

Title:

Alice Springs - Australia's Outback Capital

Word Count:

708

Summary:

The town of Alice Springs is located in the middle of the Australian continent and is the unofficial but undisputed capital of the Australia's vast outback. This unique town is rich in history and natural features, and is the perfect base from which to explore Australia's Red Centre which includes world famous features such as Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon and the MacDonnell Ranges.

Keywords:

alice, springs, central, australia, northern, territory, tour, travel, holiday, vacation

Article Body:

The town of Alice Springs is located in the middle of the Australian continent and is the unofficial but undisputed capital of the Australia's vast outback. This unique town is rich in history and natural features, and is the perfect base from which to explore Australia's Red Centre which includes world famous features such as Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon and the MacDonnell Ranges.

Alice Springs is nestled in the MacDonnell Ranges in Central Australia. Roughly equidistant between Adelaide and Darwin, it lies almost at the geographical centre of Australia, approximately 1500 kilometres from any major Australian city in any direction. The highest mountain in the Northern Territory of Australia, Mount Zeil, rises to 1,525 metres out of the West MacDonnell Ranges about 200 kilometres west of Alice Springs. The town has a growing population of around 28,000 and is today a thriving regional centre where an amazing variety of tours, accommodation and activities for every taste and budget are available.

The history of Alice Springs began in 1871 with the construction of a telegraph repeater station, one of several such stations built between Adelaide and Darwin as part of the historic Overland Telegraph. Originally known as Stuart, this name was never really popular and in 1933 the town's name was officially changed to Alice Springs. Development was initially slow, with the original dirt road to Adelaide not being replaced until 1987. Until then, travellers including train

travellers on the historic Ghan railway followed the same route north as that followed by early Scottish explorer John MacDouall Stuart, north from Port Augusta in South Australia to Alice Springs via the outback towns of Oodnadatta and Finke. Today, the Stuart Highway which runs from Adelaide to Darwin is a first class highway suitable for any vehicle.

Development in Alice Springs accelerated greatly in the 1980's, and the town today is a modern, moderate sized municipality with a wealth of resources and facilities compared to similar sized Australian towns. The Ghan Railway played a significant role in the town's development, first arriving in 1929. The railway line was recently extended north to Darwin, with the resulting route across the centre of the Australian continent from Adelaide to Darwin now representing one of the world's great train journeys.

A variety of historic buildings can be found in the centre of Alice Springs, including the original hospital in Adelaide House, the John Flynn Museum and Church, the Old Courthouse, the Residence and the Stuart Town Gaol. The original Telegraph Station is located in a reserve a short distance outside Alice Springs to the north. On the eastern side side of the normally dry Todd River, which runs through the centre of town, is the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, an arid zone botanical garden located right in the heart of town.

Alice Springs is located in a predominantly dry region, with glorious cloudless blue skies from April to September. Rainfall is unreliable and intermittent, but can normally be expected during the warmer summer months from October to March. During summer, temperatures of 40 degrees C (104-108 F) are common, while in winter (June to August) overnight temperatures often fall below freezing point. Winter days are typically bright and sunny, making this the most popular time of year for visitors.

Information about the Arrernte people of Alice Springs can be found at the Strehlow Research Centre, where many fascinating artifacts are displayed. The Araluen Arts Centre maintains a large collection of paintings by Aboriginal artists from the Alice Springs area, including renowned the watercolour painter Albert Namatjira. Many other activities are available in and around Alice Springs, including hot air ballooning, horse and camel riding, cycling, and excursions to nearby natural attractions in the MacDonnell Ranges. Alice Springs also hosts a variety of events and festivals in the cooler months between May and September.

Alice Springs is well serviced with accommodation suited to all tastes and budgets, from backpacker hostels to luxury hotels, and has several good restaurants. Alice Springs is easily accessible by air or bus from all

Australian capital cities. To travel in style to Alice Springs, consider the luxurious Ghan train which departs from Darwin, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Cars can be carried on the Ghan so that your own transport is available when you arrive in Alice Springs.