



AUSTRALIA'S 20 BEST

OUTBACK TRACKS

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LEAD.



Australia is a place dominated by deserts, monsoonal regions and semi-arid landscapes. Criss-crossing these wide expanses are 4WD tracks that, if you're properly prepared, will take you to some of the most impressive off-road locations anywhere in the world. Ranging from easy dirt tracks to brutal cross-country slogs, we've put together 20 of the best Outback tracks you'll find in this great country of ours. So, let the countdown begin!



Australia is an amazing place, and we are privileged to be able to travel through so much of it. TJM would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



Written by: James Jackson

20 · THE STRZELECKI TRACK.

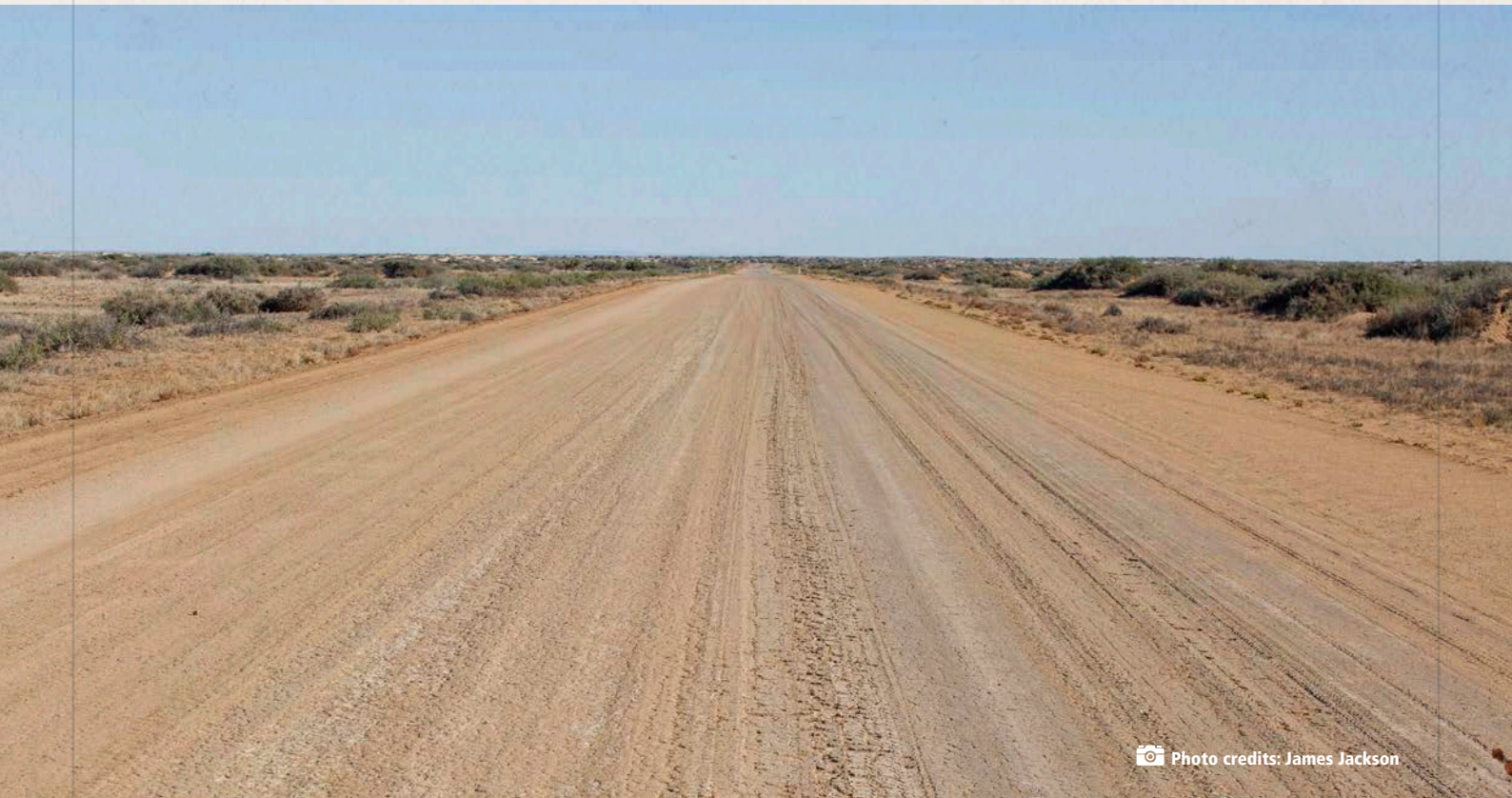


Photo credits: James Jackson

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

470km, Lyndhurst to Innamincka

Difficulty

Mostly AWD, off-road caravan-friendly

Time to allow

2 days

Places of interest

Blanchewater ruins, Montecollina Bore,
Strzelecki Creek

An iconic track with an iconic story behind it, the Strzelecki is etched into Australia's off-road lore.

While it's more of a desert connection road than an off-road challenge, the Strzelecki Track remains an Australian icon. The most picturesque sections cut through red dune country of the Strzelecki Desert, but for the most part the track is well graded and flanked by wide expanses of stark arid country. Nevertheless, following the path of Harry Redford (aka Captain Starlight) and his bold route to take 1000 head of stolen cattle from Queensland to Blanchewater is a worthwhile intersection with history.

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19 · GARY HIGHWAY.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

325km, Gary Junction to Everard Junction

Difficulty

Difficult, low range required

Time to allow

2 days

Places of interest

Windy Corner, Veevers, Meteorite Crater

This lesser-known desert track is about as far away from a highway as you can get.

The best part about the Gary Highway is its sheer remoteness. For the most part it's just two wheel tracks through plenty of spinifex in the middle of nowhere, which even in Australia is difficult to find nowadays. Built by Len Beadell and his Gunbarrel Road Construction Party in 1963, the drive courses through the Great Sandy Desert, the Little Sandy Desert and the Gibson Desert. Most of the drive is flat but it still maintains a level of difficulty to keep even the most experienced four-wheel driver interested.

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18 · GOOGS TRACK.

Photo credits: Ben Cordia



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

375km, Ceduna to Glendambo

Difficulty

Moderate, 4WD and off-road camper trailer-friendly

Time to allow

1 day

Places of interest

Goog and Dinger Memorial, Goog's Lake

Look around and you might mistake Googs Track for the Simpson Desert.

Googs Track is a legitimate diamond in the rough for travellers searching for adventure near the South Australian coastline. Starting in Ceduna, the landscape quickly transitions into red dune country that's not dissimilar to the Simpson Desert albeit in a smaller, bite-sized package. With some steep dunes, broad claypans and soft sand to negotiate, Googs Track is a fast-paced heavyweight that's also surprisingly accessible.

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17 · BINNS TRACK.

Photo credits: Ian Cochrane



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

2200km approx.

Difficulty

4WD and off-road camper trailer-friendly

Time to allow

10-12 days

Places of interest

Devils Marbles, Old Andado Station, Davenport Range, Judbarra/Gregory National Park

Binns Track is a true cross section of the Australian Outback in all its forms.

Starting in Mt Dare on the edge of the Simpson Desert and finishing in the small town of Timber Creek, Binns Track is an all-encompassing 4WD trek through Central Australia. Along the way you'll encounter small towns and abandoned stations, head-turning ranges and dusty plains, testing corrugations and newly sealed roads; sometimes each pole is separated by a few kilometres, sometimes by a few days. Either way, any traveller who completes it will have been well-steeped in the Northern Territory's outback by the time they're done.

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16 · MONTEPIRIE TRACK INNAMINKA.



Photo credits: James Jackson

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

100km, Innamincka to Coongie Lakes

Difficulty

4WD and off-road camper trailer-friendly

Time to allow

3 hours

Places of interest

Innamincka, Coongie Lakes, Kudriemitchie Outstation

Experience a thriving wetland in the middle of the desert at Coongie Lakes.

The drive into Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park from the Outback outpost of Innamincka and its iconic pub is short but sweet. Cutting through dusty plains and dune country dotted by vegetation and wildflowers, the trip ends in a location unlike any other: Coongie Lakes. A thriving wetland that appears out of nowhere amongst the Strzelecki Desert's red dunes, Coongie Lakes are home to a massive range of wildlife: pelicans, herons, eagles, eels, bream, yellow belly and much more. With waterside campsites in the middle of a red desert and wildlife all around, the trip from Innamincka is an enjoyable one for which you're richly rewarded.

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15 · JUMP UP LOOP ROAD - STURT NATIONAL PARK.

Photo credits: Bushie



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

110km

Difficulty

Easy 4WD, off-road caravan-friendly

Time to allow

3-4 hours

Places of interest

Olive Downs, Tibooburra

Rich reds and deep blues colour this memorable journey into Corner Country.

Full of rich red terrain and wide blue skies, Sturt National Park and the Corner Country perfectly capture the classic vision of the Australian Outback. From Tibooburra's massive granite tors (Tibooburra rightfully means 'heaps of rocks' in the local tribal dialect) through to the region's distinctive jump ups, gibber plains and rolling red dunes in the west, the trip through Sturt to Cameron Corner is a perfect summary of what the Outback is all about.

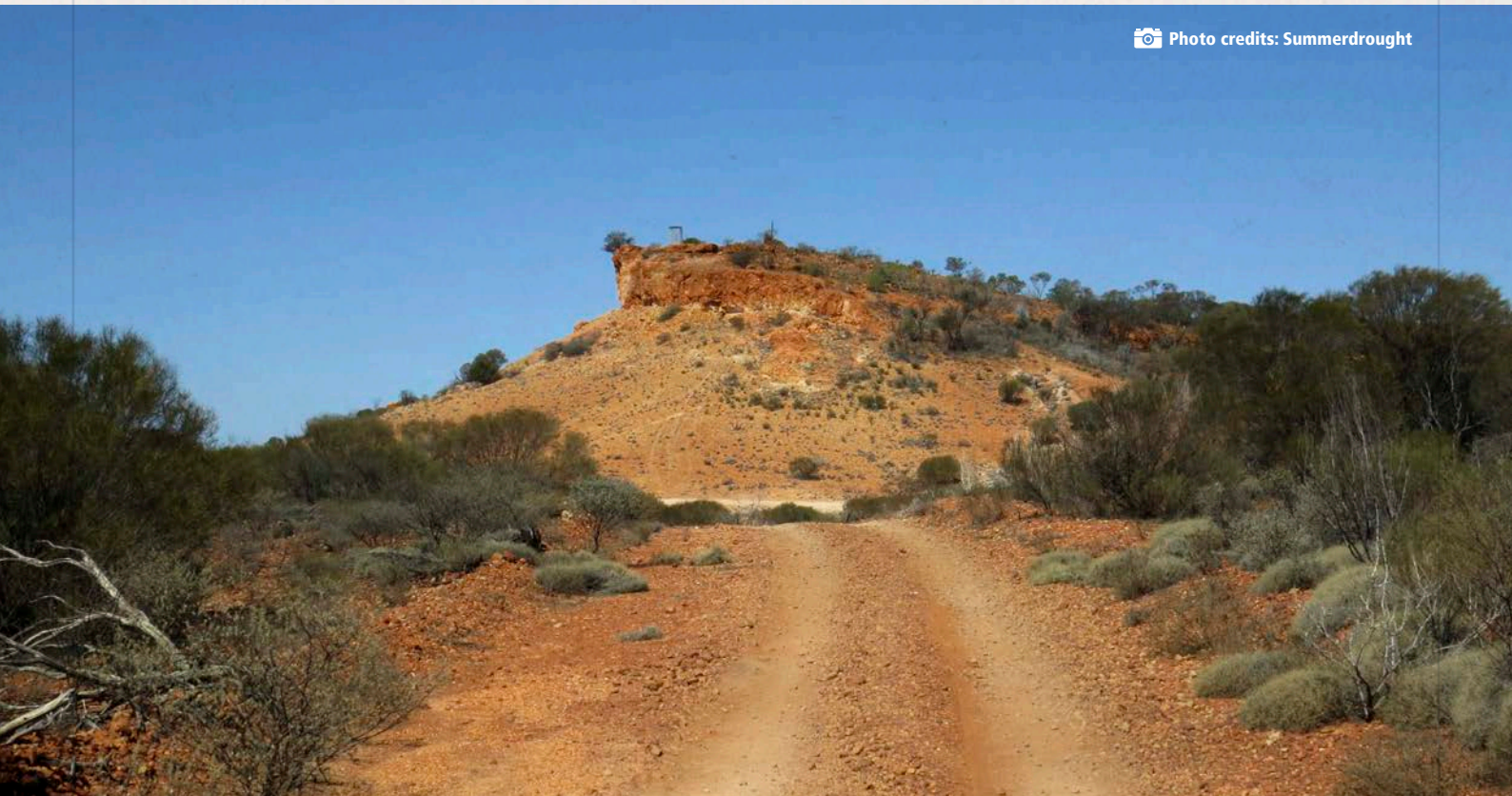
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14 · GUNBARREL HIGHWAY.

Photo credits: Summerdrought



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

1420km, Wiluna to Yulara

Difficulty

Difficult, low range required

Time to allow

5 days

Places of interest

Mt Beadell, Mingol Camp, Carnegie Station,
Geraldton Bore

When it comes to the Gunbarrel, the track's challenge is also its biggest drawcard.

A unique combination of remoteness and Outback brutality, the Gunbarrel Highway is a track that's hard to forget. Be warned: the Gunbarrel's insistent corrugations and harsh environs mean it's not for the faint of heart, but this truly blood-and-guts vibe is also what makes the trip so memorable. Along the way, you'll experience the very best of the Great Victoria Desert and the Little Sandy Desert, while stops at Mingol Camp and the abandoned Carnegie Station are fascinating interludes. Whichever way you cut it, the Gunbarrel is an experience like no other that can be worn like a badge of honour at any Outback pub.

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13 · BORDER TRACK.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

400km

Difficulty

4WD and off-road camper trailer-friendly

Time to allow

2 days

Places of interest

Wyperfeld National Park, Pink Lakes,
Murray-Sunset National Park, Lake Kenyon

Victoria may not have any deserts but the Border Track is vintage Outback.

The Border Track, which is named for the way its route follows the border between South Australia and Victoria, is the ultimate Outback drive for southern state residents. Most of the off-road section of the trip runs through the low-lying vegetation and sandy terrain of Mallee country – an environ which is unique to the region – and is interspersed with dunes of all sizes. A drive along the Border Track can be paired with a deeper dive into Wyperfeld National Park for an extended adventure, allowing you to immerse yourself into a distinctive landscape that was (some eons ago) once entirely underwater.

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12 · CANNING STOCK ROUTE.

Photo credits: Ian Cochrane



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

1850km, Wiluna to Halls Creek

Difficulty

Difficult, low range required

Time to allow

2-3 weeks

Places of interest

Wells

In a country of big Outback tracks, the Canning comes up trumps.

In a word, the Canning Stock Route is epic. A true marathon through some of the country's most challenging terrain, the world's longest historic stock route has no peers when it comes to off-road slogs. Ask someone who has completed it to reminisce and they will stare off into the distance, lost in the memory of endless desert expanses and constant corrugations that force you to slow down and simply ride the Canning wave. While its history is as murky as it is unflattering for its namesake Alfred Canning, what is indisputable is that the CSR is an unforgettable journey for anyone that completes it.

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11 · KARLAMILIYI (RUDALL RIVER) NATIONAL PARK.



Photo credits: Gypsy Denise

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

510km, Marble Bar to Talawana Track

Difficulty

4WD and off-road camper trailer-friendly

Time to allow

4-5 days

Places of interest

Desert Queen Baths, Watrara Pool

Karlamilyi is massive, picturesque and untouched - just the way we like it.

Located in the heart of the Pilbara, Karlamilyi National Park is as picturesque as it is remote. For some context, Karlamilyi is bigger than Qatar (as well as almost 40 other countries) but has no facilities of any kind; let that sink in. Typical of the Pilbara region, Western Australia's largest national park is filled with bright red landscapes to enjoy, while the drive has some incredibly tough sections that require skill to conquer. Stops at the park's handful of mini oases like Desert Queen Baths are a must, which is where you can rest weary bones and appreciate some explosions of vegetation and wildlife.

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10 · CONNIE SUE HIGHWAY.



Photo credits: Summerdrought 2

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

1000km, Warburton to Kalgoorlie

Difficulty

Difficult, low range required

Time to allow

4 days

Places of interest

Neale Junction, Mackenzie Gorge

The Connie Sue shows off how vibrant and alive deserts can really be.

While not as long or as revered as the Canning Stock Route, the Connie Sue Highway is undeniably one of Australia's most jaw-dropping tracks. Its red sandy trail cuts through mulga scrub and patterned spinifex in a rhythm of dunes that comes to life with wildflowers in the right season, and the drive is a proper off-road test. The track intersects with the Anne Beadell Highway – another of surveyor Len Beadell's legendary creations – at Neale Junction, which feels like it must be the most remote intersection in the world.

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9 · DARLING RIVER RUN.

Photo credits: Domenico Stallo

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

950km, Walgett to Wentworth

Difficulty

Mostly AWD

Time to allow

1 week

Places of interest

Bourke, Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre, Mungo National Park, Kinchega National Park, White Cliffs National Park

A leisurely track that's soaked in both Indigenous and pastoral history.

The longest river system in Australia has a firm place in the country's pastoralist history, while its course intersects with a heap of interesting and unique off-road regions. The drive loosely follows the river, which itself comes in contact with established ports that sprung up in days gone by: Bourke, Wentworth and Tilpa to name a few. Aside from these classic Outback towns, the journey along the Darling River also gives you the chance to head off on side trips to Mungo, Kinchega and White Cliffs national parks – each of which have unique arid landscapes, wildlife and tracks to discover.

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8 · THE HOLLAND TRACK.

Photo credits: Jeroen Komen 2



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

670km

Difficulty

4WD and off-road camper trailer-friendly

Time to allow

3-5 days

Places of interest

Lake Grace, Emu Rock, Rabbit Proof Fence

Get ready for all kinds of conditions and a strong dose of adventure.

An off-road icon in Western Australia, the Holland Track is filled with history and 4WD-only challenges that deserves to draw visitors from all over the country. The track was cut in the late 19th century as a means of connecting Broomehill and Coolgardie in WA's Goldfields region, and today the Holland Track is an action-packed trip that delivers a range of track conditions and landscapes. The most hardcore part of the drive arrives in the form of many boggy washaways, which depending on recent rainfall can range from muddy trenches to extended water crossings. The rest of the trip takes you through rural farmland, low-lying woodlands and past looming granite outcrops that pleasantly colour the journey.

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7 · THE MADIGAN LINE.

Photo credits: Christopher Watson 2



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

Approximately 1000km, Alice Springs to Birdsville

Difficulty

Difficult, low range required

Time to allow

5-7 days

Places of interest

Madigan's camps

Follow in the footsteps of an explorer along this wild cross-country epic.

Thanks to their accessibility and how much they're trafficked, the Simpson Desert's more classical crossings have become tame experiences to some in recent years. To those who believe it, Madigan's Line – which was pioneered by Cecil Madigan and some camels back in 1939 – brings memories of ye olde days' faint wheel tracks, rugged terrain and true remoteness back to the Simmo. The trip connects Madigan's camps in a relatively straight path across the northern part of the desert, though the drive is anything but straightforward: towering dunes, soft crests and lack of other travellers mean experience and preparedness is key to conquering Madigan's Line.

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6 · OODNADATTA TRACK.

Photo credits: Pen Ash



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

620km, Marla to Maree

Difficulty

AWD and caravan-friendly

Time to allow

3 days

Places of interest

The Pink Roadhouse, Painted Desert, Algebuckina Bridge, Coward Springs, William Creek

A true tour of the Outback that gets the balance of sightseeing, history and off-roading just right.

Less of a 4WD challenge and more of an Outback exploration tour, the Oodnadatta Track should be on everyone's off-road bucket list. The drive itself combines stunning scenery with big dollops of history, which in large part is thanks to its path that runs alongside the Old Ghan Railway. Along the way you'll encounter rich red landscapes, multiple ruins and attractions like the Pink Roadhouse and the Painted Desert. Its upbeat tempo and list of things to see and do makes the Oodnadatta a perfect introduction to desert travel for less confident off-roaders, and it will surely give you a taste for the Outback.

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5 · RED CENTRE WAY.



Photo credits: Dimageau

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

670km, Alice Springs to Uluru

Difficulty

AWD and caravan-friendly

Time to allow

1-2 days

Places of interest

Uluru, Kata Tjuta, Tjorita/West MacDonnell
Ranges, Kings Canyon

A drive that goes to show there's off-roading to be had around Uluru.

The Red Centre is commonly thought of as a tourist trap for FIFO travellers who've never gotten off the blacktop, but there is in fact some excellent unsealed driving to be had around Uluru. The on-road, off-road mix of the Red Centre way puts you in touch with the region's greatest hits of places to see – the chasm of Kings Canyon, the monstrosities of Uluru and Kata Tjuta and the rippled ranges of the West Macs – with a solidly enjoyable drive mixed and (and chances to head off on side trips to tougher tracks like Boggy Hole).

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4 · ECHO CAMP BACKTRACK (ARKAROOLA).



Photo credits: James Jackson

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

Approximately 50km, Arkaroola Village return

Difficulty

4WD and off-road camper trailer friendly

Time to allow

5 hours

Places of interest

Arkaroola Village

This is the kind of track that will make you forget about Wilpena Pound.

The Northern Flinders Ranges is undoubtedly one of the most scenic destinations Australia has to offer, and Arkaroola is the hub for its most jaw-dropping sections. Blue-hued from a distance and rich red up close, the Vulkathuna-Gammon Ranges surround Arkaroola and are also home to some excellent off-road opportunities. Arkaroola Road squeezes between the ranges on the way to Arkaroola Village and it's from here you can take on the rise-and-fall goodness of the Echo Camp Backtrack. The drive is over in a matter of hours, but within that time you'll tackle some truly steep sections of track and find yourself face-to-face with some of the country's greatest mountain vistas.

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3 · ANNE BEADELL HIGHWAY.

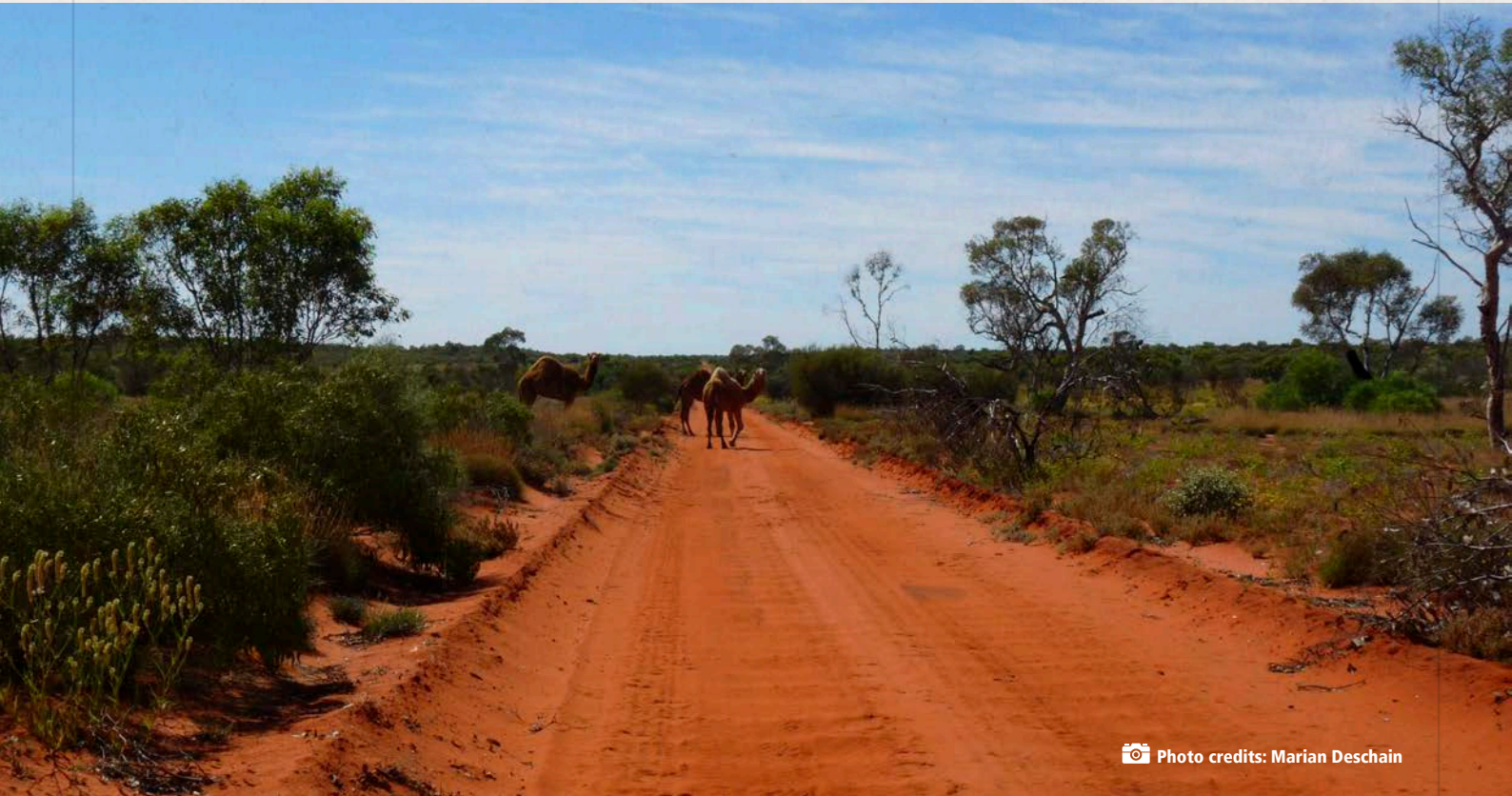


Photo credits: Marian Deschain

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

1380km, Coober Pedy to Laverton

Difficulty

Difficult, low-range required

Time to allow

1 week

Places of interest

Bishop Rileys Pulpit, Point Sunday,
Ilkurlka Roadhouse

The Anne Beadell delivers endless chart-toppers when it comes to desert terrain and scenery.

Another of Outback surveyor Len Beadell's track creations (this one was named after his wife), the Anne Beadell Highway is the desert parallel to the drive across the Nullarbor Plain. Much of the track cuts through the red dune country of the Great Victoria Desert – you get a front row seat to some of the best arid landscapes in the world – which is heavily corrugated in parts and somewhat overgrown in others. Between the outpost of Ilkurlka Roadhouse and Coober Pedy there are no supply points too, which means you'll have 800km of self-sufficiency as you drive through incredibly remote country. The Anne Beadell intersects with the Connie Sue Highway at Neale Junction, while other highlights include a flurry of mesas and plateaus, salt lakes and even some wooded sections.

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2 · QAA & FRENCH LINE.



Photo credits: Tandrew22

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

500km, Birdsville to Mt Dare

Difficulty

4WD, low-range required

Time to allow

3-5 days

Places of interest

Birdsville, Mt Dare, Dalhousie Springs

The Simpson Desert remains the gold standard for 4WD desert journeys.

The Simpson Desert is the world's largest parallel dune desert and its 1100-odd red crests have become one of Australia's biggest off-road tests. Pass it and you can walk into any Outback pub with your head held high and a memorable story in your back pocket, such is the respect 4WD travellers have for the Simmo. The trip generally starts in Birdsville, which is famous for its position on the edge of the desert and its curried camel pies. After a cold drink in the iconic Birdsville Pub, the journey starts with a bang on top of the desert's biggest dune, Big Red, which rises over 40m above the swales below. From there, the trip continues to deliver big as you sail over a rolling sea of red towards Mount Dare on the other side of the dunes. After all is said and done you can soak your weary bones at the thermal pools in Dalhousie Springs, capping off the journey of a lifetime across a destination like no other.

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1 · GIBB RIVER ROAD.



Photo credits: Martin Sandrock

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Distance

712km, Derby to Kununurra

Difficulty

4WD and off-road caravan-friendly
(depending on side trips)

Time to allow

3-4 days

Places of interest

Adcock Gorge, Barnett River Gorge, Bell Gorge,
Dimond Gorge, Elizabeth Station, El Questro,
Home Valley, Lake Kununurra, Manning Gorge,
Mitchell Falls, Mornington Wilderness Camp,
Pentecost Range, Tunnel Creek, Walcott Inlet,
Windjana Gorge

Bursting with postcard-worthy highlights and rougher side trips, the Gibb is the jewel in Australia's Outback crown.

Once an unknown frontier but now a fan favourite among 4WD tourers, the Gibb River Road's weather-worn red gorges, countless side trips and variety of landscapes makes it the ultimate off-road adventure. In truth, the Gibb's popularity has drained some of its mystery; the sealed sections which are slowly inching across its length prove this. However, despite this knock, the heights the Kimberley reaches are simply higher than most any other off-road destination on Earth.

Perhaps the best part of the Gibb River Road is its depth – the straight shoot from Derby to Kununurra may only be 712km but include side trips and this number balloons to well over 3000km. Almost all of the things to see and do on the Gibb would be enough to draw travellers to the region on their own steam, but together they give off-roaders a wealth of scenic and 4WD riches to choose from: Mitchell Falls, Windjana Gorge, Walcott Inlet, Home Valley, the Pentecost Range, Mornington Wilderness Camp, Adcock Gorge, Lake Kununurra, Dimond Gorge, Manning Gorge, El Questro and more – much more. With places like these to choose from and some excellent four-wheel driving along the way, it's easy to understand why the Gibb is sitting pretty at the top of the Outback track pile.

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