



Outback Adventure

By *Judy Koutsky*

A recent study surveyed Americans to find out their most desired bucket list travel destinations. The top international destination on the list: Australia! And when people think of this country, images of the Outback come to mind. Located in the Northern Territory, it's famous for its Red Center desert landscape. Home to the iconic sandstone monolith Uluru (formerly known as Ayers Rock), the red-rock domes of Kata Tjuta and the sculpted cliffs of Kings Canyon in Watarrka National Park, this area offers plenty of bucket-worthy adventure activities—think sunrise hot air balloon rides, camel safaris into the desert and canyon hikes where kangaroos can be spotted.

The Star of the Outback

While there is plenty to do and see in the Red Center, Uluru is indisputably the star of the show. This massive rock formation is one of the most famous in the world—and is considered sacred by the local Aboriginal people.



Guests can learn how to cook using native plants, fruits and grains.

For your home base, [Sails in the Desert Hotel](#) is ideal in terms of location and activities it offers. Incorporating local culture in meals and design, the property combines beauty and luxury in a rugged outback setting. All rooms have balconies or terraces, which is a great vantage point to observe the stunning views. The property offers a range of experiences unique to the Outback. One such experience is the A Night at Field of Light by Camel, where travelers are transported to a remote desert spot by camel at sunset. Then dinner under the stars is served, before guests are led to a light installation featuring 50,000 glass spheres. Another unique dining experience is Tali Wiru, meaning 'beautiful dune' in local Anangu language. A helicopter ride whisks people to the desert, where they enjoy a lavish four-course dinner and wine pairing with Uluru as the backdrop. There are plenty of ways to really experience Uluru, including walking around the base via the Mala Walk. But for something a little different, take a [Segway tour](#) .

Another popular activity that the resort hosts is a cooking demonstration during which guests will learn about the native foods and seasonings—and how certain plants, fruits and grains are used in traditional cooking methods. These cooking methods have been used for centuries by the indigenous people, incorporating native bush ingredients.



Accommodations in the Outback are more luxurious than most people realize.

Kings Canyon

After a few days near Uluru, drive three hours to Watarrka National Park and the colorful rock formations of Kings Canyon. Not to be missed is the [Kings Canyon Resort](#) and the world-renowned Under a Desert Moon dining experience—where a five-course dinner and wine pairing awaits. The meal is created from seasonal, locally sourced ingredients all served next to a fire, under the stars.

Take advantage of the Kings Canyon rim walk, which offers amazing views directly into the 300-foot canyon. Sunrise and sunset at the canyon make for absolutely incredible photos.

Alice Springs

Be sure to spend a few days in Alice Springs. One of the most unique experiences is taking a hot air balloon tour at sunrise over the MacDonnell Ranges ([Outback Ballooning](#)). This ride is a great way to experience the scope of the outback. For active adventure enthusiasts, a good option is a bike tour to see wallabies and kangaroos ([Outback Cycling](#)). If you don't get a chance to see kangaroos in the wild, then pay a visit to the [Kangaroo Sanctuary](#). You'll get a chance to get up close to these beautiful creatures and learn all about their habitat. The 188-acre wildlife sanctuary was opened in 2011 for rescued baby and adult kangaroos. It's a great way to end your bucket-list trip.



The Australian instrument the didgeridoo is performed for those dining under the stars.
