



This part of the journey starts in Alice Springs, an oasis in the desert with a banquet of activities to suit all types of traveller.

As you continue north, the humidity increases and you are presented with waterfalls, hot springs, swimming holes and crocodiles, culminating in Darwin, Australia's only tropical capital city.

## Alice Springs - “the most well-known inland town in the country”

Without a doubt, the most well-known inland town in the country, Alice Springs, and surrounding areas provide the tourist with a wealth of attractions, both natural and man-made.

A sizeable blog could be devoted to just detailing these options, so the best bet is to make a beeline to the Visitors Centre in the middle of town and arm yourself with all the information needed. My favourite natural attractions are to be found mainly in the West McDonnell Ranges, such as Standley Chasm, Ormiston Gorge and Ellery Big Hole.

In the East McDonnells, the old gold mining town of Arltunga is fascinating and if a competent 4WDer with a high clearance, low range 4WD, Ruby Gap is brilliant.

In town, visits to the National Road Transport Hall of Fame and the Royal Flying Doctor base are very informative.





## Devils Marbles - “What happened here? Why are they so round?”

You will know when you are approaching this area, as large round boulders start to appear in the relatively flat surrounding area.

What happened here? Why are they so round? A walk through this area is fascinating and, although not requiring a lot of time, it is a top place to take a break from behind the wheel, or stay the night in the nearby camping area.

The keen photographer could be rewarded with some fascinating sunset and sunrise images.

## Daly Waters - “quirky”

If you are looking for something quirky, Daly Waters has it in spades. A tiny town adjacent to a WW2 airstrip, it now consists of a pub and a few very “individual” souvenir shops.

You could easily spend an hour in the pub perusing the masses of paraphernalia that adorn every available space. If the timing is right, the pub does a good meal and at the very least, a cooling beverage is likely to hit the spot.

Take the time to have a wander around the old airfield and hangar. This and other airfields along the Stuart Highway played an important role during the war and information boards in the hangar will help you understand the operation of the site.







## **Mataranka - “a chance for a refreshing dip ”**

By now the daytime temperatures are rising and the chance for a refreshing dip may beckon. What better place to take a break than Mataranka, with its thermal springs providing the opportunity to soothe away any aches and pains and send you back on the road revitalised. You can stay in parks adjacent to the springs, with only a few minutes walk from doorway to pool.

The nearby re-creation of the Elsey Homestead, used in the making of the 1980's film *We Of The Never Never*, is well worth a look with information boards providing a good insight into some of the histories of this area.



## **Katherine Gorge - “One of the jewels in the crown for the Northern Territory”**

One of the jewels in the crown for the Northern Territory, Katherine Gorge will reward you for the time spent here. With excellent accommodation options either in Katherine or at the gorge, this is a comfortable place to stay.

Like Mataranka, a dip in the thermal springs in the middle of town is a top way to relax and soothe away any aches and pains. Unless you are into paddling, the best way to see the Gorge is on a guided boat trip. Allow a day for this as to experience the full wonder of this area it is best to travel as far up the gorge as possible.

Depending on the time of year and water levels, a full tour requires transferring from one boat to another at least once in the journey, however, the walking involved is not overly



strenuous.

The indigenous guides will ensure you don't miss any of the significant sites, the wildlife, including freshwater crocodiles, and an understanding of the significance of the area to the local people.



## Litchfield National Park - “sheer beauty in quite a compact area”

Not far south of Darwin, just to the west of the Stuart Highway is the magnificent Litchfield National Park. For sheer beauty in quite a compact area, I believe this rivals Kakadu and is certainly more accessible. Massive termite mounds, cascading waterfalls and wonderful swimming holes are features of this area.

There are a wide range of accommodation options either in or adjoining the park and you can easily spend a day or two exploring.

Well, there you go. Allow time for your next trip north to see at least some of these fabulous areas. You won't be disappointed.

***Check out all our 4WD articles for alternative routes for the more adventurous, as well as tips, tricks and products that will help get the most out of your journey.***