

6 Day Travel Writing Retreat Itinerary



Held over six days, with one day free for writing and plenty of opportunity to explore Red Centre story angles, Daniel Scott's course looks at the fundamentals of narrative development, story structure, and crisp, compelling writing. Turn your travels into articles and your articles into money and with it the opportunity to travel for free. Although reasonably intensive, the course is above all enjoyable and stimulating, and working with a small group of like-minded individuals provides a mutually supportive environment.

Outline of the course

Getting Started

- Turning your travels into stories
- What is good travel writing?
- How to write an introduction that will really grab the reader's attention
- The importance of detail
- How personal should our stories be?

Getting Noticed/ Story structure

- What is it about your experience and your story that will get it noticed?
- Why is a theme to your story so important?
- What types of story structure can you use?
- How can you get your story noticed?

The Bigger Picture

- Detailed feedback on your work
- Some useful tips on travel photography
- What makes for a shot that will be published?
- What about other types of travel writing? – for guide books/ for the internet/ travel books/blogging

Getting into Print

- Marketing yourself and your stories
- Knowing when and how to contact travel editors
- How to package and present your work
- Feedback on up to four pieces of your writing during and after the course
- Professional and group support for the future

Our style of walking is to take plenty of time to enjoy the birds, plants, animals, scenery and the fact of just being in the bush. We don't race from A to B. That way, you can enjoy both the challenge *and* the beauty of the trail and surrounds: take a few photographs, sit down occasionally for a cup of tea, ask questions about what you've seen, or just be.

The Larapinta Trail is part of a strong, ancient and fascinating landscape. "For us the trail provides an avenue to be here in the land and feel enriched by this experience. We want to walk so that we stay open to the wider experience of being here."

Fitness: All our tours require a medium to high level of bushwalking/walking fitness. As the Larapinta Trail becomes more popular the perception of its difficulty decreases. This however is not the case. The trail remains unrelentingly rocky and hard underfoot and weather extremes can be experienced at any time of year, so the more prepared you are the more you will enjoy the experience. More information on preparation is included in the following pages.

In the following pages there will also be information on the itinerary and what equipment you need to bring, what we supply and general information to consider for your 6 Day Travel Writers Retreat.

Please read through the information carefully and don't hesitate to contact us at info@treklarapinta.com.au with any questions you may have. We also recommend reading the information NT Parks and Wildlife provide on the Larapinta Trail at: <http://www.nretas.nt.gov.au/national-parks-and-reserves/parks/walks/larapinta>

Group size: We have a maximum group size of **8-10** on all our Larapinta Trail Tours (minimum 4)

- **6 Day Travel Writers Retreat Cost in 2012: \$ 1,850 per person** (exclusive and non exclusive group rates apply - ask for details)

See the Booking Form for conditions and payment details.



6 Day Travel Writing Retreat Itinerary



6 Day Itinerary

Pick up: in Alice Springs from your hotel between 7.00am and 7.30 on Day 1.

Drop off: in Alice Springs at your accommodation around 4pm on Day 6.

Although we endeavour to run the trip as per the itinerary, changes may occur due to weather conditions or other factors outside our control. Please use the itinerary as a guide only.

Day 1: Picking you up from your hotels between 7- 7.30am, we begin our journey driving west through the stunning West MacDonnell National Park. After a stop at Ellery Creek for a short walk and a chance to start getting a feel for this ancient rugged country, we head to our beautiful private Ormiston Creek Camp, our base for the next 6 days. Arriving mid morning we relax with a cup of freshly brewed coffee or tea and have a meet and greet before a detailed outline of plans for the week. The next few hours are spent with Daniel Scott, as you embark on his comprehensive Travel Writing course. Today's first module covers "Getting Started" and deals with one of the most important elements of any travel story, writing an inspiring introduction. It also dispels some myths about the travel writing industry.

Following a delicious fresh lunch we head off on a walk, following the Ormiston Creek stopping to admire the ancient river bed filled with giant River Red Gums and plentiful birdlife. Climbing up nearby hills, we enjoy a spectacular perspective of the vastness and beauty that surrounds us. On our way back to camp we encounter more of Central Australia's fascinating flora, gnarly old Corkwoods, magnificent wildflowers and the white Ghost Gums glowing in the late afternoon sun. As we approach camp the sight of our campfire and the smell of a freshly prepared evening meal mean it's time for dinner. Sitting around the fire is a great time to reflect on the day's events; discuss writing with Dan and the rest of the group and enjoy our remote and secluded camp.

After a delicious dessert and a cup of tea it's time for bed. You have the choice to sleep in your tent or under the starry night sky, an unforgettable experience.

Day2: The morning starts with a big healthy breakfast. Dan will introduce the second module of the course for the rest of the morning (4-5 hours). This deals with how to structure travel yarns in order to ensure they don't become travel yawns! Then, after another freshly prepared lunch, it's off to Ormiston Gorge to do the 8km 3-4 hours Ormiston Pound loop walk. It's one of the Red Centre's 'must do' short walks, incorporating rugged ridges, vast valleys, permanent water holes and one of Australia's most gorgeous gorges.

Day 3: Today we hike one of the most beautiful sections of the Larapinta Trail, Counts Point. The trail starts at Serpentine

Gorge, before heading west along one of the magnificent high ridge lines of the Heavitree Range. The views over the vast interior are incredible as we witness the rugged mountains, deep gorges, open plains and even ancient meteor craters. Progressing along the high ridge line we reach Counts Point, the view from here has to be one of the most spectacular in Australia and featured on the "we still call Australia home" ads made by Qantas. We finish today's section at Serpentine Chalet Dam, where we are picked up and transferred back to our camp. The afternoon is spent at your leisure, giving you the opportunity to go for an exploration of the area, to work on a writing assignment set by Dan or just relax in the shade of a tree and listen to the birds.

Day 4: Much of today will be free for writing and during the day Dan will hold one-on-one coaching sessions at our camp, where the surrounding environment affords plenty of inspiration.

Day 5: After another night under the stars and a healthy breakfast today begins with a chance to review what you've written with Dan and the group and receive feedback and support. Dan will then give the third module of the course, "The Bigger Picture" which deals with broader aspects of travel writing such as blogging, writing for guide books and photography.

In the afternoon we head off to the Finke River for a loop walk that takes us to the start of one of the oldest river systems in the world, past very important permanent waterholes filled with rare water birds and fish. We walk through lush forest and incredible rock formations before finishing our walk at the historic Glen Helen Homestead. The afternoon is free to enjoy a swim in Glen Helen Gorge and an ice cold beer at the rustic homestead bar.

In the evening we settle down to another delicious evening meal cooked on the fire by your Guide.

Day 6: Our final morning of the tour is spent with Dan, tackling the all-important fourth module of the course: marketing and selling your work to newspapers, magazines and the internet as well as recapping the week. Before heading back to Alice Springs we stop for a couple of short walks at the Ochre Pits and Simpsons Gap, returning to your hotels between 4-5pm.

For fundamental safety, the group members need to be aware of each other's location whilst walking, remembering the old bush walking rule of 'keeping an eye on the person behind you'. This may require walkers to adjust their pace to the group. Faster walkers soon adjust to the joys of pausing in the shade, taking time to listen to the interpretative guide and absorbing the wonders of the trail.



Things to know:

Flights

Please arrange your flights into Alice Springs at least one day before the trek starts and arrange your departure flights from Alice Springs at least one day after the trek finishes.

6 Days in the Bush

6 Days out here in the bush and on the trail is a great experience. Be sure that your boots are broken in and your personal equipment is in good shape.

Although we come together as individuals, we share the experience as a group. There is always time for personal space, but by helping each other out and showing consideration for your fellow walkers, we can ensure a rewarding experience for all. Your guides are always available to talk to whilst on tour to help manage the wellbeing of you and the group.

What you carry

Minimal weight: Because you have two guides—one on the trail to carry safety equipment and one back at camp organising the logistics of the tour—you only carry a day pack for your walk.

In your pack: Most of the weight will be water to sustain you while walking in the Central Australian climate, which (apart from the very rare splashes of rain) is sunny and dry even on cold days. We recommend you carry at least 3 litres of water each day. In addition to water, you carry your lunch box, whatever snacks you'd like for the day, a windproof/ rainproof jacket, warm layer and whatever personal items (such as camera and binoculars) you'd like with you on the trail.

Health and Fitness

This is a Travel Writing Retreat all walks for this tour are optional. The more physically ready you are the less likely you are to sustain an injury. Please talk to us if you have any health issues or other injuries which may affect your time with us, and don't be afraid to see your GP for advice on participating on this trip before you confirm your booking.

The Larapinta Trail is physically hard and just because you are on a guided trek doesn't mean it gets any easier! So, be as ready as you can be. Engage in aerobic activity 3-4 times a week for at least 1 hour each session during the 3 months prior to your trip; this might include walking, cycling, swimming etc.

Start to do some long bush walks as regularly as you can and do some full day bush walks with your pack weighing around 5-6kg to get your body used to walking with a load, starting at least 2 months in advance of the trek.

The Larapinta Trail is known for its unevenness and hardness under foot so make sure you do some walking over rough terrain (if you can find it). Feel free to talk to the Trek Larapinta staff about being prepared.

Good meals all day

With sustaining food for breakfast, fresh & tasty meals for lunches, quality camp-cooked food for dinners and plenty of snacks for the trail, you are bound to enjoy your eating with Trek Larapinta. We provide plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, real coffee and billy tea. We pride ourselves on our fresh and healthy food.

Catering for dietary requirements

With notice, we can cater for vegetarians and meet medical dietary requirements.

For non-medical dietary preferences, please get in touch with us. We like to do what we can to cater for your needs, but because we're in a remote area and aren't able to restock while on tour, we do need notice and appreciate your consideration and understanding of these limits.

We pride ourselves on our fresh and healthy food.

Footwear

The surface on much of the trail is hard and rocky, with sharp quartzite. It is very tough on boots and feet and sometimes older footwear can crack, break or fall apart. It's good to get the balance of boots that are worn-in but not worn-out. If the boots are "worn-in", it will reduce the chances that you'll get blisters. But if the boots are "worn-out", they are likely to fall apart on the tough surfaces of the trail.

So it helps if you check your shoes well in advance of the walk. If they don't look certain to make the distance, it's helpful to buy a new pair at least a few months in advance and break them in properly prior to the trip. Retailers in quality outdoor-gear should also be able to give you good advice on buying new shoes. Your feet are likely to get hot rather than cold. Simple, good-quality leather or synthetic trekking boots or good-quality, low-cut walking shoes are fine. It also helps to have good quality socks to fit your footwear. We wear well-padded thinner style of Merino wool sock or a synthetic moisture-wicking sock.

Comfortable footwear for around camp such as sneakers or sandals are great. We like to wear Ugg boots during the cool evenings!

Clothing

Temperatures do vary during the year (*see temp chart*). You will know your preferred walking attire, but, as a guide, always bring clothing that can protect you from the sun during your day's walk, like a long sleeve shirt with a collar, a hat and some sunglasses. Long pants are good to have on cooler days, but shorts are very handy for most of the year. Warm, lightweight jumpers for walking and a lightweight rain coat are essential items. Ankle gaiters can help keep grass seeds and sand out off your shoes but are not essential (we wear the cotton ankle/sock protectors). Thermal layers are also very handy as they are light

and warm. Think about the layering system when choosing your clothes.

For after the day's walk, casual clothing is all you need, plus some warm layers—including a beanie and gloves—for the chilly drop-off in temperature at night.

Feet

The temperature within the boots and also the hard and uneven terrain can quickly cause blisters or exacerbate other foot problems. Before a walk like this, get any corns, calluses etc. seen to, and make sure problem nails are trimmed and all nails cut. Come prepared with some form of blister prevention and, if you are prone to blisters, always tape up before the days walk **“prevention is the cure”**. Your feet will be very valuable to you during this tour, and a little preparation can go a long way.

What to know about water

Keeping yourself hydrated is even more important than keeping your feet blister free. Drinking enough water while walking will help you with the stamina and clear thinking you need to walk the trail. Please bring water bottles or a bladder such as a Camelbak to carry a **minimum of 3 litres** for the day walks. Even in the cooler months, the dry air can cause you to drink more than you realise. We can't stress enough the importance of keeping your fluid intake up.

Our Camp Site

A lot of changes are happening to the way the park is being managed as far as campsite locations for commercial operators are concerned. We have been granted private use of a section of the beautiful Ormiston Creek. It is a bush camp and we adhere to Parks and Wildlife's and our own strict minimal impact policies, which we have learnt through experience and observation of our interaction with these areas. It's a privilege to be in these areas so we want to look after them.

On the 6 day trip we use one camp site for the duration of the tour. Due to our walks all being on the far western sections it means you can set up and not have to worry about relocating campsite each night. We just transfer each day to the trail heads. Sometimes people say before they get here that they hoped to be moving each night, but they soon realise the benefits of a base camp and end up being very thankful for the chance to be in one place especially here on Ormiston Creek. There is also a Total Fire Ban on the Larapinta Trail, so we use camp sites away from the trail where, by permit, we are able to enjoy the delights of a camp fire.

Camp facilities

The camp site on Ormiston Creek is a pristine natural area with no permanent structures, so anything we take in is taken out, either at the end of each trip, or the end of the season.

Toilets

At camp, we set up a composting toilet at the start of the season. We then remove it and all the composted waste at the end of each Larapinta Trail season. Our composting toilet is simple yet comfortable, clean and private, with no smell!

On the trail, responsible and minimal impact bush toilet protocol is to ensure that you toilet at least 100m from any trail or watercourse (including the sandy banks of ephemeral rivers in these regions) and dig at least 15cm down to make sure that it can be covered in such a way to avoid visual pollution or its discovery by fossicking animals.

Showering

The trail is arid and somewhat remote, so whatever water we wish to use we need to bring in ourselves. We have a simple bush showering area where you can strip off and pour some water over you at the end of each day Balinese style! Hot water is provided. Make sure you bring a towel and natural biodegradable soaps, if used.

Sleeping:

Swags and the sky: Whether you've slept in a swag hundreds of times or never before, we think you'll enjoy this part of being out on the trail. A swag is a foam mattress protected by canvas and, in it, we put bedding that's clean and cosy and warm. We also provide you with a tent if you wish, so you can sleep inside or out under a ceiling of stars. Sleeping bags rated to minus 5 are provided.

What to know about swimming in waterholes

We can swim in some of the waterholes we come to. As part of responsible and minimal impact travel, we can't wash in them, and it's good to have a bit of a “bird bath” or “wipe off” beforehand, to remove sunscreens so we can avoid polluting these valuable drinking sources for animals in this desert land. The water can be a bit chilly, but it can be refreshing to take a plunge after walking for a day, so bring along some bathers as well as your towel.

Staying in touch

Apart from some of the high ridgelines there is no mobile phone reception for the duration of your trip. There is a pay phone at Glen Helen which we can access at certain times during the tour. We carry a satellite telephone on all of our tours for use in emergencies.

Cameras

We are able to charge most re-chargeable camera batteries through a universal charging device or you can bring your own charger (24 V or 12 V) and plug it into our sine wave inverter. Don't forget spare film or memory cards and other camera accessories you may need.

6 Day Travel Writing Retreat Itinerary



Bags

You'll need a good quality day-pack with a comfortable harness for walking and another, larger bag to hold all your other things back at camp. Large backpacks or other soft bags are easier for us to fit in the trailer than suitcases and also tend to be better suited to camping. We have limited space so the smaller your luggage bag the better. Enquire about leaving excess luggage at your hotel (preferred) or at our work shed.

Vehicle Storage

We don't have any facilities for vehicle storage. If driving to Alice Springs please arrange to leave your car at your hotel or other storage facility such as the airport. Contact us if you are having any difficulties with finding suitable storage.

What to know about weather

Winter weather in Central Australia is near-perfect for walking. You predominantly enjoy sunny blue skies, but with the moderate temperatures of winter rather than the baking heat of summer. But when night falls, the temperature drops fast! So come prepared for warm days and chilly nights. In 2010 we experienced much rain so make sure you have a good working raincoat with you.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Av. Max	28	23	20	20	22	26
Av. Min	12	8	5	4	6	10
Rainy Days	2	3	3	3	2	2

Quick list for some of the essential items.

Day pack	Toiletries -biodegradable soap	✓
Water bottles/ bladder (minimum 3L)	Baby wipes <i>optional</i>	✓
Walking shoes or boots	Beanie	
Sunscreen	Warm gloves	
Sun hat	A good book or two!	
Sunglasses	Gaiters <i>optional</i>	
Lightweight raincoat / windproof jacket	Camera <i>optional</i>	
Personal first aid kit - blister protection	Binoculars <i>optional</i>	
Head torch and spare batteries	Walking poles <i>optional, may be hired</i>	
Comfortable walking attire		
Spare comfortable shoes or sandals		

Table to be used as a guide only. Please call us with any questions

Tour inclusions:

All meals and snacks from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 6 and all catering equipment.

All camping equipment including sleeping bag, swag, pillow, linen and tent etc.

Small groups with max of 10 participants.

4x4 transport with hotel pick up and drop off.

2 Trek Larapinta guides.

Group first aid kit and satellite phone in the event of an emergency.

All camping and access fees.

Private campsite location.

Travelling with a locally owned, culturally and environmentally responsible business.

- **Tours do not include pre or post trip airfares or accommodation**

Trek Larapinta uses and recommends the Aurora Hotel in Alice Springs - to get the best rate and priority rooms mention you are a Trek Larapinta client when booking online at www.auroraresorts.com.au

