

Project Information

Project Dates

- Term 1: January – April (10 weeks)
- Term 2: April – June (10 weeks)
- Term 3: July – September (10 weeks)
- Term 4: October – December (10 weeks)

The project dates are set in consultation with our partners and are aligned with the Northern Territory School terms. Your Program Manager will advise you of the exact dates closer to your departure. You will also be required to attend a pre-departure training in Sydney a day before heading to the Northern Territory. The pre-departure and orientation prior to project is an essential component of your placement. Attending this phase of the program is compulsory. The Sydney pre departure is followed by a further orientation session upon arrival in Central Australia.

Pre-departure meeting - Sydney

Your orientation will start with this one day session in Sydney, which will consist of:

- Meeting with other participants
- Discussing your hopes and fears as a group
- Talking with Returned Volunteers from Central Australia
- Discussing group living, potential conflicts and volunteer roles
- Final medical processes
- Last minute administration

Arrival in Central Australia

Volunteers fly to Alice Springs or Yulara and participate in a half-day cultural orientation program. An additional orientation session will be held in the communities by partner organisations.

Accommodation

Accommodation is arranged for volunteers by YCA and will either be a house or demountable. The volunteers will have bathroom, kitchen and bedroom. The set up of accommodation will vary depending on the project community.

Food

When you order goods from the major supermarkets in Alice or Yulara to truck out to remote communities, this process is called a 'bush order'. You will most likely do your initial fortnightly bush order in Alice Springs or Yulara before you head out to project. You will learn more about how to do this during orientation.

Generally speaking you will sit down and decide as a group what you wish to communally buy. This is not an easy process; the first bush order has been known to take up to 3 hours! You will need to purchase not only food but cleaning products.

Tips from past volunteers:

Water: “On our first order we got a couple of 10litre plastic water bottles which have been fantastic. You can drink the tap water however it has high levels of calcium and doesn’t taste all that great. We used the plastic 10litre bottles and empty bottles from juice and cordial on previous orders and filled them with water from the compounds (housing areas that have water tanks attached, you will need to tee up with someone to let you in as they are locked up and you will need a ride to get all your water back home)”.

Fruit and Vegetables: You can go a little nuts and you do need to remember that fresh fruit and vegetables will not last the entire two weeks, so ordering some frozen vegies and tinned fruit is a good substitute and will last you for later orders if there is problems with getting your food orders.

Meats: When you order meat packs try to be relatively specific about size otherwise you can get some pretty ridiculous sized packs, such as over 1kg packs of chicken breast. The power in some communities can cut out sometimes so in the past volunteers have been filled milk cartons with water and freezing them as insurance.

Milk. Get long life milk cartons.

If you like your snacks and soft drinks get them on the order and always remember to be specific. The store is expensive and does not stock much in the way of snack foods, particularly healthy ones.

When writing your order make sure you write ‘*please substitute if not available*’ on the order or on specific products, if they don’t have something in stock and you have not asked for a substitute you will not get it.

Be prepared to miss out on some things, on every order there will be one or two things that are not sent for no obvious reason.

Family life

The family unit is generally much larger than the average ‘whitefella’ family. In one house there are many people, and a number of strong women in the community take care of more than ten kids, for various reasons. Women have a particular role, and you will find that many girls will be interested in going out looking for bush tucker. This is a great way for you to be involved in their lifestyle and learn about their culture. The men still hunt, though this is not their main source of food. Mostly they will hunt for kangaroos and goannas.

There is still violence in the community, in particular towards women and children, though it is unlikely that you will see much of it. The staff at the school will inform you in regard to how to deal with any abuse you may experience. It is highly unlikely that any ill favour will be directed towards you however, provided you respect the people and their way of life.

Physical contact and treatment of women

In general you should avoid physical contact with any member of the opposite sex above the age of 10-11 years at school, and at your discretion outside of school. Additionally there is still a great deal of violence against women. It is part of your role to set an example as to how women should be treated.

Petrol and Alcohol

All communities are dry communities, no alcohol or unleaded petrol is allowed, and those in possession of either substance can be prosecuted. There may be some instances of alcohol possession and consumption, though most of the time the police are quick to act.

Climate

As you'd expect of a desert environment, Central Australia is predominantly dry, with brilliant blue skies especially from April to September. Rainfall usually occurs in the hottest months from October to March bringing welcome relief to the landscape and it's people. But with a yearly average of only 275 ml, clear skies are generally a pretty safe bet. Extreme conditions do occur however, and precautions must be taken to prevent fatigue.

Temperature

During summer (October to March), sunscreen, a hat and a plentiful supply of water are essential companions, while throughout winter (May to September) extra clothing will protect you from cool evenings and cold mornings. Temperatures in the low 40 degrees Celcius are not uncommon in the height of summer, while in winter overnight minimums sometimes drop to minus 7 degrees Celcius (19 F).

CHART: Monthly Maximum and Minimum Temperature Averages (Measured in Degrees Celsius)

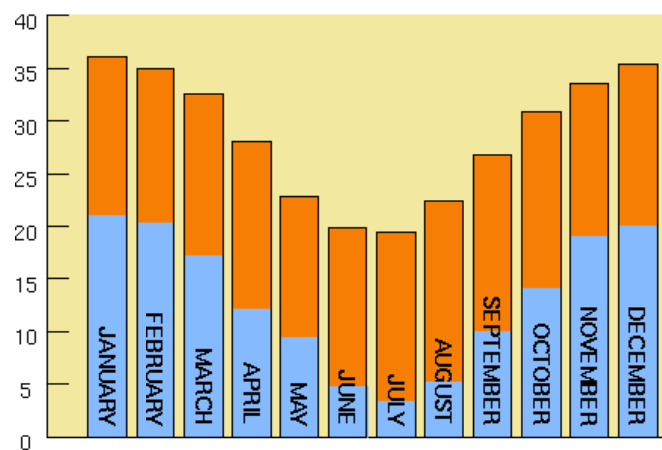


CHART: Monthly Rainfall Averages (Measured in mm)

Average annual rainfall: 275 mm

