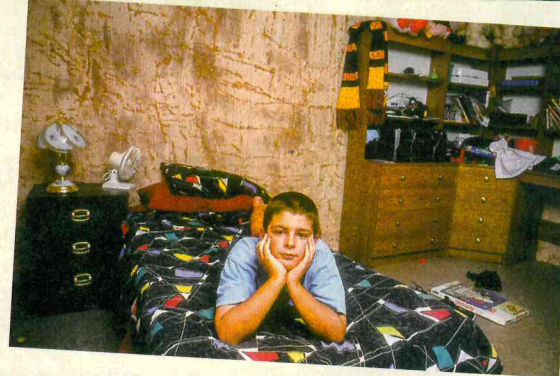


Where  
in the  
World?



The town of Coober Pedy doesn't look like much from above ground. But people like James (above) live beneath the surface!

# THE HIDDEN TOWN

The world's most valuable gems are buried in Coober Pedy, Australia. But that's not all you'll find underground there. BY TOD OLSON

**T**here is hidden treasure in the town of Coober Pedy, Australia. Glowing gems called opals lie buried in the ground. The most beautiful opals glitter like magic stones.

And these stones are incredibly valuable. If you find a perfect opal, it could be worth \$1 million.

Thousands of people have come to Coober Pedy hoping to get rich. Today, the town produces 70 percent of the world's opals. More than 3,500 people live there.

But if you visit Coober Pedy, it might seem strangely quiet. Walk around and you'll

notice some unusual things.

Chimneys poke out of the ground. Doorways have been carved into hillsides. Signs tell you to watch out for "unmarked holes."

By now you may have figured out the mystery. Opals aren't the only things buried in Coober Pedy. Half the town lives underground.

## Staying Cool

Why would anyone want to live where the sun doesn't shine? The answer is simple: to stay cool.

Coober Pedy sits on the edge of a desert. Temperatures

soar to 120 degrees in the summer—and there isn't much shade. You can walk for miles without seeing a tree.

The early miners found a clever way to beat the heat. They worked underground digging for opals. They knew the temperature in the mines never changed. It was always a comfortable 75 degrees.

To get cool, the miners used their mining tools to dig their homes into the ground.

Today, more than 1,500 people live in dugouts beneath Coober

