

ORMISTON GORGE – WEST MACDONNELL RANGES



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Ormiston Gorge is Gorgeous

Ormiston Gorge is located in the West MacDonnell Ranges. It's one of the greatest places I have lived and worked in as a ranger.



Ormiston Gorge is one of the most popular *and* photographed places in the Red Centre. It's found on postcards and in paintings, and if the light is right when you visit, it takes your breath away.

It's not hard to understand why, and on this page, I'm going to tell you how to get to the gorge, what to do there and the best time to go.

Whilst the gorge is famous for its waterhole, one of the other very special things about Ormiston is that it showcases the spectacular geology and landforms of the **MacDonnell Ranges**.

Ormiston, along with [Ellery Creek Big Hole](#), is a popular place for outback swimming, camping, hiking and relaxing, and is located an easy hour and a half drive west of Alice Springs. **It is an absolute must-do place on your trip through the West MacDonnell Ranges.**

Ormiston is also a sacred site the Western Arrernte people. It's name in Western Arrernte is *Kwartatuma*.

The Dreaming story for the waterhole tells of the adventures of a group of Emus who came to the waterhole from the East, and the man who hunted them whilst they were there.

How to Get There:



Ormiston Gorge is located 135km west of Alice Springs, and is in the [West MacDonnell National Park](#).

It's easily accessed from [Alice Springs](#) via Larapinta and Namatjira Drives on a sealed road which is generally accessible all year. However, I'll let you know that after heavy rain and subsequent flooding, you might not be able to get in.

[Check out THIS map for a complete guide to Ormiston Gorge and the West MacDonnell Ranges.](#)

From Alice Springs, travel west along Larapinta Drive for 50 km, until you reach the intersection with Namatjira Drive. Turn right onto Namatjira Drive and keep heading west another 70 km or so until you see the signs into Ormiston Gorge.

If you're travelling the Red Centre Way to get to [Kings Canyon](#) or [Ayers Rock](#) you can still stop in here and then continue on via Tyler's Pass to reconnect to your route.

Facilities:

Ormiston Gorge campground has free gas BBQs, a small camping area, shade shelters, picnic tables and a shower (hot water) and toilet block.

There is also a staffed ranger station here. Ranger guided walks and talks (called the [*Territory Parks Alive program*](#)) operate April to October. You can pick up a timetable from most tourist centres or lookout for a brochure on park.



Keep in mind though that while camping sites are available, spaces are limited and operate on a first come, first served basis.

Camping fees are payable at the site and sites suit caravans, camping trailers and tents (although the ground is quite hard).

Camping costs: \$10.00/adult, \$5.00/child (5-15 years), \$20.00/family (2 adults and up to 4 children).

Our advice: get here early in the peak winter (May-August) season.

If there's one BAD thing about Ormiston's campground, it's that the campground gets very crowded during the winter.

If you don't like crowded campgrounds, then the alternative is bush camping at nearby Two Mile.

Two Mile is a great spot located in and around the shady banks of the Finke River. As it's bush camping, you can pretty much camp wherever you like.

To access Two Mile, you'll need to drive to Glen Helen (10km), and then instead of turning left into Glen Helen, look for the brown Parks sign and turn right onto the 4WD track

See and Do:

If you like to walk then there are a few choices here that immerse you in the landscape.

For an easy climb of about 15 minutes take the trail up to the Ghost Gum Lookout or if you really want to experience this amazing place then take the Pound Walk which will take you 3-4 hours.



Ormiston is also the junction of sections 9-10 of the Larapinta Trail.

I would recommend as another option if you have the time to get dropped off at Glen Helen Resort and walk the 10 km back to Ormiston via section 10.

Something else that's popular at Ormiston is **birdwatching**. An early morning stroll around the campground will reveal dozens of birds here. If you're a keen birder or a twitcher, and a careful look at the right time of year will reveal some of Central Australia's most sought after birds.

Ormiston is renowned as a place to see Spinifexbirds and Dusky Grasswrens. When I lived here, one year I had Grey Honeyeaters in my front garden for several weeks.

As I said earlier it is also a great place for a relaxing swim in the warmer months and I've seen hundreds of visitors over the years just sitting at the waterhole and reading a book! You couldn't get better scenery or a more relaxing spot.

Please consider your fitness and walk prepared with plenty of water, a hat and sturdy shoes.

When to Go:

Ormiston Gorge is a place that you can go anytime of the year, but if you want to swim I suggest the warmer months.

The campground has a bit of shade so it's better placed than some of the other camping spots for a longer stay.

For camping and walking, it's best to visit from April-October, when it's a bit cooler.

It's an easy day trip from Alice Springs if you don't want to camp, so if you're planning a West Mac's day trip, make sure you stop here. My advice though is to spend a night or two here to get the most out of the location and what it has to offer.

And if you bump into any of the rangers during your visit to **Ormiston Gorge**, make sure you stop and say hi.

Gary might even be wandering around somewhere so ask while you're there.

If you've enjoyed reading about **Ormiston Gorge** and found this page useful, please share this page via Facebook, Twitter or Stumbleupon, using the 'Share it' button below.