# Who wants to visit the Australian Outback?

by Jwallace10

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Australiaâ€™s pure white-sand beaches are the envy of the world. More than 90% of the Australian population lives in its urban coastal regions in the east, south and south-west.

But the fact is that most of Australia is â€˜outbackâ€™, haunting, lonely land that stretches for several thousand kilometres. This is no-manâ€™s land, and for good reason: its pockets of fertile land used for sheep or cattle grazing are few and far between in this harsh, hostile and barren wilderness. Stories of ill-prepared tourists that have died from heatstroke, exhaustion or dehydration in this unforgiving territory are well-known.

But look more closely, and youâ€™ll see the outbackâ€™s hidden wealth from its dramatic ancient landscapes, mineral riches (including iron, aluminium, manganese and uranium)Â and world-renowned fossil sites to its canopy of vast clear skies and its prolific wildlife. Although you might not come across any other people, youâ€™d be hard-pressed not to see dingos, kangaroos, emus, flocks of exotic birds and, particularly in the winter months, snakes and lizards basking in the sun.

The vast swathes of lonely, rugged land is also surprisingly diverse, with everything from rocky hills to sand tunes, flood plains and red sand that gets covered with wildflowers after the monsoon rains. The well-watered northern â€˜the red centreâ€™ near Alice Springs and Ulura/ Ayers Rock is a tiny but important tourist hotspot. Tourism to the Aussie outback is big business, and itâ€™s steadily increasing along with the quality of the roads and the number of tour operators offering attractive packages. But what is the opinion of the average Australian towards this dramatic but inhospitable land? A recent

reward survey asked over 2000 Australians whether they had ever visited any part of the outback. The results show that most have, at least once. They also reveal that the back of beyond is apparently more appealing for men than for women: 46% of women had never been, a far higher proportion than the 30% of male 'Aussie outback virgins'.

The poll also suggested that visiting the outback is an experience that often comes with age. Only 27% of over 60s had never been to the outback compared with 43% of those aged between 22-30. 77% of the oldest age category said they had either been 'once or twice' or 'several times' to the outback, compared with just 46% of their younger counterparts. Perhaps making the trip requires the backbone and bank balance of an older adventurer; one thing for sure, this striking landscape is not for the faint-hearted.

The poll also looked into the favourite destination within the Aussie outback, asking respondents to choose one of a long list of tourist hotspots. Top of the list was Uluru Rock (13 %), followed by Kakadu National park and Alice Springs with around 10% of the vote.  Ulura, the great sandstone â€˜island mountainâ€™, is a stunning and instantly-recognisable emblem of Australia. Like many such places of great natural beauty, Ulura has a great mythical significance for the local ancient Aboriginal tribes. The vast ancient cultural and natural treasures and inextricably intertwined in the Australian outback, and through tourism, they are preserved and passed on through the generations.

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