

ISSUE 09



JOURNEY **BEYOND**

ISSUE 09

*The Allure of Arnhem Land
All Aboard for a Solo Summer
24 Hours in the Kimberley
The Whitsundays Two Ways*

*July - November 2023
Journey Beyond, and you'll
find where unforgettable lives*

*The Wilderness of Kangaroo Island
An Artist's View of Australia
The Fullness of Lake Eyre
Travel with Childlike Wonder*

YOURS TO KEEP

Opal Hunters

WORDS Meg Law

“People live underground? What the heck?” shouts my six-year-old son as we drive along the red dusty outback roads, bound for Coober Pedy (Umoona), South Australia. The opal mining capital of the world, famous for its mine shafts, lunar-like landscape, quirky history and labyrinth of underground houses, hotels and even shops, was a place we had been curious about for some time.



FROM LEFT exploring the labyrinth of underground abodes; Coober Pedy car under a blissful Milky way.

You know you’ve arrived in Coober Pedy when you catch a glimpse of the large, three-metre-high sign found above Main Street, which my ten-year-old daughter doesn’t miss: “Mum, it looks like Hollywood!” At first glance, the dusty town feels a little ‘rough around the edges’, but it doesn’t take long to realise this place is rich in storytelling, history and full of life – even if that life is mainly below ground.

Having got wind that a 14-year-old boy had found the first Coober Pedy opal in 1915, our daughter is determined to find the biggest, shiniest opal. As we head underground to get busy opal fossicking, she shouts “game on,” as she races through the mine shafts and tunnels with her brother hot on her tail, their competitive spirits alive and kicking.

With our son’s pockets full of ‘wannabe opal’, we head approximately 15 kilometres out of town to the lunar-like landscape aptly named Moon Plains. The kids’ faces light up as they pretend to walk on the moon, the soft soil sinking beneath their feet. They couldn’t care less that movies such as Mad Max and Priscilla Queen of the Desert were filmed here. Or that the vast expanse of rocky plains are so unusual that they’re not found anywhere else on Earth. What’s important to them is that we all act out Neil Armstrong’s first steps on the moon as a family. And as I hear the words “that’s one small step for man” run through my head, I’m reminded that travel is, after all, a spark for the imagination.



Allow Coober Pedy to spark your imagination while you hunt for opals on one of The Ghan Expedition’s Off Train Experiences when travelling from Darwin to Adelaide. For more information on 2024 packages, visit journeybeyondrail.com.au

