



From the swag-laden four-wheel drive to the most palatial motorhome, the variety of vehicles heading north on the Stuart Highway would rival any Camping and Caravan Show, and this winter has seen an exodus of vehicles heading for more tropical climates.

But here's the rub; In that desperation to escape the cold, for many, it's full steam ahead with as few stops as possible until that tropical warmth starts seeping into the bones.

The Stuart Highway starts at Port Augusta and takes a pretty direct northerly route to Darwin. All up it's nearly 3000km that can be covered in less than a week. However, to do this would be to miss out on some of our most stunning landscapes and very intriguing towns. All whilst enjoying travelling through Australia's great outback.

So here are my top places to spend some time and explore on your trek north. To do them all justice would take some considerable time, so perhaps several trips may be required.



We started the trip at Port Augusta.

Port Augusta - the journey starts

The Wadlata Outback Centre is a great place to start your journey. The interactive displays in the centre will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the indigenous and European heritage of the country up to Alice Springs.

Having a context for the things you see makes them far more interesting and will add considerable richness to your journey. For more information see the [Wadlata Outback Centre website](#).

While at Port Augusta, you might also be interested in a trip on the restored trains of the Pichi Richi Railway. These trains follow the narrow gauge line of the original Ghan Railway from Port Augusta, winding up through the lower levels of the Flinders Ranges to Quorn. For more



info head to the Pichi Richi Railway website [here](#).

Woomera -“this is a place of legends”

Now, this is a place of legends. The British Blue Streak rocket tests, the American Narrungar Tracking Station and a testing site for Australian military tanks and other military equipment. The infamous Woomera Immigration Detention Centre still sits unused, adjacent to the massive airfield that has recently hosted testing of the high-tech experimental SCRAM Jet. The legendary outback road builder Len Beadell surveyed and built many of the tracks needed to follow, observe and retrieve rockets launched only a few kilometres from the town. Although only a shadow of its former self in population, The Woomera Heritage Centre, housed in what was the United States Forces Recreation Centre documents the varying fortunes of the town and is well worth a visit.

In the centre of town is the National Aerospace and Missile Park housing a fabulous display of rocket, missiles and planes that played their part in the varied history of this place.



Visiting the National Aerospace and Missile Park in Woomera, SA.

Coober Pedy- “the biggest opal producing area in the world”

Having lived in Coober Pedy for 6 years, I know this is a place that tourists often bypass and yet it has much to offer.

Apart from being the biggest opal producing area in the world, it also provides a unique,



underground lifestyle that tourists can readily see, and perhaps even stay in. From the 5 star luxury of the Desert Cave Hotel to a number of underground camping options, this is your chance to experience something very different.

A number of opal showrooms, both above and underground will entice you to buy one of Australia's national gemstones. For the adventurous, an underground mine tour could be just the thing.

Nearby are the Breakaways, an area of natural beauty, stunning colours and where some of the original Mad Max films were shot. You can easily spend a couple of days exploring this oasis in the desert.



The Breakaways at Coober Pedy.

Uluru and Kata Juta - “the most recognisable natural feature in Australia”

Probably one of the most, if not the most, recognisable natural feature in Australia, Uluru is a must see. This will require a 250km detour off the Stuart Highway. But combined with a visit to Kings Canyon, all on a sealed road, will loop you back to the Stuart Highway.

To see both will add an extra 830km to your trip. Not apart from the brilliant scenery, you will most likely enjoy beautiful warm outback days, although the nights can be chilly. There are shorter options for those prepared to tackle some reasonably rough dirt road.

You should spend at least a couple of days at Uluru to experience the grandeur and mysticism of this place. A walk around the base of the rock, preferably on your own, allows you to explore in peace and quiet. This is the best way to appreciate the beauty and scale of



this place.

It'll also give you a better understanding of why Uluru is of such great significance to the local aboriginal people. To see a sunset on the rock is an unforgettable experience, but one you will not do alone.

Kata Juta is nearby and well worth the half-hour drive on a sealed road. Again, the best way to appreciate the beauty of this area is to take one of the walks that lead you to these massive rock domes.

Take a picnic lunch and give yourself a day to leisurely wander and take in the spectacle.



The stunning Kings Canyon.

Kings Canyon - “one of the most under-rated natural wonders in Australia”

I believe this is one of the most under-rated natural wonders in Australia. It's worth every minute of time taken to explore this great chasm. Kings Canyon Resort or the nearby [Kings Creek Station](#) provides a wide range of accommodation and a full day should be allowed to explore this area.

The climb to the top of the canyon is quite strenuous, so give yourself time and take plenty of water. Once at the top the pace is far more leisurely as you explore the rim of the canyon. But beware – do not go too close to the edge as this can be very dangerous. A walk down to the bottom of the canyon into the Garden of Eden, a beautiful rock pool



surrounded by lush growth, is well worth the effort.

The next major stop on this journey takes you to Alice Springs. Find out what this oasis in the desert has to offer, and what lies in store further north on the Stuart Highway by subscribing to the Snowys Blog.