

"I love the 'festival quality' of the Todd when it's in flood, and the creativity in Alice."

"The Territory is keen to support the increased mobility that GPS brings."

"The Mutijulu man recalls being a young boy and coming across Harold Lasseter."

"Boil native fuchsia and add it to your bath. It's good for aches and pains."

share our story

DAY SEVEN ANCIENT CURIES



# DESERT DESIGNS

**A DESIGNER'S INSPIRATION**

Elliat Rich is a modest 30-year-old who calls herself a designer. But like her award-winning "Urban Billy", she's a neat stack of elegant components - an artist, an explorer, a philosopher, and an inventor who won a trophy on the ABC's *New Inventors*.

"Actually, I don't set out to design an object like a sofa," Rich says. "I discover a humble pleasure that I want to share, and then I make an object to facilitate that sharing."  
The sofa in question is "Yala" which has been displayed in art and science museums around the country. When people sit on it, the blue fabric reacts to their body heat and blossoms with white flowers of the bush potato.

"I'd been watching local people digging up the Yala or bush potato and I saw how they were engaged and occupied, and also enjoying being together. That inspired the sofa. I wanted to put the joy of being together into a domestic space."

The ABC trophy was garnered for a canvas jacket that converts to a swag or a tarp.

"One time I pulled off the road and camped in the ranges. I was out walking next morning - there was no path - and found the most beautiful rock carvings. So the jacket is about giving people the

opportunity to explore and discover, and the exhilaration you get from that."

Rich was a finalist in the Bombay Sapphire Design Award in 2007 and hot-listed by *Vogue Living* for the Urban Billy, a functional glass tea-making device that puts the bush ritual into an urban context.

Rich says these humble pleasures - and indeed these exuberant creations - are born of Alice Springs. The town has been her home since 2004, when she and her partner moved here after a two-year camel trek around NSW.

"I love the peacefulness of the place," she says. "I love the 'festival quality' of the Todd when it's in flood, and the well-spring of creativity in the town. There are so many extraordinary people here. They break the mould - and they break it properly so the pieces fall and look lovely!"

At present, Rich is being kept busy with private and public commissions. But she's under pressure to make designs like the "Lichen" jacket commercially available.

"I'm not comfortable with the idea of mass-manufacturing things. So I'm exploring ways of delivering limited numbers of hand-made products to people who will take the time to understand what these things do - why they've been created in the first place." See [www.elliatrich.com](http://www.elliatrich.com)



On reflection: Elliat Rich absorbs her environment and re-creates it in practical and beautifully designed pieces.

## HEALING GARDEN



Gardeners are turning to Australian native plants that are more hardy than European species, look good and smell great. But how many realise their bushland backyards are also rich with medicinal benefits?

Veronica Perrule Dobson is an Eastern Arrernte woman, a respected elder, an author and a translator. She takes occasional tours through the Alice Springs Desert Park explaining some of the traditional medicinal uses of native desert plants, including:

**BUSH lemon grass** (*Cymbopogon sp.*): elegant, aromatic grasses which can be boiled and inhaled as a decongestant.

**WILD tomato** (*Solanum chippendalei*): burn the root, grind it up and apply it to an aching tooth.

**EMU bush** (*Eremophila longifolia*): possibly the most sacred of plants in desert culture, this plant is used widely in "smoking" ceremonies; its smoke is believed to strengthen newborn babies and help mothers recover from childbirth. When ground up or in decoction, it has healing properties for cuts, sores and headaches. It is also said to aid sleep.

**NATIVE fuchsia** (*Eremophila latrobei*): pick when shiny (the sap is up), boil it and add it to the bath - good for aches and pains. Sweet nectar found at the base of the bright red flower is a delicacy.

**RED poverty bush** (*Eremophila duttonii*): a useful antiseptic and good for the relief of flu.

**APPLE bush** (*Pterocaulon serrulatum*): crush the delicate leaves to release a pleasing aroma or bunch them to use as a pillow. Good as a decongestant.

**MINT bush** (*Prostanthera striatiflora*): another lovely aromatic, the mint bush can be ground up and mixed with fat to make an ointment.

See [www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au](http://www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au)

## GPS HELPS DRIVERS GO DEEP INTO THE RED

**REMOTE TRACKS OPENED**

There was a time when essential off-road equipment meant jerry cans of fuel and a hi-lift jack.

Today, the must-have piece of kit for four-wheel-drivers wanting to explore the Red Centre is undoubtedly the GPS. "Global positioning technology and communications have never been so portable or so affordable," says John Stafford, senior industry development officer for Tourism NT. "It means people

can go further and be more adventurous, but with a greater degree of safety."

According to Stafford, even drivers with basic four-wheel-driving skills are feeling more confident about tackling remote areas.

"We get a lot of visitors who come from the major cities, looking to try out the capabilities of their vehicles. Some of them have support structures built into their dashboards housing a laptop computer with detailed mapping capabilities plugged into the GPS.

Combine this with a satellite phone and they can call if they get into trouble.

"So they're more comfortable about getting out there, opening up old tracks and finding truly remote ground."

Stafford, who is based in Alice Springs, says that in some states drivers are pushing into territory that is off-limits.

"But we're kind of the opposite to this, in fact the Territory is keen to support the increased mobility. We're working with pastoral interests and indigenous groups to open up more and more

terrain to exactly these sort of drivers. We're talking about country around places like Ipolera, Rodna and Palm Paddock, where you can really get out there and not see another vehicle."

At the same time, Tourism NT is formalising a series of tracks for people who want an off-road adventure but also a level of support, including appropriate way-marking and occasional bush camps.

And drivers should never underestimate the challenge of remote country.

"You can have all the technology in the world, but you still need to know what you're doing - you need to know about tyre pressures, how to approach a dune, how to get out of a bog. And yes, you absolutely need your jerry cans and your hi-lift."

See <http://en.travelnt.com/experience/driving.aspx>



Handy device: GPS technology means freedom and security.



Country with a past: Lasseter's cave can be found west of Kata Tjuta.

## LINK TO LASSETER

**MUTIJULU MAN'S STORY**

In November last year, a man living in the Mutijulu community near Uluru died. He was possibly the last person to see adventurer Harold Lasseter - famous for his fabulous "reef of gold" - alive.

The man, who can no longer be named according to Anangu custom, left his story to the Uluru visitor's centre, where an interpretation can be heard on the listening wall.

The Mutijulu man recalls being a young boy walking with his family, and coming upon a European sheltering in a

cave and clearly suffering from hunger. Speaking no English, the group tried to offer the European their native food, but he "didn't like it".

After some weeks of trying to care for Lasseter, the group eventually moved on.

Lasseter's body was found at Winter's Glen in 1931 by a bushman named Bob Buck who had consulted with Aborigines in his effort to track down the missing man. Buck recovered Lasseter's diary from the cave at Hull's Creek, which retold how a group of nomadic Aborigines had given assistance. Suffering malnutrition, Lasseter had attempted to reach Uluru.

## WIN A TRIP TO THE NT TO COLLECT A UNIQUE PIECE OF ABORIGINAL ART

(to the value of \$11,900) courtesy of Tourism NT and Voyages



"Ahakeye Bush Plum Dreaming" by Lindsay Bird Mpetyane. MBANTUA GALLERY

Today's code word is 'relax'. To enter, go to [travelnt.com](http://travelnt.com) and tell us in 25 words or less, using all seven code words provided, why you need to Get Centred in the Red Centre.\*

\*For full competition terms and conditions visit [travelnt.com](http://travelnt.com)



"Look at the sunrise in the morning, the sunset in the afternoon and the moonrise at night. If those three things don't unwind you, nothing will."

Jan Hayes, Central Australian resident, 6:54am

# GET CENTRED

ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK  
Find your story in the Northern Territory. Visit [travelnt.com](http://travelnt.com) or call us on 13 67 68