



(U) Life in Alice

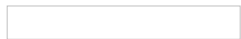
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Run Date: 05/14/2004

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(U//FOUO) One night some months ago I said to my husband, "I think that vacancy announcement in Alice Springs was written for you."

(U) "Alice Springs?" he said. "Isn't that in the middle of nowhere?"

(U) I nodded. We stared at each other across the table, trying to imagine our lives at such a remote location. But [REDACTED] applied and was accepted, and more than a year later, here we are in the Outback.



(U) Alice Springs is a town of 27,000 people that gets almost 400,000 tourists a year. Most visitors prefer to come in the fall and winter; in summer, the heat regularly exceeds one hundred degrees. The nearest cities of any size, Adelaide and Darwin, are eight hundred miles away to the north and south. There's virtually nothing east or west, except snakes, lizards and kangaroos. It's one of the most remote cities of its size anywhere in the world, and that sense of adventure was part of its appeal.

(U) Alice is the kind of place where you make your own fun, so we've been to the Camel Cup, the annual camel races, and the Henley-on-Todd, where people race in bottomless boats in the dry Todd riverbed. [REDACTED]

(U) Besides those two annual events, we've also taken rides on a camel and in a hot-air balloon, and we've enjoyed didgeridoo concerts, a night of star gazing, and trips to Uluru (Ayers Rock), Sydney, Tasmania and New Zealand. We've watched kangaroos hop across the land behind our house, and we've awakened to the screeching of exotic pink and gray parrots. We've seen some incredible sunrises, and for the first time in my life, I've been able to see the milky part of the Milky Way. The stars are so bright in Alice's clear air, you'd swear you could touch them.

(U) For an isolated city of its size, Alice has an energetic arts community. I was surprised at how large and modern the local arts center is, with two theaters and several galleries. It attracts national performers, from award winning dance and music groups to the annual Melbourne Comedy Festival Roadshow. Several different arts and music festivals celebrating local talent take place during the year. The Alice Springs Choral Society, which I've joined, performs some of the most challenging music I've ever sung.

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(U) Many people associate Alice Springs and its constant sunshine with year-long outdoor sports. Neither of us is the athletic type, but if we wanted to try, there's plenty of opportunity. People play on all kinds of teams, for all age groups - baseball, softball, rugby, soccer, netball, volleyball, Aussie-rules football, tennis, swimming, you name it. There are a couple of cycling clubs, and many folks enjoy camping nearby.

(U) Since you don't have to spend time sitting in traffic, Alice is a great place to try new things. I've been fossicking for garnets. We've fed black-footed wallabies that live on a nearby rocky hillside. I'm planning to cycle the eighteen miles to the facility before winter's end this year. I can't draw, but didn't let that stop me from taking up watercolors.

(U) Our first year of our two-year tour seemed to fly by, and it was time to decide if we wanted to extend. We didn't have to discuss that very long. For a place in the middle of nowhere, we've found the quality of our lives here to be high. With the lack of traffic, the sunny weather, and the variety of experiences we've enjoyed, we're happy to stay two more years in this town called Alice.

(U//FOUO) See the [Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap webpage](#).

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