

Northern Territory

If Sydney represents the peak of Australia's urban life, Darwin and the Northern Territory represent another side of Australia, one of deserts, magnificent gorges and a population known for its individuality and diversity.

Where to start

The Northern Territory is a fiercely individual place, and if you've seen Priscilla Queen of the Desert, you know you can expect an interesting mix of people. Territorians do things their own way, as you would expect from a place where the skyscrapers are made from rock, not steel and glass.

The NT's natural attractions include Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge), Kakadu National Park, Uluru and Kata Tjuta (The Olgas). If you plan your trip carefully, you can choose whether to go rough or stay in luxurious, air-conditioned comfort. A must-see is World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, a landscape of contrasts: beneath waters dotted with lotus flowers, saltwater crocodiles lurk.

Where to eat

In Darwin, try the Darwin Sailing Club for a tropical feast from the Arafura Sea, or Bogarts Restaurant and cocktail bar with international seafood, music and dancing on Friday and Saturday nights.

Where to shop

Casuarina Square in Darwin is the NT's largest shopping centre with over 180 stores. Mbantua Australian Aboriginal Art Gallery in Alice Springs is home to a large collection of Aboriginal artwork, including dot paintings, symbols, drawings and indigenous sculpture from the Central Desert.

Where to party

In Darwin, Gardiner Street is the heart of the city's nightlife. Throb Nightclub in Smith Street is the only gay and lesbian club in town, with floor shows and drag. If you're in Alice Springs, play at the lavish Lasseters Hotel and Casino, as seen in Priscilla. In March, look out for SPIN FX, the Desert Party, with its sunrise tour of Uluru.