

# The true colour of Australia's Red Centre

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## CASE STUDY

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Greg Barton, Editor, *Australian Traveller*



Epson PictureMate 250



Epson Stylus Photo R2400

In early 2007, Tourism Northern Territory (Tourism NT) took six journalists on an outback trip with something of a difference. While the primary goal was to provide the six with a greater understanding and appreciation of Australia's beautiful Red Centre, there was an additional item on the agenda. This was to have them take a series of photographs, a selection of which would be printed using an Epson Stylus Pro 9800 on Epson Premier Art Glossy Water Resistant Canvas and be displayed in a public exhibition.

Ingrid Sanders, Tourism NT Public Relations and Media Advisor, comments: "The Red Centre represents some of the most breathtaking landscape photographic opportunities in the world; and we wanted each of the group members to capture images they thought were representative of the Red Centre."

During the course of the five day sojourn, the group passed through areas such as East and West MacDonnell Ranges, Finke Gorge, Glen Helen, Kings Canyon and, of course, Uluru. While the evenings were spent in the comfort of resorts and hotels, the days were devoted to traversing some of this country's most beautiful landscapes and, as opportunities arose, capturing those landscapes with digital cameras.

### Epson appears

To provide on-hand expert photographic advice for the group, Tourism NT brought in Grenville Turner, arguably one of Australia's most well-known and respected landscape photographers. Bringing more than skill and experience to the journey, Turner brought with him two of his favourite photo printers – an Epson Stylus Photo R2400 and the compact Epson PictureMate 250.

"I wanted to give everyone the benefit of seeing the results of their photography just as they would appear in final print format," Turner explains. "And without waiting to get back from the journey."

With that in mind, as the group was travelling in its convoy of four-wheel drive vehicles through the MacDonnell Ranges, Turner reached into his pack and brought out the PictureMate 250. Using a standard readily purchased inverter, he plugged the printer in the vehicle's cigarette lighter and started printing photos straight from one of his camera's CF cards. Sitting next to him was Alex Coppel, a photojournalist with the Melbourne *Sunday Herald Sun*.



Epson Stylus Pro 9800



For Coppel, the sudden appearance of the PictureMate 250 was just as much an eye opening experience as it was a surprise. "We were sitting in a 4-wheel drive vehicle going over some pretty bumpy road and without a word, Grenville pulled out the PictureMate, plugged it into the car's cigarette lighter and started printing out photographs," he says.

According to Coppel, who has been a professional photojournalist for six years, seeing the compact photo printer generate high quality colour photographs brought about a major change in attitude. "I'm extremely particular when it



comes to photo prints," he explains, "and I have to admit that when I first looked at similar printers several years ago, the quality simply wasn't there.

"When I saw what the PictureMate could do – and bear in mind that this was in a vehicle moving over rough terrain as it was printing – my opinion changed right on the spot. The quality is right up there with what I expect of professionally printed photographs."

Adding further to the benefits Coppel sees being gained through the use of the PictureMate 250 is reassurance that the photographer has taken the best possible photo. "When I view a photograph in my digital camera's

LCD view panel, it only gives me about a 30 per cent assurance," he says. "The fact is that most LCD displays can't show the full contrast and colour range that you need in order to evaluate the shot with any real degree of certainty.

"With the PictureMate 250, you *get* that extra 70 per cent! The colours that little printer can generate give the photographer an accurate and almost immediate miniature of the photo that will ultimately be printed in large format."

### Providing the incentive

It was at the very next stop that the rest of the group first discovered what Turner and Coppel had been doing – generating print after print of full-colour photos while on the move. Understandably, other members of the group were quick to produce their CF cards and – in the middle of the Red Centre – print their own 4x6-inch borderfree photographs.

In giving all members of the group ample chances to print their own photos using the PictureMate 250, Turner was providing them with a first-hand understanding of the level to which Epson has taken photo printing.

"One of the things I wanted everyone to appreciate was that getting a great photo print result no longer requires any technical know-how," Turner explains. "I just showed them how to insert their camera's CF card into the printer, select the image and press the print button. It's that simple."

The simplicity of operation Turner refers to was a primary consideration when Epson developed the PictureMate 250, building on the advances made with earlier models, particularly in total PC-free operations. Features, such as Photo Enhance, which automatically analyses image data and adjusts printer settings for optimum output, an in-built 2.5-inch colour LCD, and highly intuitive control panel combine to deliver an entirely self-contained photo printing solution... wherever you are.

### From amusement to admiration

At the end of one day's trip, the group returned to the hotel only to find that Turner had yet one more photo printing surprise in store. He relates: "I set up my notebook computer and the Stylus Photo R2400 in my hotel room, then started printing out some larger prints from the day's photo shooting. While everyone had been really impressed with quality of the PictureMate 250, when they saw what the R2400 was capable of producing, they were *really* impressed."

Included in the group of Red Centre visitors was Greg Barton, editor of Australia's highest selling travel magazine, *Australian Traveller*. An editor with years of experience in sorting through countless photographs for publication, Barton admits to having expressed a degree of initial scepticism when Turner brought out the A3+ photo printer.

"When Grenville unpacked the Stylus Photo R2400, it was actually a source of some amusement, with everyone wondering why anyone would bring such a printer on a trip to the middle of the Northern Territory," Barton says.

"But when he started printing out some of the photographs we'd taken, using a

high quality matte paper, I have to say that amusement pretty quickly gave way to admiration.

"In fact," Barton continues, "one of the prints has gone all the way from being printed out in the Glen Helen Resort's restaurant to being framed and hanging on a wall in my home. The quality of the prints was *that* good."

The quality of the Stylus Photo R2400 prints that Barton expresses such admiration for is due in large part to the printer's Epson UltraChrome K3 eight cartridge pigment ink set. Based on an advanced formulation, the inks have been designed specifically to create prints that can display a wide gamut of colours – an important characteristic in capturing landscape images that have incredibly fine gradations across a large range of colours.

According to Turner, while the Stylus Photo R2400's appearance on the journey was a surprise to the other group members, taking it with him on photo shoots is far from unusual.

"One of the real beauties of the R2400 is that it can take quite a bit of physical handling," Turner says. "I'm constantly having them go through the baggage



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systems at airports and there has never been a problem. I have to say, though, that I *was* surprised that it took the pretty harsh conditions of being stuck in the back of a 4-wheel drive going over very rough terrain.

"When I unpacked it at the resort and plugged it into my notebook, it just carried on as if it were back in my studio."

### The simplified selection

While Tourism NT's Sanders was also impressed with the versatility and quality of the Epson printers' photographic printing capabilities, she comments that it was the PictureMate 250 that gave her the ability to significantly streamline the selection process of those photos to be featured in the exhibition.

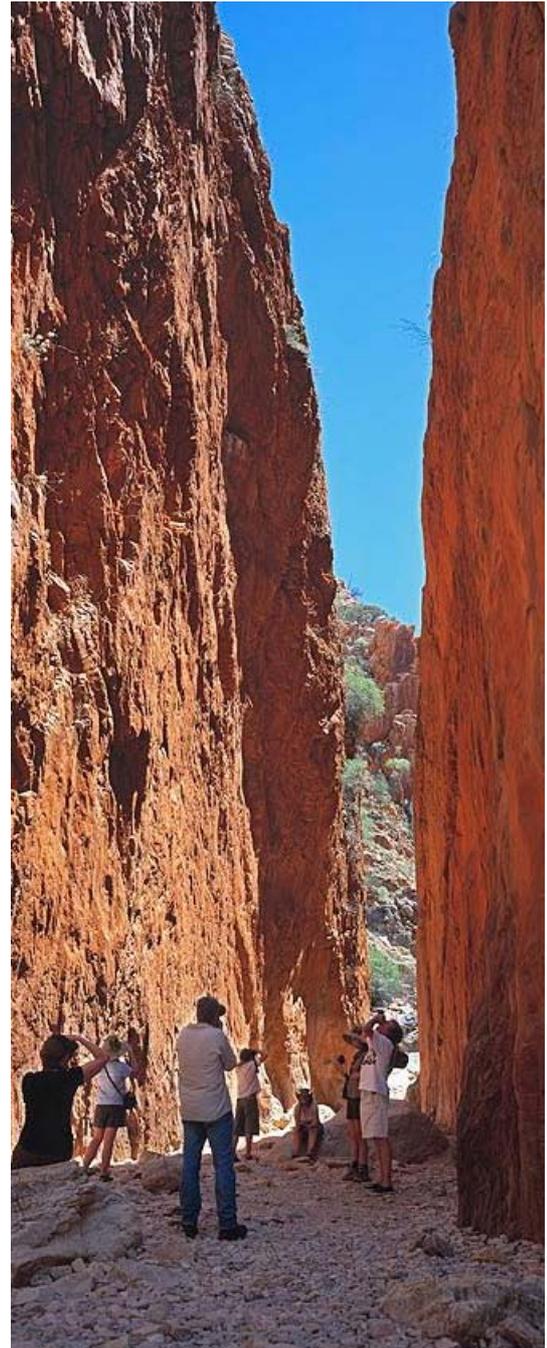
"I expected that when the trip was over, I would need to sit at my computer and browse through hundreds of photos on screen, then print out the best ones for a final cut," Sanders says. "Instead, as soon as we returned to the hotel after the journey, Grenville and I sat down and used the PictureMate to print out a large selection of shots taken by each of the media representatives.

"Actually, the speed of printing was so high that by the time we had had a chance to look over one photo, the printer had already finished printing the next.

"Essentially, I was able to work out the entire exhibition before I even returned to the office."

In commenting on the ruggedness of the PictureMate 250, Sanders says: "I'd have to say it was just awesome. No one was gentle with the printer; and it just sat on the back seat printing out photo after photo while we were driving along.

"Definitely, when we do our next Red Centre trip for media representatives, I'll be pushing to take along a PictureMate 250."



Ultimately, the images deemed to best portray the rugged beauty of the Northern Territory were printed on an Epson Stylus Pro 9800 large format printer and displayed at The Red Centre Photographic Journey exhibition.

Sanders comments: "There's no doubt at all that in choosing the Stylus Pro 9800 to print the exhibition's photos, we chose a printer that did absolute justice to the rich and vibrant colours that are the Northern Territory. And the fact that Epson printers were the ideal solution at every step of the way wasn't lost on anyone."