



An unforgettable adventure  
in Australia's heartland

[theoutbackloop.com.au](http://theoutbackloop.com.au)



## RECOMMENDED PHOTO OPS



- A** MOUNT DARE HOTEL
- B** SIMPSON DESERT
- C** BIG RED
- D** BURKE & WILLS DIG TREE



- E** INNAMINCKA HOTEL
- F** LAKE EYRE
- G** THE PAINTED HILLS
- H** THE BREAKAWAYS



- I** WILLIAM CREEK HOTEL
- J** OPAL FIELDS
- K** COWARD SPRINGS
- L** PLANE HENGE



- M** THE MARREE HOTEL
- N** ARKARoola
- O** BLINMAN MINE
- P** PRAIRIE HOTEL



- Q** WOOMERA
- R** WILPENA POUND
- S** WADLATA OUTBACK CENTRE



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www.theoutbackloop.com.au



## The Outback Loop

The Outback Loop is a vast region in the far northeast of South Australia, stretching into South West Queensland, where travellers can experience the astonishing and contrasting beauty of Australia's desert zone.

Ranging from Parachilna in the south to Birdsville in the north, and Mt Dare in the west to Innamincka in the east, The Outback Loop incorporates three iconic outback tracks — Birdsville, Strzelecki, and Oodnadatta — and the Simpson desert to the top of South Australia.

The area, which covers a diverse range of environments including sandy and stony deserts, floodplains, mountain ranges, and wetlands, invites travellers to explore this unique region.

The three iconic outback tracks on the Loop feature some of SA's quirkiest towns, characters, and little-visited attractions, and provide some terrific off-road camping spots. All are well maintained and are monitored continuously to let drivers know if there are any problems, such as weather events, flooding, etc.

Take the time to immerse yourself in this unique region, and write your own unforgettable adventure in Australia's heartland.

### So, what is the Outback Loop?

The Outback Loop can be sorted into three main loops.

- The Full Loop — From Parachilna to Arkaroola, Innamincka, Birdsville, Simpson Desert, Dalhousie Springs, Mt Dare, Oodnadatta, William Creek, Marree, to Parachilna.
- The Birdsville/Innamincka Loop — From Parachilna to Arkaroola, Innamincka, Birdsville, Mungerannie, Marree, to Parachilna.
- The Oodnadatta/Birdsville Loop — From Marree, to Mungerannie, Birdsville, Simpson Desert, Dalhousie Springs, Mt Dare, Oodnadatta, William Creek, to Marree.

Naturally, you can start and finish wherever you like and, of course, you don't have to do an entire loop — just what appeals to you. You can even create mini loops if you like.

Talk to a local for the best and most interesting routes.

### How much time should you allow?

The word 'hectic' doesn't exist in the outback. If you're keen on driving much of The Outback Loop, take it easy and allow plenty of time. It's not something that can be done in a couple of days; you need to plan on spending a couple of weeks to appreciate this stunning area.

### How to use this map

This map is designed as a guide only and to give you an insight into this unique region. We recommend purchasing detailed maps of your planned route and ensuring you have the most up-to-date road and weather information.

## More Information

Outback travel advice from the RAA, visit [www.raa.net](http://www.raa.net) and from RACQ, visit [www.racq.com.au](http://www.racq.com.au)

Download the latest 4WD Tracks & Repeater Towers brochure at [www.southaustralia.com](http://www.southaustralia.com)

Lake Eyre Basin Aboriginal Way Map  
[www.aiatsis.gov.au/explore](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/explore)



# Know Before You Go

## Accommodation Options

Outback accommodation options include hotels, motels, cabin parks, caravan parks, campgrounds, homestays, station stays and roadhouses. It is recommended where possible to pre-plan your holiday and book in advance to ensure you get the accommodation that's right for you.

## Clothing

Take care when travelling in remote areas during summer, as temperatures in outback Australia can reach over 40°C (104°F). Always wear a hat, shirt, sunglasses, SPF30+ sunscreen and insect repellent. Swim clothes and a towel are also a good idea. And remember to carry plenty of water with you.

## Desert Parks Pass

The Desert Parks Pass is your passport to South Australia's breathtaking outback parks and covers camping (where permitted). Purchase a Desert Parks Pass, and you'll get a handbook with information on all eight parks, safety instructions for outback driving, vehicle supply checklists, wildlife information and detailed maps. The pass is valid for 12 months and is issued on a per-vehicle basis.

## Climate

The Outback Loop falls within the desert zone, so summer days can be scorching, while nights are often quite cold. In fact, the Simpson Desert Parks are closed from 1 December to 15 March. The best time to visit Australia's outback is between May and September when the temperatures are much cooler and the flies won't carry you off.

## Fire Danger

During fire danger season (1 November to 30 April), there are strict conditions for lighting any fire, including campfires. On Total Fire Ban Days, all fires are banned. Before lighting any fires, avoid severe penalties by checking with the **Country Fire Service** at [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au), or the **Bushfire Information Hotline** on 1300 362 361. In an emergency, call 000.

## Outback Travel Tips

- This map is a guide only. Make sure you carry appropriate maps.
- Please preserve the incredibly fragile environment when travelling The Outback Loop. Arid landscapes support a wide range of truly unique and amazing plants and animals.
- Up-to-date road conditions can be checked via the Far Northern and Western Areas Road Condition hotline — 1300 361 033 or by visiting [www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads](http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads). Alternatively, call the Desert Parks information line on (08) 8648 5328.
- Use only recognised Public Access Tracks and designated camping areas. Seek prior approval from landholders to use private tracks.
- Camp only in designated areas or where you have obtained permission by the land manager.
- Camp more than 500 metres away from stock watering points to avoid disturbing grazing stock.
- Do not collect wood in outback areas — it is in limited supply and used by wildlife for shelter.
- Use designated dump points for RV and caravan waste, and take your rubbish to the nearest town facilities for disposal.
- Plan your toilet stops by checking the distance to the next amenities. If toilets are unavailable, dig a deep hole, burn any toilet paper and fill in the hole.
- Please do not use soap or detergents in or near waterholes, stock watering points or artesian springs.
- Avoid a repair bill, or getting stranded, by not driving after dusk and before dawn. Sheep and cattle also graze on unfenced pastoral properties, so drive with caution.
- Ensure you're carrying adequate supplies of fuel, food and water.



# 'Must-Visit' Outback Towns



## Birdsville

Iconic Birdsville lies on the Diamantina River in the heart of Queensland's Channel Country. Once an essential stop on the stock route into South Australia, Birdsville today is an outback hub and a thriving community of around 110 people employed in regional tourism and hospitality, and servicing the area's still-dominant cattle industry. Birdsville's 'must-dos' include an icy-cold beer in the famous Birdsville pub, a refreshing dip in the town's unique billabong, and drinking in a sunset at Big Red.

## Innamincka

Innamincka is a tiny outpost on the Strzelecki Track, adjacent to the magnificent Cooper Creek within the Innamincka Regional Reserve. The pub is the social hub of Innamincka and features a motel, 18-hole mini-golf, the Starlight Cinema, and its acclaimed air-conditioned 'Outamincka' bar. Not far away, Australia's largest billabong, the stunning Cullyamurra Waterhole, is alive with wildlife and birdlife. The area has a strong connection to the tragic story of 19th-century explorers Burke and Wills, whose graves, and the famous Dig Tree, await discovery nearby.

## Leigh Creek

The outback township of Leigh Creek is situated west of the picturesque Northern Flinders Ranges. Leigh Creek is ideally located to explore the region's natural beauty, rich Aboriginal culture and heritage, and remarkable geological sites. If you're a nature lover, you'll love the Aroona Dam Sanctuary, which offers spectacular views and a beautiful 5.5 km interpretive walk, traversing wetlands below the dam, mountainous terrain, rocky outcrops, and red-gum-lined creeks. Leigh Creek accommodation options include the Leigh Creek Outback Resort and a caravan park.

## Oodnadatta

Sitting around a third of the way along the Oodnadatta Track is the historic centre of Oodnadatta. Oodnadatta is an important Aboriginal historical and cultural centre, with the Aboriginal community running the Transcontinental Hotel and the local school. The outlandish Pink Roadhouse is a fun and iconic part of the outback and features a licensed café, post office, fuel, mechanical workshop, and campgrounds with essential amenities. Worth a look too is the museum, Aboriginal art gallery, 4x4 amateur driver's loop, Afghan Cemetery, and Hookeys Waterhole.

## William Creek

Lying on the dusty Oodnadatta Track, the tiny settlement of William Creek is South Australia's smallest town, ironically located on the world's largest cattle station — Anna Creek. With a population of just six (and a dog), the town comprises one of Australia's most remote and quintessential pubs, a caravan park, motel units and the headquarters of WrightsAir. William Creek is also the only fuel stop between Marree and Oodnadatta. WrightsAir specialises in aircraft charter, as well as Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre and Anna Creek Painted Hills outback scenic flights.

## Parachilna

Located on the sealed Outback Highway on the western edge of the Flinders Ranges, Parachilna is a convenient stopover enroute to the Outback Tracks. Once a scheduled stop on the old Ghan line, Parachilna is recognised for its proximity to one of the most significant Ediacaran fossil sites in the world, representing the earliest evidence of complex life on earth. Parachilna is noted by the film industry for its diverse outback and red desert locations.

## Marree

Marree lies at the junction of the Oodnadatta and Birdsville tracks and is the gateway to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre basin. Marree once featured Arabunna Aboriginal people, Europeans and Afghani cameleers living side-by-side from the time of the town's establishment. Today, remnants of these three cultures live on in the Arabunna Aboriginal Community Centre and the Marree Mosque. Worth a look too is the Tom Kruse Collection, a special room in the Marree Hotel that houses a tribute to the legendary outback mailman.

## Mt Dare

Formerly the station kitchen on the old Mt Dare cattle property, the Mt Dare Hotel was rebuilt anew in 2006 and today stands as the outback's newest hotel. Part of the Witjira National Park and accessible by 4WD only, Mt Dare Hotel lies just 10 km south





# Outback Events

## Birdsville Bronco Branding, Campdraft and Rodeo - May

### Birdsville

Experience the fast-moving action and traditional bush skills as teams tough it out to be the quickest to brand cattle using the traditional method of bush branding. The weekend also features a campdraft competition and a much-anticipated sunset rodeo. Live music and dancing add to the atmosphere while crowds cheer on their favourite bushmen and women.

## Camel Cup - July

### Marree

For a race meet with a difference, the Camel Cup is hard to go past. The 13-race program features a Calcutta on the Cup, fashions in the field, live entertainment, plus food and bar facilities. Add to that donkey races, dog races, a hole-in-one competition, tug-of-war (with a camel) and plenty to keep the kids out of your hair, and you've got a great family day out.

## Big Red Bash - July

### Birdsville

One of the biggest and best Aussie rock concerts happens every year at Big Red, on the outskirts of Birdsville under the open skies of the Simpson Desert. Bring the family (even the dog), pitch a tent and take in the atmosphere of this three-night concert featuring the cream of Australian Rock, and plenty of daytime activities, events, and entertainment.

## Betoota Races - August

### Betoota

Kicking off the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival, the Betoota Races breathes life back into this outback Queensland ghost town as holidaymakers, racegoers, and outback locals celebrate the region's signature event. Friday night will have you boot scooting at the outback bush-dance, followed by a full Saturday of racing fun with a six-race program, fashions in the field, a mystery auction and lucky gate prizes.

## Birdsville Races - September

### Birdsville

One of the best times to visit Birdsville is during its annual race carnival when the town comes alive, and the population swells to over 7000 people. Visitors converge from all over Australia for two days of quality outback racing and three great nights of live entertainment in an event that takes on the mantle of the Melbourne Cup of the Outback.

## Iconic Outback Watering Holes

Definitely a pub crawl with a difference. This one might take you a couple of weeks, but the historic and iconic pubs, the characters, the drive, and the scenery between drinks will be worth it. Start anywhere you like on The Outback Loop, but pubs worthy of a visit include:

**Prairie Hotel** – Try the Feral Food Platter and a pint of Fargher Lager (bookings essential)

**Mungerannie Roadhouse** – The quirkiest pub in the outback

**Innaminka Hotel** – The 'Outamincka' bar is fab, as is a Cooper Creek cruise

**Birdsville Hotel** – A beer in Australia's most famous pub? Tick!

**Mt Dare Hotel** – You'll need a 4WD to get there and a Desert Pass to go further

**Pink Roadhouse, Oodnadatta** – Drink in the Pink

**William Creek Hotel** – A quintessential pub in the middle of nowhere

**Marree Hotel** – Oodnadatta or Birdsville track? Have a beer and decide

*Information within this brochure is correct at time of printing.  
For current information and further details visit [theoutbackloop.com.au](http://theoutbackloop.com.au).*

## More Information

For further details and even more events, visit:

[www.theoutbackloop.com.au/events](http://www.theoutbackloop.com.au/events)





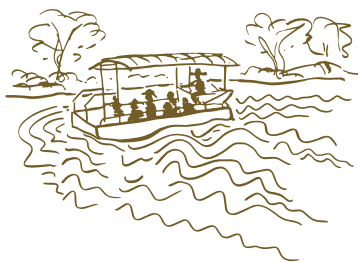
# Bucket-List Highlights

## Beer in the Birdsville Pub

A bucket-list item for many Australians, an ice-cold beer in the front bar of the country's most iconic hotel is a 'must-do' if you're travelling to Birdsville. The heart and soul of the town since 1884, the front bar of the Birdsville pub is one of those places where there are no social boundaries. Once you're having a well-deserved drink in the pub, everyone starts to loosen up, and that's when stories are told, experiences related and legends created.

## Sunset Cruise on the Cooper Creek (Innamincka)

The best way to indulge in the beauty of the Cooper Creek at Innamincka is to take a sunset cruise onboard the pub's covered boat, 'Kingfisher'. With a drink in hand, witness handsome gums and acacias silhouetted against a burnt orange backdrop, as majestic pelicans on their last flight of the day glide inches above the creek's mirrored surface.



## Early Animal Life Unearthed at Nilpena Station

(approx 40 km from Parachilna)

Five hundred and fifty-five million years ago, the desert backdrop of the Flinders Ranges was submerged below shallow tropical seas, inhabited by the earliest evidence of complex life on earth. For a limited season, pre-book an 'exclusive access' guided tour to one of the most significant Ediacaran fossil sites in the world. Visit [www.prairiehotel.com.au/fossils](http://www.prairiehotel.com.au/fossils) for details.

## Arkaroola Ridgetop Tour

The Ridgetop Tour showcases the majesty of the Northern Flinders Ranges and is a 'must-do' experience at Arkaroola. You'll travel in a specially constructed open-top 4WD vehicle on a 4.5-hour guided tour of some of the most spectacularly rugged country on Earth. Drink in 360-degree views with morning or afternoon tea at Sillers Lookout – a lofty pinnacle at the end of the track.

## Feral Food Platter at the Prairie Hotel

One of 20 unmissable outback experiences, the famous Prairie Hotel Feral Food Menu entices visitors with its intriguing combination of kangaroo fillet, emu filet mignon, and camel sausage. Finish off with the quandong crumble pie and wash it all down with the pub's Fargher Lager. Aussie outback cuisine at its best.

## Underground Bakery at Farina

Run entirely by volunteers, this unique pop-up bakery utilises the underground kitchen in the ruins of the old homestead at Farina. Baking only in the winter months, the bakery is garnering kudos and creating all sorts of freshly baked goodies for lucky locals and visitors. Every year, at least \$40,000 in bakery revenue goes back to the restoration group and its preservation efforts.

## Visit/Fly Over Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre

At 144 km long, 77 km wide, and 15.2 metres below sea level, the vastness of Australia's largest inland lake can only truly be appreciated from the air. Witness extraordinary birdlife along with a visual feast of incredible colours, patterns, and textures, not only on the lake itself but in the surrounding wilderness. Many tour operators regularly fly to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre as part of a tour package, or just over the lake as a stand-alone charter.

## Sunset Drinks at Big Red

One of the most stunning places to view an outback sunset is just 35 km from Birdsville, on top of the 45-metre-tall sand dune known as Big Red. You'll need a 4WD and, once you're there, the challenge is to see if you can drive straight up the face of the dune without rolling back. When you're done, grab a cold drink, sit back with family and friends, and bask in a spectacular Simpson Desert sunset.

## Birdwatching at Goyder's Lagoon

Part of the Diamantina River Wetland System, and located around 170 km south of Birdsville, Goyder's Lagoon can be reached via the Birdsville Track (dry times only). Goyder's Lagoon is classified as an Important Birdlife Area. It is considered a photographer's and twitcher's paradise, with regular sightings of waterbirds including ducks, terns, spoonbills, heron, ibises and cormorants, to name just a few.

## Camping at Coongie Lakes

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park is a freshwater world of lakes, channels, billabongs, shallow floodplains, deltas, and interdune swamps. It lies on the floodplain of Cooper Creek located about 110 km west of Innamincka in the Innamincka Regional Reserve. You'll need a Desert Pass and a 4WD to get there, but once you've set up camp, you'll be richly rewarded with some of the most stunning wilderness and an endless parade of birdlife. A few day's camping in this stunning location is well worth the effort, but remember to book your site and pay camping fees.

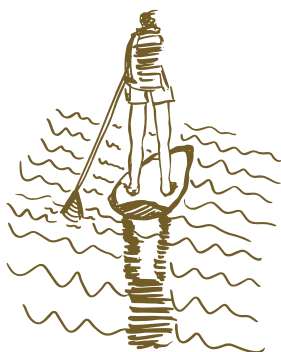


### Swim in Dalhousie Springs

Take a dip in a natural hot spring where the spring water bubbles up from deep underground. The water temperature varies from 38-43° C around the pool, so if you're getting too hot in one place, you can swim to another. In Arrernte, the name for Dalhousie springs is Irrwanyere. The springs are sacred to the Lower Southern Arrernte, and Wangkangurru Aboriginal people and home to unique species of fish, such as the Dalhousie Hardyhead and other rare aquatic life found nowhere else in the world. Don't forget, you'll need to purchase an SA Desert Parks Pass to camp at or visit Dalhousie Springs.

### Swim or Paddle-Board in Birdsville Billabong

The Birdsville billabong is a surprising oasis in the middle of this outback desert town. Located on the edge of the town, the billabong is a drawcard for locals and tourists alike for swimming, paddle-boarding, kayaking, fishing and walking. Make your way around to Pelican Point, a small peninsula across the water and a particularly beautiful place where you can observe the local birdlife, small marsupials and beautiful outback sunsets.



### Stargazing at Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre and Arkaroola

Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park is not only home to Australia's largest salt lake but is also one of the darkest locations in Australia. The large, flat salt lake ensures unobstructed views, and when the lake is full, the water reflects the stars from above, creating an absolutely spectacular sight. Another spot well worth visiting is the observatory at Arkaroola. Discover galaxies, solar systems, suns, planets, nebulae, and billions of stars light-years away, from the inside of three impressive privately owned observatories.

### Mutonia Sculpture Park, Alberrie Creek

Bizarre boltings, wacky weldings, and peculiar spare parts combine to create a world of quirky sculptures at the Mutonia Sculpture Park on the Oodnadatta Track. A metal oasis on a lonely stretch of desert road, these strange industrial sculptures are the brainchild of designer and ex-mechanic Robin Cooke and have delighted travellers since 1997. Located 60 km west of Marree, look out for 'Plane Henge', 'Big Dog', and a range of smaller robot structures, amongst others.

### Aussie Movies in Innamincka

If you love iconic Aussie movies, what better way to see them than in a totally outback setting, under a blanket of millions of stars. Starlight Cinema is a feature of the Innamincka Hotel, and what better way to finish off a great meal in the Outamincka Bar than relaxing in a deck chair, watching the likes of *Red Dog*, *Last Cab to Darwin*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *Charlie & Boots*, or *Priscilla: Queen of the Desert* on the big outdoor screen? Don't forget too, there's also a fabulous 9-hole mini-golf course to keep the kids entertained before the movie starts.

### World's Longest Fence

The Dog (or Dingo) Fence is the longest fence in the world at over 5600 km. Originally erected in the 1880s, it is a 1.8 m pest-exclusion fence built to keep dingoes out of the relatively fertile south-east part of the continent and protect the sheep flocks of southern Queensland. The Dog Fence stretches from Jimbour on the Darling Downs near Dalby in southern Queensland into South Australia through the area known as The Outback Loop, ending on Eyre Peninsula cliffs above the Great Australian Bight near Nundroo. The fence crosses all three tracks: The Strzelecki Track, 103 km north of Lyndhurst; the Birdsville Track, approx 42 km north of Marree; and the Oodnadatta Track, around 40 km west of Marree.





#### DISTANCES

Birdsville to Poeppel Corner .....	170 km
The Birdsville 'Inside Track' .....	146 km
The Oodnadatta Track .....	637 km
The Birdsville Track .....	520 km
The Strzelecki Track .....	456 km
Walkers Crossing .....	364 km
Coongie Lakes Road .....	115 km
Cordillo Downs Road .....	424 km
Arrabury Road .....	385 km

Approximate distances only.

Please ensure you check the latest conditions and reports for all routes/tracks you intend to travel.

Up-to-date information can be found by visiting

[www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads](http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads)

[www.roadreport.nt.gov.au](http://www.roadreport.nt.gov.au)

[www.racq.com.au/cars-and-driving/safety-on-the-road/road-conditions](http://www.racq.com.au/cars-and-driving/safety-on-the-road/road-conditions)

## OUT OF THE LOOP

Once you've had your fill of all things Outback Loop, there are plenty of options to extend your holiday.

Depending on where you are, there are lots of small towns just out of the Loop waiting for you to discover, explore, and experience. It's just a matter of deciding which way to head next.





## Northern Territory

If you're driving down the Explorer's Way along the Stuart Highway from Alice Springs or Darwin, a small diversion exploring The Outback Loop region is a great way to extend your trip.

The easiest way is to turn left at Marla onto the Oodnadatta Track, which will take you to Oodnadatta, William Creek and Marree. From Marree, you can head up either the Birdsville or Strzelecki tracks.

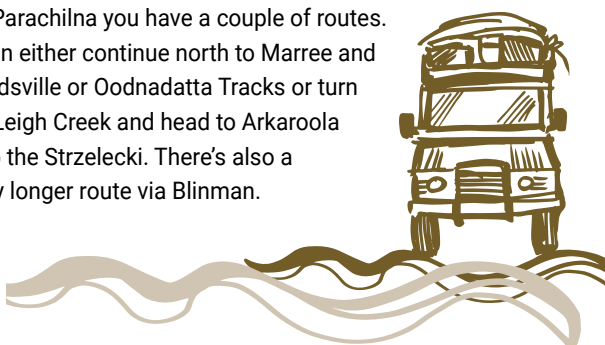
Alternatively, turn off at Kulgera Roadhouse and go bush to Finke and then down to Mt Dare. From Mt Dare, you can either head to Dalhousie Springs and across the Simpson Desert to Birdsville, or head south to Oodnadatta.

## South Australia

Approaching The Outback Loop from Adelaide is a beautiful way to see South Australia's Mid North and Southern Flinders Ranges before entering the outback.

Parachilna is the stepping-off point and is reachable from Quorn via the Augusta or Horrocks Highways. Alternatively, RM Williams Way via Jamestown and Orroroo joins the Flinders Ranges Way just south of Hawker.

From Parachilna you have a couple of routes. You can either continue north to Marree and the Birdsville or Oodnadatta Tracks or turn off at Leigh Creek and head to Arkaroola and up the Strzelecki. There's also a slightly longer route via Blinman.



## Queensland

The most direct way to The Outback Loop from Brisbane is via the Warrego Highway to Charleville, where the road changes to the Diamantina Development Road. Take this road to Quilpie, and then you have a couple of choices.

You can continue along the Diamantina Development Road to Windorah and into Birdsville, or take the Cooper Development Road to Eromanga and Thargomindah to Innamincka. Note that the road changes surfaces from bitumen to dirt at the SA border.

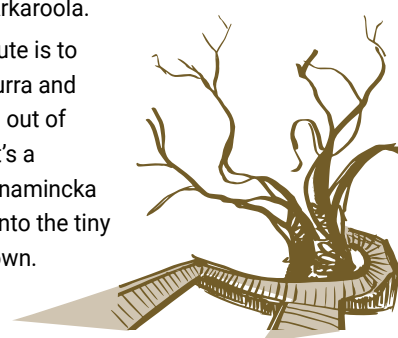
If you're coming from Northern Queensland, you can arrive at Birdsville via Winton, Boulia, and Bedourie. Alternatively, you can approach from Longreach and Windorah.

## New South Wales

Broken Hill is the most obvious major town from which to approach The Outback Loop if you're coming from New South Wales.

Perhaps the most adventurous way is to travel north on the Silver City Highway to Tibooburra and then make your way over to Cameron Corner (where the SA, Qld, and NSW borders meet) via the Dunes Scenic Drive. Continue via Riecks Road to join up with the Strzelecki Track, and make a decision to go either north to Innamincka or south to Arkaroola.

Another less challenging route is to keep going north at Tibooburra and link up with Bundeena Road out of Thargomindah. From here it's a short trip until you hit the Innamincka Road, which leads straight into the tiny South Australian outback town.





## East to South West Queensland

### Windorah — Eromanga — Thargomindah

From Birdsville, it's an easy drive to Windorah, where the Cooper Creek originates. Visit the Whitula Gate Museum to see outback life in the early pioneering days, grab a drink and meal in the Western Star Hotel, and check out the Windorah International Yabbie Races held just before the Birdsville races.

East of Innamincka, you'll come across Eromanga, the furthest town from the sea in Australia. A prehistoric playground, Eromanga's natural history museum is acclaimed as the home of 'Cooper' the 95- to 98-million-year-old Titanosaurus fossil. Another way into and out of the Loop is via the Bulloo Shire. Start in Thargomindah, a bustling town of 230 people. Just out of town, be sure to visit Lake Bindigolly National Park for birdwatching and some stunning walks. It's also a great place to stay awhile, unwind, and catch plenty of yellowbelly and big, fat yabbies. Innamincka visitors can take Bundeena Road out of Thargomindah to Julie Kate's Corner and then the (unsealed) Innamincka road into the town.

## North to Far West Queensland

### Betoota — Bedourie — Boulia

Just north of Birdsville lies the ghost town of Betoota. However, the deserted town bounces back to life twice a year for the Betoota Gymkhana in April and the Races in August.

North of Birdsville, visit a copse of rare waddi trees on your way to Bedourie, home of the Bedourie Camp Oven. Try soaking in the warm waters of an artesian spa and checking out the National Trust-listed Carcory Homestead. You can also get your jolly swagman on by camping under the shade of a coolibah tree in the Diamantina National Park.

Further north, Boulia waits to enthrall you with the mysterious Min Min Lights. A 'must-visit' is the Boulia Heritage Museum where you can learn about three distinct periods of history: prehistoric predators of the sea (including fossils of the Ichthyosaurus and Plesiosaurus); Boulia's first people, the Pitta Pitta, and their culture; and Stonehouse Cottage, which provides a window into early pioneering life.

## South-East to Northern New South Wales

### Cameron Corner — Tibooburra — Malparinka

If you're on the Strzelecki, head to Cameron Corner and stand at the intersection of South Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland. Check out the Dingo Fence, play nine holes of golf in three different states, and follow it up with a meal and a drink at the Cameron Corner Store.

Head south to Tibooburra, home to the Wadigali, Wongkumurra, and Malyangapa Aboriginal people. View artefacts and photographs at the Keeping Place Museum. See the upside-down whaleboat replica of the vessel Captain Sturt dragged with him from Adelaide. Drop into the Family Hotel to see some stunning artworks by famous artists, including Russell Drysdale and Clifton Pugh.

Next stop is Milparinka. Check out the Baker's House with its insight into pioneering life, and the old Police Station, which is now an art gallery, souvenir shop and visitor information centre. Have a beer in the town's only commercially operating business, the Albert Hotel.



## West Into the Northern Territory

### Explorer's Way — Coober Pedy to Alice Springs

Turn off at William Creek and head to Coober Pedy, an opal mining town renowned for its underground community. Stay at a range of above and underground accommodation, or go noodling for opals, or take a guided opal tour. Visit some of the quirky underground dwellings, attractions, souvenir shops, galleries, restaurants, and cafés.

Head up Explorer's Way to Marla, the last major stop before you hit the NT. Marla's Travellers' Rest is a sprawling roadhouse, hotel/motel, restaurant, servo and supermarket, all in one place. An ideal overnight stay on your way to the Alice and beyond.

Other whistle stops on your way include the SA/NT border crossing...definitely worth a selfie; Kulgera Roadhouse, which bills itself as the first and last pub in the Territory; and Erldunda — the turning-off point for Uluru — with its big Desert Oaks Roadhouse that has a lot of accommodation and camping options.

## South to the Flinders Ranges

### Wilpena Pound

Parachilna in the Flinders Ranges is the stepping-off point for The Outback Loop. However, if you're looking for an adventure before you start travelling one of the Loops, why not consider a station stay? There are 27 properties throughout the Flinders Ranges where you can experience life on a working sheep station.

Bed down for a night or two (or more) in accommodation that ranges in styles from bush camping and glamping to shearers' quarters and elegant homesteads. Most stations are family-owned and offer all sorts of experiences to keep you busy, including exploring superb 4WD tracks, stretching your legs hiking to places other travellers won't get to see, or going on a guided tour with the host. Some even offer scenic flights.

Don't forget the rest of the Flinders, including the Ikara Flinders Ranges National Park, which remains a place of enormous significance to the local Adnyamathanha people. Be sure to visit Wilpena Pound for spectacular views and the other notable towns and drawcards such as Blinman, Hawker, Brachina Gorge, Rawnsley Bluff and more.



# Aboriginal Pre-History in Lake Eyre Basin

Aboriginal people explored and occupied all corners of Australia from at least 65,000 years ago, developing an intricate connection to the land. Even in its most inhospitable regions, they successfully adapted to diverse conditions and major climatic and environmental changes.

Of the 250 distinct Aboriginal language groups, around 70 were in the Lake Eyre Basin, where archaeological fieldwork points to it being occupied at least 40,000 years ago.

Aboriginal Australia was a vibrant, diverse mosaic of lifestyles, practices and beliefs, governed by seasonal changes and the nature of their territorial ecosystems. The Lake Eyre Basin desert river systems provided the Aboriginal inhabitants with a great diversity of resources, which they maintained through flood (boom) and drought (bust).

A common factor for all was the spiritual connection to their specific country. Here, the great creation Ancestors had formed the features in the landscape and set out the laws and lore governing life as they followed their creation paths through the land.

The transfer of this knowledge through song, ceremony and ritual exchange, and obligations to the land as custodians, provided the fundamentals for a rich and sustainable lifestyle.

Water was key to adjusting to the boom/bust cycle. A network of soaks, rock holes, deep waterholes, and native wells (mikiri) allowed people to move freely through the desert regions.

The extensive dreaming tracks and trade routes crisscrossing the Lake Eyre Basin made it one of the most important Aboriginal landscapes in Australia.

Over thousands of years, many different Aboriginal language groups developed and are bound by highly complex belief systems that interconnect the land, spirituality, law, social life, and care of the environment.

Today, Aboriginal people from, and living in, the Basin retain strong links to their country and are re-establishing their presence through Native Title declarations and taking an active interest in the management and health of this vital landscape.



# Air Access



The Outback Loop isn't just for 4WD drivers. You can still see and experience The Outback Loop by taking an air tour.

To see the Loop from the air is truly a bucket-list experience. A birds-eye view over Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre, the Diamantina, and Channel Country after the rains is an experience like no other. Expect to see a gorgeous fan of spidery water tendrils crisscrossing desert plains with hints of green at the edges.

The water brings new life to the region as it flows into small and large waterholes that revitalise the areas and provide an oasis for wildlife. Look out too for fields of wildflowers in amongst the stony and desert scrub. There are airstrips at towns dotted around The Outback Loop, including, Arkaroola, Birdsville, Innamincka, Leigh Creek, Marree, Mount Dare, Oodnadatta, and William Creek. Parachilna can be accessed via Leigh Creek to the north or Blinman to the east. Transfers are available for both locations.

Many tour operators regularly fly to these outback towns as part of tour packages. And, of course, most have a pilot on board who is also a skilled guide and will talk you through the many facets of the landscape below. There are also tour operators on the ground at each of these towns, who will pick you up and take you to your accommodation, then show you around the places of interest and take you to nearby experiences and activities.

The airstrip at Birdsville is literally across the road from the hotel and is the only one commercially serviced by Rex Airlines, with four flights a week from Queensland. See [www.rex.com.au](http://www.rex.com.au).

**All the air tour operators below are available for charter or have packages to The Outback Loop:**

- Kirkhope (ex Moorabbin, Victoria)
- Rex (ex Charleville, Birdsville, Thargomindah)
- WrightsAir (ex William Creek)
- Chinta Air (ex Adelaide, Flinders Ranges)
- Arid Air (ex Port Augusta)
- SeaAir Pacific (ex Coolangatta)
- Air Central West (ex Longreach)
- Fargher Air (ex Parachilna)
- AirCruising (ex various Australian locations)
- Banksia Adventures Pty Ltd (ex Adelaide)
- Bush Pilots (ex Hawker)
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