

# The Alice Springs trip



# The Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory occupies about one sixth of Australia's total land mass some 142 million Hectares, with a population of about 200,000 and is home to some of the natural world's most unique and exciting destinations.

The Northern Territory has six main destinations. From the red sandy desert of Alice Springs and Uluru / Ayers Rock and the golden plains of Tennant Creek, to the savannah woodlands surrounding Katherine and the lush green tropics of Darwin and Kakadu, it's not surprising the Northern Territory is a popular destination for travellers keen to experience Australia's outback.

The Northern Territory is known around the world for the World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks. It also has lots of other attractions Alice Springs, The Larapinta Trail, Palm Valley, Kings Canyon, Devils Marbles and much much more.

The Northern Territory has 2 seasons the Wet and the Dry, i have only been in the dry season as the roads can be cut off due to large amounts of rainfall swelling the rivers. But this year i am going on the Ghan towards the end of the wet season.

# The Equipment.

My vehicle is a Toyota pop top camper with dual 90 litre fuel tanks , a 50 litre water tank.

The vehicle can sleep four people with the roof extended, it has a cooker, sink, fridge, storage cupboards for food utensils and clothing.

The vehicle has a 150 watt solar panel and a 2000 watt inverter for 240 volt power, it also has dual batteries so as to keep the fridge going day and night.

I have recovery equipment consisting of a snatch strap, high lift jack, Max trax, long handled shovel and an exhaust air jack.

Safety equipment is a first aid kit, fire blanket, 2 fire extinguishers one at the front and one at the back, a satellite phone and UHF radio.





## Entering the Northern Territory

After entering the Northern Territory (top left), the speed limit changes to 130kmph and you can see the road trains overtaking me (top right) on the Sturt highway. I am traveling at 100kmph, we were all in contact via UHF radio, so reasonable safe as the road train drivers travel the Sturt Highway a few times a week.

Fuel is available at Kulgara roadhouse (bottom right), the roadhouse has a food bar, coffee and tea, also a bar for a cold beer if you are staying at the campground or not driving.

Leaving the Kulgara roadhouse onto the Lasseter highway to Curtin Springs (bottom left) I came across Mount Conner / Artilla (above) it is part of Curtin Springs Station, tours are available. Mount Conner is 300 metres above ground level and known to the locals as Fooluru as tourist mistake it for Uluru.

## Uluru / Ayres Rock

Uluru / Ayers Rock was named by William Gosse in 1873 after Sir Henry Ayers. Uluru is the Aboriginal name. The rock was created over some 600 million years, it originally sat at the bottom of a sea, but today stands 348m above ground, and 2.5kms of its bulk is underground.

I have visited Uluru many times and have been lucky enough to see the rain coming off it, but never climbed it as some reason for me it did not seem right to do. There are great dreamtime stories to be heard from the Aboriginal people.



Sunset at Uluru



Rain running off Uluru





## Uluru / Ayres Rock

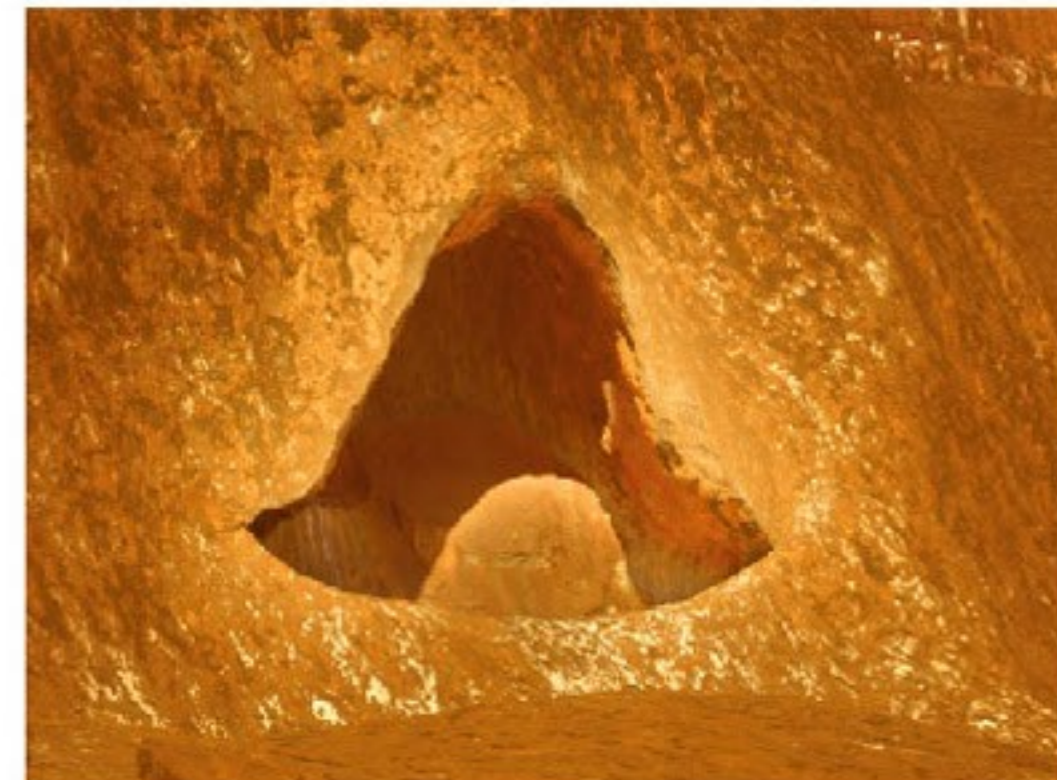
Uluru is a big sandstone monolith that is 348 meters above ground, but the bulk is 515 metres is below ground.

Top left; Sunrise at Uluru.

Bottom; Uluru with Kata Tjuta / Olgas in the background.

Right; People climbing Uluru.





Page Left

Top left; Map of walks around Uluru.

Bottom left; The teaching cave, many young boys were taught how to live out in the bush here.

Top right; Aboriginal rock art.  
Bottom right; Aboriginal rock art.

Page right

Top Right; Kapi waterhole.

Top left: Kapi waterhole story.

Bottom Right; One of the holes in the rock at Uluru.



## Kata Tjuta / The Olgas

Kata Tjuta or the Olgas are made up of 36 formations, the highest point is Mount Olga, rising to 546m above ground, some 200m higher than Ayers Rock / Uluru. The Olgas were named by European explorer Ernest Giles in 1872, then in 1993 it was dual named Kata Tjuta. Most of the area is closed off to white people and Aborigines who do not have business there.

I did the Valley of the Winds walk, it is 7.4km, takes around 3 hours and gets very hot, but has beautiful views of the Olgas.



Sunset at Kata Tjuta



Sunrise at Kata Tjuta





## Kata Tjuta / The Olgas

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Top left; The Walpa Gorge Walk.

Bottom left; The Valley of the Winds Walk takes you between the domes, through creek beds and is 7.4km long.

Top Right; Kata Tjuta.



## Valley of the Winds



**The Walk**

Walk	Distance	Return Time	Grade
Relaxed	3.0km	1 hour	easy
Intermediate	5.0km	1.5 hours	moderate
Challenging	7.4km	2.5 hours	difficult

**Valley of the Winds Walk**

This is an opportunity for people with a keen interest in geology to walk through the domes of Kata Tjuta. The walk is a 7.4km track through the domes, with a return time of 2.5 hours. The track is a loop, starting and ending at the same point. The track is a loop, starting and ending at the same point. The track is a loop, starting and ending at the same point.

**Kata Tjuta - Men's Sacred Area**

Kata Tjuta is a sacred site for the Anangu people. The traditional law for Kata Tjuta is known as *Pitjantjatjara* and is passed on orally. Under this law, the knowledge of the site is restricted to certain people only. This includes respect for the site and its surroundings. Therefore, we request that you respect the site and its surroundings.

**You are on Aboriginal Land. Please Respect It.**

The walking tracks at Kata Tjuta have been carefully made to allow people to experience this unique landscape. Please respect Aboriginal values and traditional law by staying on the marked tracks. Do not climb the domes.

**Warning**

For your safety, the track beyond Water Lookout is closed when the temperature is 38°C or above. The risk of dehydration is extreme in these temperatures. Under any 32-35°C of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations (EPBC) must be followed for passing the official closure sign when it is shown. Penalty: \$5,000.

**Look after Yourself**

Drink one litre of water per hour in hot weather. Always carry water with you. Wear sturdy shoes, sunscreen and a hat. Do not swim with only the water from the creek swimming.

**Nearest Toilets**

The nearest toilets are located 1.5km away in the main camp. It is your responsibility to look after the Park, and the other people who visit, and other people who visit.



## The valley of the winds

The valley of the winds walk is a 7.4km walk through the domes of Kata Tjuta / the Olgas, the walk took me over 4 hours and should not be taken after 11am on hot days (it is closed on days above 36 degrees).

Top left; The valley of the winds walk.

Bottom left; The Valley of the Winds walk track through the domes.

Top Right; The valley of the winds walk.

## The valley of the winds





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Top left; The Walpa Gorge Walk.

Bottom left; The Valley of the Winds Walk takes you between the domes, through creek beds and is 7.4km long.

Top Right; Kata Tjuta.



## Red Center Way

Only 3 hours from Uluru along the red center way is Kings Canyon, a majestic destination featuring 100 meter high sandstone walls, palm filled crevices and views that stretch across the desert.

Top left; Waterhole on the Red center way.

Top right; Reedy rockhole.

Bottom right; Macdonnell ranges on the Red Centre Way.





## Kings Creek Station

Set amongst majestic desert oaks, Kings Creek Station is a 2,000 square kilometre working cattle/camel station with facilities for food, fuel and camping.

Top left; Kings Creek roadhouse.  
Bottom left; wild camels.

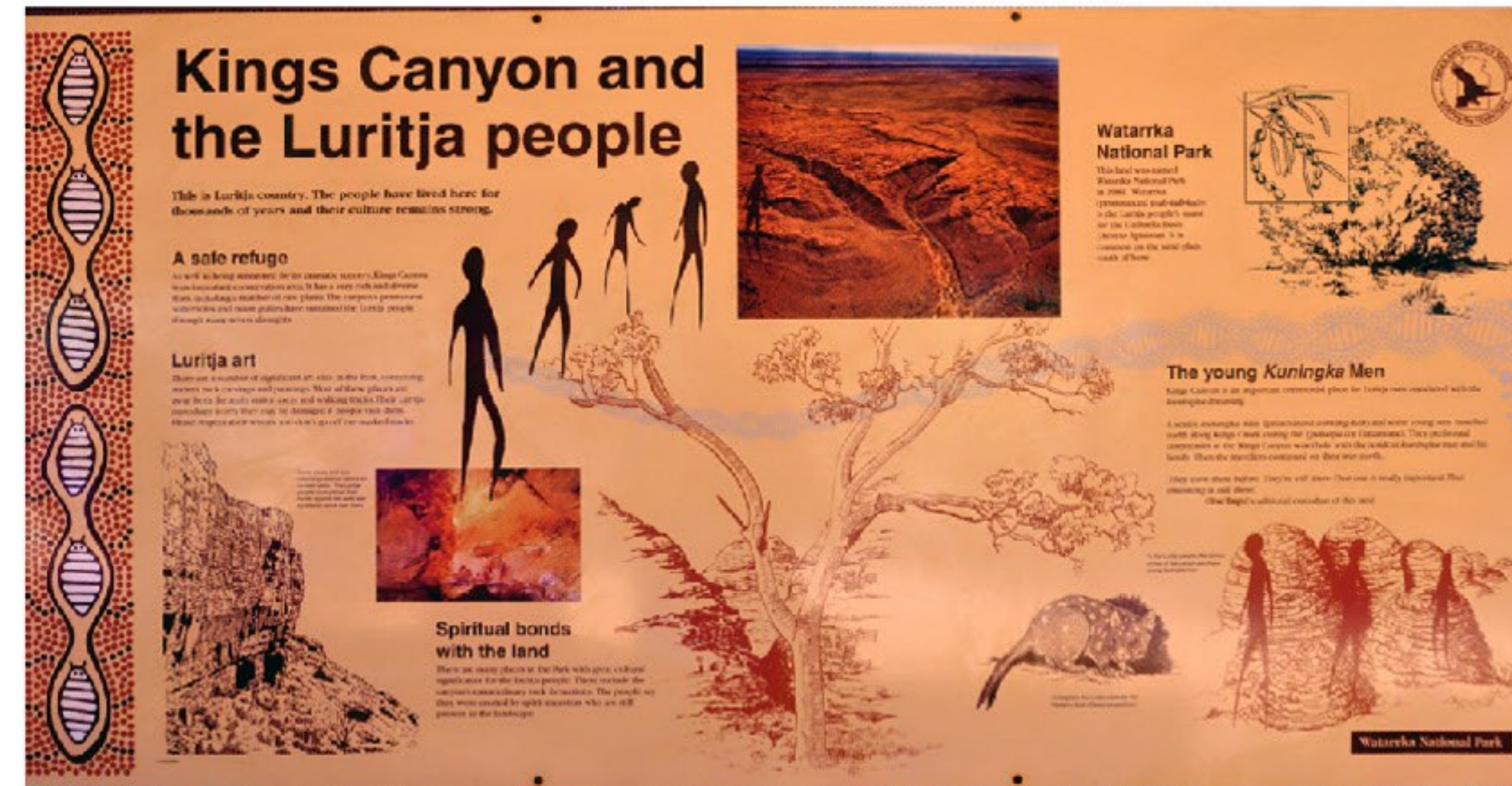
Top right; training the young camels.

Ian and Lyn Conway established Kings Creek Station in 1981



The Gill ranges





## Kings Canyon

Only 3 hours from Uluru, is the beautiful Kings Canyon featuring 100 meter high sandstone walls, palm filled crevices and views that stretch across the desert.

Kings Canyon is in the 71,000 hectares Watarrka National Park and has been home to the Luritja Aboriginal people for more than 20,000 years.

1 up early and take the 6km Rim Walk, a must for those wanting see the magnificent views of the canyon rim, the weathered domes of 'The Lost City' and the Garden of Eden.

## A Ceremony Place

The shady creek is a very shady place for the Luritja people. In the past only men fully initiated in the Luritja culture would venture further up the creek from here. The Luritja people ask you to please respect this important area. There is no access to the top of the canyon from here.





## Kings Canyon

Kings Canyon is within the 71000 hectares  
Watarika National Park in the Northern Territory.

Left; Kings Canyon.

Top left; The sandstone domes.

Top right; Cotterels bridge.

Bottom right; The Lost City.





## Water is Life Kapi-ngurru Waruka Nyinanyi

The Garden of Eden is a very sacred place to the Traditional Owners of Watarrka. It is an important men's site and the Tjukurpa (dreaming) stories are far too sensitive to share publicly. Aboriginal people do not swim at this precious water source and ask that others respect this place and keep out of the waterhole.

Like the Aboriginal people that have relied on this water as a lifeline in centuries gone by, so to do the multitude of animals and plants that call Kings Creek home. Hundreds of species rely on the health and longevity of waterholes such as this one for their survival. Human activity such as swimming reduces the quality of the water by adding pollutants such as sunscreen and can deter native wildlife from inhabiting this area.

*"Splash your face to cool off, that's ok, but don't swim."*

*"If you keep the water healthy, you keep the plants and animals healthy."*

*"Sit quietly...enjoy"*

The Traditional Owners of Watarrka welcome visitors to this sacred place. Take the time to sit and quietly enjoy the rich culture of Eden and you will be rewarded with glimpses of its unique wildlife. The presence of all the native animals around the water in this desert Eden, water is life.

*"As a Traditional Owner I am not allowed to swim here, this place is a men's place. Please respect our wishes and don't swim here."*

Watarrka National Park  
Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife working together

## Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden is a beautiful waterhole surrounded by rare plants in Kings Canyon. The Tjukurpa people do not swim in the water and ask you not to.

Top left; The waterhole.

Top right; The water supply.

Bottom right; The plants of the Garden of Eden.





## Larapinta Drive

Larapinta drive sounds nice, it is a track that goes from Kings Canyon. From the Camels hump a permit is required to travel this corrugated red dirt road with washouts and water across the track, check the road condition sign.

Right; Road conditions sign.

Top Left; Sign saying slow down.

Top right; Ginty's lookout sign.

Bottom left; Water on the track.



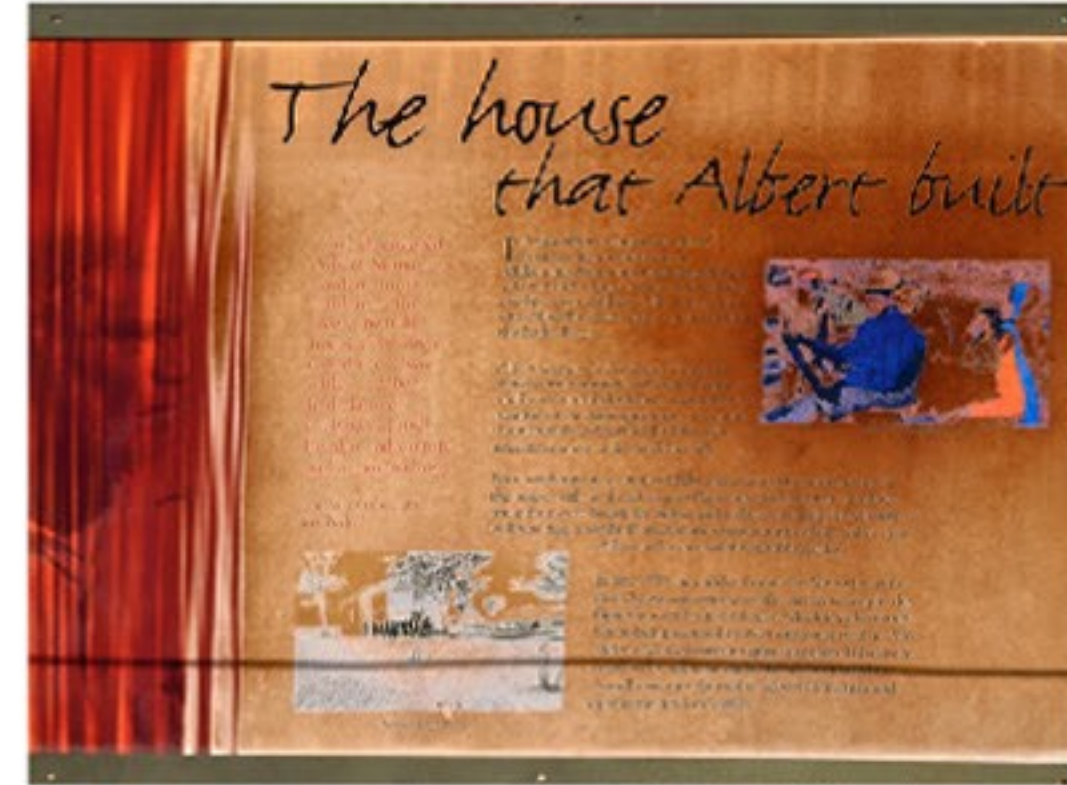
## Albert Namatjira

Albert was born in 1902 and at the age of 13 Albert did the Aboriginal ritual initiation as one of the Aranda group, he lived in the bush for six months and was taught traditional laws and customs by tribal elders. Work as a camel driver took Albert through the country he would later paint, the dreamtime places of his Aranda people.

In 1944 Albert sold 38 paintings in a Melbourne art exhibition, with the proceeds he tried to build a house in Alice Springs. Once again the law prevented him, just because he was Aboriginal. Public outrage at Albert's predicament pushed the government to grant him and his wife Rubina full citizenship in 1957. Citizenship meant they could vote, enter a hotel and build a house anywhere they chose, Albert, Rubina and their 8 children built a house at the Goat camp on the banks of the Finke river.

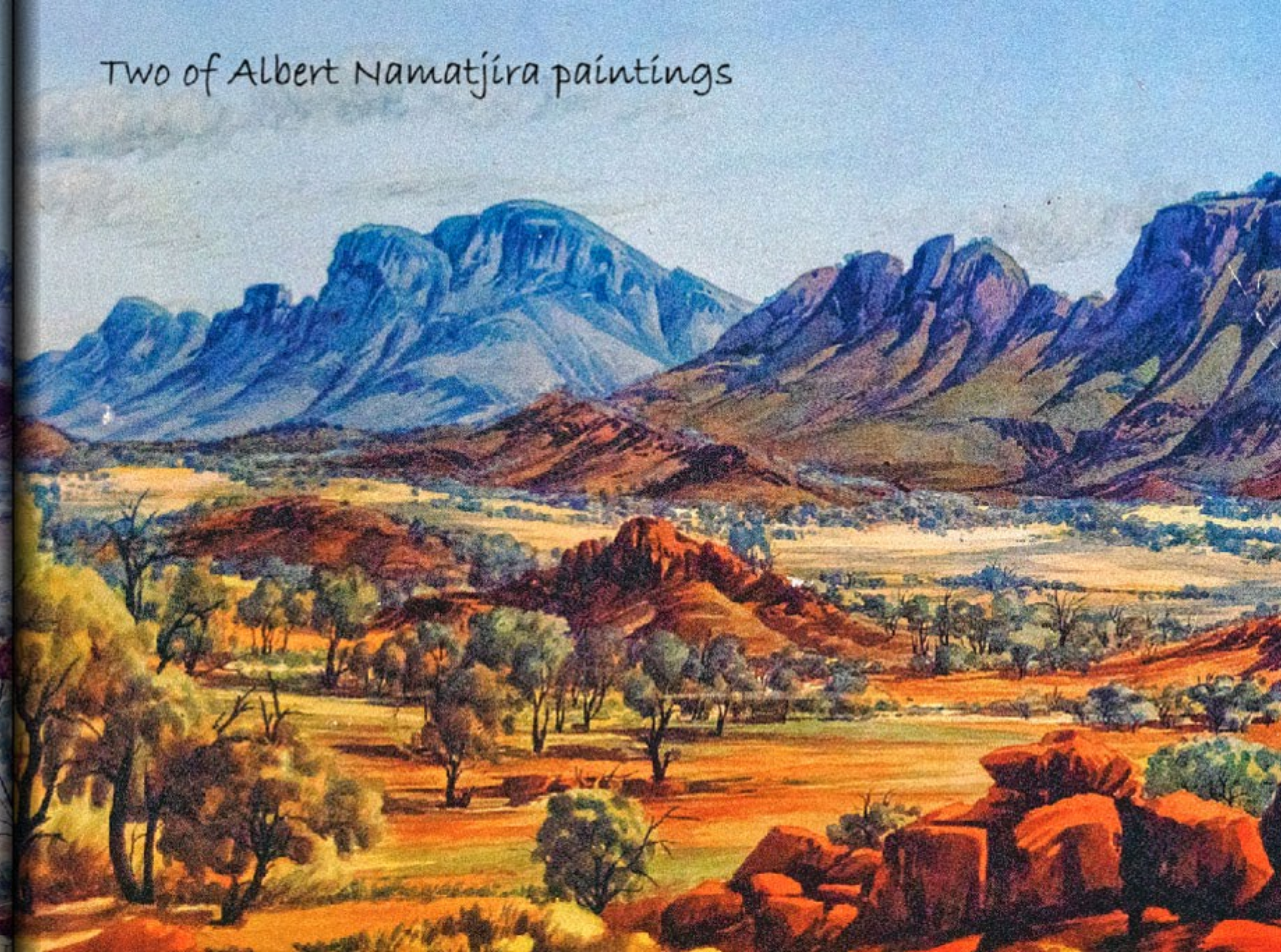
As a citizen Albert Namatjira could now also buy alcohol. In keeping with Aboriginal customs, Albert's friends expected him to share any food and alcohol he bought. But in doing this he broke white man's laws. In 1958, police charged Albert with supplying alcohol to Aboriginal people. He denied the charge, but the court didn't believe him. After two months in prison, Albert emerged a free, but a broken man. He had lost his will to paint, and to live. Albert Namatjira died in 1959. He was just fifty-seven years old.

In 1967 the government granted similar rights to the rest of the Aboriginal population.





Two of Albert Namatjira paintings



## Palm Valley

Palm Valley is in the Finke Gorge National Park which covers an area of 46,000 hectares.

Palm Valley has sandstone amphitheatres, pinnacles and gorges and is home to the Red Cabbage Palm after which the valley is named.

Top Left; Palm Valley warning Sign.

Bottom left; Entering the Finke Gorge National Park.

Bottom right; Electric animal grid, the electric wires were held just off the road with springs.



## Palm Valley

The first part of the journey to palm valley campground is not too bad, you have to cross the finke river with water and dry sand.

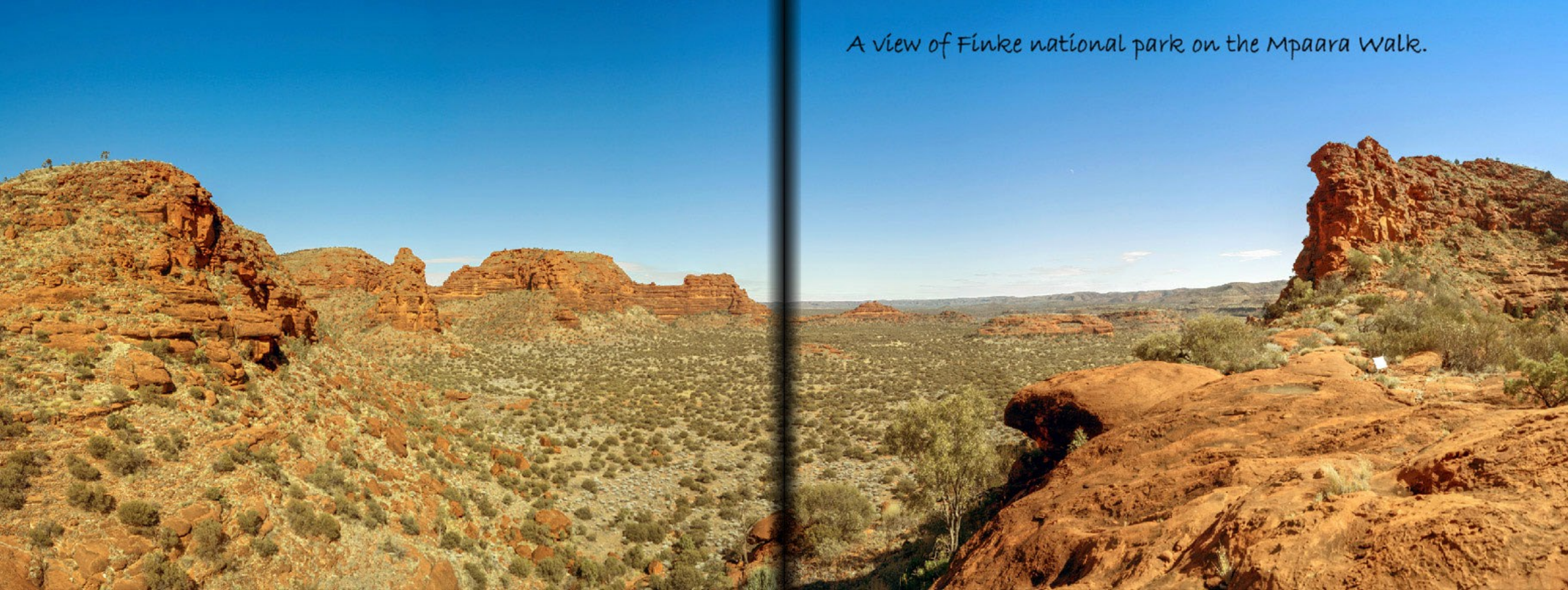
Top Right; Crossing the Finke river.

Bottom right; Campground has toilets and cold showers and barbeque and camp kitchen.

Bottom left; Sunset at the waterhole behind the campgrounds.



*A view of Finke national park on the Mpaara walk.*



Sunset at Old Woman Rock and Kalarranga rock in the  
amphitheater





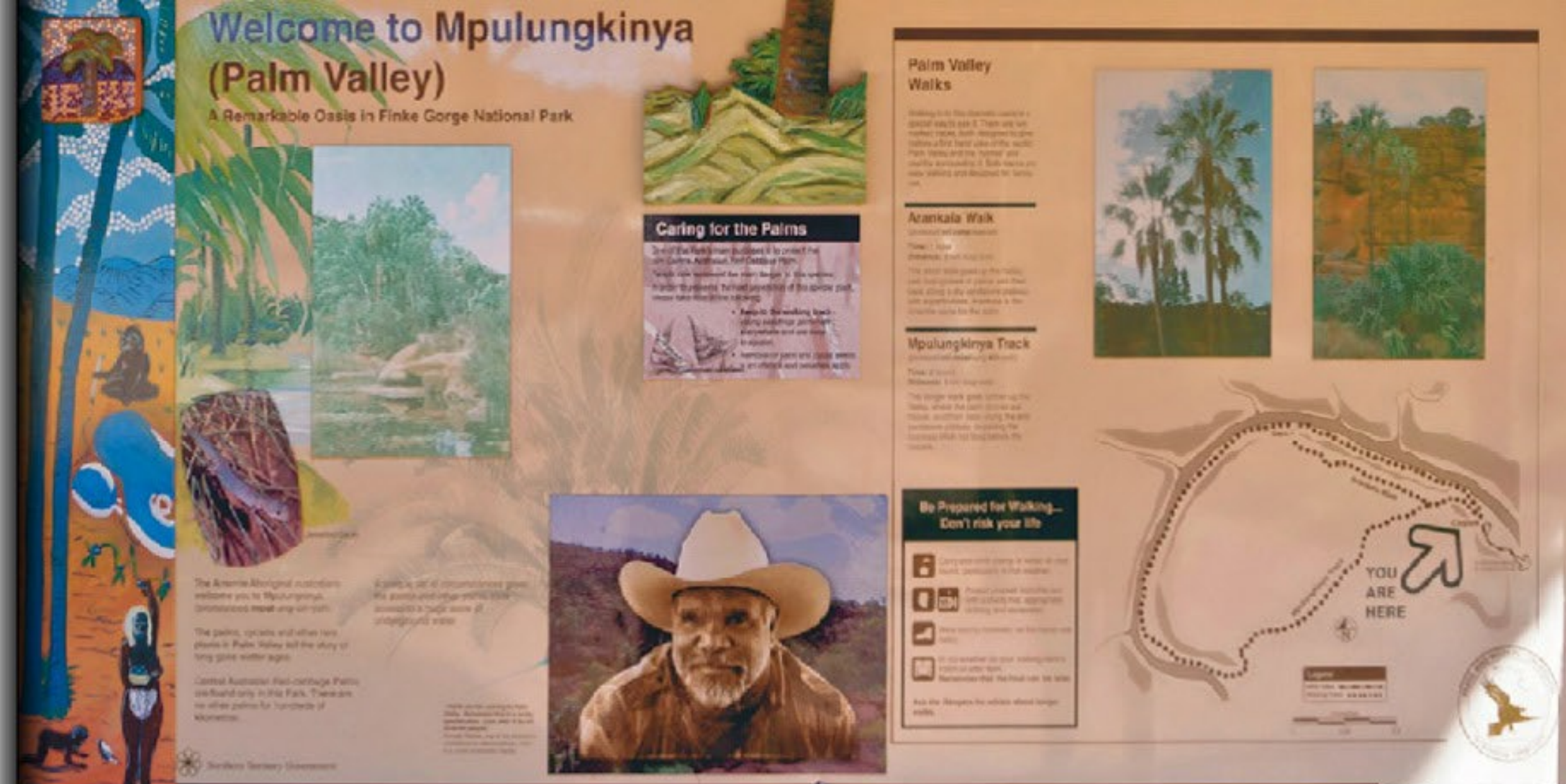
## Cycad Gorge

A palm cycad plant grows to 2m high and the same in width, it has long leaves and an egg shaped fruit which has toxic properties. For this reason, the seed was not used as a food source by Arrernte people.

Top Left; Water sitting in a rock hole.

Bottom left; Water and rock crossing on the way to Palm Valley

Top right; Entering Cycad Gorge in the Finke Gorge National Park.



On my last visit to palm valley i walked the 4km to Palm valley as i did not have a high clearance vehicle. I saw people drive the 4km over rocks and through water scraping the underside of their vehicles. I came across a landcruiser L200 who had told his passengers to get out and walk, but he still could not get over the rocks, unsure if it was the car or the driver, he turned back.

This time i drove 4km to the valley of Palms car park. The track took me through the valley of Cycads, then along well washed creek bed rock, it was not easy driving, but okay in the troopy. When you reach Palm Valley you see towering palm trees, it's amazing to think these red cabbage palms/Arankaia are only found in this one location in the middle of Australia's arid zone. It was still early so i decided to do the 5km Mpulungkinya Loop Walk, going deeper into the valley and up the sandstone plateau past a variety of colourful wildflowers and tall ghost gums.



## Palm valley

Palm valley Red Cabbage Palm after which the valley is named.

Top Left; Ferns growing out of the sandstone.

top right; Red Cabbage Palms at palm valley.

Bottom right; Ghost gum on the Mpulungkina Loop Walk.



## Arranda land

The Finke river is one of the oldest rivers in the world

Top Left; Welcome to Arranda land Sign.

top right; Elder and boy going walk about.

Bottom right; Sign about litter on country.



## Hermannsburg

Hermannsburg was a Lutheran mission built in the 1880s and was one of Central Australia's first settlements, the buildings built from local materials. Today Hermannsburg is the Arrernte Aboriginal community with around 400 living in and around the township.

Top Left; The old church.

top right; Kitchen and eating house.

Bottom right; Girls bunkhouse .





## Tnorala Goose Bluff

Around 142 million years ago a comet about 600 metres wide, crashed to earth, blasting a crater some 20 km across. Today the bluff is 2 km lower and about 5 km in diameter, reduced over time by erosion. Aboriginal dreamtime say's Tnorala was formed by a group of women dancing across the sky as the Milky Way. During this dance, a mother put her baby aside, resting in it's wooden baby carrier. The carrier toppled over the edge of the dancing area and crashed to earth where it was transformed into the circular rock walls of Tnorala.



## Glen Helen Gorge

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 animals and migrating waterbirds. From here the Finke River continues and makes its way to the Simpson Desert. The traditional owners waterhole is the home of an ancient and powerful Rainbow Serpent, and regard it as off limits.





## Ormiston Gorge / Kwartatuma

Ormiston gorge is famous for its waterhole, and the spectacular geology and landforms of the MacDonnell Ranges.

Left; Sunrise in the gorge.

Top Left; Dingo looking for fish.

Top right; The spectacular gorge.

Bottom right; Bird flying into the gorge for water.



# Ochre - Stone of the Dreamtime

Aboriginal people have extracted ochre from these cliffs for thousands of years. The ochre from here is still used by Western Arrernte people, mainly for ceremonial purposes.

Ochre is integral to the Dreamtime stories - stories of creation and law - of Aboriginal people throughout Australia. Red ochre deposits often represent the blood of sacred ancestral beings.

The traditional Aboriginal stories and ceremonies for this site belong to Western Arrernte men. Women and children are not permitted to dig the ochre, or know of the stories associated with the site. However, women are permitted to use ochre from this site in their ceremonies if it is provided by men.



The Aboriginal custodians of this site have made a special request to visitors not to touch or remove ochre from the cliffs.

It is also an offence by law and penalties apply.



Ahead of you is one of the most dramatic formations of the Ochre Pits, with swirling near-vertical curves of colour 'painted' on the 10m-high cliff face. Wind and rain have carved into the layers to reveal dramatic designs.

The different colours represent layers of mudstone and siltstone, once horizontal, but steadily heaved into their present near-vertical position when the MacDonnell Ranges formed over 500 million years ago.

## The colours

Yellow ochre, the dominant colour of these cliffs, is caused by a mixture of white clay and iron oxide (rust).

The red-brown colours are formed by high levels of oxidised iron in very fine-grained hematite or limonite.

White ochre has very little or no iron. The white colour comes from kaolin, a white clay mineral.

Tiny fragments of mica and quartz give the ochre a shiny quality.

West MacDonnell National Park



## Serpentine Gorge / Ulpma

Serpentine Gorge is an easy walk that takes you into a sheltered gorge and waterhole, the water is cold.

Bottom Left; Serpentine gorge waterhole.

Top right; A steep climb up onto the western ridge of the gorge will show a great panorama of MacDonnell Ranges.

Bottom right; The lookout walk takes you into the Gorge.



## Ellery Creek Big Hole / Udepata

Over thousands of years of floods the water carved out Ellery Creek Big Hole through the MacDonnell Ranges and created the waterhole.

Top Left; Entrance to Ellery creek big hole.

Bottom Left; Ellery creek big hole.

Bottom right; Ellery creek big hole waterhole.





## Standley Chasm / Angkerle Atwatye

Unlike the normal golden hour of the day, at Standley Chasm its most dramatic an hour either side of noon on a sunny day. Then the sheer walls of the chasm glow from reflected sunlight to create the rich colour.

Top Left; Standley Chasm cave.

Bottom Left; Standley Chasm.

Top right; Entrance to Standley Chasm.

Right; Simpson's gap





## Emily Gap / Anthwerrke

Emily's gap was created by a giant caterpillar fighting with a stink bomb, the stink bomb bit off the caterpillar head which created the gap, the body creating the macdonnell range

Top Left; Aboriginal rock art.

Top right; Aboriginal rock art.

Bottom right; Dreamtime story for Emily's Gap.

### Welcome to Emily Gap

Anthwerrke, the Arrernte name for Emily Gap, is a traditional site of major importance. It is part of the storyline for the Three Caterpillars: Yeperenye, Nyanlike and Utnerrengetye which are ancestral beings for the Alice Springs area. Arrernte people conceived in Alice Springs consider themselves direct descendants of these Caterpillar ancestors.

The Caterpillar story is recorded in a gallery of rock paintings 150 metres from here. Sometimes the gap fills with water and you can't get to the paintings.

The name Emily Gap first appeared in the early 1870s on maps of explorer William Whitland. At the time it was in charge of the main community for an area we know as the Central Desert. It is now the name of the gap after Emily Gap - the place where the wife of James George Bell, who was a settler, lived. Her husband named the gap Emily Gap. Her Gap of redness. 30 kilometres west of here, was the road where here.

**Protecting Our Heritage**  
In the heart of Australia's ancient people's country, it is important to protect our heritage. Please help to protect this unique landscape, remember all natural and cultural features of the park are fully protected.

## Henbury Meteorite Craters

When a meteor crashed into the earth 4,700 years ago it left 12 craters in the Central Australian desert that can be explored today at the Henbury Meteorites Conservation Reserve.

The largest crater is 180m wide and 15m deep and can be seen in the picture above.

### the Henbury Meteorite Craters

Around 4,000 years ago, a large meteorite travelling at over 40,000 kilometres per hour broke up before impact and hit the surface of the earth at Henbury.

As you visit the site, you will see 12 meteorite craters, ranging in diameter from 7m to 180m. The largest crater is 180m wide and 15m deep.

The original story of the craters is that they were created by a meteorite that crashed into the earth. The craters are now filled with water and are used by the Arrernte people for hunting and gathering.

Things to do  
Visit the craters. Allow 30 minutes for the 1.5 km return walk.  
A campsite with shade and water for camping.  
View only in the designated area.

**Care for the Desert**  
The desert is a fragile environment. Please do not walk on the sand dunes and do not disturb the vegetation. Please do not litter and do not take any food or drink into the desert.

**Be Prepared When Walking**  
Walking in the desert is a dangerous activity. Please do not walk alone and do not walk in the desert without a companion. Please do not walk in the desert without a companion.

**For Your Safety**  
Please do not walk in the desert without a companion. Please do not walk in the desert without a companion.

## Alice Springs / Mparntwe

The name Alice Springs was first given to the waterhole that was originally discovered near the town when the Overland Telegraph Line was being constructed in 1871, it was named after Alice Todd the wife of the superintendent Sir Charles Todd.

In 1887 gold was discovered in these parts which saw hundreds of settlers flock to Alice Springs region to claim the stakes. Supplies, food and provisions was transported by camel trains that drove their way through the centre of the country.

In 1929 the camel trains were finally replaced with trains. The railway ran between Adelaide and Alice Springs, which saw the population of the region grow. The old Ghan travelled through floodplains and was sometimes not able to get through, so a new railway was built in 1980 avoiding the floodplains to Alice Springs, in 2004 the train line was extended to Darwin.

Dreamtime says that the mountains were created by 3 giant caterpillars Yeperenya, Utnerrengatye and Ntyarlke, all 3 having their heads ripped off by Iríperenye the green stink bug and creating the gaps in the Macdonnell ranges, the ranges are the bodies of the caterpillars. At Emil's gap you can see the rock art paintings of the caterpillars.

Nearby the Alice Springs is the Larapinta Trail which i have visited a couple of times. One year i was lucky enough to be in the town for the camel races, a great experience. Another year i was in Alice at the time of the Todd River races, but unable to hang around to see them due to travel commitments going north to the Kimberly.





Top Left; The Anzac Hill Memorial was unveiled on 25 April 1934 (Anzac Day) and was dedicated to the armed forces of World War I. It has now become a memorial to all those who have served in the defence of their country during all wars in which Australia has participated.

Top right; view of Alice Springs from Anzac Hill showing the Macdonnell ranges that surround Alice Springs.

Bottom right; Alice Springs Ghan Railway Station.

Top Left; The old Telegraph station.

Top right; Royal Flying Doctor plane.

Bottom left; The dry Todd river and the gap in the Macdonnell ranges.



The Ghan at Alice Springs station



The Camel races



Sunset at Rainbow valley



# Finke Desert 3 day Race



Finke  
Aputula  
Footy  
Final  
On the Finke oval





## Chambers Pillar's

Left; Chambers Pillar, eagle rock

Top right; Window rock

Bottom right; Milky way

Bottom left; castle rock



Alice Springs seems to be in the middle of the country.  
Alice Springs to Adelaide is 1531 km.  
Alice Springs to Darwin is 1496 km.  
This book only covers from the South Australian border  
north to Alice Springs.  
On my 3 trips here i have been lucky to see rain running  
off Uluru, go to the Camel races, both great experiences.

