

COOBER PEDY

Day 1/Night 1

After your outback trek along the Stuart Highway, start your discovery of this unique town by taking a jump back in time. Head to the Old Timers Mine and Museum to relive 100 years of blood, sweat and tears that it took to build this iconic town. It will give you the insight you need to understand the history of the town and the hard work the pioneers went through to build such a unique place in one of the world's most unforgiving climates. The museum includes an historic home within the mine dating back to the 1960s giving you a taste of living like the locals. Kids will also love running through the tunnels of this hand-dug mine!

Try your luck fossicking for opals, or "noodling," as the locals call it, and see if you can find a gem of your own. Be careful, it gets very addictive for both young and old! Once you've found your precious gem, head to the Opal Cave to get your own opal polished. They can also tell you about Faye Naylor, her unique pioneering history, and her underground home that she hand-dug with a couple of friends.

If lunch is calling, head to Downunder and Gallery Café. Enjoy a fresh handmade sandwich. While you take a break, have a look through the underground art gallery, full of paintings by Coober Pedy's amazing and talented artists.

Catch opal fever at Tom's Working Mine. Guided tours are hosted by an experienced opal miner, taking you through the mine and showcasing modern-day machinery used in opal mining. See opal still in the walls and have a blast going up and down a shaft on a winch like an opal miner. All the family will feel like they are starring in an episode of Outback Opal Hunters!

If you don't find your own opal souvenir, there are plenty of options to buy one in town, and maybe even chat to the person who has created your new piece of jewellery.

As the day is ending, head to Josephine's Gallery and Kangaroo Orphanage where the kids will love hand-feeding a big red kangaroo and have a cuddle with a baby joey, all rescued by Jo and Terry.

Dinner at the Outback Bar and Grill is a perfect way to end your first night in Coober Pedy. From pizzas to seafood and meals for the kids, you can't go wrong. If your adventures have made you build up an appetite, you will love their famous signature dish - chargrilled Greek style lamb & chicken souvlaki.

After enjoying your first day in Coober Pedy, drive down the main street where you will see a big movie screen...yes, the last drive-in in South Australia is in Coober Pedy! Still operating thanks to a small group of dedicated volunteers, you and the family can sit back in your car or lay down at the back of your van or ute and watch one of the latest blockbuster movies. This is something unique that will make the kids understand what it was like when their parents (or maybe grandparents!) met.

The Lookout Cave Hotel will allow you to relax in the quiet serenity of underground accommodation. This quirky underground hotel offers parking and wifi access and no light or noise to interrupt a long, peaceful sleep.

If you prefer above-ground, the Mud Hut Motel with its rammed earth walls has you covered, or if you're looking for something on a budget, Coober Pedy's caravan parks, like the Oasis Caravan Park, Big 4 Stuart Range or Opal Inn will welcome you for the night.

Day 2/Night 2

After experiencing the best night's sleep ever, head to the only underground café in Coober Pedy, Crystal Cave Café located in the Desert Cave Hotel. While you're there, walk through the free underground display which takes you several feet under the hotel.

Right next door, enter Umoona Opal Mine and Museum to see amazing fossils discovered from the area's inland sea. The entire area around Coober Pedy was once covered by a vast inland sea during the Cretaceous period, from about 145 to 66 million years ago. The ancient sea left behind marine fossils that are still found in the area today, many of which are on display at the Umoona Opal Mine and Museum including the Umoonasaurus, an extinct genus of plesiosaur discovered in Coober Pedy.

If lunch is what you're after, look no further than John's Pizza Bar and Restaurant. The award-winning restaurant caters to all your needs. You can't leave Coober Pedy without trying their famous Coat of Arms pizza.

With everything you have learned about the area, take a drive out to the Kanku-Breakaways Conservation Park which starts just 15kms outside of Coober Pedy. Experience the rugged beauty of this 15,000-hectare conservation park, which was once submerged under the inland sea. The striking sandstone plains and mesas, which transforms into a spectacular red, pink and orange hued landscape during the golden hour (sunset or sunrise), are also home to a unique array of native desert flora and fauna. Travel back to town via the moon plain and along a section of the Dog Fence, the world's longest man-made structure at 5,300km!

If you want some culture to balance your outback adventure, stop by one of the underground churches including the world-famous Serbian Orthodox Church. Its striking scalloped ceiling, carved sculptures of saints, and brilliant stained-glass windows will leave you in awe.

As your day is ending, head to Coober Pedy's Big Winch 360, the Outback's newest world-class attraction and home to Australia's first permanent 360-degree Circlevision cinematic experience. The movie there will allow you to explore Coober Pedy's surroundings, such as the Oodnadatta Track and the communities along it, without leaving the comfort of the soft sofas.

If your belly is grumbling, grab some drinks and food at the in-house Big Winch 360 Café and head outside to experience one of our breathtaking outback sunsets.

After a full day, sleep underground at the Comfort Inn. This old mine has been turned into a modern hotel. The old tunnels will take you to your comfortable underground bedroom where you will experience the most peaceful sleep you've ever had.

If you are after hosted or more homey accommodation, head to one of the many underground B&Bs, such as Di's Dugout, Ali's Underground, Dug Out B&B, Potch & Color, or Underground B&B, Radeka's, or even Riba's Underground and set up your swag or your tent... you guessed it, underground!

Day 3

Excited to discover more of Coober Pedy, you wake up to the smell of freshly made coffee. Waffle and Gems will serve you fresh waffles and delicious coffee to start your day.

Choose any tour you like! From a scenic flight over Lake Eyre or the Anna Creek Painted Hills with Wrightsair to a mail run tour where you accompany the mailman and deliver the post to outback cattle stations. Most of these tours will take up a full day and might require you to plan for a future trip!

If you want a town experience, Follow Me Downunder Tours offers a tag-along tour in your own vehicle, where the experienced guide will show you some of Coober's best-kept secrets. The guide will take you through their underground home to show you their family lives. Then you can enjoy driving through the opal fields to see working mines in action. But be careful, don't step out of the car as shafts are everywhere!

If you don't have your own four-wheel drive, jump on board with Noble Tours to explore the town and nearby outback attractions. Noble Tours will also take you to their private claim and help you experience noodling in a safe area away from the deep and dangerous shafts.

Hunting for opal definitely works up an appetite - CK Confectionaire will satisfy your hunger with their freshly made pies, pasties, sausage rolls and assortment of other baked goods and sweets. If you want something more exotic, enjoy their lunch special that introduces you to new flavours from throughout Asia every day.

Tee off at Coober Pedy's grassless golf course, Opal Fields Golf Club. It's the first and only golf course that has been granted reciprocal playing rights with the oldest and most prestigious golf club in the world, St. Andrews in Scotland! Pop into Opalios shop in the main street to organize access to the course. You never know, you may even find your own opal in the rough.

Now that you have experienced the underground and discovered this hidden gem of a place, it's time to head home. Drive home on the Stuart Highway while the kids are comparing their rough opal in the back of the car, tired and amazed by their outback adventure, you can start planning your next trip to Far North SA to discover even more of this beautiful and unique region.