

## **CENTRAL AUSTRALIA AT THE CUTTING EDGE**

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The Central Australia region of the Northern Territory offers not only amazing desert landscapes and iconic natural attractions such as Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata Tjuta (The Olgas), but is also home to a cutting edge Desert Knowledge Precinct, as well as an amazing array of interactive indigenous experiences.

The 73 hectare Desert Knowledge Precinct, located in Alice Springs, is a national and international focal point for desert knowledge activities and brings together 'knowledge rich' organisations such as the Desert Knowledge Solar Centre and a Co-operative Research Centre to work in partnership to identify and create know-how, ideas and innovation. One of the region's leading conference hotels, Crowne Plaza Alice Springs, recently showed how such innovation can be turned into reality when it installed the largest rooftop-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) system in the Southern Hemisphere, setting an enviable green benchmark for the hotel industry.

Lynn Fairbrass, Manager of the Northern Territory Convention Bureau commented "Such innovations have undoubtedly assisted with the attraction of events to Alice Springs such as the Global Eco Asia-Pacific Tourism Conference in November this year and also the Cooperative Research Centres Association Inc (CRCA) Annual Conference in 2010." The Global Eco Conference is expected to bring more than 400 leading players from across the globe to discuss and debate the development of a more sustainable tourism industry while the CRCA Conference will attract more than 300 researchers, educators and industry.

Central Australia is also one of three officially-designated Indigenous Tourism Hubs which have been created in locations across the Northern Territory to provide support for emerging indigenous tourism businesses. The Territory, home to Australia's largest population of Aboriginal people with a culture rich in traditions over 40,000 years old, now boasts more than 80 different indigenous experiences which can be undertaken in some of the most environmentally and culturally significant areas of Australia.

Conference and incentive groups can undertake unique indigenous team-building activities such as dot-painting workshops, didgeridoo-making and learn-to-play sessions, boomerang-making and how-to-throw lessons, mountain bike touring with a difference, jewellery-making and weaving, bush tucker excursions as well as bush craft and survival skills. Some tour companies now take groups into desert areas never before open to the public, to view extraordinary and priceless rock art paintings and engravings. These activities are hosted by the traditional custodians who are delighted to share their stories and the cultural significance of their timeless land.

The 1200 seat Alice Springs Convention Centre has recently launched a new website which reconfirms the close links between the traditional peoples and the exotic landscape in which the centre is located. In 2009, the centre continues to attract more than its fair share of attention with a range of significant medical gatherings including a leading pharmaceutical company bringing its team in June, the Provincial Surgeons of Australia coming in July, closely followed by the Neurological Society of Australasia in September.

For further information on conferences and incentives in Australia's Northern Territory, visit [www.ntconventions.com](http://www.ntconventions.com)

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