

compass

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WHERE ARE YOU?

DIRTY TRICK

The red dust flies as I shake the sieve, sorting the earth and throwing away chunks of sandstone. What I'm searching for is a glimmer of colour. I'm noodling for opals in Coober Pedy, South Australia. It's the local term for an activity that's just like panning for gold—only dustier. Opal was discovered here in 1915, and there are now about 250,000 opal-mine shafts around the town. Visitors can sift through mullock

heaps, or piles of discarded rock, in public noodling areas. After half an hour of sifting, my eye locks on a rock about the size of my fingerprint. I lick the stone to remove the dust and expose a milky opal with flashes of vibrant blue trapped inside. If you're lucky enough to find an opal while noodling, it's yours to keep. It's thirsty work, though, so I take mine and repair to one of Coober Pedy's underground pubs for a cold beer. —Amanda Lee

NOODLE
 THEN VISIT
 THE UMOONA
 OPAL MINE



COOBER
 PEDY
 AUSTRALIA

29.0139° S
 134.7533° E
 LOCATION

1,800
 AROUND
 POPULATION

DID YOU KNOW?
 To escape the area's intense heat, Coober Pedy Opal Fields Golf Club members play the 18-hole grass-less course at night using glowing balls.