

You won't find your way to Longitude 131° unless you already know the way. No, it's not a Zen koan; it's the Longitude 131° philosophy.

Few properties could pull off such a disappearing act, but Longitude 131° is far from being your average resort.

Consisting of just 15 tented pavilions spreading out on either side of the central Dune House, the low-slung camp is hidden from outsiders by the gentle desert dunes.

Its isolated location allows it to offer a true desert experience while still delivering creature comforts such as king-size beds, in-room wi-fi and freely-flowing Louis Roederer champagne.

Nowhere else in the Red Centre can you enjoy an Uluru sunrise without the crowds. Dawn tends to be peak hour at the various viewing areas overlooking Uluru. At Longitude 131°, however, you can savour the spectacle without even getting out of bed. Simply press the button by the side of your bed to raise the blind on your floor-to-ceiling glass wall and reveal Uluru in all its glory. One thing to consider is that children under 10 are not allowed at the resort.

Even if you usually sleep in, get used to rising with the sun. Extreme desert temperatures make it wise to get an early start. As part of its all-inclusive rate – \$2200 per night for two people, including all meals and beverages but excluding flights to the Red Centre – Longitude 131° offers a roster of complimentary activities, including walks around Uluru to explore cave

paintings and sacred sites, and sunset drinks in a secluded gorge.

Some of our favourite activities, however, are on the menu of bespoke experiences available for an extra charge.

Take the morning we head to Kata Tjuta, formerly known as the Olgas. From a distance, these 36 beehive-shaped domes look jumbled together; however, they are actually spread out over 20km.

The three-hour Valley of the Winds walk wends its way between them, along creek beds and through a surprisingly

waiting to offer us champagne. That's the Longitude way.

Longitude 131° has been under new management since last November when it was taken over by Baillie Lodges, the owners of the acclaimed Southern Ocean Lodge and Capella on Lord Howe Island. Their reputation helped lure VIP visitors the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, who stayed at Longitude 131° on their royal tour to Australia.

Following an initial \$2 million refurbishment, which introduced indigenous artworks from the local Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara people to the lodge, further improvements are planned for early next year. Each pavilion will get a verandah with its own fire pit, while two new premium pavilions will also be added.

One area that needs no improvement is the meals created by the team led by Seona Moss. Moss trained at Ecco in Brisbane under Phillip Johnson and has worked in Melbourne's Vue de Monde and Fenix and several restaurants in France. At Longitude 131° the four-course dinners include delights such as cauliflower and camembert soup, or Kinkawooka mussels with lemon myrtle, coconut, chilli and fresh lime. The ultimate dining experience, complimentary for guests, is Table 131°, an alfresco meal enjoyed amid the dunes.

Under a sky blazing with stars, after a superb meal, we watch traditional dances performed by Anangu. Back in our rooms, fur-wrapped water bottles are heating our beds. A night in the desert doesn't get better than this. **LSJ**

DESERT DREAMING

Hidden in the desert, Longitude 131° is the ultimate luxury outback experience, writes **UTE JUNKER**.

green valley. This tranquil place, sheltered from the harshness of the surrounding desert, feels like an oasis in the desert.

Then there are the helicopter tours, a wonderful alternative to four-wheel drives. Longitude 131° offers chopper tours to a variety of destinations, including Kings Canyon.

We choose a sunrise option that circles Uluru and Kata Tjuta then continues out over the desert, where we see kangaroos hopping through scrub and shimmering salt lakes.

As the piece de resistance, we land atop the Red Centre's other great monolith, the flat-topped Mount Connor. Inevitably, staff are already



CHECKLIST

Rates at Longitude 131° are \$2200 per night for two people and include all meals and drinks and many activities. Book through longitude131.com.au. Virgin and Jetstar both offer direct flights from Sydney to Uluru.

Clockwise from top: Longitude 131° with its spectacular view of Uluru, all meals are included in the price; you may sleep in a tent but luxury isn't far away; take a hike at sunrise to Kata Tjuta; king-sized beds and outback memorabilia in the 15 tents which are raised and linked by raised walkways to protect the land.

