

99Experiences

for caravanning and camping in Australia



Amazing adventures
in every state

What's your road
tripping style?

Interactive
activities map



Great Australian Discoveries

By Scott Podmore

WHAT is it that continues to lure more Australians into the caravanning and camping lifestyle?

Is it the freedom that comes with being in the Great Outdoors? Maybe it's that more down-to-earth style of travel that appeals to so many, where a park's facilities are easily accessible and you don't have to fuss too much over the evening meal (unless you want to, of course!)

Caravanning and camping numbers are booming because it's such a relaxed and easy way to holiday. It provides the thread that binds Aussie camaraderie and presents the perfect way to welcome visitors from other countries to explore our towns and regions.

It spawns magical memories.

Like-minded caravanners and campers have a synergy, like some unwritten law, where barriers are broken down and we all "share" our experiences in the most relaxed of ways. Kids burst out of a tent, van or cabin, then come together – strangers or not – and jump into a park pool, river or beach for a splash, or ride a bike around a park. Grown ups, from solo travellers and young couples to families and seniors, converge around barbecues and make new friends. Some for life.

With that comes the biggest bonus of them all. Our great southern land provides the most envied platform for discovery and we have some of the world's best and most diverse experiences on the planet.

From the east coast's beaches and historic hamlets, to the west coast's wine regions, dazzling natural land formations and spectacular waterways.

Head north for serious Aboriginal cultural experiences, unique native wildlife, the mighty Uluru and all the charms of Darwin, Tennant Creek and the Katherine region. Head south for the rolling hills of South Australia, and little old Tasmania may be our smallest state, but it arguably packs the biggest punch of them all for experiences.

And while there are thousands of experiences to choose from, we've found 99 that suit all walks of life and cover every patch of our great country. It's a taste of what is out there for those exploring Australia by road.

In the following pages there is something for everyone: bushwalkers, adventure thrill-seekers, animal lovers, fossickers, golfers, fishermen, cyclists, surfers, beach lovers, and food and wine enthusiasts.

Best of all, whether you're exploring with a caravan, tent, motorhome, camper trailer or seeking out cabin accommodation, there is a caravan holiday park only a stone's throw away to park your wheels and set up camp while discovering any of these 99 Aussie experiences.

Enjoy the ride. Soak up the experiences.

For more info visit

www.experiencecaravanningandcamping.com.au

PRODUCED BY
OCTOBER GREY MEDIA FOR THE CRVA

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Queensland



The Sunshine State has it all – amazing beaches, food trails, fossicking opportunities, the Great Barrier Reef, rainforests and so much more. Read on.

Did you know?

One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral formation in the world stretching over 3000km along North Queensland's coastline, beginning from just above Bundaberg right up to the tip of Cape York.



1. Ride a horse on Rainbow Beach

ACCORDING to local legend, the colourful sand dunes along spectacular Rainbow Beach were born when a spirit presented as a rainbow and plunged into the cliffs after a battle with an evil tribesman.

The result? All those beautiful colours were left scattered across the shore where they have remained to this day thousands of years later.

Such a vibrant, colourful appearance means it is often considered Australia's most alluring and interesting stretches of coastline.

Of course, you could explore this beach by foot, but there's nothing quite as exhilarating as discovering this part of the world on the back of a beautiful horse.

Rainbow Beach Horse Rides take both beginners and experienced riders past the famous, coloured sand blows and along the beach overlooking Fraser Island. Given there are only a handful of places in Queensland where you can ride horses around some of the state's most pristine areas, it's little wonder people are quick to insist you take a horse riding tour along Rainbow Beach.

www.frasercoastopportunities.com.au



Rainbow Beach,
240km north of Brisbane



Mon Repos,
14km east of Bundaberg

2. Turtley awesome discoveries

FEW destinations give you the opportunity to get up close and see a baby turtle hatch from its nest or a large turtle laying its eggs.

The Mon Repos Turtle Rookery and coastline is a hotspot for the largest concentration of nesting marine turtles on eastern Australia's mainland. It's where turtles including the endangered Loggerhead Turtle, Green Turtle and unique Australian Flatback turtle nest and hatch on the beach at night.

Being home to the most significant loggerhead turtle nesting population in the South Pacific Ocean region, it's critical that breeding in this area is successful for its very survival.

Tours run every night during turtle season – adult female turtles come ashore to lay eggs on Mon Repos beach from November to January and tiny turtles hatch and leave the nests to begin their journey to sea from January to late March. To see nature at its finest there is a chance the turtles could take hours and sometimes even come up at four in the morning – but anyone who has ever experienced this incredible event will tell you it's definitely worth the wait!

www.bundabergregion.org

3. A tasty nude food trail



Granite Belt, Great Dividing Range

NUDE food is just as nature intended it to be – fresh food that's in season and food that belongs to the region.

The Granite Belt Nude Food Trail has food at every corner along this scenic stretch of the Great Dividing Range.

The Granite Belt is also home to some of Australia's (and the world's) best wine growing regions. Winery tours and traditional concerts in the vineyard are held at Granite Belt and Stanthorpe throughout the year and include everything from Jazz and Opera to Bollywood.

The area's rich cultural diversity also comes alive through fresh food, with incredible combinations of flavours. British, Italian, Polish and German family recipes – to name a few – have been passed down through the generations and are dotted along the trail. All you need is a brochure that tells you where to find different kinds of produce, meats, savoury staples and sweets along with a map – but then again if you get lost along the way, it's not such a bad thing, is it?

www.southernqueenslandcountry.com.au

4. Take flight in a museum experience



Longreach, central Queensland

MOST visitors expect to spend a few hours at the Qantas Museum in Longreach but are always surprised when they're still buzzing around exploring the fascinating history behind the town, the museum and Qantas a couple of days later.

Don't worry if you know nothing about planes, either – all that really is required is a basic interest in history. It's a fascinating place. This world-class facility is run by locals and tells the stories of the founders of Qantas and how it grew to become the airline giant it is today. The museum educates people about the operations of an aircraft with engaging displays and aircraft tours.

www.outbackqld.com.au

5. Fossick for sapphires



The Gemfields, 330km west of Rockhampton

IT is said sapphires can help a person find peacefulness as well as relieve stress and tension.

Whether or not you believe in the mythical powers of these stones, they are nevertheless regarded by many as the most beautiful in the world.

The Sapphire Gemfields in Queensland are some of the most significant sapphire-bearing grounds remaining on planet earth, and you can even fossick for your own sapphires in this area covering 900 square kilometres.

People from across the world flock to this part of Australia to try their luck at the gemfields that have been mined since the 1800s. Rubyvale is home to the largest underground sapphire mine open to the public, Miners Heritage Walk-In Mine. You have the option to take an underground tour of the mine as well as spend time in the park fossicking for your own gems ... just imagine the thrill if you find one!

www.capricorntourism.com.au



6. All aboard the scenic rail!



30km north east of Cairns

THE enchanting rainforest village of Kuranda lies beyond waterfalls and a journey through lush rainforest.

One of the most interesting ways to reach it is by the famous Kuranda Scenic Rail.

Though constructed over a decade between 1882 and 1891, the Cairns-Kuranda Railway is still considered a tremendous engineering feat and today you can still enjoy the breathtaking scenery that people would have witnessed more than 100 years ago. While passing by the surrounding tropical rainforest, which is millions of years old, learn about the area's history on the one hour and 45 minute rail ride from Cairns to Kuranda.

The track winds its way through the World Heritage-protected tropical rainforest and past the magnificent Barron Gorge.

After exploring the local markets in the relaxed township of Kuranda, take the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway to enjoy even more eye-opening views.

www.ttnq.org.au



7. Digging for dinosaurs



Winton, 180km north
west of Longreach

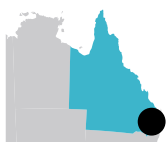
ALONG the Flinders River in 1865 in Outback Queensland, James Sutherland made the first dinosaur discovery of *ichthyosaurus*.

Since then paleontologists have become intrigued with this unique part of the world. Much of the state's outback was once covered by sea, which means the region is rich in fossils of dinosaurs and marine reptiles dating as far back as around 100 million years ago. Discover the incredible prehistoric creatures that once roamed this area on Australia's Dinosaur Trail, where you can even try fossicking for your own fossils in designated public areas. Book an organised tour as guides will give you some handy tips, such as which spots to try, while also letting you in on some interesting facts and fascinating history.

www.outbackqld.com.au



8. Stand up paddling



Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast

STAND up paddling is one of the world's fastest-growing water activities.

With a paddle in your hand, head out to the break before turning around and riding the waves back into shore. With stand up paddling you can easily reach waves further out than you ever could on a traditional surfboard.

Surfer and instructor Brad Holmes (www.bradholmessurfcoaching.com) brings this exciting sport that originated in Hawaii to Surfers Paradise. He holds group and private lessons, teaching clients the skills and techniques that will help them master the sport.

Several lessons are held in these clear waters every day for people of all ages – whether you're a beginner, looking to improve your technique, or simply looking for a fun-filled day.

Brad was Queensland's first surfing coach to be qualified in catering for disabled people, which means nobody misses out on this thrilling experience.

www.visitgoldcoast.com



9. Slip into the lava tubes



Undara Volcanic National Park,
264km south west of Cairns

ONE of Australia's geological wonders, the Undara lava tubes, sit in north Queensland's rugged Gulf Savannah region.

A whopping 23 billion cubic metres of lava oozed from the Undara volcano 190,000 years ago, leaving behind a 100km-long pipeline as lava drained away. Explore these extraordinary caves and underground tunnel system under the curious eyes of thousands of bats.

Some of these engaging tours include Active Explorer, Wildlife At Sunset, Archway Explorer and Volcano Valley. The accommodation options here are quite diverse, too, including pioneer huts, swag tents, a caravan park and even a railway carriage.

There's nothing quite like standing in the massive caverns in this subterranean environment and peering into spaciousness of the disappearing tubes. Undara is an Aboriginal word meaning 'a long way'. True to its name, you'd have to go a long way to beat this experience!

www.ttnq.org.au

10. Strap in for the Rodeo Trail



Outback Queensland

IF you're looking for one heck of a ride, then look no further than Outback Queensland's rodeo scene.

Across the state you'll find many rodeo events during the year, showcasing some of the most skilled riders.

Spend Easter at the northern Queensland town of Einasleigh, where you'll witness some of the best in bull riding, steer wrestling, bareback bronc, rope and tie, team roping, barrel racing and bucking ponies.

In late June in Cape York Peninsula you'll find the annual Laura Rodeo and Races, attracting people from all over the peninsula for a few days of fun in a picturesque Outback setting.

Meanwhile rodeo riders travel long distances just to compete with the ringers and stockmen for the prizes and trophies. Then August brings the Mount Isa Rotary Rodeo, the largest rodeo in the southern hemisphere. Thousands flock to this Outback city just to experience a few days of world-class rodeo action and entertainment.

www.outbackqld.com.au

11. Go down to the mines



Mount Isa, 900km west of Townsville

MOUNT Isa's long mining history means it's the perfect place to explore what daily life is like for miners working underground and learn about the Australian mining industry.

The Hard Times Mine Tour is said to be more than simply a tour, but an unforgettable experience. Knowledgeable tour guides who have spent years working in the area's mines teach you about the area's history as you explore these tunnels on foot.

Your journey begins as you descend into the mine in an Alimak Cage, just as miners across Australia do every day on their way underground. As you walk through the tunnels notice the amazing infrastructure and high tech equipment. You can even have a go at operating the air-leg drill and feel the earth rumble.

www.outbackqld.com.au



12. Get mugged by the "humpies"



Hervey Bay,
290km north
of Brisbane

HERVEY Bay is the whale-watching capital of the world where thousands of humpback whales drift into its sheltered waters each year before unleashing an ocean spectacular throughout winter and spring.

It's then you can see the mighty "humpies", some weighing 40 tonne, put on a show that includes blows, breaches, fluke-up dives, fin thumps and spy hopping as they get up close to the tour boats.

If you visit in late August, there's a great chance you will experience muggings: when the Humpies come into the protected waters of Hervey Bay for their 'annual holiday'. As some skippers will tell you, it's not uncommon for whales to come up alongside the boat, or even swim beneath it.

These events were nicknamed whale muggings because legally they can't move the vessel until the whale has had enough and left. Nothing is more spectacular than hearing the blows close up and witnessing the loud slaps of tails, flukes and full breaches.

www.frasercoastopportunities.com.au





13. Finding Nemo

Scuba diving Whitsundays



The Whitsundays,
120km north of
Mackay

CRYSTAL clear waters, white sandy beaches, blue skies, pristine coral reefs and an abundance of wildlife – there's no doubt the Whitsunday islands are a scuba diver's paradise.

Marine animals, including dolphins, whales, turtles and dugongs frequently inhabit the stunning coral gardens in these waters.

With a range of scuba dive tours and operators to choose from, soak up the sights of the magical, fringing reefs and drop offs teeming with an abundance of colourful fish species, including the clownfish, made famous by the hit animated film 'finding nemo'. While these little orange and white striped fish appear cute, they are quite brave and are known to bite divers if they believe you're trying to steal their anemone! Nevertheless, seeing these magnificent creatures in their colourful underwater world is a beautiful sight you'll never forget.

www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au

14. Mud crabbing in Karumba



Karumba,
750km west of Cairns

THE waters in Karumba are home to loads of marine life including mud crabs, a creature said to be one of the best shellfish you can catch and eat in the world, thanks to their moist meat and distinctly sweet flavour.

They can grow to more than 25 centimetres wide across the shell breadth and, of course, you can't help but notice those massive (and intimidating) claws!

In Karumba, a small town on the Gulf of Carpentaria, you can join a mud crab tour for some fun-filled crab pot lifting, handling and crab tying while also spotting the odd crocodile along the way.

You'll be fascinated by how the professionals in the mud crabbing industry bait and trap them in crab pots and find out how to pick them up without getting nipped.

www.ttnq.org.au



New South Wales & ACT

We all know the global favourites like the Opera House and Sydney Harbor Bridge, but New South Wales has so much more to explore, from breathtaking road trips and museums to coastal delights and even a gigantic banana

Did you know?

There are almost 900 national parks, forests and reserves in NSW offering arguably the most diverse nature experiences in Australia ranging from rainforests, marine parks, a city within a national park, Outback landscapes, mountains, islands and World-heritage listed areas.





15. Road trip in grand style



Sydney to Wollongong

THE Grand Pacific Drive really is the drive that has it all. It's one of the best on the planet, let alone New South Wales.

Start your journey from Sydney's outskirts at Audley with a relaxing picnic on the banks of Port Hacking River in the Royal National Park.

Then follow the signs and discover the importance of each region as you stop off at the drive's iconic spots before soaking up the sound of waves crashing on Wollongong's surf beaches – or throwing a board in and hanging 10!

The northern section of the drive spoils all comers with some incredible scenery as you cruise through coastal hamlets, beaches, rock pools and lush rainforests while the south brings rolling green hills and wineries.

Some of the must-do stops include the Sea Cliff Bridge, Nan Tien Temple and Bald Hill Lookout.

www.visitnsw.com.au



16. Make a splash under a waterfall



Blue Mountains,
90km west of
Sydney

THE Blue Mountains is the place to be on a rainy day as the already beautiful waterfalls become one of the most spectacular sights you're ever likely to see.

A diverse range of walks through pristine rainforest, which are available for people of all fitness levels, lead to magnificent cascading waterfalls such as the Leura, Wentworth and Empress falls.

There are stepping stones to jump across just so you can get closer to the waterfalls to take in a closer view and feel the mist on your face.

Bring along a pair of bathers and a towel as well because at the end of a long hike (and weather permitting) there's nothing like having a relaxing dip at the bottom of a waterfall no matter what your age is.

www.visitbluemountains.com.au



17. Stargazing in clear skies



Coonabarabran,
360km north west
of Newcastle

WITH its clear skies, high altitude and distance from city lights, Coonabarabran is known as the astronomy capital of Australia.

Explore the night skies with simply a pair of binoculars at a campsite or looking through Australia's largest optical telescope at the Siding Spring Observatory. It features intriguing information on the solar system and universe.

June and July are the best months for stargazing, with astronomers from across the world travelling to the small town, that sits on the divide between the Central West and North West Slopes regions of NSW, to investigate the night skies. Here astronomers have discovered new planets and mapped the entire southern hemisphere sky.

www.warrumbunglereigion.com.au



18. Visit Old Parliament House



Canberra, ACT

CANBERRA is a destination featuring some wonderful attractions, and there are none more impressive than the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. It's a museum steeped in history that is dedicated to telling the story of Australian democracy: the past, the present, and even what's in store for the future.

While you admire the architecture, it won't take long to be engaged by the incredible real-life stories of ordinary people who fought to help make today's society what it is.

Discover where Australia has come from and become involved in where the country is headed. a range of innovative exhibitions, tours and public programs that challenge and inspire. There are also special activities and spaces for children to explore.

www.visitcanberra.com.au



19. Walk on the wild side



Merimbula, 450km south of Sydney

IT'S a rare sight to see koalas wandering right next to kangaroos yet at Potoroo Palace this is a daily occurrence.

The native wildlife sanctuary is ranked as the No.1 tourist attraction in Merimbula. You can touch a snake, ride a mini train and hand-feed the emus, ducks, peacocks and kangaroos that roam freely in the park.

It's also a great opportunity to see the long-nosed potoroos that are seen rarely in the Bega Valley these days.

Daily tours (included in the entry fee, which helps keep this not-for-profit running) teach you about the sanctuary's animals and their importance to the Australian ecosystem.

www.southcoast.net.au

20. Scientific thinking at Questacon



King Edward Terrace,
Canberra

GET ready to experience science in extraordinary ways at Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre. Questacon's eight interactive galleries feature over 200 hands-on exhibits for visitors of all ages to touch, play and explore. Exhibitions cover a range of science topics, from astronomy to zoology and everything in between.

Bend your mind and muscle in Excite@Q as you go head over heels on the 360 Swing, battle a robot at air hockey and free fall down a six metre slide.

Inspire your inner scientist with Q Lab's ever-changing array of intriguing experiments, explosive demonstrations and interesting displays. The youngest scientists will enjoy Mini Q as they play, discover and learn in a gallery specifically for 0-6 year olds. No visit to Questacon is complete without watching—or even starring in—a Spectacular Science Show. Topics change daily and include dinosaurs, natural disasters, water, flight, rockets, balloons, liquid nitrogen and much more!

Questacon's onsite café, Megabites, will keep you well-fuelled during your visit, and the Q Shop offers a range of science-themed toys, gifts and souvenirs so you can continue the Questacon experience after you leave.

www.visitcanberra.com.au



21. Visit a living desert



**Broken Hill,
750km west
of Dubbo**

ON top of a majestic hilltop amidst the Barrier Ranges you'll discover 12 intriguing sandstone sculptures known as the Sculpture Site.

It's the result of a 1993 sculpture symposium, where artists from around the world gathered to create this iconic Australian Outback tourist attraction.

It spectacularly highlights the skyline and each has its own story to tell.

Tourists travel far and wide to photograph these sandstone sculptures, with their various shapes providing so many interesting angles.

Australian photographer Ilya Genkin advises sunrise and sunset are the best times to bring your cameras along, as the colourful skies provide a scenic backdrop.

www.inlandnswtourism.com.au

22. Slip into the Big Banana



**Coffs Harbour,
390km north
of Newcastle**



THE Big Banana has been, and probably always will be, the stopping point for those road-tripping between Sydney and Brisbane.

Everybody wants a photo taken in front of the famous Australian icon, the Big Banana, which is 11m long, 5m high and 2.4m wide. Kids are known to go ... well ... bananas for the Banana Slip Water Park, Australia's first three-storey high inflatable waterslide, ice skating rink and wild toboggan ride.

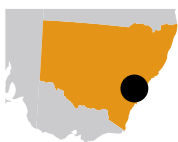
The story behind the Big Banana is equally fascinating. In 1964 John Landi wanted something that would make traffic stop at his roadside banana stall. So he enlisted the help of local engineer Alan Chapman, who cut the best looking banana he could find into 40 pieces and developed construction plans.

Then with the help of builder, Alan Harvey, the biggest banana in the world was officially opened on December 22 that year and has been compelling families to stop by ever since.

www.coffscost.com.au



23. Hit for six! Visit the Cricket Hall of Fame



Bowral, 120km south west of Sydney

SIR Donald Bradman's vision was for cricket to "continue to flourish and spread its wings – the world can only be richer for it", and that's what the International Cricket Hall of Fame in the lovely town of Bowral in the Southern Highlands was set up to honour.

The museum shows the important contribution the Australian icon made not only to cricket, but to Australian history, as well as cricket's role as one of the world's most popular sports.

At this must-see attraction in Bowral, you can learn about Australia's cricketing heritage through fascinating memorabilia and read the stories from some of the sport's greatest players. The Hall of Fame engages visitors and brings the sport to life with its interactive touch screens, large video screens and a range of fascinating displays.

www.southern-highlands.com.au

25. Hunter Valley Gardens



Pokolbin, 60 km north west of Newcastle

COME Springtime when the sun starts making its presence felt, flowers bloom with a burst of colour and the Hunter Valley Gardens come to life.

Set in the historic district of Pokolbin in the Hunter Valley, it's truly like stepping into another world. In the rose garden meander past up to 8000 magnificent roses of every colour imaginable. Then there's the Italian Grotto enchanting you with stunning views of red Bougainvillea, pink wisterias and cascading geraniums that line the Mediterranean Garden.

But perhaps the biggest drawcard, and indeed the most unique, is the Storybook Gardens. The enchantment begins with topiary animals such as teddy bears and horses. The kids will love having their photo taken next to giant sized world-famous nursery rhyme characters such as Humpty Dumpty on his wall, the characters around the table at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party with Alice in Wonderland, or laying about on the hill next to Jack and Jill as they prepare to tumble down.

www.tourismhunter.com.au



24. Rock climbing and abseiling at Mt Kosciuszko



Snowy Mountains

STRETCHING 2,228 metres above sea level, Mt Kosciuszko is the highest peak on the Australian mainland.

Though the traditional "7th Summit" may seem like a challenge only the fittest thrill seeker would attempt, you don't have to be especially strong or experienced to try rock climbing up its sides – or abseiling down them! The trick is being able to think methodically about what is in front of you, and then use your balance to reach the top!

The spectacular setting of the Snowy Mountains makes a suitable backdrop to your climbing endeavours, so you'll be sure to feel a sense of achievement no matter how high up you get. A number of operators can take you on different climbs around the Snowy Mountains, with climbs for all ages and experience levels.

Mt Kosciuszko is also perfect for a summit walk if rock climbing isn't your scene. Whatever your method, it's worth the effort to see the beautiful landscape. Look for wildflowers in spring and summer, and snow during the colder months.

www.snowymountains.com.au





26. Go kayaking in the bay



Byron Bay, North East NSW

HOLIDAY experiences don't get too much better than when you are having a gentle paddle through the beautiful waters of Byron Bay with the warm sun on your back as marine life swim around you.

The memories of this simple yet magical guided tour with Cape Byron Kayaks (www.capebyronkayaks.com) at Byron Bay will last a lifetime.

Anybody can ride the waves in one of New South Wales' most famous bays in a kayak, encountering wild bottlenose dolphins and sea turtles as they come up for air. You'll even spot Humpback whales in these waters during migration between May and November, when mothers bring their calves into Cape Byron's calm waters to feed and rest.

There's nothing more beautiful than these inquisitive and playful calves coming within metres of your sea kayak with their mothers by their side. The tour also includes a light snack on a pristine beach where you can reflect on your experience and learn about local and aboriginal history.

www.ncdn.com.au

28. Drive Mt Panorama



Bathurst, 205km west of Sydney

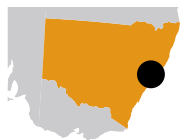
EXPERIENCE life in the fast lane at Australia's most famous motor racing circuit, Bathurst.

Motorsport enthusiasts who have driven the Mt Panorama circuit often say it's the best experience they've ever had. For most of the year this thrilling track is public road, which means regular road rules and speed limits apply during that time.

However, that gives you a completely different perspective of the races held at the iconic track. You can take in the area's unique scenery and spot kangaroos lounging near the track as you drive along Mountain Straight and pass Hell Corner, the first of the track's 23 corners. Experience the excitement of driving along Brock's Skyline, which offers breath-taking views over the Bathurst region, before passing The Chase, Murray's Corner and the finish line.

www.visitbathurst.com.au

27. Let loose in sand dune buggies



Port Stephens,
60 km north east
of Newcastle

THE Worimi Sand Dunes at Port Stephens is one of Australia's best-kept secrets.

Take in magnificent views of the sweeping coastline with experienced Aboriginal guides while riding a 400cc quad bike through these coastal sand dunes, which are the largest in Australia.

It's a cultural quad biking experience unlike any other, where you'll learn about authentic Aboriginal culture and history, visit ancient campsites and learn about local bush foods, medicines and the secrets of finding fresh water.

The bikes perform well in wet or dry conditions and there are kid-friendly bikes available for children. You'll cover anything between 12km and 20km during your adventure, accessing dunes up to 100 feet high. When it comes to where you can ride, the sky's the limit! There's no designated track and these dunes are forever changing so no matter how many times you return you'll never go the exact same way twice.

www.visitnsw.com

29. Licorice and chocolate tasting for sweet-tooths



Junee, 433km south west of Sydney

DID you know licorice is a medicinal herb dating back over 4000 years?


In the small town of Junee in southern New South Wales you'll find the Junee Licorice and Chocolate Factory, where you'll learn about licorice's fascinating history.

The iconic 20m high factory, built in the 1930s, was once a flour mill and a key player in the town's industrial progress after the Great Depression. But today it's a much happier place with the scent of licorice and Belgian-style chocolate that fills the air inside its walls.

Hourly tours run between 10am and 4pm, where you'll learn about this magnificent structure's history and watch how these scrumptious delights are made. You can even indulge yourself in the factory's deliciously smooth, organic chocolate and tasty licorice as you walk around the factory and when your tour is finished, wash it all down with a hot chocolate at the cafe.

www.visitjunee.com.au

Victoria



From cool café culture, hip shopping precincts and all the beautiful hamlets of the Great Ocean Road to wine regions, mountain areas and historic towns, Victoria is a state that lures people from all over the globe down south.

Did you know?

The iconic gold cliffs and crumbling limestone stacks that form the Twelve Apostles off the shore of Port Campbell National Park were formed by erosion and extreme weather conditions from the Southern Ocean. Today, only eight of the twelve remain, and are susceptible to further erosion – the rate of which is about 2cm per year.



30. Pretty in Pink



Murray-Sunset National Park, 370km north west of Bendigo

THROUGHOUT the year the so-called Pink Lakes in the relatively untouched Murray-Sunset National Park change from a glistening white to a deep pink.

These four lakes – Becking, Roulton, Crosbie and Kenyon – change colour because of the release of a red pigment by algae in the water.

Dawn, late afternoon or a cloudy day in spring is the best time to soak up the views of the vivid pink colour.

However, the lakes are stunning throughout most of the year regardless thanks to their vast, isolated backdrop.

www.visitmildura.com.au



31. Food and wine around Rutherglen



Rutherglen, 300km north east of Melbourne

RUTHERGLEN is famous for its world-renowned wines and superb food.

Every year this small country town, which is located in one of Victoria's premier wine regions, is the home of exciting festivals such as Tastes of Rutherglen and the Rutherglen Winery Walkabout when thousands of people converge on the Goulburn Valley hotspot.

Many of the region's winemaking houses were constructed during the gold rush days of the 19th century, with the descendants of the original winemakers still passing their knowledge and skills through the generations. There are also some new kids on the block producing some amazing wines, too, especially the "stickies".

With award-winning wineries, fresh produce and beautiful scenery, you can't go wrong.

www.dmr tourism.com.au



32. Go back in time at Sovereign Hill



Ballarat, 110km north west of Melbourne

GO back in time to the days of the gold rush at Ballarat's star attraction, sovereign hill.

It's an outdoor museum unlike no other, re-creating the city's first decade after the discovery of gold in 1851. Back then, thousands of people from across the world set sail for Australia and ventured into the country Victorian town in search of fortune.

You'll not only learn about the city's fascinating past, but you'll experience what daily life was like at Sovereign Hill in the 19th Century as you walk down the busy Main Street, passing ladies and gentlemen in old-fashioned costume. The clip-clop of horses can be heard as they trot along the dusty roads, and the lolly shop is always a busy spot with its boiled lollies of every colour of the rainbow always being a favourite with the kids.

Then night brings the multi-million dollar sound and light show 'Blood on the Southern Cross', telling the story of the Eureka Uprising. Of course, a trip to Sovereign Hill isn't complete without panning in the Red Hill Gully Diggings ... who knows, you may just strike gold!

www.visitballarat.com.au



33. Take a step back in yesteryear in Echuca



Echuca, 220km north of Melbourne

AFTER she was built at the Moama slipway in 1911, paddlesteamer P.S. Pevensey collected bales of wool from station properties along the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee river systems and brought them to the Echuca wharf.

Today, this magnificent paddlesteamer still looks and operates much the same as it did back then - the only difference being she now carries tourists through the Port of Echuca!

As you take in wonderful bush views during your relaxing ride, learn about the town's intriguing history and booming wealth thanks to the thriving river trade from about 1860 to the early 1900s.

www.echucamoama.com



34. Let's go shopping



Melbourne CBD and surrounding suburbs

IT'S little wonder Melbourne has an international reputation as being Australia's shopping capital, as it offers everything from designer labels and independent boutiques to vintage stores and factory outlets.

Stores are located throughout the centre of the city offering a range of items to suit any shopper's budget. If you're on the hunt for formal dresses, gorgeous skirts and stylish work attire, Chapel Street and Bridge Road are the places to start, while also allowing you to rest for a coffee or lunch at a trendy cafe.

Close by is the CBD where Bourke Street Mall and the designer labels on Collins Street are waiting for you.

www.destinationmelbourne.com.au



35. Country Cup horse racing



Gunbower, 130km north of Bendigo

REGIONAL Victoria hosts several country racing events throughout the year but the Gunbower Gold Cup, held every October, is said to be one of the bush's best kept secrets.

The race meeting has something for everybody with childrens' activities, novelty events and the much-loved Fashions on the Field.

With the Gunbower Racing Club set on the stunning Gunbower Creek and Murray River, racegoers can relax in the shady picnic areas while admiring the scenic backdrop. It's a fun-filled day of action with good old-fashioned country hospitality.

www.murraylakesandrivers.com.au



36. Hang out with furry friends



Port Melbourne, 4km south west of Melbourne CBD

THE Savanah Walkabout Australian Animals Eco Tour teaches visitors about local indigenous culture while you enjoy the chance to get up close and personal with some of Australia's most unique, iconic animals.

Walk amongst mobs of kangaroos and watch other native animals such as emus and cockatoos go about their daily business.

Your guide also takes you into one of the national park's open forests where you can become involved with koala research and observe these adorable creatures as they watch you from the trees.

www.destinationmelbourne.com.au

37. Drive the Great Alpine Road



Beginning at Wangaratta, 250km north east of Melbourne

DRIVING along one of the Victoria's most scenic roads is nothing short of magnificent.

The Great Alpine Road stretches 300km from Wangaratta in the north of the state to Bairnsdale in the heart of Gippsland in the east. Expect to feel like you're in the European countryside as you pass several charming country towns surrounded by forests, rivers and lakes.

Meanwhile, wineries, antique stores, churches and other landmarks await every step of the way. The beautiful mountain village of Harrietville is one of the road's stunners, hidden at the base of Mount Feathertop and set on the banks of the flowing Ovens River.

Then lose yourself in another world as you check out the incredible paintings of Italian migrant Francesco Floreani from the 1930s when you conclude your drive at Bairnsdale.

www.visitwangaratta.com.au

38. Explore a gold mine



Bendigo, 150km north west of Melbourne

ALMOST one ton of gold – worth about \$44 million in today's prices – was unearthed in Bendigo and unlike so many other places in Australia, the Central Deborah Gold Mine gives you the opportunity to descend underground to explore a real gold mine that operated during the gold rush era.

The mine, which operated from 1939 to 1954, still has 15km of drives and tunnels, and it's all yours to explore. There is a range of different underground experiences available, including the Nine Levels of Darkness Tour – Australia's deepest underground mine tour – taking you 228m down to the silent depths of the mine.

With a light on your cap and passionate guides who share all their knowledge and wisdom about the hidden underground tunnels, you'll become enthralled by the history of the underground mine, just like so many others who were lured to the area by the prospects of fortune in the 19th Century.

www.bendigotourism.com

39. Rejuvenate the senses at a day spa



Daylesford, 115km north west of Melbourne

YOU don't need a load of cash to pamper yourself with a bit of luxury for a few days at Daylesford.

This beautiful Victorian town is surrounded by mountains, which formed due to volcanic activity millions of years ago. With thick forests surrounding you, it really is the perfect backdrop for a few days of relaxation and self-indulgence. Being home to 80 percent of Victoria's mineral springs, Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges has truly earned its reputation as 'Spa Country'.

Over the centuries, Melbourne's wealthy would flock here to enjoy the mineral springs for summer holidays and today their presence remains with elegant and lavish mansions and beautiful gardens.

These mineral springs are said to be rich in calcium, magnesium and other minerals and are rumoured to bring several health benefits.

Yet the chance to take some time out of our busy lives and relax in the refreshing waters at one of Victoria's most beautiful and historically rich locations is a treat within itself.

www.dmr tourism.com.au



40. Go for a hike in the Grampians



260km west
of Melbourne

INCREDIBLY, 40 million years ago, the Southern Ocean covered the northern and western bases of the Grampians in Victoria.

Still as spectacular today, these rugged sandstone mountains seem to watch over the ancient landscape and travellers can explore all its beauty on foot whether it be a gentle stroll or a solid hike.

Huge sections of this spectacular landscape, including its rocky formations, pristine waterfalls and bushland teeming with wildlife, are unspoiled and the walking tracks are ideal.

There are walking trails for all hikers of all fitness levels, from the 30-minute walk to the stunning MacKenzie Falls, where people can dip their toes in or go for a swim, to the challenging Grand Canyon and Pinnacle Walks that include water crossings, rock steps and rock hopping.

The colourful Grampians wildflowers are a major attraction in spring but the unforgettable sunset views from The Balconies, Reeds Lookout and Boroka Lookout bedazzle everyone who rolls up at any time of the year.

www.grampianstourism.com.au



41. Food tours



Inner city Melbourne

AS George Bernard Shaw once said:

“There is no love sincerer than the love of food.”

Everybody has room in their heart for a delicious experience, whether you're a newcomer to Melbourne or if you've been there plenty of times before. But you haven't truly experienced Melbourne's cultural diversity until you have tried its range of dishes, herbs, spices and sweets, and the city's food trails are gaining popularity, and people particularly love the Asian, African and Indian food tours.

Friendly hosts not only treat visitors to authentic flavours from across the world, but they delve into food's origins, history and health benefits while sharing entertaining anecdotes.

Treat yourself to some baklava at some of the oldest Turkish restaurants in Brunswick's busy Sydney Road, or munch on some authentic Ethiopian bread, African spices and sip sublime coffee in Footscray. Otherwise gourmet meals and spices await in the city's Indian food hotspots. It's an experience that will treat your tastebuds to flavours you didn't even know existed.

www.destinationmelbourne.com.au



Forrest, 160km
south west of Melbourne

42. Get on your bike along the Great Ocean Road

TUCKED away in the Otways rainforest not far from the beach is a mountain biker's paradise.

The sleepy town of Forrest, 45 minutes from Apollo Bay, has some of the best mountain bike trails in the southern hemisphere.

There's more than 60km of single track surrounding this charming township, with trails for riders of all skill levels. Whether you want to take the gentle 3km Forrest Town Loop or brace yourself for the more difficult descents and tough technical climbs along the Vista Trail, the breathtaking valley views are just reward.

Towering trees and the beautiful Lake Elizabeth captivate visitors every time. An abundance of native wildlife including king parrots, crimson rosellas, koalas and even grey swamp wallabies, can be seen and heard along every trail. Riders can hire Giant Anthem and Trance model bikes at the local corner store while a qualified guide can accompany beginners on these world-class trails. There's also a handful of riding events throughout the year, such as the Forrest Festival and Otway Odyssey.

www.visitgreatoceanroad.org.au

43. Reach for the sky in the Yarra Valley



60km north east
of Melbourne

SOMETIMES the best way to experience the world's natural beauty is with a bird's eye view in a big hot air balloon.

It also happens to be the best way to discover gorgeous Yarra Valley, Victoria's most spectacular wine-producing region.

Kick back and float through the sky as you are carried over a lush landscape in an unforgettable experience that balloonists say should be experienced by everybody at least once in their lifetime.

The hot air balloon first came into existence more than 230 years ago, and today the ingenious invention enables Yarra Valley's visitors to admire 360-degree views of the area's magnificent mountain ranges while the Yarra River snakes through the landscape as far as the eye can see.

Small group or exclusive bookings are available. For a truly magical experience, make sure you arrive at the take off point at the crack of dawn so you can watch sunrise from up high. Afterwards, enjoy a delicious breakfast or lunch at one of the region's wineries or cafes – there are hundreds to choose from.

www.yrrml.com.au



Tasmania



From rugged coastlines, rainforests and diverse landscapes to fishing hamlets, river cruises and historic monuments, Tasmania has a series of worlds within worlds to discover.

Did you know?

A Huon pine tree in the south-west wilderness is estimated to be 4000 years old, making it the second oldest living tree on earth.



44. Be an explorer on Bruny Island



Bruny Island,
south eastern coast
of Tasmania

ONE of the apple isle's most interesting land treasures is Bruny Island, which is made up of a North and South Island that are divided only by a narrow isthmus called "The Neck". To access the island, take a 15-minute ferry trip departing from Kettering.

The island has a population of about 620 and is surprisingly large, being about 100km in length.

While the island is home to great food and wine producers, including handmade fudge, cheese and fresh oysters, Bruny Island Cruises also offers a great way to explore the area with a range of tours including three hour eco tours to full day cruises which take in the best of the island's amazing cliffs, caves and wildlife.

www.brunyisland.org.au



45. Visit historical Port Arthur



96km east of Hobart

STORIES of Australia's dark colonial past haunt every room and every patch of grass at Tassie's Port Arthur.

The worst convicted and re-offending criminals sent to Australia between 1833 and 1853 were incarcerated at Port Arthur. It's also the site of Australia's worst mass murder in the nation's post-colonial history.

As one of the country's most significant heritage areas and Tasmania's top tourist attraction, convict history is incredibly well preserved. Guided tours educate visitors about the harsh environment and atmosphere that faced the 12,500 detainees that walked the prison's grounds.

So brutal were the conditions they faced that many committed murder – a crime punishable by death – just to escape the daily horrors of Port Arthur.

Further immerse yourself in the town's fascinating history with a late-night ghost tour or a cruise to the Isle of the Dead, Port Arthur's island burial ground. Ensure you allow time to explore all of the town's gardens and historic sites as many first-time visitors regret not spending that extra night.

www.portarthur.org.au



46. Oldest golf course



Bothwell, 76km
north-west of Hobart

HEAD back in time in Bothwell, the home of Australia's first golf course, Ratho, which was settled in 1822.

The well-preserved golf course is the oldest known that exists outside of Scotland where the game evolved.

You'll experience what playing golf was like in the 19th Century before technology and year-round watering systems came into the equation, with each season bringing varying challenges in a part of Tasmania.

It's a place oozing charm with stone cottages, gardens and other centuries-old buildings.

They say the greens are even maintained by the grazing sheep in the area. Also, don't forget to visit the Australasian Golf Museum while you're there.

www.hobartandbeyond.com.au



47. White-water rafting in Tasmania



West coast
of Hobart

FOR the serious road-tripping thrill-seeker, white-water rafting along Franklin River is the perfect combination of natural beauty and adventure.

Work in a team to stay afloat while encountering rapids and challenging sections of water.

You'll also pass tranquil pools, pristine rainforest and deep gorges in this epic adventure along one of the world's last great wild rivers.

www.franklinrivertasmania.com

48. West Coast Wilderness Railway



Queenstown,
260km west
of Hobart

STEP back in time as you climb aboard a majestic steam train transporting you to and from the heart of Queenstown.

Journey through pristine forests and breathtaking landscapes as you learn about the railway's rich history and the tales of the risk, hardship and determination that helped shape the rugged Tassie west coast back in the 1890s.

www.wcwr.com.au

49. Platypus spotting



Latrobe,
10km south east
of Devonport

OUR world-famous platypus is widely considered to be one of the world's most unusual creatures. Believe it or not, it's also one of the few venomous mammals in existence.

A visit to the Platypus Interpretation Centre at the Australian Axeman's Hall of Fame is a chance to see a platypus in its natural environment and learn so much more about them.

With a bit of luck, he or she won't be sleeping - they're said to sleep more deeply than any other mammal.

www.cradlecoast.com



50. Public Murals at Sheffield



Sheffield,
30km from Devonport

THERE'S a good reason why the small township of Sheffield attracts over 200,000 people every year – the “town of murals” has more than 60 murals painted on the walls of buildings providing some seriously interesting eye candy for art lovers. Another nine are displayed in Mural Park.

The International Mural Fest is an ever-growing art competition held every Easter Sunday. Each year, nine artists pit their skills against each other in a public paint off for a week.

Each artist must complete a 2100mm x 4800mm mural, using the same poem as their mural's central theme and inspiration. Each year a new poem is selected, meaning no two Mural Fests are ever the same. The comp is held in Mural Park, the town's now famous outdoor art gallery in the heart of Tassie's Cradle Mountain touring region.

www.sheffieldmurals.com



51. Breathe in the world's cleanest air



Cape Grim, northwestern
point of the state

DISCOVERED and named Cape Grim by Matthew Flinders on 7 December 1798, Cape Grim is the northwestern point of Tassie.

What makes it so special (aside from the amazing Cape Grim Beef that's produced there), is its isolated geographic location. The next land mass directly west is the southern tip of Argentina.

The air and winds that make their way to Cape Grim from Antarctica and the Indian Ocean don't encounter any significant land mass and is some of the purest you'll breathe in on the planet. It's actually been identified by the CSIRO as having “the cleanest air on Earth”.

There is plenty to do in this lovely, quiet little piece of Tassie, including checking out Cookhouse Cottage and stepping back in time as you discover the history of the property and the Van Diemens Land Company from the pictorial displays.

www.tasmaniasnorthwest.com.au



52. Get hooked on New Norfolk



New Norfolk,
30 minutes from Hobart

THOSE with an interest for fishing can't go past New Norfolk and its charming location on the Derwent River. This small country town is big on warm hospitality and is considered the capital of the Derwent Valley in the south-east of the state.

The nearby Salmon Ponds Heritage Hatchery and Gardens is believed to be the oldest trout hatchery in the southern hemisphere. Back in the day, European settlers were keen to make their new surroundings more like “home” so introduced European plants and animals, including salmon.

After several failed attempts to transport them, the first live salmon and a small number of trout eggs arrived at these ponds in May 1864.

The grounds have a Museum of Trout Fishing and Hall of Fame, restaurant and café, children's activities and a picnic area with barbecues.

www.hobartandbeyond.com.au



53. Tackle the Salamanca markets



Hobart, the second oldest Australian city

SOME unique markets around Australia have their own distinctive charms, and the famous Salamanca markets in historic Hobart offers something not many others around the globe can match every Saturday from 8.30am at Salamanca Place.

Lined either side by towering plane trees and the yesteryear charms of the sandstone facades of historic warehouses, Tasmania's legendary market draws millions of visitors to wander through more than 300 stalls for the fresh food, music, hot baked spuds, the sweet smells of coffee and pastries, buskers and all sorts of arts and crafts including hand-worked glass, innovative design in Tassie timbers, clothes and ceramics.

www.hobartandbeyond.com.au

54. Cruising along a river of dreams



Strahan, former port town on the West Coast

THIS incredibly photogenic township on the west coast has some serious waterways to explore, something you can indulge in through Gordon River Cruises, one of the best operators in Australia.

Gordon River Cruises takes you from the bustling little port town of Strahan, across Macquarie Harbour, and into the lower reaches of the Gordon River.

One of the popular options is the Hells Gates trip. How's this for an enticer from the operators: "You'll cross the harbour to reach its narrow entrance—the notorious Hells Gates. Here the harbour and ocean meet in a turbulent and shallow channel marked by a lonely lighthouse. To the north, the sands of Ocean Beach stretch kilometres into the distance. You pass through this once-treacherous stretch of water for a few moments to experience the might of the Southern Ocean before returning into the harbour. You'll pass fish farms that produce salmon and ocean trout on your way to the broad, lower reaches of the Gordon River."

www.tasmaniaswesternwilderness.com.au



55. Quirky, National Penny Farthing Championships



Evandale, 20km from Launceston

THEY say "the wheels of time turn back 100 years" in the north Tasmanian village of Evandale when the annual Village Fair and National Penny Farthing Championships attract people from far and wide every February.

Divided by hay bale barriers, spectators get a taste of life from a bygone era.

The event has a program of Penny Farthing bicycle racing featuring the National Penny Farthing Championship.

Started in 1983, the Evandale Penny Farthing races are accompanied by a cute country fair and period themed festival. Evandale is one of the state's earliest settlements, with buildings from Victorian times dating back to the 1820's. The village's well preserved streetscapes provide a perfect backdrop for this popular event.

www.northerntasmania.com.au

56. Take a hike at Cradle Mountain



90km south west
of Devonport

THERE are few rugged landscapes as beautiful and as accessible for the average traveller as Cradle Mountain.

This world heritage site attracts hikers of all fitness levels and is one of Tasmania's most visited sites. There are several short walks that take visitors through enchanting rainforest, pristine lakes and mesmerizing waterfalls.

Visitors encounter wildlife at every step of the way, from unique birds and flora to wallabies and wombats.

The summit, 1545m above sea level, entices visitors to a spectacular 360-degree view of Dove Lake, Barn Bluff and the state's highest peak Mount Ossa. While Cradle Mountain's scenery is impressive at any given time of the year, most walkers who have been there and done that recommend between December and April when the weather is warmest and there's less chance of rain.

However, Tasmania is known for weather that can change quickly at any time. Be prepared to pack a range of clothing suitable for rain, hail or shine.

www.tasmaniasnorthwest.com.au



57. Climb the Nut at Stanley



Stanley,
40km from Burnie

WHEN one visits beautiful Stanley, there's an unwritten law to abide by: you must climb the mighty Stanley Nut – the pinnacle provides some spectacular views, and it's great exercise. Make sure you have the camera handy to capture some rewarding sights, with sunsets being the most popular, of course.

But you only need climb in the winter months when the chair lift is given a break. Otherwise head there in summer, sit back, relax in the sunshine and cruise on up.

The Nut is a huge flat circular headland that has an imposing presence in town. It takes only about 15 minutes to walk up, but there are some steepish moments that require some extra energy and strength. The walk around the edge takes around 45 minutes to an hour as the land mass on top is about 90 acres.

The Nut is a State Reserve and is free to enter.

www.tasmaniasnorthwest.com.au



Road-tripping

Brumbys on the run

Who: The Brumby family

How: 4WD Toyota Land Cruiser and Roadstar Caravan

WHEN the Brumby family decided to go on a six-month caravan trip across Australia, their goal was to be explorers.

Katerina "Teeny" Brumby describes the trip as an opportunity for the family to spend some time together, as well as a perfect chance for the kids to see Australia close up before starting high school.

"We needed an adventure before our children start high school," Teeny said.

"You can get to the end of life and be so busy with the everyday mundane things that we can forget what it is to stop and smell the roses.

"This was just that opportunity for our family. It also gave us the chance to work on our little family unit developing love, communication and educating our children in the process."

Teeny, Brum and their four kids took their 4WD Toyota Land Cruiser and Roadstar Caravan complete with three bunks, toilet and shower, over to the mainland on the Spirit of Tasmania – the wide expanse of Australia open to them.

Teeny says her "adventurous little family from Tasmania", comprised of husband Brum and four kids (Josie 4, Jonty 6, Aidan 8 and Chelsea 10) arrived in Melbourne in April 2013 where they tossed a coin to decide whether to head north or west.

"The joy of an unplanned journey was exhilarating to say the least," recalls Teeny.

The lure of the Great Ocean Rd won the toss, and they headed through Victoria, through Adelaide and up as far as Coober Pedy.

"One of the most memorable destinations was Coober Pedy, experiencing the reality of desert life, where the heat was oppressive and the flies thick," said Teeny.

"It was at this point we had to decide if we would venture on to the WA coastline or back through inland Victoria, New South Wales and onto Queensland. A desire to miss the cooler months of winter in a caravan with four kids meant we began the trip towards Queensland."

The adventurers swam in waterfalls and swimming holes accompanied by eels – a fact Teeny discovered after having a dip – in the Tamborine Mountains; ate huge waffle cones on the beach at Trial Bay Gaol; and swam in the heated pool at the Emerald Beach BIG4 Caravan Park in the middle of winter.

They travelled as far north as Bundaberg before heading back to their beloved Tasmania.

The caravan trip was a slice of adventure, yet it carried an extra significance, opening the eyes of parents and kids alike as they drove.

"The trip gave us all a much greater appreciation for this great country that we live in! Australia has some of the most amazing scenery in the world. It was definitely a spiritual experience where we all as a little family grew in appreciation of God's amazing creation," said Teeny.

Her advice to others who are thinking about undertaking a family road trip is to go with the flow.

"Don't have a plan! Be spontaneous and enjoy the thrill of an unfolding adventure," Teeny said. "Life is already so planned and regimented. Enjoy the freedom of taking every day as it comes."



Pop-top vanning and making friends

Who: Lynne & Bob Gruell
How: 16 foot A'Van pop-top caravan

LYNNE and Bob Gruell travelled across and around Australia for four years, stopping once in a while to work along the way.

They undertook this mighty mission to see all of Australia in a 16 foot A'Van pop-top caravan that they bought second hand.

Their best memories are of the people and personalities they met along the way. One couple, in particular, they have remained friends with.

"We see them at least once a year on the anniversary of the day we met – we go to new places together or come and visit in each others' home state. They live in Western Australia so it's a good reason to go west," Lynne said.

The lifestyle change you go through being a roadtripper goes two ways, according to Lynne.

"The first two years we sort of turned into party animals! 'Beer o'clock' is a social thing, so we were having a drink every night. We were celebrating finally getting out there," said Lynne.

"But once we settled down again we actually lived a very healthy lifestyle. It may seem odd on a holiday with so much driving, but we were getting much more exercise in while on the road – bushwalking, hiking, swimming ... you name it!"

With no regrets, and nothing more horrifying than a flat tyre to mar their trip, the Gruells are heading off on the road again.

Their advice?

"Get out and do it any way that you can, whether it's for two months or two years, make a start today.

Why don't you join them?



The convenience of cabins

Who: Allie and Shane Keogh.
How: Cabin accommodation

ALLIE and Shane Keogh love to travel Australia with their dog, Honey. When they do, they stay in cabins.

"Staying in a cabin is so convenient – it's great to get away for the weekend without having to pack the bags," Allie said.

They like the security and privacy of a cabin in a caravan park – there's no weather worries, you can lock your doors securely, and you have a full kitchen and bathroom all to yourself.

"Cabins these days have all the facilities and more of home – we were just staying at the [Gold Coast Holiday Park](#) and they have a moonlit cinema and a great dog area for Honey. We just love it there," Shane said.

Cabins are a great way to experience the laidback, camping camaraderie in a caravan park, without having to worry about purchasing expensive equipment, or trying to plan a meal to cook on a public barbeque that isn't the same as last night.

The cabin experience for Allie and Shane is about having some fun and excitement of getting away, without hauling and setting up a lot of equipment – or being stuck in a claustrophobic hotel room.

As Allie said: "We like the flexibility cabins give us to really go anywhere, do anything, but still feel comfortable and relaxed. They're our home away from home!"



South Australia



From dives with Great White sharks, cave and opal mine explorations to some of the most exquisite and beautiful wine regions on the planet. Hands up who wants to visit South Australia?

Did you know?

South Australia is known as a wine and food hot spot with 13 wine regions and a higher ratio of cafes and restaurants to residents than any other city in Australia.





58. Swim with the Great Whites



Port Lincoln, 340km
south west of Port Augusta

IT'S often said that Great White sharks are the most misunderstood creatures of the ocean – yet that still doesn't change the fact that you wouldn't want to be stranded in open water with one nearby!

In Port Lincoln, however, you can safely get close to these apex predators in their natural habitat.

From the security of a cage, hold on tight as Great White Sharks swimming around the waters off South Australia interact with other members of their species, hunt for food, and investigate their own human zoo!

Port Lincoln also one of the few places in the world – and the only location in Australia – where these one-day shark cage diving charters are run.

They grow to an average of 4.6 metres in length and you'll definitely catch more than a quick glimpse of the 300 serrated teeth that line these creatures' mouths. The great thing about this once-in-a-lifetime experience is that you don't need a diver qualification or previous experience.

www.visitportlincoln.net

59. Be part of Farina's historical restoration



Lake Eyre Basin, 325km
north of Port Augusta

A small group is working to restore this small town in Outback South Australia to its former glory.

Tom Harding's idea to share Farina's fascinating history through reconstructing its old buildings began while sitting around a campfire in 2008.

Ever since, community members have committed to work, determined to reconstruct the forgotten town's church, hotel, school as well as a police and railway station.

You can appreciate the town in its heyday from 1878 to the early 1900s, when it was a vital agricultural service centre and railway hub – and depending on what time of year you venture to Farina, you may even witness the restoration team hard at restoring projects.

www.southaustralia.com



60. Cycle the Riesling Trail



140km north
of Adelaide

FAMOUS for its vineyards, mining history, cafes and galleries, Clare Valley also has some of the best tourist trails in the world, which take in vineyards and farmland views and historic stop-off points along the way.

Damian Cerini from cycling tour company Tour de Vines says the Clare Valley's flat landscape makes it the "perfect region" for visiting cellar doors on a bike. With more than 40 wineries within just a few kilometres, the Riesling Trail (25-30km) is built on the old rail line.

Highlights include historical stops such as Horrocks' Tree, Sevenhill Cellars, the Little Red Grape complex, Annie's Lane, and after some gentle pedalling, a tasty share plate and wine tasting experience awaits at O'Leary Walker Wines. "Combine that with some gentle exercise while you breathe in some fresh country air and it's a terrific way to explore a wonderful part of the Clare Valley," Damian says. "It's all about having fun and enjoying Clare – better still, there's no Lycra required!"

www.clarevalley.com.au

61. Be a winemaker for a day



Penfolds, Barossa Valley,
80km north east of Adelaide

IN the heart of the Barossa Valley is Penfolds Cellar Door, where the wines are superb and the cellar door is fascinating.

This is where some of the world's best wines ferment and mature. Best of all, it's one of the few places you can actually put on a lab coat and mix your own reds with the Make Your Own Blend Tour. It's the first original tour of its kind in the area.

One of Penfold's experienced staff teaches you about the different wines before guests head to the Winemaker's Laboratory to have a go at blending their own wine from Shiraz, Grenache and Mourvedre – all picked from vines over 100 years old.

The best part? Aside from the fact that you get to sample straight from the barrel, once finished making your own blend, you get to take it home in a personalised bottle to enjoy with family and friends.

www.barossa.com



62. Maggie Beer Farm Shop



Nuriootpa,
80km north east
of Adelaide

NO visit to the Barossa Valley is complete without stopping by the Maggie Beer Farm Shop, where the food is fresh and delicious. You'll quickly discover why all the other people in the shop are smiling.

Most of us have tasted Maggie Beer's scrumptious delights at some point, whether you've picked up the burnt fig, honeycomb and caramel ice cream from your local supermarket, or unknowingly tried some of the raspberry and pomegranate jam at a cafe. At the Maggie Beer Farm Shop you can choose your own collection of Maggie Beer goodies, whether that's cheeses, woodfired bread, olives or even a glass of wine.

Fill up your pantry with Maggie's famous produce or, if pressed for time, you can easily just stop by for a coffee and indulge in a sweet. Passionate chefs can also take part in the daily cooking demonstrations at 2pm, giving you plenty of inspiration and ideas to take home and experiment with.

Otherwise, check out the pheasant farm or wander around the beautiful lake and gardens outside the cafe.

www.barossa.com

63. Fly over the great flood



560km north
of Port Augusta

COVERING an incredible 9500 square kilometres, Lake Eyre is the largest salt-water lake in Australia and the North Lake alone is larger in size than Holland.

This natural wonder is usually a flat salt pan that reflects the sun for as far as the eye can see.

The lake can remain this way for years until heavy monsoonal rainfall in the northern part of the country causes the lake to flood, bringing thousands of water birds such as pelicans and silver gulls to its shores.

A scenic flight over Lake Eyre is the only way to truly appreciate this rare phenomenon in all its glory.

www.southaustralia.com

64. A food market that rules them all



Adelaide CBD

THE Adelaide Central Market is considered the food centre of South Australia, the very heartland of the supply chain from the farm gate to consumer.

Stallholders proudly say it's the only market of its kind in the country. Its colourful and aromatic atmosphere draws 8 million visitors a year, tempting them with food from a range of cultures, including Italian, Greek, Russian, Asian and Middle Eastern.

Mark Gleeson, who runs the Central Market Tour, says his two-hour guided tour is the best way to discover what really goes on behind the scenes at Adelaide's famous 140-year-old market.

He leads visitors to shops – some of which are three generations old – where stallholders smile and gladly talk about their products. "It's an experience you simply can't get if you're just wandering around – they love to show off their stuff. They're very proud of what they do," Mark says.

www.southaustralia.com

65. Visit a German village



Hahndorf,
26km east
of Adelaide

HAHANDORF, described as "the jewel of the Adelaide Hills", is Australia's oldest surviving German settlement.

Few villages in Australia ooze such charm and elegance, with elm and plane trees more than a 100-years-old lining the streets.

Hahndorf is home to many German bakeries, pubs and cafes – not to mention the craft stores, galleries and souvenir shops.

Its buildings, which are beautifully maintained, give Hahndorf a charming village feel. It's also the perfect place to spend a day with the family.

www.southaustralia.com



66. A day out at the Oakbank races



Adelaide Hills,
30km east of Adelaide

THE iconic Oakbank Easter Racing Cup carnival attracts more than 100,000 visitors annually to the Adelaide Hills to watch the gee gees in action.

Oakbank is one of the country's oldest tracks, having first opened in the 1880s. This picnic race meeting, held over the Easter weekend, is said to be the largest in the southern hemisphere.

The great eastern steeplechase is the premiere event, but many go to sit back and admire Oakbank's colourful history and enjoy its relaxed atmosphere.

Furthermore, there's gold on those hills – by way of some fantastic wineries and other great places to visit.

www.southaustralia.com

67. Walking with the wildlife



Kangaroo Island,
210km south of Adelaide

KANGAROO Island's isolation from the Australian mainland has protected its native vegetation, animals and birds from foxes and rabbits, making it a true wildlife sanctuary.

There's no shortage of wild echidnas, koalas, kangaroos and tamar wallabies.

As you walk around the island you'll also see Australian sea lions, brushtail possums, bats, frogs, and southern brown bandicoots in their natural habitat.

Many of the island's animal species are most active at night, so don't miss a nocturnal animal tour during your visit.

www.tourkangarooisland.com.au



68. Lobster fishing at Kingston



Kingston,
294km south east
of Adelaide

AS you drive along Prince's Highway, the Big Lobster locally known as "Larry" greets you.

He stands 17-metres tall and it's a sign of things to come in the popular fishing town of Kingston in South Australia.

It's home to beautiful sandy beaches and is a great spot for fishing.

Charter fishing boats are readily available and are a great way to suss out where the best fishing spots are, particularly where you'll find the southern rock lobster.

After that, visit the restaurants in the area for a great feast and/or a range of rock lobster recipes if you want to get creative with your catch.

www.southaustralia.com

69. Underground dwellings and opals



850 km north
west of Adelaide

COOBER Pedy continues to lure opal-seekers nearly a century after the first opal was discovered.

It wasn't long after 14-year-old William Hutchinson accidentally stumbled across the colourful gem in 1915 that miners moved into the area, introducing underground living in 'dugouts' to escape the scorching heat.

Those dwellings are now an iconic feature of Coober Pedy, with tourists travelling from far and wide to experience a taste of life underground. More than half of the town's residents live underground while museums, art galleries, opal shops and churches are found underneath the desert sand.

Today, the unique Outback town is known as the 'Opal Capital of the World', supplying the globe with most of its gem quality opal.

Visitors can explore the historic opal mines before browsing through some of the world's largest displays of opals. April to October is the best time for visitors as the weather is pleasant and the nights milder.

www.southaustralia.com



70. Explore caves and fossils



Naracoorte Caves
National Park, 100km
north of Mt Gambier

BELOW the surface of South Australia's only world heritage site lays an ancient environment of stalagmites and stalactites.

These natural ornaments formed as water and minerals slowly seeped down from the earth above the caves more than half a million years ago.

The unique site continues to fascinate palaeontologists across Australia, finding itself at the centre of research.

The Naracoorte Caves contain Australia's largest and most diverse collection of fossils and mega fauna and tour guides will eagerly point to fossils of extinct species dating back to 60,000 years ago.

Take your camera on a guided tour through the stunning Alexandra Cave, a beautifully decorated area with helictites that twist and defy gravity. Watch endangered Southern Bent-Winged Bats leave Blanche Cave at dusk in summer while in winter you'll spot them hibernating and hanging from the ceiling of the cave.

Meanwhile, those seeking a challenge will find one crawling and squeezing through rocky tunnels with adventure cave tours.

www.southaustralia.com

71. Bushwalking at Wilpena Pound



Wilpena Pound,
162km north east
of Port Augusta

THE dramatic mountain ranges and 800 million-year-old landscapes surrounding Wilpena impress all comers.

Trails for walkers of all fitness levels take you through this incredible landscape, where many generations have come before you.

You can take the hour-long Drought Busters Trail, which showcases a range of native plants, or go on a full day return walk to St Mary Peak, the highest point in the Flinders Range.

There's also the magnificent Edeowie gorge and the famous 12,000km Heysen Trail, which takes hikers through some of South Australia's diverse scenery, also passes through the Flinders Ranges.

www.flindersranges.com

Western Australia

Comprising an entire third of Australia, head out west and you will encounter everything from a swim with whale sharks or dolphins, camel safaris and beautiful beaches and sunsets to tree-top walks and some of the world's most unique land formations

Did you know?

Western Australia is the only place on the planet which has the natural phenomenon known as the Staircase to the Moon, which is caused by the rising of the full moon reflecting off the exposed mudflats at extremely low tide to create a beautiful optical illusion of stairs reaching to the moon.



72. Explore Karijini National Park



Pilbara region,
northwestern
Western Australia

THE colours are what first smacks travellers in the senses when they reach the Karijini National Park.

With earth red cliffs, turquoise blue waters and the vivid green plants that surround some of the areas waterways, Karijini is perfect for those wanting to explore the natural beauty of the Australian Outback. Two billion years in the making, Karijini is home to massive gorges, crystal clear rock pools and waterfalls along with interesting wildlife, including red kangaroos, echidnas and dingoes.

These features make it an appealing setting for hiking and swimming and there are walking trails for hikers of different capabilities. Take a guided tour of Hancock George past narrow chambers and rock pools, swim at the unusual Fortescue Falls or take a dip in the natural spa pool at Hamersley Gorge while surrounded by remarkable rock formations.

A scenic walk in Mt Bruce holds breathtaking views of Karijini the entire way while Oxer Lookout, located at the junction of four mighty gorgeous, offers some of Western Australia's most stunning panoramas.

www.australiasnorthwest.com



73. See the Ngilgi Cave from an Aboriginal perspective



Yallingup, 255km
south of Perth

DREAMTIME legend tells the story of the battle that took place at the cave in Yallingup between an evil spirit named Wolgine and a good spirit of the ocean called Ngilgi.

According to legend, Ngilgi drove Wolgine from the cave and still dwells there today. Koomal Dreaming's tours to the Ngilgi Cave teaches visitors more about this Ngilgi and Wolgine, along with other fascinating stories associated with this 500,000-year-old cavern.

It's not just a journey into the cave to see the stunning display of stalactite, stalagmite, helictite and shawl formations. It's an opportunity for travellers to experience Wardandi and Bibbulman country through the eyes of their traditional owners. Among several cave tours in the area, Wardandi man and talented musician Josh Whiteland educates visitors about indigenous culture, food and medicines on a guided bushwalk tour, tasting bush tucker and experiencing traditional fire lighting along the way with his Koomal Dreaming. (www.koomaldreaming.com.au)

Once inside the cave, you are also treated to a live didgeridoo performance, with the sounds echoing off the walls into the still, dark cave.

www.geographebay.com

74. Horizontal waterfall at Buccaneer Archipelago



Off the coast of Derby,
220km north east of Broome

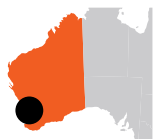
GIVEN the Buccaneer Archipelago is home to white sandy beaches, rainforest, turquoise waters and hidden coral reefs, it's surprising more Australians don't know this paradise sits right in their own backyard.

It's estimated the Buccaneer Archipelago is made up of up to 1000 islands, with many of them having rocky, steep cliffs which present magnificent views of pristine coastline and waters.

But the tide rushing through the gaps in the cliff to create the Horizontal Waterfalls in Talbot Bay is a sight you shouldn't miss when you visit. As the BBC's David Attenborough – who is believed to have travelled more than anybody else in the world – says, "This waterfall is one of the world's great natural wonders".

www.australiasnorthwest.com

75. Swim with wild dolphins



Shoalwater Islands
Marine Park, 48km
south of Perth

IT is often said there's a deep connection between humans and dolphins.

These self aware, compassionate creatures have even been known to defend people from shark attacks.

Multi award-winning marine wildlife cruise company, Rockingham Wild Encounters, allows visitors the incredible and unique experience of swimming within a metre of wild dolphins in a natural environment.

Simply don a wetsuit, link up with everybody in your tour group and jump straight into the water and within minutes dolphins emerge from the distance to join in for a play and a splash.

For between 75 to 90 minutes you can witness dolphins catching their dinner, mothers nursing their calves or even showing off right in front of your eyes in what is said to be "the ultimate wildlife encounter".

Founder Terry Howson says this fascinating wildlife encounter is open to anybody. "It's an unforgettable type of experience. The youngest I've put in the water is about 3 and the oldest was a 91-year-old Japanese lady."

www.experienceperth.com



76. Jump on a camel safari



Broome, WA

FEW people realise Australia is home to the world's largest population of wild camels – an estimated one million.

They were first introduced to Australia in the 19th Century to transport goods, but the rise of the motor vehicle meant that by 1930 most camels had escaped or were released into the wild.

Learn about the history of these misunderstood animals in Australia and so much more when you join one of several camel rides available with tour companies who have worked with the camels for years, trained them and loved them.

Head off for a gentle ride along the beach as the sun rises and sets over Broome, soak up the silence and make a new four-legged friend in the process of an unforgettable ride.

Did you know the camel's hump consists of fatty tissue that they live off in bad times? It is a food storage, not a water storage like most people believe.

www.australiasnorthwest.com

77. Swim with whale sharks



Off the coast of
Exmouth, 1200km
north of Perth

NINGALOO Reef is home to an abundance of fascinating sea life and colourful coral, with plenty of snorkel and dive tours to choose from.

Between April and July, thousands of whale sharks descend upon these tropical waters, enabling visitors to come face to face with these fascinating creatures.

They are the world's largest living fish with mouths are up to one metre wide and lined with up to 350 rows of teeth, but don't let that scare you – these gentle ocean giants feed mainly on plankton, not snorkelers.

Ningaloo Reef is one of the few unique spots in the world where large numbers of whale sharks regular appear. It's also the only place in Australia where it's possible to swim with these fascinating creatures: all the more reason to add this experience of a lifetime to your must-do list.

www.australiascoralcoast.com



78. Treetop walks



Walpole, 250km
south east of Bunbury

BEING amongst the tree top canopy of some of the tallest timber giants in Australia truly is a breath of fresh air.

The Valley of the Giants treetop walk enchants visitors, taking them to the top of 400-year-old giant red tingle trees, which are only found within a 15km radius of Walpole.

The 600-metre walk leads over a deep gully, educating and allowing its visitors to explore the area's most ancient, intriguing and majestic trees. The views that await once you're 40 metres off the ground and watching over the forest as these giants have done for centuries are simply breathtaking. It's no wonder why it's the most visited place on the Rainbow Coast.

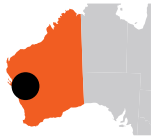
This tour offers the best of both worlds as afterwards the Ancient Empires Walk takes you beneath the canopy and you pass some giants which are over 15 metres round at the base. The path gradually ascends into the treetops, making it suitable for people and children of all ages, including those with wheelchairs and parents with strollers.

www.australiassouthwest.com

Experience caravanning and camping
VIP Club
Newsletter



79. Walk with the wildflowers



Coalseam Conservation Park, east of Geraldton

WESTERN Australia is home to vast desert landscapes and pristine beaches, but the spectacular wildflowers blooming throughout the Coalseam Conservation Park is a sight not to be missed.

Every year from June to November 12,000 different species of wildflowers are in full bloom across the state, bringing it alive with every colour imaginable.

Marvel at the carpets of everlastings along the Everlastings Trail, with pink, gold and white everlastings visible for as far as the eye can see. Also cast your eye over thousands of wildflowers of all colours, such as the vibrant pink Schoenia, wreath flower and wattle shrubs.

Don't forget to head south to the Lesueur National Park, where you'll walk past fields of grevillea, orchids, dryandra, hakea and pearl flower, to name a few. It's the perfect environment for a picnic with a seriously good view.

www.australiascoralcoast.com



80. Visit the Bungle Bungle Range



Purnululu National Park, east of Broome

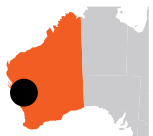
EXPLORING the black and orange striped domes of the Bungle Bungle Range in the Purnululu National Park is one of nature's gifts.

Check out the endless number of beehive-shaped rock formations, hidden valleys, rock pools, and gorges lined with palm trees. The domes stand between 200 and 300 metres above the woodland and grass covered plains, making it one of the Australian Outback's great wonders.

The scenery is mesmerizing, yet perhaps the most mind-blowing thing is that Indigenous people have inhabited this area and the rest of Australia for generations while the world didn't even know it existed until about 30 years ago.

www.australiasnorthwest.com

81. Fremantle walking tour



Fremantle, 20km south west of Perth

SOMETIMES the best way to see a city is by walking, where you can get lost in your own world, take unexpected turns and uncover places most travellers would unknowingly pass in their cars.

Fremantle is a city renowned for its impeccably preserved architectural heritage and its long list of stories from colonial times waiting to be told.

A walking tour with Two Feet & a Heartbeat (www.twofeet.com.au) winds its way through the city, visiting historical landmarks such as the Fremantle Prison and enjoying food and art sites before finishing the tour at Western Australia's oldest building The Roundhouse.

Local guides help you see the city in a new light, and they insist the tours don't give you a bland overview of city buildings that you can simply read in your guidebook. The tours are fun, informative and personal, introducing you to the city's historic, crime and bar venues while treating you to the city's best food and beverages.

www.experienceperth.com

82. Margaret River Discovery Tour



270km south of Perth

FOR the adventurous at heart there's everything from caving and mountain biking to horse riding and cultural tours, but one can't visit Margaret River without putting aside a day for the Margaret River Discovery Tour.

The tour includes a 4WD journey through the bush, a stroll out to the Willyabrup Cliffs on the Cape To Cape Track, a paddle on a canoe down the beautiful Margaret River and a gourmet lunch at a magnificent winery.

The company's Sean Blocksidge says it's all about going off the beaten path and linking the area's great outdoors with why the wines in the country's south west are so special. Not only do visitors enjoy a fascinating wine and scenic touring experience but they uncover locations that most locals don't even know exist.

"It's about taking you behind the tourist façade, away from the masses and introducing you to people and places you won't find on your own," Sean says.

www.margaretriver.com

83. Photograph the Pinnacles with Shadows



Nambung National Park,
250km north of Perth

THOSE with a burning desire to capture the world through their camera lens will relish the chance to photograph the Pinnacles at sunset.

These dramatic limestone formations are up to five metres tall, having formed 25,000 to 30,000 years ago.

Wind, rain, sun and vegetation have sculptured these dramatic structures over time. Top photographer Ilya Genkin advises using polarising filter and a low level shooting point to achieve brilliant shots at any time of day, but avoid shooting on dark, moonless nights or extremely rainy or cloudy days.

"The Pinnacle formations are best photographed in the early morning or late afternoon as the play of light brings out the colours and the extended shadows of the formations delivers a contrast that brings out their features."

It's even worthwhile taking the scenic drive a few times to get a feel for the best morning, evening and night shots. August to October is the best time to visit, as the days are mild and the area's gorgeous wildflowers blossom.

www.australiasnorthwest.com



84. Relive the legend of the Red Dog



Dampier, 855km
north east of
Broome

ON the outskirts of Dampier, the famous Red Dog statue captures the hearts and imaginations of all who pass it.

The statue was built in memory of a kelpie cross, known as 'The Pilbara Wanderer'.

He wandered across the region, frequently returning to Dampier and often catching rides with motorists to get from place to place.

The dog was known by many and each person who knew the dog had something different to say about him. He passed away in November 1979, but his story lives on with a film, book and this statue that greets you when you drive into town.

www.australiasnorthwest.com

85. Visit a ghost town



Broad Arrow,
near Kalgoorlie,
600km east
of Perth

GOLD was first discovered in Broad Arrow in 1893, triggering a massive influx of travellers who hoped to one day find their fortune.

In its heyday the town had 15,000 residents, eight hotels, churches, a police station, a bank and two breweries. But when gold ran out in the 1920s the town was abandoned.

These days, Broad Arrow appeals to travellers with its ghost town tours, where you learn about its history – and you'll be surprised how much history is here. The Broad Arrow Tavern remains open, where people often rave about the "delicious burgers".

www.australiasgoldenoutback.com



Northern Territory

Steeped in Aboriginal history, unique art, and some of the most extraordinary Outback and Red Centre destinations to explore, every Australian caravanner and camper must visit the Northern Territory at some point in their lives. We show you why.

Did you know?

Aboriginal people have lived in Kakadu National Park for more than 50,000 years - that's the oldest living culture on earth!



86. Take a scenic helicopter flight



Nitmiluk National Park,
240km south east
of Darwin

AIRBORNE Solutions (www.airbornesolutions.com.au) have just launched an exciting new tour, Nitmiluk Dreaming, a day trip scenic helicopter flight from Darwin to Nitmiluk National Park over the 13-gorge system of the Katherine River, viewing a number of gorges that are otherwise inaccessible.

The flight includes a two-hour boat cruise through the first two gorges, lunch in the Visitor Centre, and the chance to learn more about the culture of the traditional people, the Jawoyn.

A return helicopter flight to Darwin is included.

www.tourismtopend.com.au



87. Go camping in Arnhem Land



Arnhem Land,
Top End

WHEN you consider Arnhem Land is overflowing with wild coastlines, islands, rivers, rainforests, escarpments and savannah woodland, there's no doubt this northern region is the perfect spot to go camping.

Access is restricted to allow Aboriginal cultures to exist in the traditional way with little outside influence, so it's important to obtain permits.

To simplify accessing Arnhem Land by 4WD it can be segregated into destinations to explain the permit systems, and these can be checked at the website below which covers areas such as Garig Gunak Barlu National Park on the Cobourg Peninsula, such hidden gems as Cape Arnhem and Little Bondi, and some traditional owners are now inviting travellers to come to their remote outstations in areas where they host campers, anglers and those travelling by 4WD.

www.travelnt.com

88. Discover the Battery Hill Mining Centre



Tennant Creek

MINING is a big contributor to what makes the Tennant Creek and Barkly region so special and it all began in the 1930s when gold was discovered.

It set off Australia's last gold rush, the history of which is presented incredibly well at the Battery Hill Mining Centre. The locals say there is still plenty of gold to be found, and mining remains as vital a part of the regions economy today as it was 80 years ago.

Battery Hill overlooks the Tennant Creek township and was named after the original 10-head stamp battery. Underground tours take place regularly, there are self-guided walks available where you meander past the old machinery. There is the Social History Museum, The Mining Museum and a rock and ore collection.

www.barklytourism.com.au

89. Explore Kakadu's rock art



Kakadu, 250km
east of Darwin

IT'S not until you see the world-class rock art at Kakadu that you realise why this special place has been granted World Heritage status.

Historical colourful paintings cover the walls of THE ROCK, telling the stories of the fascinating lives of Aboriginals who lived here. A must-see for anybody fascinated by history and art, as it's one of the longest historical records of any indigenous group in the world.

Two very popular rock art galleries are Ubirr and Nourlangie and they contain paintings of animals, traditional aboriginal foods and tools.

There are even paintings which tell the stories about Aboriginal law and early contact with European people. With some paintings 20,000 years old, the rock art at Kakadu is a reminder of Australia's indigenous ancestors who passed through this land so many years ago, leaving their stories behind for the next generation to pass on.

www.travelnt.com



90. Art and culture at Araluen



Araluen Arts
Centre, Alice
Springs

ART loving road trippers will fall in love with the Araluen Arts Centre, the thriving life force for the performing and visual arts scene in Alice Springs.

The theatre hosts performances by national touring companies and top quality local productions while the galleries feature a program of exhibitions with a focus on Aboriginal art from Central Australia, and contemporary art by local and Aussie artists.

The centre was designed and built around a 300-year-old Corkwood Tree in the Sculpture Garden. That tree, another at the front of the building and Big Sister Hill are considered sacred by the Arrernte people.

www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au

91. Mindil Beach Sunset Market



Mindil Beach,
Darwin

PEOPLE say you haven't seen a real market until you've visited the Mindil Beach Sunset Market in Darwin.

Every Thursday and Sunday in the dry season, Mindil Beach comes alive with dancing, live music and stalls of all kinds. After admiring the 15-minute spectacular orange sunset on the beach with other market-goers, explore the market's incredible range of food stalls dishing up the best of Asian, Greek, South American, Mexican and Italian cuisines. The market offers everything from arts and craft stalls to massages and tarot card readings. With locals dancing under the coconut palms to the world-famous didgeridoo, it's not hard to see why it's widely considered to be one of Australia's most iconic markets. Enrico, a Venezuelan-born stallholder who has worked at markets all over the world, says Mindil is more than just a market: "It's a cultural market ... there are people here from all over the world," he says. "There is every type of food imaginable. Then there is the beach, the sunset, the music – it has everything."

www.travelnt.com

92. Watch a movie under the stars



Deckchair
Cinema, Jervois
Rd, Darwin

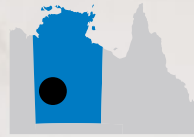
IT isn't often you get the chance to watch a movie with a barking owl, a frog hopping about your feet and the occasional bat drifting through the projector's beam. Welcome to Darwin's Deckchair Cinema.

Locals come here to sit back, relax and enjoy interesting films that they generally can't access elsewhere. The independent cinema screens a range of Australian, foreign, classic and family films – to name a few – every night during the dry season. What better way to chill out with the average person from Darwin? You might even bump into Di and Stefan Koser, two friendly locals who have visited the cinema twice a week for the last 20 years. They say "if you live here, it's just what you do." Deckchairs, cushions, food and drinks are provided but visitors are welcome to bring their own plus whatever else they need to get comfortable. Best of all, from April to November the Darwin skies are usually clear with no clouds, with the sparkling stars forming the perfect backdrop for the screen.

www.travelnt.com



93. Uluru



Uluru, Central Australia

SEEING really is believing. Tourists are constantly blown away by the sheer size of Uluru, which stands nearly 350 metres tall and is higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

In the spiritual heart of Australia's Red Centre, the large sandstone rock formation rises abruptly from the surrounding flat lowlands. To really see this sacred site up close you should take one of the many walks around the base of Uluru with an Aboriginal guide.

Passing sacred sites for kilometres where ancestral beings once walked, you stop at lookout points with sweeping landscape views and uncover ancient, symbolic Aboriginal paintings at caves around the rock.

Make sure you get yourself up early in time for sunrise or stay back for a magical sunset as the desert landscape's incredible colours change, giving the rock a magical glow.

www.travelnt.com

94. Bring in a Barra



Mary River, Darwin

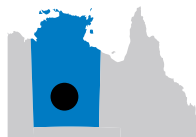
EVERY fisherman wants to catch the iconic NT "barra", and there's no better place to do it than in the Mary River region where popular spots include Shady Camp and Corroboree Billabong where houseboats are available for hire.

Fishing tours can be booked or, for the independent road tripper, small boats can be hired in Darwin, Point Stuart, Shady Camp Corroboree Billabong and Mary River.

There are other great options to land a barramundi, too, if you dare to be a little more adventurous like trying a Heli-fishing experience where you fly from Darwin over the wetlands to the Daly River Region to get your catch of the day. Otherwise, try your luck and Airboat Fishing at Bamurru Plains on the Mary River Floodplain. Bamurru Plains is located just to the west of Kakadu National Park on the Mary River floodplains.

www.tourismtopend.com.au

95. Face to face with reptiles



Alice Springs

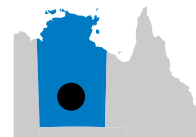
THEY are perhaps a little creepy, crawly, and have the ability to put the heebie jeebies into anyone who stumbles upon them out in the wild, but there is no doubt the human race has always had a fascination with reptiles.

The Alice Springs Reptile Centre is home to the largest reptile display in Central Australia, displaying a vast array of reptiles including Terry the Saltwater Crocodile, enormous Perentie Goannas, Thorny Devils, Frill-neck Lizards and many other lizards including "a varied selection of NT Geckos from the Alice Springs region, Barkly and the Top End on display in the amazing Gecko Cave".

The daily show held at 11am, 1pm and 3.30pm is always a hit with visitors and includes a talk on selected lizards and pythons followed by a supervised handling session.

www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au

96. A caterpillar creation story



Alice Springs

ABORIGINAL Dreamtime stories are always fascinating, descriptive and visual, and this particular one is no exception.

The Arrernte people have lived in the region for thousands of years, with evidence dating back to 30,000 years.

According to elders, the great landscape surrounding Alice Springs, notably the MacDonnell Ranges, were formed by the carcasses of caterpillars after they lost a great battle with their enemy, the stink bug. The gaps within the range, the lead into Alice Springs, are said to have formed after the stink beetles ate their heads. Elders say: "Because there were different types of 'caterpillars' in this region at the time, the one that was killed in battle was the AYIPARINYA CATERPILLA and the Arrernte name for the Green Stink Beetle that he battled with is ALPERENYE - these names are significant to the Arrernte Dreamtime stories."

www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au



97. Swim the thermal pools



*Katherine,
off the Victoria Highway*

ASK anyone who has had the privilege of a dip in the Katherine Hot Springs, and they will tell you there's nothing more soothing and refreshing in this world.

These natural thermal springs on the banks of the Katherine River within the Katherine township, comprise clear pools framed by lush, native plants and trees. A long time ago the main pool was merely an indentation at the edge of the river, but now it's a hot spot for visitors to relax, enjoy swimming in the pools, the picnic grounds and take a scenic walk around the tracks that are available.

www.travelnt.com



98. Have a beer at the Bark Hut Inn



*Between Darwin
and Kakadu*

THE rustic roadhouses in the Northern Territory are different to any others on earth, especially the mighty Bark Hut Inn which is one with the lot.

Located on the Arnhem Highway halfway between Darwin and Kakadu National Park, the Bark Hut Inn is an iconic Northern Territory pub, roadhouse and traveller's rest stop with a caravan park out back.

There is some of the most amazing memorabilia lining its walls from the last buffalo muster in the region, and these days they frequently host fun themed events on weekends. (late last year they trucked in sand and created a manmade beach in the bush for a bikini party!) They also have emus and buffalos named Jack and Jill out back who are hilarious at feeding time each day.

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99. Take a jumping crocodile cruise



*Adelaide River,
40km south
of Darwin*

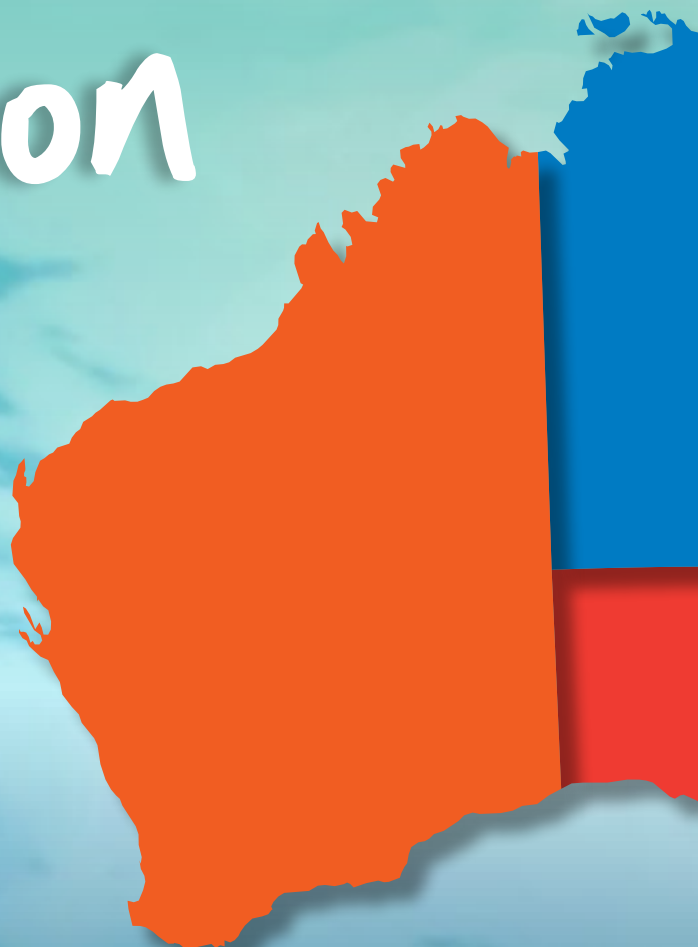
HEADING down a river in the Northern Territory while man-eating crocodiles jump out of the water may sound like something you would want to avoid at all costs, but this is definitely a thrilling experience worth paying for.

More than 80,000 saltwater crocodiles roam the waterways of Northern Australia but they are rarely seen. However, these crocs come out of nowhere when they spot the jumping crocodile cruise boats, knowing they're in for a feast – but not of the human variety, thankfully; unless you fall in, that is.

Once cruising along the Adelaide River, tour guides hold a long stick with a piece of meat dangling over the water. Huge saltwater crocodiles creep up and start launching themselves vertically out of the water to claim their snack. Look on with excitement as these strong predators jump out of the water one after another, showing off their hunting skills ... and sharp teeth.

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What's on



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Alice Springs Cup Carnival, Alice Springs	Apr 12-May 5, 2014
Tjungu Festival, Uluru	Apr 24-27, 2014
Darwin Festival, Darwin	Aug 7-24, 2014
Desert Harmony Festival, Tennant Creek	Aug 15-31, 2014
Henley-on-Todd Regatta, Alice Springs	Aug 16, 2014
Alice Desert Festival, Alice Springs	Sep 10-14, 2014

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Taste Great Southern, Great Southern Wine Appellation, Albany	Feb 22-Mar 30, 2014
Outback Fusion Festival, Newman, East Pilbara	May, 2014
The Australian Geographic ANZANG Nature Photographer of the Year, Kalgoorlie	May 3-Jul 27, 2014
Derby Boab Festival, Derby	Jul 5-21, 2014
Kings Park Festival, West Perth	Sep, 2014
Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Margaret River	Nov 21-23, 2014

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Nippy's Silver Sands Multisport Festival, Fleurieu Peninsula	Apr 5-6, 2014
Oakbank Races, Easter Monday, Adelaide Hills	Apr 21, 2014
SALA Festival, statewide	Aug 1-24, 2014
Ceduna Oysterfest, Eyre Peninsula	Oct 5-6, 2014
Lights of Lobethal, Adelaide Hills	Dec, 2014
Brighton Jetty Classic, Adelaide	Feb 1, 2015

TASMANIA

Derwent Valley Autumn Festival, Derwent Valley	Apr 6, 2014
Dark MOFO, Hobart and Launceston	Jun 12-22, 2014 (Hobart) Jun 20-Jul 5, 2014 (Launceston)
Chocolate Winterfest, Latrobe	Aug 10, 2014
Queenstown Heritage and Arts Festival, Queenstown	Oct 10-12, 2014
North East Rivers Festival, Dorset Region	Oct 17-26, 2014
West Point Royal Hobart Wine Show	Nov 15-21, 2014
Falls Music Festival, Marion Bay	Dec 29-Jan 1, 2015
Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, Hobart finish-line	Jan, 2015
Festivale, Launceston	Feb 13-15, 2015

Australia



QUEENSLAND

Julia Creek Dirt'n'Dust Festival, Julia Creek	Apr 11-13, 2014
Port Douglas Carnivale, Port Douglas	May 16-25, 2014
Wintersun, Coolangatta	Jun, 2014
Whitsunday Fantasea Reef Festival, Airlie Beach	Aug 1-8, 2014
Birdsville Races, Birdsville	Sep 5-6, 2014
Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers	Sep 19-28, 2014
Woodford Folk Festival, Woodford	Dec 27-Jan 1, 2015

NEW SOUTH WALES

Taste Tamworth Festival, Tamworth	Apr 4-13, 2014
Bluesfest, Byron Bay	Apr 17-21, 2014
Blue Mountains Winter Magic Festival, Katoomba	Jun 21, 2014
Australian Surf Festival, Coff Harbour	Aug, 2014
Sydney International Food Festival, Sydney	Oct, 2014
Australian National Busking Championships, Cooma	Nov 1-2, 2014
Mildura Jazz Food and Wine Festival, Mildura	Nov 1-5, 2014
Parkes Elvis Festival, Parkes	Jan, 2015

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Australian Running Festival, Canberra	Apr 12-13, 2014
Canberra International Music Festival, Canberra	May 9-18, 2014
Floriade, Canberra	Sep 13-Oct 12, 2014

VICTORIA

The Man From Snowy River Bush Festival, Corryong	Apr 3-6, 2014
Bendigo, Easter Festival, Bendigo	Apr 18-21, 2014
Wangaratta Jazz Festival, Wangaratta	Oct 31-Nov 3, 2014
Maldon Folk Festival, Maldon	Oct 31-Nov 3, 2014
Phillip Island Jazz Festival, Phillip Island	Nov 21-23, 2014
Festival of Sails, Geelong	Jan 22-26, 2015
Avalon Air Show	Feb-Mar, 2015

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What can I WIN?



What can I learn?



Where can I stay?

