



WEST MACDONNELL RANGES



Simpsons Gap

Start your adventure heading west on Larapinta Drive. After 24kms you will reach the beautiful Simpsons Gap, one of the most prominent gaps in the West MacDonnell Ranges. Keep an eye out at dawn and dusk as you may spot a black-footed rock wallaby along the walking track or by the permanent waterhole.

Typical vegetation of the West MacDonnell Ranges such as large stands of mulga and over 40 rare and relict plants can be found here. There are many short walks that pass the native plants of the area including ancient Ghost Gums and the views of the ranges are breathtaking.

Known as Rungutjirpa to the Arrernte Aboriginal people, Simpsons Gap was the first mythological home of a group of giant goanna ancestors. Several dreaming trails and stories cross at this important spiritual site.



Standley Chasm

Jump back on the road for another 27kms and turn right into Standley Chasm. An inspiration, the Chasm is at its most dramatic an hour either side of noon. The sheer walls glow from reflected sunlight to create a breathtaking display of stark form and rich colour.

Surrounded by the West MacDonnell Ranges, Standley Chasm is located in a private flora and fauna reserve owned by the Iwupataka Land Trust, a unique Aboriginal owned and operated enterprise.

An entirely different experience is provided along the walking track that links the carpark to the Chasm. This follows a creek where spring-fed pools attract a great variety of wildlife and birdlife. Most active visitors will find the 20 minute one-way walk to be quite easy.

Entry fees do apply and can be paid at the Standley Chasm Kiosk.

The Standley Chasm Kiosk is a café not to be missed on your adventure! With amazing food and super-shakes available daily. Relax on the veranda and enjoy a meal/snack while looking out into the beautiful West MacDonnell Ranges.



Ellery Creek Big Hole

The spectacular waterhole is fed by the West MacDonnell Ranges and surrounded by high red cliffs and sandy Ellery Creek.

Thousands of years of massive floods have carved out this waterhole, which is recognised as an internationally significant geological site. Take the 3km Dolomite walk to see the surrounding formations.

You will also have excellent recreational opportunities such as walking, swimming, picnicking and camping.

Ellery Creek Big Hole is just another 37kms from Standley Chasm. Just keep following the road out west until the turn onto Namatjira Drive comes up on your right.



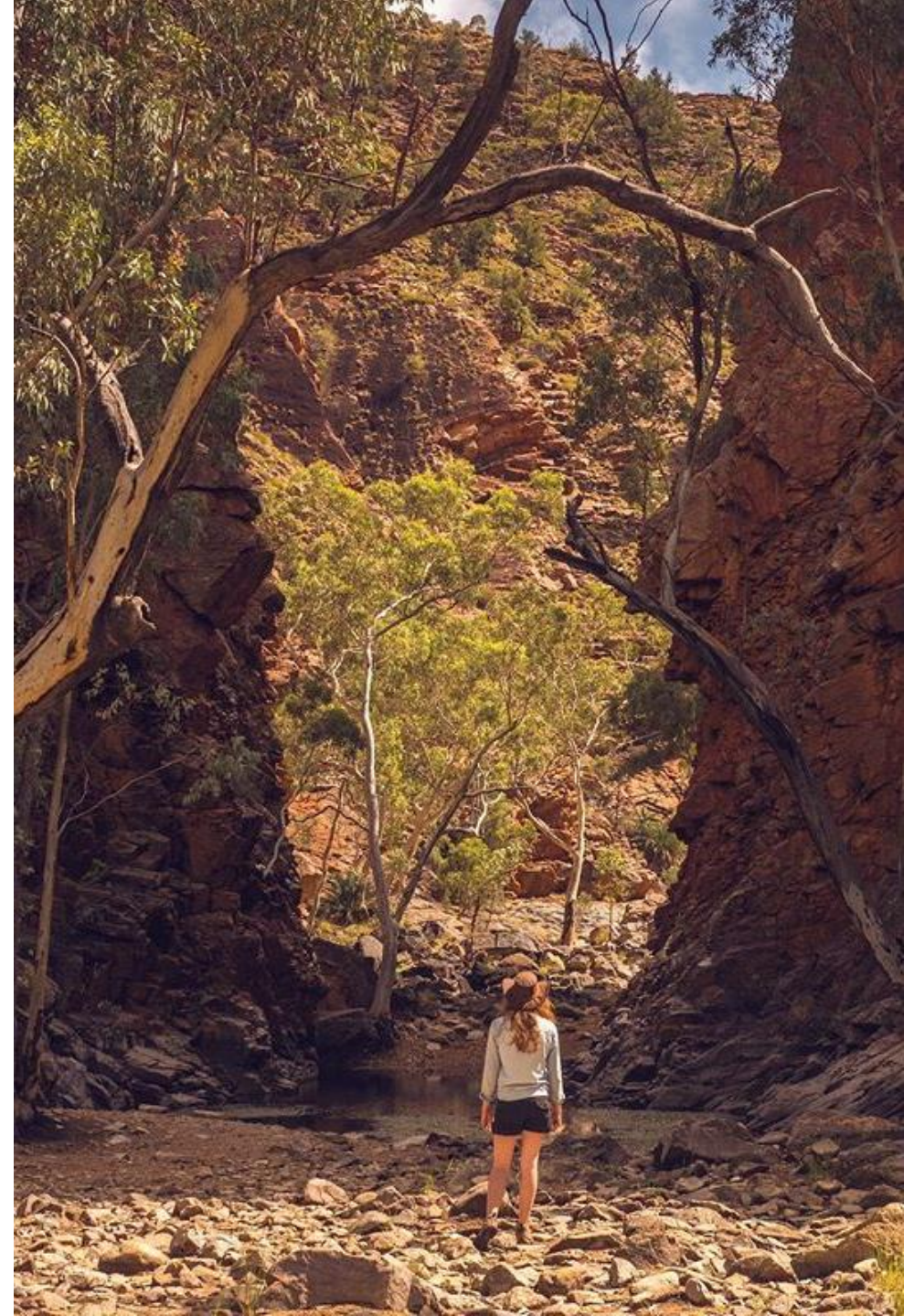
Serpentine Gorge

For those with a 4WD, jump back onto Namatjira Drive and head 14km towards Serpentine Gorge. The gorge is yet another stunning natural feature of the West MacDonnell Ranges.

Follow one of the many well-marked paths along the gorge through the cool shade of river red gums, or up to the lookout above the cliffs to survey views of the series of semi-permanent waterholes, and the geology of the rugged MacDonnell Ranges.

Serpentine Gorge is a birdwatchers paradise in the dry season as it remains as one of the only waterholes to not dry up, resulting in birds flocking to the area.

It is also the site of the Carpet Snake Dreaming, having special significance to the Western Arrernte custodians.



The Ochre Pits

Just 9kms from Serpentine Gorge or if you're in a 2WD, 23kms from Ellery Creek Big Hole, you will arrive at the Ochre Pits. At this location you can see the natural ochres in the cliff face that have provided a source of materials for Indigenous peoples for thousands of years.

An information shelter at the site provides information about how, why and when the Ochre Pits were used. After browsing this historic site, sit down in the scenic surrounds and enjoy a barbecue lunch.

Ochre occurs in a range of earthy colours ranging from white through to yellow, orange, red and browns. It is an important part of Aboriginal culture and is used in everyday life. It is a raw material for paintings and ceremonial body decoration. Weapons were painted with ochre to increase the success of hunting and to protect the wooden weapons from termites. Red ochre was mixed into an ointment to relieve congestion and white ochre was used as a magical charm. It also protected the wooden weapons from termites.



Ormiston Gorge

Just a short 24kms from the Ochre Pits and you'll reach the spectacular Ormiston Gorge. A great place for a swim, or to see the towering walls of the gorge and pound, local plants and wildlife.

The gorge has a near permanent waterhole that is fantastic for swimming, especially in the warmer months.

Explore the area via the Ormiston Pound Walk, a 3-4hr circuit that leaves from the visitor centre to cross the rocky slopes and the flat floor of the pound and back along the gorge via the main waterhole. The 5 minute Waterhole Walk, which has wheelchair access to the end of the paved path, and the 20 minute one-way Ghost Gum Lookout Walk are the most popular with visitors.

The area contains an interesting variety of native fauna and flora including a number relict plant species from Central Australia's tropical past.

Ormiston has everything you need from a Kiosk serving amazing food, toilets, picnic benches, free gas BBQ's and a campground.





Glen Helen Gorge

If you're coming from Ormiston Gorge, you'll see that Glen Helen Gorge is a stone's throw away! Stop in and experience the spectacular of Glen Helen. A towering sandstone wall is the first thing you'll see as you arrive. The area includes views of Mount Sonder, one of the highest points in Central Australia, which changes colours with the light.

At Glen Helen Gorge the ranges part to make way for the Finke River. The permanent Finke River waterhole is an important refuge in the hot summer months, for all nine species of fish and the migrating waterbirds. From here the Finke River continues and makes its way to the Simpson Desert.

Enjoy lunch on the verandah of the lodge, this is truly a magnificent experience as you sit and bask in the warm sun overlooking the ranges and Finke River. Not to mention, the food is amazing!

Wander down the sandy path and see the river up close. In the warmer months, opt to spend your afternoon floating in the cool waters of the river.

Redbank Gorge

For those 4WDers, Redbank Gorge is just a further 25kms on Namatjira Drive and is well worth a stop in. Here we have a stunning gorge and chasm that is a refuge for many threatened plant and animal species.

Take the 2km, 1.5hr return walk from the car park along the creek bed to the gorge. In the warmer months, opt to swim in the cold, deep water of the near-permanent waterhole.

