



# ANZAC GHAN

STORY + PHOTOS MARK MULLER

DURING World War II, *The Ghan* transported almost 200,000 troops from Adelaide to Alice Springs, where the line then terminated. Most were then trucked to Larrimah, where they were put on another train to Adelaide River and then back onto trucks to Darwin. To commemorate its connection to this war service, Great Southern Rail – the company that operates *The Ghan* – now runs a special Anzac Tribute train over the Anzac weekend.

In 2013 some 250 people, many of them veterans, undertook the journey. During the four-day trip from Darwin, passengers visited the Adelaide River War Cemetery, had dinner in Katherine Gorge, attended the dawn service in Katherine, explored Alice Springs and also experienced the Pichi Richi steam train – an original troop carrier – on a side-trip through the Flinders Ranges from Port Augusta to Quorn before rejoining *The Ghan* and embarking on the final leg to Adelaide.

In all, three nights are spent on *The Ghan* as it crosses the continent. Entertainers are on board, and historians give talks

about the part the train played during the war, and about Australia's wider role in the conflict, with a particular focus on the communities through which the train passes.

For WWII veterans Ray Hart and Lysle Roberts, it is an enjoyable journey, leavened by the sadness of remembrance, and the solemnity of the dawn service itself.

Ray was a wireless telegraphist with the 110 Mobile Fighter Control Unit in Darwin. "It was our job to communicate with the pilots – to let them know where they had to go," Ray says.

Lysle, who flew Spitfires out of Darwin for 457 Squadron, remembers his first journey on *The Ghan* in the war as being an entirely different experience. He says conditions were "primitive". "But you didn't worry about that then – we were young and it was an adventure," he says.

The 2014 Ghan Anzac Tribute departs Darwin on Wednesday, April 23. For more information, see [www.greatsouthernrail.com.au](http://www.greatsouthernrail.com.au) or phone 1800 703 357.



1. WWII medals (l-r) 1939–45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal and the War Medal 1939–45 pinned to a blazer at the Anzac Day breakfast in Katherine.
2. Veterans Ray Hart OAM and Lysle Roberts at the Adelaide River War Cemetery.
3. The Ghan readies for departure from Darwin.
4. The special service from Darwin to Adelaide over the Anzac long weekend commemorates Australia's military service, and the fact that The Ghan operated as a troop train during WWII.



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1. Great Southern Rail's Kate Sleep serves lunch in the dining car.  
2. Katherine mayor Fay Miller lays a wreath during the 2013 dawn service at the Katherine War Memorial.



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3. The Ghan pulls up beside the Afghan memorial at Alice Springs.  
4. The gates to the Adelaide River War Cemetery.  
5. Lysle Roberts flew Spitfires out of Darwin as an officer of 457 Squadron during WWII.  
6. Warrant Officer Steve Holland prepares to guide veterans and service personnel of RAAF Base Tindall on the Anzac Day march in Katherine.  
7. The lapel badge of the Spitfire Association.  
8. Katherine railway siding.  
9. James Blundell entertains travellers at Katherine Gorge on the night before Anzac Day.  
10. Jawoyn dancers welcome people to Nitmiluk National Park.

# PHOTO ESSAY

1. During the stopover in Katherine, passengers travel up Katherine Gorge to view spectacular rock-art sites.
2. The Pichi Richi Railway curls up into the southern Flinders Ranges.
3. Dierdre Owen OAM and her husband Frank Owen OAM were guests on the 2013 Anzac Ghan. Frank is a veteran of the Vietnam War and a board member of the South Australian RSL state executive.
4. Marcus Williams of Pyndan Camel Treks with some of his camels outside Alice Springs.
5. Flight Sergeant Melinda Skinner (front right) and her colleagues from RAAF Base Tindall at the Katherine Anzac Service.
6. Katherine locals (left to right) Chris Moora, Marilyn Gordon, Fraser Peters, Toby Johnson, Thomasina Gordon and Alison Watson watch the Anzac march.



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