



Media Release

February 2010

What's hot and happening in Australia's Outback Northern Territory

- **Climbing high – update on the Uluru climb ban**
- **Outback Marathon – first ever!**
- **Bamurru Plains re-opens for the 2010 season**
- **Cruising Arnhem Land**
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Climbing high? – Uluru climb ban will eventually happen

A new management plan has been approved by Australia's Environment Minister Peter Garrett which will eventually lead to the close of the climb at Uluru (Ayers Rock). The plan has agreed that until at least one of the following has been met, the climb will stay open:

- The number of people climbing the ancient icon must drop from the current 38% to less than 20%; or
- The attraction of the climb is no longer the major reason why visitors travel to Uluru; or
- A range of new experiences are in place for visitors.

It is estimated that the climb will stay open for a number of years and the industry has been guaranteed at least 18 months notice before the eventual closure.

Around 100,000 visitors to Uluru climb the sacred rock each year and last year the government opened a new viewing platform aimed at giving visitors an official point to watch the sunrise and set behind the giant icon.

www.environment.gov.au/parks/uluru/

Outback Marathon – first ever!

Australia's first international Outback marathon will launch this year on the 31st July in central Australia. There are very few sealed roads on the planned route so this marathon will push even experienced runners as much of the course will be dirt tracks and sands! Participants can leave other runners for dust along the planned course which circles the Voyages' Ayers Rock Resort

which is at the heart of Australia's Red Centre. Runners will be pacing themselves on the red earth whilst being rewarded with stunning views of Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) and Uluru (Ayers Rock).

If you don't feel like doing the official full marathon, there are several other stages to enter including the half-marathon, 11km and 6km.

Average daytime temperatures in July reach 21° so you will need to make sure you are properly hydrated throughout!

Entry fees and age restrictions apply – please visit the website for further information.

www.australianoutbackmarathon.com

Bamurru Plains re-opens for the 2010 season with new deals

Luxury wilderness retreat, Bamurru Plains is open for business in 2010 after the wet season with two offers valid until 31st March. Not to be missed for those who are after an exclusive luxury get-away, book one of the nine safari suites for four nights and pay for only three; or pay for three nights and receive a complimentary scenic flight over the waterfalls of Kakadu National Park. The retreat is located on the edge of the Mary River floodplains at the western border of Kakadu National Park and is well-known for its excellent Barramundi fishing and beautiful bush surroundings. Packages cost £1395 (AU\$2790) per person, twin share, including all meals, beverages and scheduled activities. Return air transfers from Darwin (25 minutes) can be arranged at extra cost.

www.bamurruplains.com or www.wildbushluxury.com

Cruising Arnhem Land!

Orion Expedition Cruises will be setting sail on the 4th May on an experience which will appeal to art lovers everywhere. The 7-night 'Art of Arnhem Land' cruise will undertake an in-depth exploration of the remote communities, and their artwork, based along the Arnhem Land coastline. These communities are known for their intricate Aboriginal artwork and the tour hosts will bring to life the Dreamtime tales and rituals which inspire the artwork. One of the tour highlights is a stop-off at Maningrida - recognised nationally and internationally, this is one of the powerhouse art areas of central Arnhem Land. Bark painting, pandanus weaving and wood carvings - especially the Mimi spirits - are all distinctive features of the artistic endeavour. This trip is perfect for experienced and novice art lovers. Prices start from £2,600 per person based on two people sharing a stateroom on B deck.

www.orionexpeditions.com

Get a life Down Under!

As part of a wider promotion between Tourism NT and KISS FM, listeners (100.00fm) can now enter online (totalkiss.com) for a chance to change their life by winning a work placement in Darwin. The two week taster will give young people an opportunity to experience life in the laid back city where relaxation is top of most holidaymaking agendas!

Six lucky KISS FM listeners have already bagged trips to visit the Northern Territory this year as part of the famous annual Australia Day celebrations on the 26th January. Over the course of twelve hours one of London's most popular radio stations flipped to 'down under' time with the breakfast team taking over the 'drivetime' slot and vice versa.

www.totalkiss.com/2010/01/northern-territory/

Darwin's Holiday Inn make-over

Darwin's first international hotel chain, Holiday Inn located on The Esplanade, is undergoing a complete refurbishment to all of its guest rooms and lobby. Floor by floor the hotel will be re-vamped, refreshed and renovated as part of a wider international overhaul. The hotel has been a resident of Darwin's skyline since 1974 and has made over 1.2 million beds to welcome visitors to the Northern Territory capital.

www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/hi/1/en/hotel/drwes?rpb=hotel&crUrl=/h/d/6c/1/en/hotelsearchresults

Not to be missed events in 2010:

- 27th – 29th May: The 2010 **Australian Sprintcar Championship** – It's been over 20 years since the Northern Territory held a sprintcar championship but Northline Speedway in Darwin will be hosting this event full of thrills and spills. www.darwin2010.com
- 25th – 28th June: **Alice Springs Beanie Festival** with music, crafts and fun this annual, free event celebrates a relaxed calm approach to life in the Northern Territory and brings together craftspeople from remote areas. Oh...and beanie wearing is essential! www.beaniefest.org
- 10th July: **Alice Springs Camel Cup** – a must-see event watch brave/crazy riders whizz past on unpredictable camels. Created in 1970 as a way to settle a bet between friends, camel racing up the dry riverbed of the Todd is a fun day out for all. www.camelcup.com.au
- 8th August: **Darwin Beercan Regatta** – build a boat from beercans and test your skills by sailing out into Darwin Harbour aboard your 'tinny' vessel. This ever-popular event is great to participate in but even more fun to watch! www.beercanregatta.org.au
- 14th August: **Alice Springs Rodeo** – watch real Australian cowboys do what they do best! The Northern Territory is Australia's cattle country so watch some roping and riding in Alice Spring's annual celebration of the rodeo. Blatherskite Park in Alice Springs.

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For more information and photography contact Suzanne Holiday or Tryph Greenwood on T: +44 207 839 2140 or tourismntmedia@keenepa.co.uk and visit www.australiasoutback.com.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Australia's Northern Territory is a leading nature and culture destination where Australia's Outback meets the tropics and is home to Australia's most dramatic, beautiful and varied scenery including the awe-inspiring red centre icons of Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon as well as the Top End adventure and wildlife destinations of Katherine Gorge and Kakadu National Park.

2. Darwin International Airport is an international gateway to Australia offering connections to Singapore, which is just over four hours away.
3. The peak visitor time is during the dry season, from May to September, but the Tropical Summer from October to April brings spectacular lightning shows and lush growth.
4. www.australiasoutback.com is an essential resource for travellers planning a trip to the Northern Territory.