



Darwin & the Northern Territory

POP 244,300 / 08

Includes ➔

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Kakadu National Park.....	821
Arnhem Land.....	828
Katherine.....	832
Alice Springs.....	850
Watarrka National Park & Kings Canyon.....	870
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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Marksies Camp Tucker (p835)
- ➔ Sounds of Silence (p872)
- ➔ Border Store (p825)
- ➔ Crustaceans (p808)
- ➔ Black Russian Caravan Bar (p834)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Cicada Lodge (p837)
- ➔ Wildman Wilderness Lodge (p816)
- ➔ Hawk Dreaming Wilderness Lodge (p825)
- ➔ Anbinik Kakadu Resort (p825)
- ➔ Desert Gardens Hotel (p874)

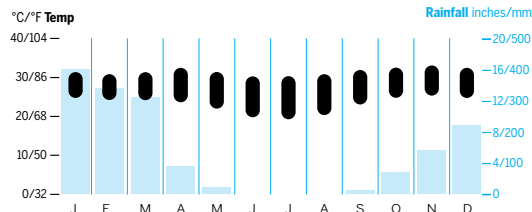
Why Go?

The Top End is frontier country. It feels wild out here; time spent exploring the region's outer reaches will feel like exploring the Australia of childhood imaginings. This is the nation's most rewarding Indigenous homeland, a land of art centres, isolated communities and ancient rock art. It is also a world of iconic Aussie wildlife, from the jumping crocs of Mary River to the flood plains and wetlands of Kakadu. Darwin is an intriguing place with a steamy, end-of-Australia feel, excellent markets, restaurants and galleries of Indigenous art.

The remote and largely untamed chunk of the Northern Territory (NT) from Katherine to Uluru is where dreams end and adventure begins. If you enjoy off-road driving and meeting real characters of the Australian outback, then you've come to the right place. And, delighting travellers with its eccentric offerings, pioneering spirit and weathered mountain setting, Alice Springs is the city at the centre of a continent.

When to Go

Darwin



Apr-Sep Markets, fine weather and festivals. The south has mild temperatures but can be cold at night.

Oct & Nov The 'build-up' brings a chance of heavy rain and very humid conditions.

Dec-Mar The Wet brings monsoonal rains and fewer visitors. Many tours don't run during these months.

DARWIN

POP 135,000

Australia's only tropical capital city, Darwin gazes out confidently across the Timor Sea. It's closer to Bali than Bondi and can certainly feel removed from the rest of the country, which is just the way the locals like it.

Darwin has plenty to offer travellers. Chairs and tables spill out of streetside restaurants and bars, innovative museums celebrate the city's past, and galleries showcase the region's rich Indigenous art. Darwin's cosmopolitan mix – more than 50 nationalities are represented here – is typified by the wonderful markets held throughout the dry season.

History

Initial European attempts to settle the Top End were mainly due to British fears that the French or Dutch might get a foothold in Australia, but from the mid-1860s to 1895 huge amounts of livestock were overlanded to immense pastoral settlements, displacing Aboriginal Australians from their lands. Some Indigenous people had to take employment as stockmen or domestic servants on cattle stations, while others moved on to try to maintain their traditional lifestyle.

In the early 1870s, gold was discovered. A minor rush ensued, with an influx of Chinese prospectors. Though the gold finds were relatively insignificant, the searches for it unearthed a wealth of natural resources that would lead to mining becoming a major economic presence.

In 1966 a group of Aboriginal stockmen, led by Vincent Lingiari, went on strike on Wave Hill Station, to protest over the low wages and poor conditions that they received compared with white stockmen. The Wave Hill walk-off gave rise to the Aboriginal land-rights movement, and in 1976 the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* was passed in Canberra. It handed over all reserves and mission lands in the NT to Aboriginal people and allowed Aboriginal groups to claim vacant government land if they could prove continuous occupation. Today, Aboriginal people own about half of the land in the NT, including Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks, which are leased back to the federal government. Minerals on Aboriginal land are still government property, though the landowners' permission is usually required for exploration and mining, and landowners are remunerated.

Sights

Central Darwin

Crocosaurus Cove

ZOO

(Map p804; ☎08-8981 7522; www.crocosauruscove.com; 58 Mitchell St; adult/child \$32/20; ☀9am-6pm, last admission 5pm) If the tourists won't go out to see the crocs, then bring the crocs to the tourists. Right in the middle of Mitchell St, Crocosaurus Cove is as close as you'll ever want to get to these amazing creatures. Six of the largest crocs in captivity can be seen in state-of-the-art aquariums and pools, while an eco boat cruise (adult/child \$14/7) takes you out on the water with them.

You can be lowered right into a pool with the crocs in the transparent **Cage of Death** (1/2 people \$165/250). If that's too scary, there's another pool where you can swim with a clear tank wall separating you from some mildly less menacing baby crocs.

Aquascene

AQUARIUM

(Map p804; ☎08-8981 7837; www.aquascene.com.au; 28 Doctors Gully Rd; adult/child/family \$15/10/43; ☀high tide, check website) At Doctors Gully, an easy walk from the Esplanade, Aquascene runs a remarkable fish-feeding frenzy at high tide. Visitors can hand-feed hordes of mullet, catfish, batfish and huge milkfish. Check the website for feeding times.

Bicentennial Park

PARK

(Map p804; ☀24hr) Bicentennial Park (the Esplanade) runs the length of Darwin's waterfront and **Lameroo Beach** (Map p804): a sheltered cove popular in the '20s when it housed the saltwater baths, and traditionally a Larrakia camp area. Shaded by tropical trees, the park is an excellent place to stroll.

Mason Gallery

GALLERY

(Map p804; ☎08-8981 9622; www.masongallery.com.au; Shop 7, 21 Cavenagh St; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** This gallery features bold dot paintings from the Western and Central Desert regions, as well as other artworks from Arnhem Land and Utopia.

George Brown Botanic Gardens

GARDENS

(Map p804; www.nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/george-brown-darwin-botanic-gardens; Geranium St; ☀7am-7pm, information centre 8am-4pm) **FREE** These 42-hectare gardens showcase plants from the Top End and around the world – monsoon vine forest, the mangroves and coastal plants habitat, baobabs, and a mag-