crew will help you get familiarised with the equipment. Late this afternoon, enjoy a walk to Chambers Pillar for a magnificent desert sunset. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Finke – Old Andado

This morning we depart Chambers Pillar and once again follow the Old Ghan Railway south. Your knowledgeable guides will tell you all about this fascinating part of Australian history as you head towards Finke.

At Finke we will top up with fuel before heading through Old Crown station. Here the landscape opens up and we start to cross our first large dunes on our way to Old Andado.

At Old Andado we will learn about the stations somewhat tragic history. The homestead is frozen in time and very little has changed since its last inhabitant Molly Clarke left.

After some time exploring the station buildings, we will move on to visit some of Australia's rarest trees at the Mac Clark Acacia Peuce Conservation Reserve.

These trees once covered large areas of land that surrounds the Simpson Desert. Today they only survive at two other sites near Birdsville and Boulia.

Tonight, we will camp among the sand dunes at Madigan Camp 1A. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Crossing the Madigan Line

Today we begin crossing one of the least travelled tracks across the Simpson Desert. We follow the path of Cecil Madigan and his scientific expedition across the here in 1939. Although he was not the first white man to cross the desert, he became known as one of the last classic explorers of Australia.

The dunes here are frequent and the terrain slow going. With detailed planning and preparation Madigan's expedition took 25 days to travel 570 kilometres from Old Andado to Birdsville.

He did it on foot and with camels. With our G-Wagons we will take just 4 days averaging not much more than 20kph.

Travelling slowly though the desert will give us plenty of opportunity to view the desert flora and fauna. On a good season the wildflowers will be abundant, and if we are really lucky, we may get a glimpse of the elusive Eyrean grasswren. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Crossing the Madigan Line

As Day 4. (B,L,D)



DAY 6 – Hay River - Munga - Thirri National park

Continuing along the Madigan Line we will travel on part of the Hay River Track. The Hay River was an ancient travelling route for Aboriginal people moving across the desert from north to south.

Evidence of their stone tool making sites still exist here. Although usually dry there are numerous Coolabah trees marking the path of the river. As we travel towards Queensland border and the Munga-Thirri National Park the vegetation will begin to change.

Large stands of Gidgee trees appear between the sand dunes. Camels often frequent these areas so keep a sharp eye out as we crest each dune.

Tonight, we will camp among the fragrant Gidgee Trees. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Adria Downs - Birdsville

Today we will swing south along the Madigan Line through Adria Downs Station. Adria Downs is private property and Outback Spirit has received special permission to traverse through the station.

We will visit the Annandale Station ruins; the first QLD station purchased by Sir Sidney Kidman in 1896. Continuing south along Eyre Creek we will meet up with the QAA Line for the final leg to Birdsville.

The sand dunes here are much larger than what we have seen so far with spectacular views. Depending on previous traffic and how dry it is these dunes can become quite a challenge.

Our final dune for the day will be Napperanica (Big Red). For the adventurous and if conditions are right, we may have a go at the 'hard way'. We will take a little time to enjoy the late afternoon views on the dune before hitting the bitumen and onto Birdsville.

We will have two nights at the Birdsville Hotel where we can enjoy a pub meal and a cold beer. The former founder of Outback Spirit, Courtney Ellis now owns and operates this iconic property. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Birdsville Rest Day

Today is a day of rest in Birdsville for passengers and crew alike. Catch up on washing, visit some of the sights around town or wander down to the edge of the Diamantina River. Our meals for the day will be at the hotel. (B,L,D)

DAY 9 – QAA Line

Leaving Birdsville, we will return to Big Red and spend a little time soaking up the view in the morning light. We will continue back to Eyre Creek and tackle the same QAA Line dunes in reverse.

Due to the prevailing winds the dunes are steeper when travelling from East to West and after re-stocking in Birdsville even more challenging.

The QAA Line is one of hundreds of mostly straight tracks made in the desert by oil exploration expeditions as early as the 1960's.

The 'shot lines' were usually made with bulldozers, cleared and smoothed to allow access to seismic equipment. Sensors would be laid and explosive shots detonated to listen to echoes of possible resources under the ground.

Fortunately for us no viable quantities of resources were found. Today comparatively few of these exploratory tracks remain and are kept open simply by the tourist traffic. The QAA was originally kept open for access to Poeppel Corner from Birdsville.

Towards the end of the day, we will come across some of the larger, and sometimes muddy salt lakes of the Simpson Desert. If necessary, we will pick our way through the drier tracks and skirt around the edges of the lakes before camping on higher ground near Poeppel Corner. (B,L,D)

DAY 10 – French Line - WAA Line - Rig Road

Beginning the day, we visit three states at once and learn about why the surveyor Poeppel placed the original post in the wrong spot. Continuing on we will travel along the French Line visiting the geological anomaly of the Apporodinna Attora Knolls.



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Standing out amongst the red sand, these two flat topped hills of white gypseous rock were once dunes formed of flour gypsum that later hardened to their present form. Today they offer some of the best views in the Simpson.

From here we have a few options of tracks to make our way across the deeper part of the desert. Depending on conditions we may take the more southern and difficult WAA Line.

Our camp sites for the next two nights will be among the Simpson's big sand dunes. A climb to the top of the nearest dune at sunset is well worth the effort; the breathtaking view and change in colours a true feast for the eyes.

In the evening, enjoy sitting around the campfire as your crew prepare dinner and explain the fascinating landscape. On clear nights, star gazing is truly an incredible experience. (B,L,D)

DAY 11 – French Line - WAA Line - Rig Road

As Day 10. (B,L,D)

DAY 12 – Purnee Bore - Dalhouse Springs - Mt Dare

The sand dunes will begin to get smaller as we reach the end of the French Line and visit Purnee Bore. At 1.9km deep and was made by the French Petroleum Company when exploring for oil in 1963. Artesian Basin water still flows out of the bore and creates a rare oasis in the desert.

Leaving the sand dunes, we will move on towards Dalhousie Springs for a well-earned soak in the naturally heated artesian water that rises naturally to the surface through underground fault lines.

This popular spot has a campground, ranger station and change room. The springs themselves have easy access via stairs so you can relax in the water with minimal effort.

After drying off and some lunch we will continue on through the ever-changing landscape towards Mt Dare where we will camp for the night and have a meal at the infamous Mt Dare Hotel.

No doubt there will be other travellers here celebrating their crossing of the Simpson. (B,L,D)

DAY 13 – Finke - Charlotte Waters - Old Ghan Railway

Returning to civilisation, we pack up camp for the final time and exit the Witjira National Park saying goodbye to South Australia and head to the ruins of Charlotte Waters. This was the site of an old Telegraph Repeater station built in 1872.

Continuing north we will meet up with the road to Finke and make our way back along the Old Ghan Railway, before re-joining the main track and set our sights for Alice Springs.

Arriving mid-afternoon, we check in the Mercure Alice Springs for the final night of our adventure. Enjoy a celebratory dinner together and relive the expedition with your fellow travellers. (B,L,D)

DAY 14 – Alice Springs

After breakfast this morning you'll be transferred to the airport or your accommodation if staying on. (B)

Every effort will be made by your crew to ensure that the above itinerary is followed. However, Outback Spirit reserves the right to alter the itinerary once on tour as required due to weather and track conditions or other operational considerations.