

DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES

MEDIA KIT



DISCOVER
ABORIGINAL
EXPERIENCES

Signature 
EXPERIENCES OF AUSTRALIA



**IN THE SPIRIT OF
RECONCILIATION, TOURISM
AUSTRALIA ACKNOWLEDGES
THE TRADITIONAL
CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY
THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA
AND THEIR CONNECTIONS
TO LAND, SEA AND
COMMUNITY.
WE PAY OUR RESPECTS
TO THEIR ELDERS
PAST AND PRESENT,
AND EXTEND THAT RESPECT
TO ALL ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
PEOPLES TODAY.**







Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory

A WELCOME TO AUSTRALIA FROM THE NATION'S FIRST PEOPLES

A trip to Australia isn't just a visit to the land down under: it's the modern home of ancient peoples – the oldest living cultures on Earth, in fact. Multifaceted and imbued with timeless wisdom, Australia's Aboriginal peoples are warm, welcoming and extremely generous of spirit; getting to know their approach to life may well be one of the richest travel experiences available.

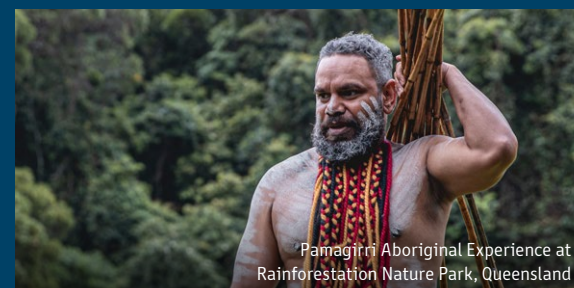
Over the following pages, you'll read of a carefully curated selection of Australia's signature Aboriginal travel offerings: the Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective. Recognised not just by stringent official selection process but by peers, competitors

and the industry at large, each member of this collection is considered a world-class leader in Aboriginal tourism, representing local Aboriginal cultures with integrity and authenticity – a responsibility indeed.

Importantly, each of these experiences also involves the use of Aboriginal guides. For whom better to show you around than a Traditional Custodian of the land? Aboriginal guides don't just afford a unique means of bringing Australia's landscapes to life. As the owners of the stories they share with you, they offer a means of connecting with Australian places and cultures quite unlike anything else you'll find.



SEIT - Patji, Northern Territory



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland



SeaLink NT - Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory

From adventure seekers and cultural enthusiasts to foodies and nature lovers, there really is something for everyone in this collective, with more than 200 experiences on offer. No matter where you choose to go, you'll be sure to find a meaningful, memorable experience.

The Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective is part of Tourism Australia's Signature Experiences of Australia program that promotes outstanding tourism experiences within a variety of special categories.

We look forward to welcoming you.

For further information

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ACTIVE	Aboriginal Adventure Tourism Is Taking Off Big Time	Modern Sport Meets Ancient Culture: Experience The Aboriginal Sporting Spirit	Sand Dune Adventures – Andrew Smith
	Explore Australia's National Parks With Their Traditional Owners		Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours – Clark Webb
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	Gaining A Different Perspective Of The Outback		wukalina Walk – Carleeta Thomas
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	Beyond Rock Art: The Diversity Of Aboriginal Cultural Sites	The Secrets Behind Australia's Aboriginal Dot Painting	Sealink NT – Kevin Baxter -Pilakui
	Discover The Rich History And Meanings Behind Aboriginal Rock Art	Why Everyone Should Visit Australia's Remote Art Centres	Injalak Arts Centre (Venture North) – Joey Nganjmirra
	Discover The World's Oldest Cultures While You Learn A New Skill	Indigenous Seafood Experiences: Sample The Sea's Bounty In A New Way	Waringarri Aboriginal Arts – Cathy Ward
COASTAL & AQUATIC	Cruise Into Aboriginal Cultures	Island Dreaming: Learn The Unique Stories Behind Australia's Islands	Borraboron Coast To Creek Tours – Terry Hunter
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	Aboriginal Cultural Traditions: Understanding Men's Business And Women's Business	One Continent, Hundreds Of Nations: Aboriginal Australia's Diverse Cultural Identities	Seit Patji – Sammy Wilson
	Australia's Aboriginal Languages Are In Need Of Preservation	Step Into Nature's Pharmacy On An Aboriginal Tour	Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours – Clark Webb
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	Beyond Rock Art: The Diversity Of Aboriginal Cultural Sites	The Special Significance Of An Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony	
	Cultural Comfort: Ancient Wisdom For The Current Era	Understanding Aboriginal Etiquette	
	Cultural Consideration: What's The Protocol For Taking Photos At Sacred Aboriginal Sites?	What Aboriginal Totem Systems Can Teach Us About Conservation	
	Discover The World's Oldest Cultures While You Learn A New Skill	Why Blak? The Aboriginal Significance Of The Spelling	
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	Explore Australia's National Parks With Their Traditional Owners	Step Into Nature's Pharmacy On An Aboriginal Tour	Seit Patji – Sammy Wilson
	Exploring UNESCO World Heritage Sites with an Aboriginal guide	The Answer To Managing Australia's Bushfire Risk Could Lie In Traditional Aboriginal Practices	Walkabout Cultural Adventures – Juan Walker
	Floral Focus: How Australian Botanic Gardens Are Helping Preserve Culture	Uluru's Best-Kept Secret: Unlocking Kata Tjuta's Indigenous Heritage	Yura Tours – Elisha Kissick
FAMILY	5 Aboriginal Experiences Perfect For Kids	From Our Family To Yours: Fun Aboriginal Travel Experiences That Everyone Will Love	Sand Dune Adventures – Andrew Smith
	5 Globally Sought-After Travel Experiences You Didn't Know You Could Have In Australia	How To Add A Little Indigenous Flavour To Your Australian Holiday	Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia – Ayers Rock Resort – Jayden Weetra
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	5 Globally Sought-After Travel Experiences You Didn't Know You Could Have In Australia	How To Experience Aboriginal Cultures When Staying At A Luxury Lodge Of Australia	
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	Floral Focus: How Australian Botanic Gardens Are Helping Preserve Culture	Within Easy Reach: Aboriginal Experiences Are More Accessible Than You Think	Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience – Shona Davidson
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			In Culture Tours – Steven Jacobs
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THE DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES COLLECTIVE



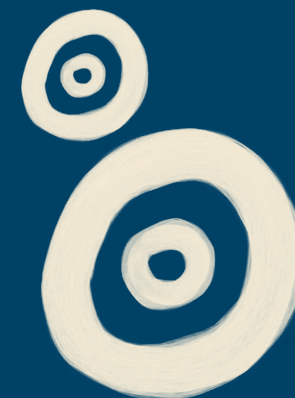
Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia -
Ayers Rock Resort, Northern Territory



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural
Experience & Tours, Northern Territory



Venture North, Northern Territory



A CULTURAL EXCHANGE: THE GROWTH OF ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN TOURISM

Australia is home to the oldest continuous civilisation on the planet. And these ancient cultures have found a voice through a leading government initiative that's producing meaningful results, writes journalist Krysia Bonkowski.

Nowhere in the world can claim a cultural legacy quite like Aboriginal Australia. For at least 65,000 years, its peoples – with hundreds of distinct clans, and as many languages and dialects – have walked the continent, making Aboriginal cultures the oldest continuous living cultures on the planet.

But – in this modern age – how does an ancient culture preserve, champion and celebrate its voice?

As travellers seek out greater authenticity and cultural engagement, interest in Indigenous tourism continues to grow. For the world's Indigenous communities, tourism can be a powerful driver for positive change and the sustainability of cultures.

In Australia, the demand for Indigenous tourism experiences by International Visitors continues to grow. According to research by Tourism Research Australia, the almost 1.1 million international trips incorporating First Nations activities in 2023–24 is the highest number recorded. This demand is 14 per cent higher in FY24, compared to FY19, and 56 per cent higher than FY23 alone. Extraordinary Aboriginal-owned and -operated experiences are clearly in demand.

Tourism Australia recognised the opportunity to connect with the oldest living cultures on Earth through our many incredible Aboriginal guides across the country, offering visitors an authentic connection with Australia as a place, through the stories of its people and their unique connection to the land.

That's why Tourism Australia launched the Discover Aboriginal Experiences (DAE) collective in 2018, building on its existing work in promoting Aboriginal tourism but also acknowledging that with our rich cultural heritage of our Aboriginal peoples, it is something that truly sets our country apart from other destinations in the world.

"Being able to share these Aboriginal experiences with visitors when they are in Australia offers the kind of life-changing, immersive moments which create memories to last for a lifetime. Delivering these memorable moments for visitors when they are here, while also supporting the continuation of our rich Aboriginal heritage, is incredibly important to our organisation," explains Tourism Australia's Managing Director, Phillipa Harrison.

Designed to support the local Aboriginal tourism industry and ensure cultural preservation, the [Discover Aboriginal Experiences](#) program has flourished into a compelling case study of Indigenous cultural empowerment, and the power of responsible tourism.



Harrison comments, “One of the truly beautiful things about tourism is that it can be an incredibly powerful force in building and supporting new creative, cultural, economic and social opportunities – particularly for Aboriginal communities – so we’re very excited about the Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective in this regard.”

The program has been designed to support smaller and owner-operated tourism businesses – especially in remote areas where the barriers of operation can be extremely high. International marketing can be challenging, costly and time consuming for individual operators; however, via Discover Aboriginal Experiences, businesses can continue to deliver their exceptional experiences on Country whilst marketing activity is being undertaken at the same time through their membership of the collective, explains Nicole Mitchell at Tourism Australia.

Mitchell, who oversees the initiative, works directly with the program’s group of members (currently numbering 54) as liaison between their operations domestically, and the wider tourism industry internationally. “The Discover Aboriginal Experiences program acts as an international umbrella brand, competing externally on the world stage as a marketing body and industry representative while internally acting as a champion of great business and support,” she explains.

A key point of difference for this initiative is its rigorous membership selection process. When Tourism Australia formed the collective in early 2018, it was in close consultation with state and territory tourism organisations, each briefed to identify tourism businesses that would be able to deliver an



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures,
Western Australia

export ready product, befitting the title of a ‘[Signature Experience](#)’ (a larger government program, based on an identified collection of outstanding Australian tourism experiences).

“We wanted to showcase Australia’s premium Aboriginal tourism experiences,” Mitchell says. “But by premium I don’t necessarily mean the most luxurious. Rather, we were looking for experiences that really hit the mark in terms of delivering cultural authenticity, offering

diversity of high-quality experiences, and meeting the expectations and needs of the international travel trade.”

The selection process also involved a rigorous examination of cultural representation, including an insistence that the stories of Aboriginal Australia are told – as they should be – by Aboriginal peoples. “Whatever form your encounter takes – whether that’s a walking tour through the heart of Australia’s urban hubs, or



a wildlife safari in the distant reaches of the outback – you walk away with a more authentic connection to Aboriginal Australia. Every place in Australia has a different story and it’s about learning those stories so that you understand a bit more.”

“It’s about the person who owns the story, telling the story.”

Helping members reach that all-important international market, Discover Aboriginal Experiences provides invaluable cost-free support in marketing, communications and training – providing everything from industry-standard photographic assets to social media strategy. By creating a single point of contact for a suite of world-class products, Tourism Australia is also able to advocate for members through its channels and at major trade shows and events.

“While the Aboriginal businesses involved in the program existed before joining Discover Aboriginal Experiences, bringing them together as a suite of extraordinary cultural experiences to market to international visitors via the new membership has delivered greater reach and great marketing exposure globally for the businesses involved,” says Phillipa Harrison. “In many ways we are seen as an extension of their sales force and promotional activities.”

The key aspects of DAE such as the authenticity of the experiences, partnering with local Indigenous businesses and the resulting win / win outcomes, attracted Insight Australia Travel’s Managing Director, Birgit Bourne. “Authentic, Indigenous, cultural experiences are highly sought-after and valued by many travellers who wish to travel with purpose and get to know the ‘real’ Australia,” says Bourne.



Kakadu Cultural Tours, Northern Territory

Bourne has been arranging Indigenous cultural experiences for international tourists for over 20 years and now also offers authentic, respectful Indigenous immersions under the Australian Geographic Travel brand as well. “Working with DAE is not only convenient with so many experiences easily accessible, but the range of product is also highly inspiring. DAE offers us amazing insight into the enormous legacy of Aboriginal cultures – their complexity and spiritual depth – which we then proudly share with our travellers.”

Liam Maher, manager of [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#), described once feeling like a “minnow” in the ocean of the international tourism industry. With Discover Aboriginal Experiences in his corner, he’s tapped markets he believes they were years from being able to reach, if ever. “They allow you to punch above your weight,” he says. This has translated directly into sales for the business – which offers immersion in the wilds of Kakadu National Park through its river cruises, 4WD adventures, cultural excursions and wilderness lodgings – with a dramatic uptick in direct and trade bookings.

It’s a benefit felt keenly by Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker, whose Queensland-based business, [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#), started as a one-man venture. “Being a small business, we don’t have the personnel and funds to attend events and sales trips,” Walker says.

“To be in this collection has helped to maintain and strengthen our relationship and awareness in the international travel market.”

When the collective was surveyed in 2022, asked if being part of the Discover Aboriginal Experiences was valuable, every member responded 100 per cent in the affirmative, and this 100 per cent score has been achieved every year since the inception of the collective in 2018. Many members also speak about a close camaraderie within the collective, with operators quick to recommend each other to the many visitors inspired to seek out further experiences. “Personally, it makes me feel really proud to think that I’m part of that group,” says Walker. “To be considered a leader in Aboriginal tourism in Australia.”

The homogenisation of Indigenous cultures is one of the greatest barriers to cultural exchange with Indigenous people worldwide – another challenge the program sought to redress. Recognising the vast diversity of Aboriginal Australia, Discover Aboriginal Experiences members are as varied as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures they represent.

In Sydney / Warrane, Auntie Margret Campbell’s tours around The Rocks region of the harbour use the power of storytelling to explore colonisation through Indigenous eyes. “Storytelling is not judgmental – it just reveals how things have changed and how they once were,” says Campbell, who founded company [Dreamtime Southern X](#). “I like to tell guests that there are no right or wrong questions when we are chatting. The only way to move forward is to ensure that everything is transparent and that we can all share our ideas and backgrounds openly.”

In Tropical North Queensland, [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) is helping visitors see the world-famous Great Barrier Reef through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eyes for the first time. Launched in 2018 in consultation with Gimuy Walubara Yidinji, Gunggandji, Mandingalbay and Yirrganydji Elders, the popular tours are crewed by First Nations cultural guides.

“Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel is the only Indigenous-led sea country tour on the Great Barrier Reef,” says CEO and Executive Director, John O’Sullivan. “Our Indigenous Guides are extremely proud of their culture and enjoy sharing their stories, which have been handed down through generations, to provide our guests with a deeper cultural understanding of the diverse Sea Country ecosystem.”

Juan Walker shares his deep connection to the land around the meeting of the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef on Walkabout Cultural Tours. For Walker, his people do not own the land: “we belong to



Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel, Queensland



Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland

it”. By creating a meaningful connection to Country for his guests, he says, he hopes to build respect – not just for the land, but for each other. “I think it’s really important that more people learn about the land and learn about the environment and gain a bit of respect for it. Because if we connect to it, we can respect it, and if we respect it, we can start to learn and respect each other a lot more.”

Tourism is one of the largest employers in Australia, especially in regional and remote Australia. As Aboriginal tourism blossoms, the ripple can be felt across the industry. Mitchell describes Discover Aboriginal Experience as having a ‘halo effect’. “Whilst Discover Aboriginal Experiences has 54 businesses with over 200 experiences, our members also work with another 2,600 businesses,” she says, with fellow tour operators, National Parks, transport companies, artists and countless others seeing the benefit. “So, the effect of Discover Aboriginal Experiences is that it not only supports the members but the tourism industry at large,” Mitchell says. Maher of Kakadu Cultural Tours testifies to this fact – as a result of the boost to the business he attributes directly to the program, they have been able to benefit industry partners and provide ongoing contract work for smaller local Aboriginal operators.

The success of Discover Aboriginal Experiences members flows profits back into Indigenous communities and improves the livelihoods of Aboriginal peoples through training and career advancement.



At [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#), most employees are Aboriginal. The team's rangers undertake a Certificate III in Conservation Land Management before guiding guests, and are increasingly looking for opportunities to receive further specialized training.

It's a similar story aboard [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#), where First Nations cultural guides have been supported to become marine biologists, engineers and skippers of the vessel itself.

Crucially, with more long-term careers created in and through Aboriginal tourism, meaningful employment opportunities are created on Country. Since the epoch-changing 1992 Mabo decision, Traditional Owners have gained increasing autonomy over the management

and care of ancestral lands. For many of these communities, tourism can present significant economic opportunity while letting native title owners share the story of their land.

It's a step towards an ideal future for Aboriginal business owners such as Walker, of Walkabout Cultural Tours. "I would love to see all Indigenous tourism products around the country, owned and operated by the people of that land," he says. "It is a great way for people to be on Country, making a living while at the same time looking after and preserving Country and culture."

This is already in action at Kakadu Cultural Tours, where the 30-plus employees, most from Country, are encouraged to excel across all areas of the business. In the same way Kakadu Cultural Tours is able to provide opportunities

for its staff, says Maher, so too does Discover Aboriginal Experiences for the business. "That's what Nicole's mob do –they provide doors of opportunity; they open them for you."

By empowering Aboriginal peoples to showcase the breadth and diversity of their culture, Discover Aboriginal Experiences has added another rich strand to Australia's unparalleled tourism offering and become a case study in the transformative power of authentic Indigenous tourism. Each member of the Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective has their own story to tell, but together they create the tapestry that is Aboriginal Australia.

DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES CONTACT DETAILS:

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DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES MEMBERS

NEW SOUTH WALES

- 1 Australian Museum
- 2 Bundy Cultural Tours
- 3 Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience
- 4 Dreamtime Southern X
- 5 Firescreek Botanical Winery Aboriginal Experiences
- 6 Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness
- 7 The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney
- 8 Sand Dune Adventures
- 9 Wajaana Vaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours

NORTHERN TERRITORY

- 10 Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris
- 11 Kakadu Cultural Tours
- 12 Kakadu Tourism
- 13 Karkke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours
- 14 Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris
- 15 Nitmiluk Tours
- 16 SeaLink NT - Tiwi Islands
- 17 SEIT - Patji
- 18 Tiwi Tours
- 19 Venture North Safaris
- 20 Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia - Ayers Rock Resort

QUEENSLAND

- 21 Down Under Tours - Daintree Dreaming
- 22 Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel
- 23 Flames of the Forest
- 24 Janbal Gallery
- 25 Jarramali Rock Art Tours
- 26 Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre
- 27 Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours
- 28 Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park
- 29 Saltwater Eco Tours
- 30 SEIT - Daintree Rainforest
- 31 Taribelang Bunda Cultural Tours
- 32 Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia - Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre
- 33 Walkabout Cultural Adventures
- 34 Yura Tours

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- 35 Southern Cultural Immersion
- 36 Wilpena Pound Resort

TASMANIA

- 37 wukalina Walk

VICTORIA

- 38 Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism
- 39 Koorie Heritage Trust
- 40 Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne
- 41 Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- 42 Borrgoron Coast to Creek Tours
- 43 Dale Tilbrook Experiences
- 44 El Questro - Injiid Marlabu Calls Us
- 45 In Culture Tours
- 46 Kimberley Cultural Adventures
- 47 Kingfisher Tours
- 48 Koomal Dreaming
- 49 Mabu Buru Tours
- 50 Narlijia Experiences Broome
- 51 Ngurrangga Tours
- 52 Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb
- 53 Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours
- 54 Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures

Information current as at February 2025
Note: Map location references are an indication only



DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES THEMATIC JOURNEYS

28 + DAE MEDIA KIT

29 + DAE MEDIA KIT

FINDING YOUR ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE... WHAT TO EXPECT – THEMATIC JOURNEYS

From exploring labyrinths of ancient and contemporary rock art, to adventurous expeditions in mesmerising natural wilderness, a rich array of experiences is on offer in the Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective. While these themes preview the range of activities available, it is worth noting that all operators are able to cater to specific guest requirements, including tailor-made experiences and private tours.



Yura Tours, Queensland



Kakadu Tourism, Northern Territory



Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill, Victoria

NATURE AND WILDLIFE

View Australia's distinctive landscapes through different eyes, helping you gain a deeper appreciation of the natural environment and the nation's unique wildlife – and enjoy great fishing!

Near the Great Ocean Road in Victoria, you can take an Aboriginal-guided tour with Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill to discover a nature reserve inside a dormant volcano where kangaroos, wallabies, emus, koalas and echidnas roam. Alternatively, explore fertile wetlands in the heart of Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory with Kakadu Cultural Tours to see crocodiles and colourful birdlife. In New South Wales, Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler brings the magnificent landscapes of the Riverina region to life with Bundy Cultural Tours. Spot kangaroos and other native wildlife as you explore sites of cultural significance. And in Tropical North Queensland, the well-camouflaged critters of the lush Daintree Rainforest are best spotted with the help of Indigenous guides. On a Dreamtime Walk run by the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, you might admire a beautiful Boyd's forest dragon or cassowary. On North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah, dolphins and kangaroos can be spotted year-round – and whales during migration (May through November).



Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, New South Wales



Saltwater Eco Tours, Queensland



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia



wukalina Walk, Tasmania

ACTIVE ADVENTURES

A wide selection of exhilarating experiences await in Australia's beautiful landscapes, from paddling, quad-biking and hiking to 4WD adventures and a bridge climb with a difference.

Perhaps you'd care to enjoy an inspiring four-day, three-night Aboriginal-guided wukalina Walk along the white-sand beaches of Iarapuna (Bay of Fires) and wukalina (Mount William) in north-eastern Tasmania / lutruwita, staying in huts inspired by the traditional homes of the palawa people, Tasmania / lutruwita's Traditional Custodians. Or maybe you'll take a tailor-made safari with Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris to explore some of the Northern Territory's towering red escarpments, dramatic waterfalls and expansive wetlands, as well as discover remarkable rock art. In New South Wales, explore Aboriginal connections to the Coffs Coast on a thrilling cultural paddle along culturally significant waterways with Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, or scale Sydney Harbour Bridge in the company of a First Nations storyteller on the Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience, which reveals glimpses of sacred sites and fascinating insights into the Aboriginal significance of the city.

CULINARY EXPERIENCES

Guided bush-tucker walks reveal the surprising diversity of the Australian landscape, while outback dining infused with the unique flavours of the landscape offers a deliciously immersive experience.

Join immersive explorations with Walkabout Cultural Adventures in Tropical North Queensland, where a Kuku Yalanji guide – whose ancestors have lived here for tens of thousands of years – will take you on a deeply personal tour. Or join Wadandi man, Josh Whiteland, from Koomal Dreaming on one of his tours in Western Australia's Margaret River region and forage for bush-tucker such as saltbush and bush celery along the Cape to Cape walking track. On the New South Wales Central Coast, take an alternative winery tour with Elder Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan from Firescreek Botanical Winery Aboriginal Experiences. Taste native flora and learn about local Aboriginal culture before sampling the winery's distinctive beverages. Or try your luck catching one of the Northern Territory's famed barramundi on a fishing tour with Kakadu Tourism. You'll never have a seafood lunch as amazing as the one you forage for yourself on the Dampier Peninsula of Western Australia on a tour with Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb.

COASTAL AND AQUATIC

Aboriginal cultures are deeply connected with Australia's spectacular coastal regions. Sail, fish, search for mud crabs, snorkel, kayak and swim in beautiful beaches and aquamarine waterways.

Discover the Creation story of the Great Barrier Reef with Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel's First Nations cultural guides. Also departing from Cairns / Gimuy in Tropical North Queensland, Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours offers a scenic cruise to Mandingalbay Yidinji Country, where you will experience local traditions. Further south, forge new connections with Queensland's Sunshine Coast as you cruise the serene Mooloolah River with Saltwater Eco Tours. At Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre, you'll take a deep dive into the Gold Coast – through Aboriginal eyes. Go kayaking with Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures to explore Shark Bay in Western Australia. Or hop on a quad-bike with Sand Dune Adventures in Port Stephens, New South Wales, and dig for fresh water, discover Aboriginal midden shell sites, and ride the Worimi sand dunes. And in Victoria, you can visit Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism, a World Heritage-listed site that contains one of the world's most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems.

EXCLUSIVE ACCOMMODATION

When you want full immersion in Australia's remarkable and remote landscapes, unique Aboriginal-owned accommodations – including wilderness retreats, safari tents and architecturally designed huts – await.

In the heart of the traditional homeland of the Adnyamathanha (Yura) people in the spectacular Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park in South Australia, Wilpena Pound Resort is set inside an extraordinary 800-million-year-old natural amphitheatre and offers 'glamping' safari tents as well as hotel rooms and camping. Then there's Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris' remote wilderness lodge nestled against the majestic Arnhem Land escarpment in the Northern Territory's Top End – the perfect place to unplug and reconnect with nature while exploring the Aboriginal cultural landscape surrounding the ecolodge. And on the transformative Aboriginal-guided wukalina Walk in Tasmania / lutruwita, you'll spend the first two nights in architect-designed huts inspired by the half-dome shelters traditionally used by palawa people, the state's Traditional Custodians.



SeaLink NT – Tiwi Islands, NT



Koorie Heritage Trust, Victoria



Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours, Northern Territory

ART AND MUSEUM EXPERIENCES

Explore Australia's Aboriginal art galleries and museums, visit ancient rock-art sites, or take part in artist-led workshops in contemporary art practice to better understand Indigenous culture.

Discover the stories behind dot paintings at Janbal Gallery in Cairns, and then create your own work of art under the guidance of a renowned creative. Visit some of the finest rock-art galleries in the world with Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris in the Northern Territory, then learn the distinctive screen-printing techniques of Tiwi Islands artisans on SeaLink NT's Tiwi by Design tour. Go off-the-beaten-track with Jarramali Rock Art Tours from Laura in Queensland, exploring jaw-dropping Quinkan art galleries, which UNESCO recognises as one of the 10 most significant rock-art sites in the world. Alternatively, take an interactive tour of Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, a creative hub in Western Australia's Kimberley region where local artisans also guide you into the epic landscapes that inspire works. You can also explore one of the world's most significant First Nations collections at the Australian Museum in Sydney / Warrane and admire ever-changing First Nations art exhibitions at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne / Narrm.

URBAN CULTURE EXPERIENCES

Aboriginal cultures thrive in Australia's urban centres, with walking tours as well as museums, galleries and cultural centres offering easily accessible ways to connect with Indigenous cultures.

Enjoy an Aboriginal Heritage Walk in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, dive into native flora and fauna exploring the Botanic Garden in Adelaide with Southern Cultural Immersion, wander Kings Park in Perth with In Culture Tours, or visit the fascinating First Nations collection at the Australian Museum in Sydney / Warrane. You can also embark on a coastal journey with Dreamtime Southern X, where the spiritual significance of Sydney's harbour is revealed on an intimate walking tour. Or ascend the Sydney Harbour Bridge accompanied by a First Nations storyteller on the Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience. On the Gold Coast, the Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre offers a different perspective of Queensland's glitziest city. Yawuru man Bart Pigram offers a walking tour of historic Broome's mangroves, highlighting the impact this unique ecosystem had on the history; you can also see Broome / Rubibi via a Kimberley Cultural Adventures' tour around the city, with a side of bush tucker and a didgeridoo performance.

IMMERSIVE JOURNEYS

Go off-the-beaten-track and you'll learn that there is not one, but many Aboriginal cultures, each with its own language, belief system and powerful connection to place. On an immersive journey, you'll gain both insight into the world's oldest living cultures and an understanding of Aboriginal spirituality and connection to Country.

Make a deep connection with the Yuin people of the New South Wales South Coast through Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, which shares sacred ceremonies, ancient stories and traditional dancing. Wander to the heart of Purnululu National Park with Kingfisher Tours, where the Bungle Bungle Range is as imposing as it is inspiring. Or join a multi-day 4WD adventure in the Northern Territory with Venture North Safaris. On your journey from Darwin / Garramilla to the Cobourg Peninsula, one of Australia's wildest corners, you'll visit one of Arnhem Land's most significant rock art sites with an Aboriginal guide. It's impossible not to feel moved by the spirituality of this sacred place as you learn about how this spectacular landscape has sustained the Aboriginal communities of the Gunbalanya region for millennia. You can also join Jarramali Rock Art Tours for multi-day visits to Quinkan rock art sites, where you can bed down at an exclusive camp site and sleep under a blanket of stars.

BUSH & OUTBACK

The Australian outback is a wild, ancient place. With an Aboriginal guide, explore working cattle stations, outback gorges, ancient rock-art galleries and waterholes, and learn about the bounties a seemingly barren desert can provide.

After you've explored the famous sites at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, go deep into the heart of the Red Centre with SEIT - Patji and join the traditional Uluru family in their homelands. On a Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours experience in the Northern Territory's Watarrka National Park, you can immerse yourself in the Luritja and Pertame language and culture. Discover native foods such as bush plum and honey ants, learn more about dot painting and see how mulga wood can be transformed into weapons and artefacts during this hands-on one-hour experience. You can also explore the far reaches of Western Australia's breathtaking Kimberley region with Kingfisher Tours, which whisks guests to remote attractions – including World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park and its famous Bungle Bungle Range – by plane, with ground tours led by Aboriginal guides.





Wilpena Pound, South Australia

MEET THE OLDEST LIVING CULTURES ON EARTH



Australia is often thought of as a young country. After all, it was colonised by the British as recently as 1788. But consider this: Aboriginal cultures are older than Roman ruins. They predate Egypt's pyramids and existed long before Stonehenge. Estimated to stretch back at least 65,000 years, they are the oldest continuous living cultures in the world.

Yet you won't find grand monuments dotted around Australia's vast outback. What you'll discover is a rich tapestry of culture that has always lived softly. Deeply connected to nature, its historical footprint exists through rock paintings that date back tens of thousands of years; through dancing grounds used for generations, and through stories laden with acute wisdom, which continue to be told today.

While the term "Aboriginal" is used as a collective for the civilisation, at the time of colonisation there were more than 300 different Aboriginal "Nations" within Australia, with at least as many languages – most of which are now highly endangered.

The skill and sophistication of these societies is still being recognised. The invention of baking, for example, is often attributed to the Egyptians, but there's evidence of seed grinding by Aboriginal peoples some 65,000 years ago. Earlier still, stone-wall fish traps remain in place as perhaps the oldest human-made structures on Earth, as do ancient aquaculture systems as evidenced on tour with Budi Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism in Victoria. Meanwhile, Aboriginal peoples were developing complex farming practices about 6,000 years ago and became masters of leveraging fire for land management.

They are also regarded as the world's first astronomers, using the stars to predict seasonal change and food sources. One way to garner insight into the complexity of Aboriginal cultures is to join a personalised tour of the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne / Narm, which has been renovated and expanded and features an extensive collection of cultural artefacts.

As they represent less than four per cent of Australia's current population, an everyday interaction with Australia's First Peoples is not a given for most visitors. Entering their world, sharing their culture and seeing the land through their eyes is a rare privilege. That is why the Discover Aboriginal Experiences (DAE) collection has been created: to enable you to learn from Koomal Dreaming's Josh Whiteland about the six seasons used to guide bush hunting and gathering; to experience a traditional Welcome to Country ceremony inside an 800-million-year-old natural amphitheatre at the Adnyamathanha peoples' Wilpena Pound Resort, and to understand connection to Country while walking in sight of skyscrapers in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

The initiative, part of Tourism Australia's Signature Experiences of Australia, highlights Aboriginal businesses that are owned by, or strongly connected to Aboriginal communities. In supporting these ventures, we contribute to the cultures' survival by supporting employment in their often-isolated traditional Lands, ensuring their vital roots, sacred laws and kinship ties remain unbroken.



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia



Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Victoria



Wilpena Pound, South Australia

ABORIGINAL ARCHAEOLOGY: DIGGING UP EVIDENCE OF THE WORLD'S OLDEST LIVING CULTURES

Sixty-five thousand years – that's the mind-boggling age of Aboriginal Australian cultures, a number based on the archaeological backdating of enduring sites. To put that into context on a world stage, Australia's First Peoples lived, thrived, traded and recorded their Dreamtime stories on rock faces tens of thousands of years before the great Pyramids of Giza were even thought of.

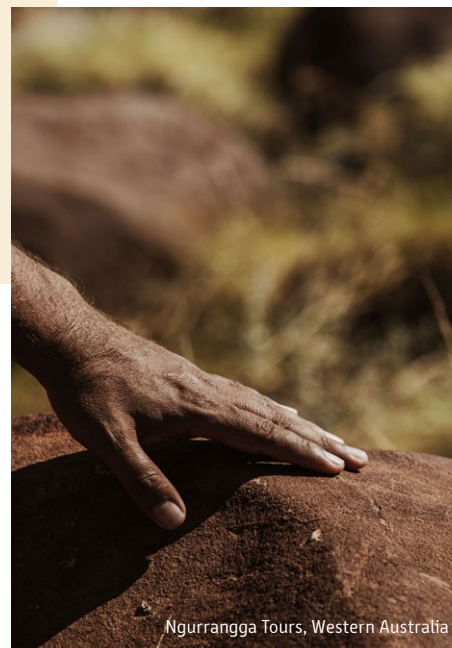
Aboriginal Australian cultures might be the oldest continuous cultures on the planet, but even with such a far-reaching history, a staggering range and breadth of sites, customs, stories and experiences remain alive and accessible today. Several among them showcasing archaeological evidence of Aboriginal Australia's astonishing timeline.



North of Adelaide / Tarntanya, in outback South Australia, rises Wilpena Pound – a natural ring of mountains (not dissimilar in appearance to a giant crater). Home to rugged mountain vistas and 500-million-year-old fossils (believed to be remnants of prehistoric sea life), Wilpena Pound also remains an enormously significant place to Adnyamathanha peoples, who have lived in the surrounding Flinders Ranges for tens of thousands of years. Learn how the other-worldly landscape came to be according to a Dreamtime Creation story on board one

of [Wilpena Pound Resort's](#) Aboriginal cultural tours. Lead by an Adnyamathanha guide, tours visit sacred sites around Wilpena, including 40,000-year-old rock paintings at Arkaroo Rock, and precious rock engravings estimated to be even older.

But it's in Australia's north-west corner, where terracotta earth meets turquoise seas on the Pilbara's Burrup Peninsula, where you'll find what is believed to be the highest concentration of rock engravings, and the earliest examples of art in the world. Best explored with Clinton Walker from [Ngurrangga Tours](#) – a descendant of the Pilbara's Traditional Owners – or one of his knowledgeable guides, glimpse an insight into their ancestral heritage as you explore an area housing up to a million Aboriginal rock carvings, known as petroglyphs, some dating back 40,000 years. While showing you some examples of these engravings, your guide will explain the figures, fauna and symbols they depict, and pass around examples of bush tucker used as traditional medicine along the way.



Ngurrangga Tours, Western Australia



Wilpena Pound Resort, South Australia



NEW LIFE FOR AN ANCIENT CULTURE: THE RISE OF ABORIGINAL TOURISM

SEIT - Daintree Rainforest,
Queensland

Aboriginal peoples have an undeniable talent for storytelling. Without a written language, the sharing of knowledge is tied to their verbal powers. Tales that unravel quietly, slowly and deliberately teach the audience the skill of listening; sit down with an Aboriginal person and you'll find yourself hanging on every word.

This master storytelling ability is one of the drivers behind accelerating demand for authentic Aboriginal experiences with Indigenous guides. Who better to introduce you to Australia's vast wilderness areas and peel back its pulsing urban centres than those who know 65,000 years' worth of the country's backstory?

That the world can still interact with members of these ancient cultures is an extraordinary privilege. Aboriginal society is based on a structure of sharing, and this giving nature is extended to those wanting to witness cultural ceremonies, visit select sacred sites and gain insights into the Aboriginal ways of life. Join SEIT - Daintree Rainforest's [Daintree Dreaming - Traditional Aboriginal Fishing Tour](#), where Kubirri-Warra brothers Linc and Brandon Walker splash you through their saltwater



Dreamtime Southern X,
New South Wales

homeland to spear crabs and search for bush tucker.

Or take a fascinating tour of the New South Wales Riverina region with [Bundiy Cultural Tours](#), where Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler will show you "scar trees" carved by his ancestors to craft canoes. Increasingly, travellers are taking advantage of these genuine windows into the world's oldest cultures.

In New South Wales, [Sand Dune Adventures'](#) creative marrying of quad-bike adventuring with Worimi history has struck a chord – the



Bundiy Cultural Tours,
New South Wales

growth it has recorded since joining the Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective has been exponential. Motivated by booming interest, more Aboriginal tourism businesses are opening every year. Not only do these businesses employ Aboriginal peoples and reinvest in their communities, they actively strengthen the connection to culture.

Crucially, the boost in Indigenous tourism is enabling Aboriginal peoples to see a bright future, one where maintaining culture, revitalising language and keeping family together – on ancestral Country – is no longer a struggle.



Sand Dune Adventures,
New South Wales



El Questro - Injiid Marlaba Calls Us,
Western Australia

ONE CONTINENT, HUNDREDS OF NATIONS: ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA'S DIVERSE CULTURAL IDENTITIES



Narljia Experiences Broome, Western Australia

The term 'Aboriginal' is used to describe Australia's Aboriginal peoples from mainland Australia and Tasmania / lutruwita as a whole. At the time of British colonisation in 1788, there were hundreds of nations and a similar number of languages, however many of the languages once spoken are now endangered.

Marvel at a [map](#) marking their areas of custodianship – it's like confetti has been sprinkled across Australia. In comparison, the modern-day continent of Europe, which is similarly sized, has 44.

From Tropical North Queensland to the dry central desert and across to the forested corners of Tasmania / lutruwita, today's communities bear distinct differences. For a start, they use different languages and dialects. Ceremonial dress and body paint markings also take many forms, as do art styles. Each group's diet is diverse, reflecting the plants and wildlife that exist in the different climates and habitats. In Australia's northern tropics, Kakadu plum is consumed, while in the centre, witchetty grub is on the menu.

Environmental surrounds also dictate identity, with coastal groups referring to themselves as "saltwater people", whereas river folk are "freshwater people" and those in Australia's centre are "desert people". It's something Bart Pigram of [Narljia Experiences Broome](#) talks about as he walks the mangroves and mudflats of Yawuru Country, explaining the traditional saltwater lives of the Yawuru and their connection to Country.

Meanwhile, the educational exhibition space, [Koorie Heritage Trust](#) in Melbourne / Narm's city centre, reveals how the Koorie differ from those in other parts of Australia. After wandering through the museum's artefacts, walk around the metropolis with an Aboriginal guide to learn how their ancestors lived along what is now Melbourne / Narm's main waterway.

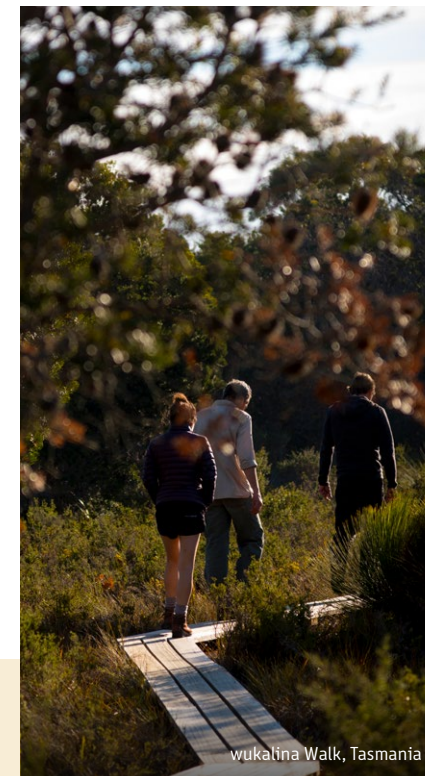


Koorie Heritage Trust, Victoria

Creation beliefs vary greatly across Australia, and many of the Creation stories are represented as elaborate Songlines, the concept of traditional storytelling with song. Aboriginal peoples can travel through their custodial Country using the song as a map, like an ancient GPS. Songlines cross the continent including the Songline for the Seven Sisters story that travels through many different language groups, and different sections of the narrative are recognised in different parts of the country. In Central Australia, Anangu culture is anchored by [Tjukurpa stories](#), which provide verbal maps of their custodial Country and also explain the creation of the earth and sky. Explore the [Gallery of Central Australia \(GOCA\)](#), part of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia's Ayers Rock Resort, to hear the stories from resident artists and then linger over an incredible collection of works from emerging and established artists.



GOCA, Northern Territory



wukalina Walk, Tasmania

Creation stories are also told in Tasmania / lutruwita, along the Aboriginal-guided [wukalina Walk](#). The Indigenous peoples living on Australia's biggest island developed their culture with less influence from other mainland groups. In fact, it's believed the palawa people evolved in isolation for more than 10,000 years after sea levels rose and cut them off from the continent. Yet, like so many other saltwater people, they feasted on shellfish and left piles of shells at camp sites, the scattering white remnants still there, hundreds of generations later.

THE DREAMTIME: EXPLORING AUSTRALIA THROUGH ABORIGINAL STORIES



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia



Kakadu Cultural Tours, Northern Territory

The “Dreamtime” is the defining heart of Australia’s Aboriginal cultures. For thousands of years Aboriginal Australians have developed a highly complex belief system that interconnects the land, spirituality, lore, culture and care of Country. Central to this belief is the concept of the Dreamtime or Dreaming. Neither of these English words capture the true meaning or nuanced sophistication of this Aboriginal belief-system.

While Aboriginal groups may have their own word and stories for the Dreamtime, it is broadly understood as the time when spiritual ancestors created the world, and everything that exists. It is the summation of all knowledge that explains how the land came to be and defines the complex relationships between flora, fauna, people and the land and the rules (lore) to ensure the continuity of all living things. Aboriginal spirituality can change and adapt to include elements of the environment Aboriginal peoples live in.

To hear a Dreaming story is to gain privileged insight into a living legacy of spiritual knowledge shared through rituals, dance, art and stories either in more traditional settings or through contemporary expression. No matter where you are in Australia – city or rainforest, coast or desert – their stories are being told across many art forms.

Halfway up the West Australian coastline, at stunning Shark Bay (also known as Gutharraguda, meaning “two waters”, in the local Malgana language), Darren ‘Capes’ Capewell, a guide with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) will tell you that Dreamtime stories speak to more than just the landscape. At their heart, they’re about respect for the land. Paddle a kayak out into the bay on one of Capes’ water-based adventures and he’ll likely tell you one of his favourite Dreaming stories, featuring a local lizard known as the thorny devil.

“The lizard was drinking too much and, as a result, he got punished for not respecting Country,” he says. “He used to be handsome and fast, but now he’s slow and he’s got thorns all over his body as a reminder.”

In Western Australia’s Purnululu National Park, the ancestral lands of the Gija and Jaru peoples, Traditional Custodian guides from [Kingfisher Tours](#) will introduce you to the significance of Songlines – ancient routes through the landscape that continue to be shared via story and song.

Songlines are fundamental to the Dreaming story of how the national park’s unique rock formations came to be. On a tour with head guide Bec Sampi, she’ll tell you how the Bungle Bungle Range was formed by a fight between a cockatoo and a galah. When the birds came to blows, they whirled around and around, creating a whirlwind that formed the now-iconic sandstone domes. The cockatoo spilt orange blood, and the galah spilt black

blood, forming the coloured rings around the domes you’ll see from the air on your flight into the park.

One of the best-known Dreaming stories is that of the Rainbow Serpent, which slithered across the land, gouging what would become the rivers and streams. In the Northern Territory’s Kakadu National Park, Liam Maher, CEO of [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#), explains the Dreaming story unique to his Country. “In this region, the Rainbow Serpent is known as Ngalyod,” he says. “We believe it still exists in the deep pools below waterfalls across the area, so most Aboriginal people will not swim there for fear of disturbing Ngalyod.” Dreamtime stories have given Aboriginal Australians a profound understanding of the landscape, he says. “Our land is our life, and these stories provide knowledge on how and when to seasonally burn and how to use each resource sustainably, along with kinship and regional clan relationships.”

SAVING THE SACRED: HOW TOURISM IS HELPING TO PRESERVE ABORIGINAL CULTURES

Steeped in Creation stories that interconnect spirituality, the land, lore, social life and care of the environment, passed down for tens of thousands of years – Aboriginal cultures have endured the ages to become the oldest living cultures on the planet today. What's even more remarkable is that – far from making use of a printing press, or other forms of written language – the preservation of Aboriginal cultures is largely attributed to the art of oral storytelling through verbal teachings, song, music, art, dance, ceremony and ritual.

But with the arrival of Europeans to the continent and ongoing modernisation, ancient storytelling and sharing of culture has evolved and diversified, even if the stories themselves have not. While storytelling remains at the heart of sharing Aboriginal cultures, today it takes many forms, incorporating modern technology, tourism and digital media, creating a wealth of unique cultural experiences across the continent that ensure the past continues into the future.

In the Northern Territory's heartland, near the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Uluru, the [Gallery of Central Australia](#) (GOCA) is part of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia's Ayer's Rock Resort. The inspiring space is dedicated to preserving Aboriginal practices like painting, drawing and carving through sharing these traditions with visitors and local employment. The gallery hosts a resident Anangu (Aboriginal people from the Western and Central Deserts of Australia) artist, whom you can watch at work before you peruse an extensive range of paintings and distinctive punu (wooden carvings), depicting Creation stories and places. To take a deep dive, book one of the private gallery tours.

From the desert to the sea, just north of Sydney / Warrane in picturesque Port Stephens, [Sand Dune Adventures](#) combines uniquely cultural preservation with quad biking in their high-energy tours of Stockton Beach sand dunes – the largest coastal sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere. Led by local Aboriginal guides, the tour gives you exclusive access to Aboriginal land, taking you on an unforgettable journey through bushland, in and around enormous sand dunes, where you'll learn about traditional Aboriginal food and history, as well as the dunes' cultural significance.

You needn't leave city limits though, to learn about the deep spiritual connection between Aboriginal cultures and the earth. In cosmopolitan centre of Sydney / Warrane, [Dreamtime Southern X](#) leads guided walking tours that showcase the city's ancient heritage, with 29 clan groups belonging to the metropolitan area, referred to collectively as the Eora Nation. The Rocks Aboriginal Dreaming Tour, Illi-Langi - The Rocks Aboriginal Dreaming Tour for instance, takes you on a leisurely stroll around the famous Rocks precinct, while your Aboriginal guide shares passed-down knowledge about the cultural significance of Sydney Harbour, its foreshores and adjoining waterways, explaining the connection between the natural world and the spiritual world, even in a modern-day metropolis.

Quite aside from helping to share and sustain the lives of Aboriginal stories, modern-day tourism also provides important economic benefits to local Indigenous communities.



Dreamtime Southern X, New South Wales

WHY BLAK? THE ABORIGINAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPELLING



Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours,
New South Wales

Language goes beyond mere communication; it profoundly reflects our identity and heritage, and has the power to harm and heal. It's particularly significant to Indigenous communities around Australia, many of whom were forced to stop speaking their traditional languages during early European settlement of the country. In fact, before European colonisation there were around 250 distinct Aboriginal languages spoken across Australia. Today, only about 120 of these languages are still spoken – many have become extinct, and many more are still at risk of dying out. Efforts are being made to revitalise and preserve these

languages, but the number of speakers for many is declining.

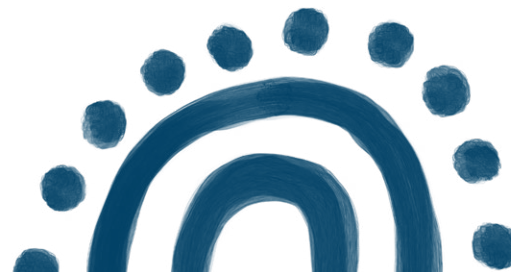
The term 'Blak' traces its origins back to 1994 and the late Aboriginal artist, broadcaster, and political activist Dr Destiny Deacon. She wanted to reclaim and redefine the word 'black,' which, over the decades, had become a derogatory term imposed by non-Indigenous people, and led to many misrepresentations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This reclamation served as a strong affirmation of Aboriginal identity, distinguishing it from the narrow and often negative portrayals of Aboriginal Australians.

Since then, Blak has been used as a way to reclaim control over the language used to describe Indigenous peoples, stripping away the judgemental or offensive undertones often associated with 'black.' It's not about skin colour, but purely about cultural identity.

"It's about challenging and transforming the narrative around Indigenous identity," says Clark Webb, the owner and operator of [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#) on the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. A proud Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung man, Clark has been an important part of Gumbaynggirr language revitalisation in the Coffs Harbour area. He works closely with community, and in 2022 opened the Giingana Gumbaynggirr Freedom School, the first bilingual school in NSW of an Aboriginal Language. "The aim is to revitalise the Gumbaynggirr language, as currently it is listed as endangered, while also providing education on Aboriginal culture, purpose, traditions and identity.

"But the word Blak is much more than that," says Clark. "It has become a term that sets apart the unique and rich experiences of Indigenous Australians from the broader, racialised experiences of other communities of colour. It's about evolving our Indigenous identity and getting rid of discrimination, stereotypes and myths. It has become a symbol of resilience and pride." And many Indigenous businesses identify themselves as Blak-owned as a result, including Tasmania's / lutruwita's award-winning [wukalina Walk](#), alongside non-tourism brands like Clothing the Gap, Haus of Dizzy and Take Pride Movement.

Can white people use the word Blak? "There's no problem with white people using Blak in writing, but, like black, it is more fraught in speech," says Clark, noting that the word is part of a broader movement within contemporary Indigenous language, also embracing other terms such as Deadly, meaning "excellent". [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#) operates a Deadly After Dark Sunset Cruise, for example, while the Deadly Awards (the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music, Sport, Arts and Community Awards) were an annual celebration of Blak talent.



ABOVE AND BEYOND: TOURISM THAT SUPPORTS COMMUNITY AND CULTURE



El Questro - Injhid Marlabu Calls Us, Western Australia

From the Northern Territory to Tasmania, joining a Discover Aboriginal Experiences tour is always an eye-opening and educational moment, designed to not only highlight but also preserve culture and traditions. But a number of members in the portfolio are going above and beyond to ensure that Australia's Indigenous cultures are not just protected – but are thriving, through reinvesting profits into education, training and employment opportunities for Indigenous people.

In the Northern Territory's Red Centre, [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#) established the National Indigenous Training Academy in 2011, with more than 700 Aboriginal employees graduating to date with skills and qualifications in retail, horticulture and hospitality. Around 60 per cent of graduates have gone on to be employed by Voyages at Ayers Rock Resort, the gateway to Uluru. Today, more than 30 per cent of the workforce here is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Read an interview with one of the graduates, [Jayden Weetra](#), in the Storytellers chapter of the media kit.

On the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) has been on a similar mission since it launched in 2018, employing and upskilling more than 30 First Nations staff, including the industry's first Torres Strait Islander dive instructor. Dreamtime works with not-for-profit organisation [Shoreline](#) to provide training to Indigenous students. Upon graduation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait trainees with Dreamtime are initially employed as cruise attendants and cultural guides, with the commitment to support them to continue their education so they can develop a career, not just a job. Read about one of the graduates from Shoreline, [Jacob Williamson](#), in the Storytellers chapter of the media kit.



Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

Also in Queensland, the majority of [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#)' employees are Aboriginal, and the team's rangers, who hold qualifications in Conservation Land Management, are provided with upskilling opportunities.

Just north of Sydney at Stockton, Sand Dune Adventures is run by the Worimi Land Council. Profits from the experience are poured back into the local Aboriginal community to fund employment, housing, education, health and Elders' programs. The council now employs more than 45 Aboriginal staff, training them in business administration, marketing, natural resource management and hospitality. For every \$1 invested into the [Sand Dune Adventures](#) business, it provides a \$25 return to an Indigenous family.

Operated from the New South Wales Mid-North Coast, Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours reinvests much of its profits from tourism activities back into the community. The company also established Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC) in 2010, with the overarching goal of sustaining local culture on Country. Over the last 14 years, the organisation has set up three learning centres as well as the Giingana Gumbaynggirr Freedom School, the first bilingual school in NSW of an Aboriginal language. In 2022, the school opened with 15 students; in 2023 there were 52 students and in 2024 the number was 85... with a waiting list. This is a 100 per cent Aboriginal student school.

In the Broome region of Western Australia, [Mabu Buru Tours](#) donates more than 30 per cent of operator profits to the Mabu Buru Foundation, an Aboriginal not-for-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring the survival and preservation of Indigenous culture. Funds are then used via a number of initiatives, including training programs for emerging Aboriginal talents.

Also in Western Australia, in the remote Kimberley region of the state, [El Questro](#) returned 165,000 hectares of pastoral leased land to its Traditional Owners as part of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) in 2022. In addition to hosting the Injhid Marlabu Calls Us tour led by Indigenous guides, through the ILUA the property supports opportunities for young Aboriginal people to be trained, gain employment and lead cultural tourism activities, including annual scholarships and traineeships to provide pathways to careers in tourism, hospitality and land management.



TAKE THE PLUNGE: AUSTRALIA'S SPECIAL SWIMMING SPOTS



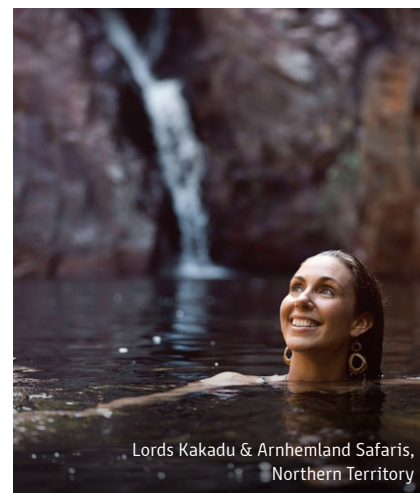
Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland

From the Kimberley region of Western Australia to Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory; from Queensland's outback to its World Heritage-listed rainforest – there's no denying that Australia has some of the most ravishing places to swim on the planet, whether saltwater or freshwater. And many of them are so special – so remote – that the best (sometimes the only) way to experience them is with an Indigenous guide. Often you won't know they exist unless you're on a Discover Aboriginal Experiences tour.

In Queensland, the Mossman River carves through the Daintree Rainforest of the Cape York Peninsula. Along its route you'll find the purest of waterfalls spilling over mossy rocks into gin-clear swimming holes, all enveloped by ferns and the world's oldest rainforest. Cool

off during tours to this part of the world with [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) and you'll not only have the chance to dip in a waterway that is as spiritual as it is serene, but get to visit with an Aboriginal guide who will explain the significance of the ancient flora and fauna that surrounds – they know all the secret places to take the plunge, with no-one else around.

Also on the Cape York Peninsula, [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#) is an extraordinary discovery of what UNESCO regards as one of the top 10 rock-art sites in the world. Outside of Laura, your base is an exclusive camp within easy reach of the ancient petroglyphs. By day and by night, you're the only ones here. Which means you'll have the river that cuts a dramatic form through the landscape all to yourself when it's time to cool down. If you opt for the longer



Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory

two-day experience, guide Johnny Murison will take you to a hidden waterfall oasis on Yalanji Country. Feel your spirit soar and your cares wash away.

Venture west to the Northern Territory where Kakadu and Litchfield national parks are home to more legendary waterfalls than you can count. At the base of Jim Jim, Gunlom and Twin Falls, among many others, there are emerald pools to splash about in. Get your bearings and find the best spots with companies like [Kakadu Tourism](#), [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#), [Davidsons Arnhemland Safaris](#) and [Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris](#), then plot your own course to return and dive in.

Even further west, the Kimberley region at the top of Western Australia is as remote as it is ravishing, a landscape with one of the lowest population densities in the world. Which means that there are endless opportunities to soak in secluded swimming spots – and the guides at [Kingfisher Tours](#) have insider knowledge. A highlight is Secret Springs, around 20 kilometres east of Kununurra, an oasis replete with beaches, multiple pools, plenty of fish... and even more photo opportunities.

Swap Western Australia's freshwater swimming spots for the ocean at World Heritage-listed Shark Bay, where [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) offers nature-based tours that last from a few hours to multiple days. Your guide may lead you to Big Lagoon within Francois Peron National Park / Wulyibidi, an incredibly scenic place to swim, kayak and snorkel. This part of the state is known for its majestic blood-red cliffs and crystal-clear turquoise waters, which teem with birds, small school sharks, rays, dolphins and dugongs.



Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

ULURU'S BEST-KEPT SECRET: UNLOCKING KATA TJUTA'S INDIGENOUS HERITAGE

Nothing quite prepares you for the first time you glimpse Uluru – the immensity, grandeur and changing colour of the world's largest monolith. This is the original 'Rock', and it is as spectacular as it is spiritual – a World Heritage-listed icon that has attained the status of a pilgrimage. It's a sight that will sear into your mind. The Anangu Traditional Owners have been living here for more than 65,000 years. As they have the rest of the World Heritage-listed national park, known collectively as Uluru-Kata Tjuta.

Bigger, wider and taller than Uluru, Kata Tjuta – 'many heads' – is a mind-blowing collection of 36 enormous domed rocks, huddled about 35 kilometres west of 'the rock'. They go shoulder to shoulder in deep valleys and steep-sided gorges, home to ancient plants that predate dinosaurs. This is, arguably, one of Australia's best-kept secrets, barely talked about among most Australians, let alone the world.

The tallest rock, Mt Olga, is 200 metres more sky-scraping than Uluru. And there are trails throughout – don't go off track or take photos, however, because this is a sacred men's site, and more than 65,000 years' worth of stories are preserved in these staggering domes.

You'll learn these finer points of Anangu etiquette on a tour through the region with Sammy Wilson from [SEIT Patji](#). Sammy (whose original name is Tjama Uluru) is a legend in these parts, and the grandson of Paddy Uluru. He guides visitors through parts of the Red Centre's most dramatic landscapes, weaving through the Mars-like landscapes on a walk that will take your breath away on so many levels. Groups of tiny birds lift into a mad, twittering flight above you. You'll pass giant, popcorn-shaped pieces of ochre-coloured rock. And ancient cycads ease into the chasms, like they need a crutch – but they have been holding that very same position for centuries. End your tour at sunset taking in the great expanse of the desert overlooking Uluru and Kata Tjuta.



Like Uluru, Kata Tjuta is made of rusting rock, but the latter is a series of several domes, rather than one massif, that rise unbidden from the flat red surrounds, an oversized collection of marbles balancing on top at improbable angles. The other reason for Kata Tjuta's exceptionality is that, to the Anangu, Kata Tjuta is a place of particular cultural significance – so much so that the domes have the rare distinction of having dual World Heritage status, both for their Indigenous cultural importance as well as for their natural beauty.



Kata Tjuta from the Dune viewing area, Northern Territory

HOW TO EXPERIENCE ABORIGINAL CULTURES WHEN STAYING AT A LUXURY LODGE OF AUSTRALIA



Silky Oaks Lodge, Queensland

From the Northern Territory to Tasmania, Australia has its fair share of opulent lodges – places that are far from cookie-cutter, and that embrace the destination and culture of the communities that they call home. Part of the [Signature Experiences of Australia](#) suite of offerings, [Luxury Lodges of Australia](#) unites these exceptional properties as a collective – all are located in an extraordinary region of Australia, all come with the niceties you'd expect of five-star accommodations. But Luxury Lodges of Australia are much more than just a place to stay – their real point of difference is connecting you to place, and in many cases, that means connection with Indigenous heritage. Here's how you can check into beautiful accommodation, and then take a deep dive into Aboriginal cultures and traditions.

The lodge: Silky Oaks

This eco-lodge sits pretty in the World Heritage-listed wilderness of the Daintree Rainforest in Tropical North Queensland, overlooking the serene Mossman River.

The experiences:

Silky Oaks collaborates with a number of DAE members to offer insights into local Kuku Yalanji Aboriginal culture. Sign up to join Juan Walker on one of his [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#), exploring Cooya Beach (his ancestral home), visiting Mossman Gorge, hunting for mud crabs in mangroves and tasting bush tucker. You can also opt to visit the [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre](#) on a Ngadiku Dreamtime Walk, combining a smoking ceremony to ward off bad spirits with a guided rainforest journey steeped in ancient culture. Brian 'Binna' Swindley operates [Janbal Gallery](#)



El Questro - Injiid Marlabu Calls Us, Western Australia

in the area, the space dedicated to Aboriginal art. Silky Oaks can organise a visit that sees you get hands-on in a creative workshop decoding Kuku Yalanji symbols and painting techniques. And if you want a sky-high adventure, jump in a helicopter to an exclusive Cape York location to unravel the ancient stories of a 20,000-year-old outback museum with [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#).

The lodge: El Questro

Set on more than 400,000 hectares in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, El Questro is as remote as it is ravishing. Choose from various accommodation options, including the luxe Homestead.

The experience:

The Traditional Owners of the land that El Questro sits on are the Ngarinyin people, and their stories are revealed on the property's [Injiid Marlabu Calls Us](#) tour. With an Aboriginal guide, be Welcomed to Country, learn Ngarinyin language and wander through a vast landscape discovering bush tucker and medicines as well as ancient, and spiritual, sites.

The lodge: Bamurru Plains

Bamurru unites style and sustainability in equal measure, providing a luxurious base

for exploring the wild coastal floodplains of the Mary River delta on the edge of Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory.

The experience:

When you stay at Bamurru Plains, you're surrounded by rich Aboriginal history dating back more than 65,000 years. Join [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#) on a Guluymbi Cultural Cruise along Kakadu's spectacular East Alligator River, taking in this World Heritage-listed landscape at a leisurely pace while learning about its Dreaming stories and abundant food chain from an Aboriginal guide. When you sign up for the Ultimate Luxury Safari Adventure with [Lords Kakadu and Arnhemland Safaris](#), you also have the chance to stay at Bamurru over your six days exploring the Top End's most fascinating Aboriginal cultural sites.



Bamurru Plains, Northern Territory



Longitude 131°, Northern Territory

The lodge: Longitude 131°

Gaze upon Uluru from luxurious elevated tents on the edge of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. Dotted among the red-rust dunes of the Central Desert, the 16 pavilions offer connection with the outback landscape and its heritage as well as a glamorous base from which to explore the incredible Red Centre.

The experience:

You may find it hard to tear yourself away from your Longitude base. But if you do, a immersive tour of the [Gallery of Central Australia](#) awaits. This introduction to Aboriginal art gives you the opportunity to learn about the symbols and painting styles used by local Anangu Aboriginal creatives in their artworks. Browse works, then purchase a piece to take home, knowing all profits go back to the artists that created them.



GOCA, Northern Territory



El Questro - Injiid Marlabu Calls Us, Western Australia



wukalina Walk, Tasmania / lutruwita

AN INDIGENOUS COMMITMENT TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Indigenous communities around Australia have long recognised the importance of conservation of both land and animals – and the tangible connection between the two. Take, for example, the ancient concept of middens: piles of shells and bones left behind during feasts of clans past. They're spiritual sites across the country, and they tell a tale of one of the world's earliest forms of conservation.

"Middens are like a preservation storybook," says Carleeta Thomas, a guide on Tasmania / lutruwita's award-winning [wukalina Walk](#). "Today we go out into the oceans and overfish because it's lucrative and we have no idea what others have caught. We're depleting our oceans through over-fishing. Middens told visiting Aboriginal communities what had been eaten in the past, and what should not be eaten as a result, to avoid future shortages. If you saw oyster and clam shells, you'd eat scallops and fish instead, to allow stocks to regenerate. And you never catch more than you need." On the four-day wukalina Walk, your meal-plan

varies in sync with this philosophy – there's no set menu; it's whatever has been sustainably caught or farmed.

It's not just mealtime where Aboriginal communities have an eye on preserving Australia's wondrous animals. On the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel's](#) GBR Biology team create reef education programs for local students, to teach them the symbiotic relationship between marine animals and coral. They employ Master Reef Guides to do the same with guests on board their cruises, while monitoring coral health and fish species.

The [Royal Botanic Garden](#) in Sydney is also only too aware of the impact habitat destruction is having on wildlife, and has an active Restore and Renew program in place to respond to the need for ecological restoration using the latest science - the goal is to create diverse, resilient and adaptable ecosystems that attract native wildlife.



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

On the outskirts of Cairns in Queensland, the [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience](#) at Rainforestation Nature Park takes guests through protected virgin forests. Many of the animals here are endangered due to land threats. And the park is determined to reverse the situation via initiatives such as ranger drives to ward off potential human threats, the installation of bird boxes in the estate's fruit orchard, avoiding chemical fertilisers, and accepting injured wildlife to rehabilitate at nearby TARC (Tropical Animal Rescue Centre).

The Worimi Land Council operates quad-bike tours via [Sand Dune Adventures](#) on the mid-North Coast of New South Wales. The Council also funds an Aboriginal 'green team', dedicated to the rehabilitation and regeneration of natural environments alongside urban-based environmental education. Part of this has been the establishment of a nursery at Murrook, where there is an Indigenous botanist, ecologist and archaeologist who oversee seed collections

to sustain native plants indigenous to the region, in so doing encouraging native wildlife to return to the area.

On the Coffs Coast of New South Wales, [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#) is Ecotourism certified, and has strict policies in place when it comes to preserving the waterways it explores, and the animals that call this fragile ecosystem home. This means marine-friendly sunscreen, a total absence of plastic, and a commitment to collecting any waste encountered while on tour. The company is all about promoting a 'leave nothing, take nothing' philosophy.

LGBTQI+ MEMBERS CHANGING THE FACE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM

The Tiwi Islands are home to one of the most northerly Aboriginal communities in Australia. And perhaps that's one of the reasons why culture across the archipelago – around 80 kilometres off the coast of Darwin – is so strong, in so many ways.

Statistics show that the Tiwis have the highest per capita population of transgender people in the country – around five per cent of the population identifies as a 'sistergirl' (trans woman) or 'brotherboy' (trans man). The community here identify as LGBTQIASB+, and they are proud of the role they're playing in changing stereotypes not just among the transgender community, but also across Australia.

"There's no stopping us in the Tiwis," says Veronique, a host at the Tiwi by Design experience on Bathurst Island and a stop on [SeaLink's day tour](#) here from Darwin. "I am LGBTQIASB+, and I am loud and proud."

Current estimates from Australia's Department of Health state that approximately 11 per cent of the Australian population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI). Indigenous representation in this figure is a minority – but one that is growing.

"We're not afraid to come out anymore," says Veronique. "There's less stigma, and much more support. For so long we were afraid – there was this stigma, and dual marginalisation meant that many in the community couldn't be proud of who they were. But in the Tiwis, there's a strong push to advocate for our rights."

In 2017, Veronique and a number of their sistergirls and brotherboys travelled thousands of kilometres south to be part of the Sydney Mardi Gras for the first time. "It was a challenging time. I'm older, and faced a lot of criticism from my Elders. But we paved the way for the new generation of sistergirls and brotherboys, who have much more acceptance and community support."



Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory

At that 2017 Mardi Gras parade, Veronique wore both traditional costumes and drag outfits with Tiwi designs, hand-painted in rainbow colours by their community from Tiwi Design on Bathurst Island. "I still wear them to this day, sometimes on tours. And I always wear this rainbow necklace that one of our international guests gave me. People always ask where I got it. It's my constant reminder that we have increasing support and awareness from the broader Australian community as well as the rest of the world."



EXPLORING QUEENSLAND'S UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES WITH AN ABORIGINAL GUIDE



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

Australia is home to 20 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. And a number of them lie in Queensland. Here's how to explore with an Aboriginal guide.

Great Barrier Reef

The scale of the Great Barrier Reef is staggering. It's actually made up of more than 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands, which are scattered some 2,300 kilometres across the Queensland coast from the tip of Cape York Peninsula in the north to Bundaberg in the south. In size, it covers an area bigger than New Zealand, Japan, Germany or Malaysia. Or, 70 million football fields.

But this isn't the only thing that makes it 'great', as you'll discover when you join Indigenous sea rangers on a [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) cruise from Cairns. "This is one of the most complex ecosystems on the planet," says Quinn Ross-Passi, a Master Reef Guide and dive instructor with Dreamtime. He goes on to tell me it's home to 10 per cent of global coral gardens and the same proportion of the world's fish species, including 30 types of

whales, dolphins and porpoises. Six species of sea turtles come here to breed, alongside 215 different types of birds.

With permission from Yindinji Elders, Quinn and his fellow Indigenous sea rangers tell the 65,000-year-old Dreamtime Creation story of this important marine environment, as we drift over it on a catamaran bound for the outer Great Barrier Reef. "There were two brothers who went out fishing one day. Bhiral, the Creator, told them not to hunt for a particular type of fish. But one of the brothers ignored this, and speared the fish. Bhiral was furious, and threw lava and hot rocks down from the sky. The rocks and heat caused the sea to rise; when the lava cooled, it formed what is now known as the Great Barrier Reef."

In between stories, the sea ranger team reveal Indigenous artefacts: a didgeridoo (which they perform with immense skill); clapsticks; intricately carved wooden coolamon (carrying baskets). And perform a Welcome to Country smoking ceremony, with the scent of eucalyptus perfuming the air. When we reach Moore

Reef – one of those 2,900 individual reefs that complete the big picture – they hand out flippers and masks, and I splash about admiring giant clams, moray eels and more fish than I imagined possible.

This is not only a colourful way to take a deep dive into the planet's most important marine ecosystem, but also the Indigenous Sea Country that makes this part of the world so special.

Wet Tropics of Queensland

An iridescent Ulysses butterfly flits over a waterhole, lingering on mossy boulders and darting between impossibly lush trees. The only sound is the soft patter of dew, falling between leaves, and the hum of dragonflies. If I didn't know any better, I'd swear I had been transported to the pages of a fairytale – Mossman Gorge is simply magical. And spiritual. My Kuku Yalanji guide on the Ngadiku Dreamtime Walk from [Mossman Gorge Centre](#) through this pocket of the Daintree Rainforest tells me that butterflies are known as 'walbul walbul' in the local language, and that they're believed to be Aboriginal Elders sent to look over those who still walk on Land. Later, at the Mossman River, I'm told about the Creation of the most prominent nearby peak, Manjal Dimbi ('mountain holding back'), where a humanoid rock, Kubirri, holds back an evil spirit.

Aside from being an incredibly sacred destination for Aboriginal communities, the Wet Tropics of Queensland is an astounding habitat for flora and fauna, many of them found nowhere else on the planet. Across its nearly 900,000 hectares, this mostly tropical rainforest is thought to be the oldest of its kind in the world, estimated to be more than 100 million years old. It's carved by rivers and gorges, waterfalls and mountains, which protect around a third of Australia's mammal species – not to mention the birds. And most of them, Juan Walker knows just by sound.

Kuku Yalanji man Juan leads tours around Mossman Gorge and Cooya Beach through his company [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#), retracing and reliving the footsteps and stories



Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia – Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre

of his family, who raised him here. Spending a day with him, I forage for pippis and mud crabs, crack open almonds and decode bush medicine – Juan also takes me to some of the region's most significant cultural sites.

Juan's brothers, Linc and Brandon Walker, share a passion for this part of the world, and through the 'Daintree Dreaming' experiences with [Down Under Tours](#), offer intimate stories about where they grew up. You can choose to spend a day delving into Aboriginal art and culture, but I sign up to go fishing – the traditional way. Spear in hand we wander the sand and mangroves of Cooya Beach, with the Walker brothers showing off their skills, and teaching us to reciprocate. At the end of it all, we feast. And nothing tastes better than catching your own dinner.



Down Under Tours – Daintree Dreaming

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION TO BUILD AMAZING EXPERIENCES

In May 2023, [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#) launched Wintjiri Wiru, a spectacular light show involving 1,000 luminous drones and Anangu culture, at Ayers Rock Resort beside Uluru. The show brings to life a chapter of the Mala ancestral story, and was developed in close consultation with Anangu custodians.

“We sat side by side – no one sits above or below,” say members of the Anangu consultation group when describing how planning sessions were held with Voyages and community representatives. “Together, we worked out how to honour culture and Country in the right way. Ideas came from Country, from the land.”

The consultation group was involved in naming the experience, advising on the visuals, narrating the story in English, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages, and delivering the music – ensuring that every level of the experience is shared with respect and in line with Anangu cultural protocols.

“Many times people come into our communities and they are just looking for a tick on the ideas they have come up with and what they have done. The stories and ideas should be developed together, and this is what has been done with this new experience, and it is the first time ever that this has happened – every decision has been made with senior Anangu people.”

Watching it all come together, come to life, was an emotional experience.

“We were quite overcome, we were immensely happy, it was amazing, it came from our story, our understanding of the world,” says Anangu custodian Sammy Wilson (Tjama Uluru). “It’s important and great that we were acknowledged and involved in working together to bring this to life. We want visitors to come here – we are really keen to do things like this that can encourage people to come again.”



Wintjiri Wiru, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, Northern Territory

As custodians of the land, Anangu hold the Mala story from Kaltukatjara to Uluru. To share their story from Kaltukatjara to Uluru, RAMUS designed and produced an artistic platform using drones, light and sound to create an immersive storytelling experience.



Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, Northern Territory

“This is the first time to see this sort of technology used to share our culture and it’s a really big thing for us... When I heard the inma we recorded I was really proud and happy. I was thinking, this is us singing! We are singing our songs! It is big thing what we have done. We are really pleased and honoured about this project. This is great for Anangu, it will create job opportunities for our young people to work and share our stories. This is about teaching our younger people, the next generation to take over and teach our stories,” says Awalari Teamay from the committee.

The show was designed and produced by world-renowned media architecture studio RAMUS, with the goal of illuminating the Central Desert with a spectacle of lights, projections and lasers shining on the spinifex and mulga.

“The process came by first not considering the technology at all,” says the company’s founder, Bruce Ramus. “We listened to our head and heart, then chose the technology that enabled that. The result is an experience that is looking to the future with extraordinary technology... paired with ancient science to keep the stories alive for all – a new way of handing down Aboriginal stories.”

“We all have culture,” says Sammy. “We wouldn’t come into your house and open your drawers – we have respect for your home and your culture. We are going to keep doing what we are doing; the young people are taking in the stories, and this will keep culture strong.”

HOW ABORIGINAL TOURISM OPERATORS ARE SPREADING THE LOVE



Wajaana Yaam Gumgaynggirr Adventure Tours, New South Wales

Aboriginal cultural tourism has come a long way over the last two decades. And it's thanks, in part, to savvy operators who are dedicated to upskilling their employees.

Take, for example, [Wajaana Yaam Cultural Awareness](#). Clark Webb, the owner and operator of Wajaana, is a local Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung man who has been an important part of Gumbaynggirr language revitalisation in the Coffs Harbour area, on the Central Coast of New South Wales. Clark works closely with community – including his Aboriginal guides – and key Elders to design programs and

experiences on the Coffs Coast, so there can be a wider understanding and consciousness about Aboriginal history, importance and prevalence of local culture and current cultural issues.

His training takes a deep dive into Aboriginal history; the importance of culture, kinship, family, language and land; and discrimination, stereotypes and myths. It also offers practical 'where to from here?' strategies on how to engage with Aboriginal communities, and how to create a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples within your workplace.



Just north of Sydney / Warrane in picturesque Port Stephens, [Sand Dune Adventures](#) combines unique cultural preservation with quad biking in high-energy tours of Stockton Beach Sand Dunes – the largest coastal sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere. Led by local Aboriginal guides, the tours give you exclusive access to Aboriginal land, taking you on an unforgettable journey through bushland, in and around enormous sand dunes, where you'll learn about traditional Aboriginal food and history, as well as the dunes' cultural significance. It's a venture staffed entirely by local Aboriginal people, mostly from the Worimi community, whose nation is bound by the Hunter River (further south), and the town of Taree to the north. Profits are poured back into the local Indigenous community, funding employment, housing, education, health and Elders' programs.

And in the Northern Territory, staff can be upskilled through training provided by [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#). The National Indigenous Training Academy at Ayers Rock Resort is an innovative program run by Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, established to provide young Indigenous Australians with solid career prospects in retail, horticulture, hospitality and tourism at Voyages properties, as well as wider employment opportunities with other organisations.

In Cairns, [Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel](#) has heavily invested in continuing to provide opportunities for employment and growth for



Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel, Queensland

Indigenous youth. The Dreamtime crew is drawn from across North Queensland as well as from the Indigenous education program, [Shoreline](#). It's an incredible way of creating employment pathways and making a positive change for young Indigenous Australians wanting to work in the hospitality industry.



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland

TEAM BUILDING THROUGH ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES

Australia is home to the oldest living cultures on the planet. And you and your work team can take a dive deep into this history, dating back 65,000 years, on immersive experiences across the country. Discover rock art and sacred sites on Aboriginal-guided tours, listen to Dreamtime Creation stories, participate in dance performances and music festivals, try your hand at art and sample bush tucker – at a time when we all appreciate experiences over ‘things’, is there any better way to unite your corporate community?

If you land in Sydney / Warrane, be sure to meet legendary Aunty Margret Campbell on one of her [Dreamtime Southern X](#) tours around the historic Rocks district of Sydney.

Aunty Margret tailors her experiences to groups, which means you can enjoy a Welcome to Country (Ghurryngun) on request, followed by an Aboriginal Dreaming Tour walking around Sydney Harbour as well as corporate cultural awareness sessions.

A pioneer in Indigenous tourism, Aunty Margret has participated in Aboriginal youth programs such as the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, and benefited from mentoring provided by Indigenous politicians and campaigners such as Charles Perkins, Esther Carroll and Elizabeth ‘Trixie’ Rowe. And today she’s an Indigenous affairs advocate through a number of frontline Aboriginal tourism and justice programs. Her knowledge is priceless.

In Adelaide / Tarntanya, [Southern Cultural Immersion](#) is a 100 percent Aboriginal-owned and -operated business, sharing culture on the Traditional Lands of the Kaurna People. With your corporate group you can spend hours or days immersed in bespoke activities that range from smoking ceremonies to Aboriginal art classes, tours of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, cultural awareness training, ochre play, weaving workshops... and so much more. The organisation also manages the Living Kaurna Cultural Centre in Warriparinga, south of Adelaide, which you can hire for events and activities.

The Kimberley is one of Australia’s greatest wilderness frontiers – what better place to disconnect from tech and reconnect with your team? Guided by Johani, a proud Indigenous man, [Mabu Buru Tours](#)’ experiences offer a deep dive into Aboriginal culture in this pocket of northern Western Australia. Tailored for groups, the three-night Broome’s Ultimate Aboriginal Culture Expedition includes the Cable Beach Muwarrt (traditional gathering to learn about culture) with Johani, Southern Cross Cultural Walk with Bolo Angus, boat cruise in Roebuck Bay with Bart Pigram, and the Wakaj Experience with Uncle Mervyn Mulardy and the Pintirri Dancers.



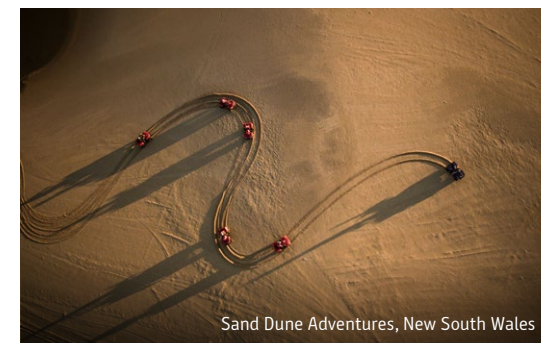
Johani – Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia

It’s an unforgettable team-bonding adventure, including accommodation, meals, tours, entry fees, cruise fees and transfers.

Meanwhile in the Northern Territory, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia operates specialised tours of Aboriginal art and culture at the [Gallery of Central Australia](#) (GOCA). Guests gain insight into life at Uluru and learn about traditional symbols and artistic techniques, introducing them to the richness of Anangu culture. As a group you can also learn about bush tucker, decode the night sky with an Aboriginal astronomer or take a workshop to discover the secrets behind playing the didgeridoo.

Want to get your team’s heart racing? Ride from bush to beach on the magnificent Worimi Sand Dunes on Stockton Beach in New South Wales on an epic quad bike experience with [Sand Dune Adventures](#). Led by Indigenous guides, this outing will teach you about the Worimi culture, including how to find bush tucker and dig for fresh water. And after all the fun, return to the Warrook Cultural Centre or enjoy sunset on the dunes with a glass of bubbles and canapés infused with native produce.

If you’re in Cairns / Gimuy and looking for a way to celebrate and educate your team, Aboriginal-owned and -operated [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#) operates a cruise from Cairns Marina with exclusive access to an Indigenous Protected Reserve. Meet Indigenous rangers and guides and explore, discover and connect with Mandingalbay Yidinji People, Country and culture on a private tour, which can also include dinner heroing native produce with a cultural performance from local dancers and musicians.



Sand Dune Adventures, New South Wales

ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL

One in five Australians (or in global terms, one sixth of the world's population), identifies as living with a disability. At Discover Aboriginal Experiences, we believe that tours should be open and accessible to all, and our operators are staunch advocates, with most being in a position to welcome everyone to enjoy a cultural connection.

From Queensland to Melbourne, you'll find accessibility goes deeper than just ramps and tactile rubber floor grips, with experiences that cater – or can easily be adapted – to every kind of traveller, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age.

In Melbourne / Narm, the newly expanded and renovated Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT) now occupies all three floors of the Birrarung Building at Federation Square. There are fresh exhibition galleries, additional areas to showcase the permanent collection, plus more accessible community engagement and education spaces. Nearby, the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne sits on a bend of the Yarra River. This leafy playground has fully graded paths that are accessible by

walkers and wheelchairs. More than that, it's a sensory delight throughout the year, replete with blooms and plants that will excite your olfactory and tactile senses. And then there are the birds...

It's a similar story in Adelaide / Tarntanya, where Southern Cultural Immersion leads guided tours through the Botanic Garden, designed to ignite various senses, including taste – bush tucker is on the menu, and you're also encouraged to get in the spirit of 'forest bathing' by touching plants and hugging trees. Because nature is like a salve for the soul.

Back in Victoria along the southwest end of the Great Ocean Road, Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism introduces you to Australia's newest World Heritage Site, and one of the world's oldest aquaculture systems. The main centre is fully accessible with ramps and wheelchair-friendly washrooms, and a number of the tours over boardwalks and gravel paths are also pram and wheelchair friendly, with plenty of places to rest in between points of interest.



Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Victoria

There are endless ways to learn about Indigenous culture in Queensland, and taking an art class offers a hands-on history lesson. You'll find Janbal Gallery nestled in leafy Mossman outside of Carins / Gimuy, offering one of the most in-depth Aboriginal art classes in Australia. Meeting accessibility requirements is more than just a legislative tick here; artist and owner 'Binna' Swindley was born with a significant hearing disability. Accordingly, the gallery is accessible for those who are deaf or have hearing loss and accommodates people who have challenges with learning, communication, understanding and behaviour, along with those who use a wheelchair.

Nearby, everyone can become immersed in the spirit of the Wet Tropics Rainforest with a visit to the Mossman Gorge Centre. This home of the local Kuku-Yalanji people is wheelchair and pram-friendly, built with accessibility front of mind from the moment you're picked up by bus shuttle in the car park, to the ramps and graded pathways throughout the gorge walk itself.



Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism, Victoria

WOMEN LEADERS IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM

Much of the growth in Aboriginal cultural tourism has happened in the years since Sydney hosted the 2000 Summer Olympic Games, and many credit Aunty Margret Campbell with spearheading the movement. An Elder from New South Wales' Dughutti-Jerrinja Nation, Margret has seen a huge shift in awareness over the last two decades. In the 1960s, she participated in Aboriginal youth programs such as the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, and benefited from mentoring provided by Indigenous politicians and campaigners such as Charles Perkins, Esther Carroll and Elizabeth 'Trixie' Rowe. It's this that inspired her to become the state's first Aboriginal-owned tourism operator in the late 1990s, when she took tourists on a 'whale dreaming' cruise, decoding how Traditional Landowners lived in and around the harbour.

Today, her [Dreampoint Southern X](#) walking tours explore the foreshore around The Rocks, a place where the Gadigal had established campsites when the First Fleet came to shore in 1788. "I don't want to dwell on the invasion," she tells me. "I just want to talk about my lived experience. I'm positive and upbeat. Many visitors on my tours are embarrassed to ask questions at the start, as they think they should know about our country's history. I make them feel comfortable, and tell them they can ask the silliest or most serious questions. There are no wrong questions; I'm not going to judge."

Across the country in Western Australia's Swan Valley, Wardandi Bibbulmun Elder Aunty [Dale Tilbrook](#) is a pioneer when it comes to bush tucker. Many restaurants around Australia today feature native ingredients on their menus, whether wattleseed, quandong, saltbush or lemon myrtle. It's likely they took some inspiration from Dale, who has been operating a business highlighting Indigenous ingredients for more than 25 years. Her beautiful property grows a wealth of native produce, which vary over the six seasons in Aboriginal culture. "I know a lot about bush food. It's very dear to my heart. From my Elders I've acquired a lot of knowledge, and have backed that up with my own research," she says.

Dale also co-owns a gallery in Western Australia, and hosts culinary masterclasses around the world.

Also in Western Australia, Wola Gija woman Bec Sampi is the head guide at [Kingfisher Tours](#), where she reveals stories of the Kimberley region in a way possible only for someone born, raised and educated with 65,000 years of intergenerational stories. Bec's playground as a child was Purnululu National Park – it was here that she gained a wealth of cultural and geographical knowledge from her Elders, who passed on their stories to her. She's an advocate for Aboriginal rights around Australia, and is also the founder of Garingbaa Native Bush Botanicals, which makes beauty products infused with bush lavender and coconut oil, among other ingredients.

Cross over to Queensland to meet Elisha Kissik, founder of [Yura Tours](#), who hosts tours taking in the spectacular surrounds of her home on Quandamooka Country on North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah. Elisha's grandmother taught herself to read and write and once she did she wrote prolific letters to government saying she would put the island on the map, and she did. The stories Elisha tells are direct from her grandparents and she hopes her girls will continue to pass culture down from generation to generation. "I've got three young girls and my middle child is really interested in what I do. She loves her culture and loves to speak in front of people. The thing is there's not a lot of Aboriginal women tour guides around. I want to make it accessible and let the girls know that you can make a living from actually being on Country and doing what you love."



Carleeta Thomas, wukalina Walk, Tasmania

An esteemed lead guide at [wukalina Walk](#) in Tasmania / lutruwita's northeast, Carleeta Thomas studied hairdressing before being headhunted to join the Aboriginal-owned company. "I never thought of doing anything like this. Of talking about myself and my culture," she says. "But I like being able to connect with guests on every level. I'm sharing what I know, and learning every time I take a tour."

Carleeta, a pakana woman, was approached to become a guide on the experience – the first Aboriginal-owned tour in Tasmania – fresh out of high school. "I was really lucky for the Elders to see something in me at such a young age," she says. "Being on Country is powerful. Learning about my culture and being able to share what I know is amazing."



KIMBERLEY CALLING: 8 WAYS TO SEE NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA IN A NEW LIGHT



Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia

1

Mabu Buru was conceived to reveal Broome / Rubibi's Aboriginal history through the eyes of Johani Mamid, a proud Karajarri, Bardi, Nyul Nyul and Yawuru man who was raised in this part of Western Australia and has an intimate knowledge of its flora, fauna and stories. You can partake in experiences that last from a few hours to four nights. "I decided that to be unique, I needed to make Mabu Buru really personal and hands-on. I wanted it to be focused on sharing stories about us and our culture," Johani says.

2

Be prepared for the unexpected when you visit Broome / Rubibi, says Yawuru man Bart Pigram. Bart's tours through his company Nartijia Experiences focus on Broome / Rubibi's mangroves. "Most people drive straight past them. But this is still an abundant food bowl. When I take people foraging here I show them how my people have been living and eating for 20,000 years – in just two hours. We collect shellfish like pipis, cockles, mangrove snails, razor clams, crabs and molluscs and chuck them straight on the fire and eat them."

3

If you want to take a deep dive into Broome / Rubibi's history, join Robert Dann's Kimberley Cultural Adventures tours. Discover how the region became the centre of the world's pearling industry and the role Aboriginal communities played, explore forgotten roads and historic landmarks, and hear the local stories connected to them. Robert has a passion for native Australian plants, and has launched a side company that makes produce from boab fruit. You'll get to sample his delicious iced tea or ginger beer at the end of your adventure.



Kimberly Cultural Adventures,
Western Australia

4

Borrboron Coast to Creek Tours is led by Bardi man Terry Hunter, who has lived on Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm, 220km north of Broome / Rubibi, for most of his life. Terry knows this corner of the Kimberley region intimately, and his walking tour combines stories of his childhood, the teachings of Aboriginal cultures and bush knowledge, and reveals how his family history is tied to the pioneering beginnings of the region's pearl trade. You'll eat fresh oysters, enjoy an art lesson on pearl-shell carving and discover the marine biology projects underway on the pearl farm.



Borrboron Coast to Creek Tours,
Western Australia



Ngurrangga Tours, Western Australia

6

The vast landscapes and Dreaming stories of the Pilbara, Burrup Peninsula and Millstream Chichester National Park are brought to life with Traditional Owners on a Ngurrangga tour, revealing astounding rock art dating back as far as 40,000 years. Owner Clinton Walker's experiences in Murujuga National Park show off some of the stunning Aboriginal images that document everything from first contact with Europeans to megafauna and other extinct species.

5

Choose your Kimberley adventure with Kingfisher Tours. Perhaps soaring over the Buccaneer Archipelago, Montgomery Reef and the Horizontal Falls on a scenic flight before taking a dip in remote waterholes. Maybe joining expert Aboriginal guides for a 4WD adventure to Echidna Chasm, World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park or on the Mini Palms walk. Or alternatively traversing Kununurra to Bullo River Station via Lake Argyle. All the while, you'll gain a deeper understanding of this remarkable place as well as its people, wildlife and the immense passage of time etched into every crevice of the dramatic landscape.

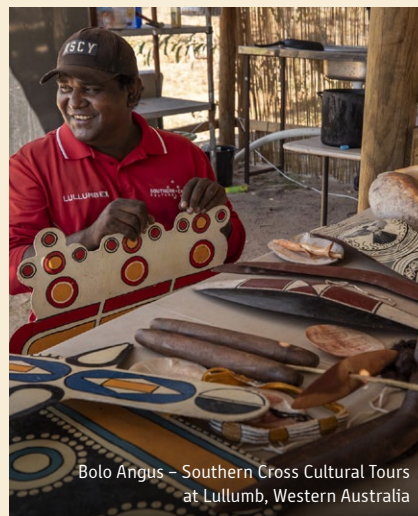




Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb,
Western Australia

7

Explore the Kimberley's Dampier Peninsula with Bardi Jawi man Bolo Angus on his [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#). Bolo's off-road 4WD tagalong tours unfold through cultural stories, songs, hands-on experiences and survival skills including hunting methods. The experience culminates with a cook-up of bush tucker that has been collected during the tour, from mud crabs to oysters. It doesn't get any fresher than this.



Bolo Angus - Southern Cross Cultural Tours
at Lullumb, Western Australia



El Questro - Injiid Marlabu Calls Us,
Western Australia

8

Experience the vast and untamed beauty of El Questro Wilderness Park on an [Injiid Marlabu Calls Us](#) tour with Traditional Owners of the land. The walking experience brings to life the stories and spirit of reconciliation, incorporating a burning and cleansing ceremony that is important to Ngarinyin cultural and spiritual methodology. It awakens the senses to the call of Marlabu and invites guests to listen, breathe, speak, see and immerse themselves in the culture and Country of El Questro through the perspective of its Traditional Custodians.





Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Victoria



The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, New South Wales

FLORAL FOCUS: HOW AUSTRALIAN BOTANIC GARDENS ARE HELPING PRESERVE CULTURE

Whether Kakadu plum, lemon myrtle, saltbush or quandong, Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been harnessing the powers of native ingredients for tens of thousands of years – for both food and medicine. Today 'bush tucker', as it's known, is increasingly being featured on restaurant menus and cocktail lists across the country. And while it grows wild in many parts of Australia, it's also being nurtured in the heart of some of our biggest cities.

Take, for example, the Aboriginal Heritage Walk in the [Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne](#), a significant cultural site for the Eastern Kulin nation. Here, just two kilometres from Melbourne / Narrm's city centre, you'll find a traditional camping and meeting place for the local First Peoples. Join an Aboriginal guide on a walking tour of the gardens – one of the most impressive urban landscapes in the Southern Hemisphere – and take lessons in plant lore, medicine, tools and ceremony, while learning more about the ancestral traditions that evolved on this picturesque patch of Earth.

You can enjoy a similar experience at The [Royal Botanic Garden Sydney](#), 30 hectares of green in the heart of Australia's largest city, which has long been a significant site for the Gadigal people. The garden runs an Aboriginal Harbour Heritage Tour and a Bush Tucker Tour, with views taking in Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge. Horticulturalists mapped out a trail through the garden that puts native Australian plants in focus. Walking with an Aboriginal guide, you stop and look around, and learn about what you can eat. Most people just wander past without noticing the small things: wattleseed, lilly pilly, bush pepper, Port Jackson figs.

The Australian Native Garden in Adelaide / Tarntanya also showcases innovative and artistic ways of using native plants on a domestic scale. With guides from Aboriginal-owned and -operated [Southern Cultural Immersion](#) (SCI), you can explore the gardens and discover flora that is endemic to the Adelaide plains or native to other parts of Australia. Corey Turner, the founder of SCI, says guests on his tours are always fascinated by the healing properties of native plants. "There are so many things around us that we can eat for wellness. You just need to know where to look."

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION: WHAT'S THE PROTOCOL FOR TAKING PHOTOS AT SACRED ABORIGINAL SITES?

Thanks to having diverse and fascinating cultural practices and sites, it's understandable that people from around the world want to photograph Australia's First Nations people, places and practices. It's not a phenomenon unique to Australia – we all want to remember the amazing experiences we have when travelling the globe. But it's one that requires particular thought amid Aboriginal communities in Australia, given the significant spiritual importance of certain destinations and people.

Here are a few things to consider before taking *that* photo:

1. Ask. Ask. Ask: If you're not sure if you can, or should, be taking a photo of a person or a site, always ask first. "Most of the time there's no problem," says Bart Pigram of [Narljija Experiences](#) in Broome. "But sometimes, if it's a really important site, like a midden or ancient rock art, then you may need permission from either your guide or Elders. Don't be afraid to ask, though!"

Always ask for a parent's permission if taking a photograph of children and do not share the photographs without their consent.

2. What's the purpose of your photo? Will it be empowering and show your destination or subject in a positive, uplifting manner?

3. Do your research. Some destinations, like Uluru, require professional film crews, photographers, artists and sound recordists to obtain a permit to carry out commercial work in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. You also need a permit to use an existing image of the park for a commercial purpose, such as in a magazine, newspaper or on a blog. In addition, many rock-art sites around the country also require



Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, New South Wales



Narljija Experiences Broome, Western Australia



Jarramali Rock Art Tours, Queensland

a permit for photography, or in many instances prohibit it. Read the signs, stay informed and be prepared before you visit these destinations.

"Many of the rock-art sites we visit on Jarramali tours are fine to take photos of – I have worked with Elders to ensure that. But other places around the country can only be seen, not photographed," says Johnny Murison, owner of [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#) through Quinkan Country in northern Queensland.

4. Reach out to the local land councils or Elders for permission to document on their land. Or, ask your tour company to do so on your behalf in advance. Be clear of your motive and your intentions to distribute the material you capture – are you visiting as a tourist, or as a professional photographer?

5. Don't photograph gravestones and tombstones or meeting places that have spiritual importance. Sacred sites are places within the landscape that have a special meaning or significance under Aboriginal tradition. These can include natural features like hills, rocks, waterholes, trees, plains and lakes, or man-made sites such as gravesites. These sites are very important to the local people and usually have restricted access as they may feature Totems and objects of importance. If images are taken and reproduced without permission, then it's seen as very disrespectful.

WITHIN EASY REACH: ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES ARE MORE ACCESSIBLE THAN YOU THINK

If you think Aboriginal cultural experiences in Australia are inaccessible – time and distance wise – rest assured that many are within easy reach of (if not within) major city hubs. Here are seven you can access within an hour of a major airport.

Victoria: Koorie Heritage Trust *Melbourne / Narm city centre*

Newly renovated and in the heart of Melbourne / Narm's Federation Square, Koorie Heritage Trust is the ultimate place to experience Aboriginal Australia within an urban setting. The not-for-profit offers several ways to gain insight into how Aboriginal peoples in Victoria once practised their culture in this area and how they continue to keep it alive today, including Australia's only stand-alone First Peoples arts and cultural centre. Drop in to browse the incredible museum-style collection, which includes oral histories, photography, art, boomerangs, possum skin cloaks, eel traps and ancient stone tools. Or sign up for walking tours, led by an Indigenous guide who shares the city's Aboriginal history and their own story along the banks of the Yarra River and to significant sites, including scar trees.



Koorie Heritage Trust, Victoria



Southern Cultural Immersion, South Australia

New South Wales: Royal Botanic Garden *Sydney / Warrane city centre*

In certain foodie circles, foraging is a hot trend, but for the Gadigal people of Sydney / Warrane, it's a way of life. Wander through the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney with an Aboriginal guide and discover the history of Sydney, while learning about the ways plants are used to make bush foods and medicine. The Aboriginal Bush Tucker tour through the Cadi Jam Ora garden also provides an opportunity to discover how these native plants have been adapted to the modern palate. On the Aboriginal Harbour Heritage tour, join your First Nations guide and admire the beauty and history of Sydney Harbour through the lens of the Gadigal, with spectacular views of Sydney Harbour, the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge.

New South Wales: Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience *Sydney / Warrane city centre*

BridgeClimb Sydney's Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience offers unbroken views over Australia's largest city while you ascend the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It also comes with a side of history, both humbling and enlightening courtesy of your Aboriginal guide. Each guide brings different Dreaming stories to your climb, not to mention different Indigenous languages, and you'll learn a word or two before you reach the summit. Standing 134 metres above the water, it's hard not to lose your breath – likely due to a combination of the 1,332 steps, the 360-degree views and your guide's fascinating insights. From the pinnacle you'll see Tallawoladah (The Rocks), where Patyegarang (Australia's first Aboriginal language teacher) instructed botanist and explorer William Dawes on the languages of Sydney.

Western Australia: Dale Tilbrook Experiences *From Perth / Boorloo to Swan Valley: 30km (30mins)*

There's not much that Wardandi Bibbulmun woman Dale Tilbrook doesn't know about Aboriginal food, culture and art – with an emphasis on bush tucker and the use of plant and animal resources as food and medicine. Sign up for one of Dale's signature experiences and you'll get to sample seasonal native

produce grown on her lush Swan Valley estate, and learn about the nutritional profile of Aboriginal food and medicine plants.

Queensland: Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre *From Cairns to Mossman: One hour (70km)*

There's something incredibly spiritual about Mossman Gorge, a place where the Kuku Yalanji people have lived for centuries amid the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest; and where cool streams and soaring mountains are only outshone by the drama of the gorge itself. This part of the southern Daintree is one of the most complex ecosystems on the planet – when you visit, you'll understand why the region is so important to Aboriginal Australians, who traditionally relied on the diversity of the plants and animals for sustenance. You'll learn all about the ecosystems the Kuku Yalanji use for food and medicine, as well as the traditions that tie them to the land, on the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre's guided walks, which are led by Aboriginal guides.

South Australia: Southern Cultural Immersion *Adelaide / Tarntanya city centre*

Exploring Adelaide / Tarntanya on your own, it's likely you will walk straight past some of the city's most significant Aboriginal sites. But if you're in the company of a guide from [Southern Cultural Immersion](#), you'll enjoy a new perspective of the South Australian capital. Not only will you discover significant and spiritual locations, but you'll also have the chance to explore flora endemic to Adelaide – it's a particularly tasty tour if you enlist to wander through the Botanic Garden with your guide.

Western Australia: In Culture Tours *Perth / Boorloo city centre*

Fun fact: Kings Park / Kaarta Garu-Up in the centre of Perth is the largest inner-city park in the world. It's also a sacred place to the Traditional Custodians, the Noongar people, who camped here and came to give birth before European settlement. This fascinating history is revealed on a walking tour with Whadjuk man Steve Jacobs, who also decodes the astonishing variety of native flora and fauna throughout, and its uses to Aboriginal communities as both food and medicine.

ABORIGINAL LAND CARE: THE OLDEST SYSTEM OF SUSTAINABILITY ON EARTH

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples don't see a piece of land as something to fence off and own. Nor do they look at the bush as a place to extract as many resources as possible. They don't regard waterways as reservoirs to feed mass plantations. Instead, they see themselves and the land as one.

The world's oldest living cultures have been embracing sustainability long before it became fashionable to lower food miles and use plant-based plastics. For at least 65,000 years they have lived in harmony with the environment, adhering to a reciprocal relationship that honours, rather than exploits the land. The Earth is their mother, a force that enables their existence in return for care and respect.

In keeping with this, Aboriginal peoples believe the land owns the people, rather than the people owning the land. Everything within it is regarded as living, even rocks, and everything has equal value. When the land is hurt – for example in Australia's 2019/2020 mass bushfires – Aboriginal peoples hurt, too. There is grief at the loss of place, and everything from the memories to the sacred sites and native creatures contained in it.

This perspective of nature has led to a language rich in words and concepts that have no English equivalent. It has also resulted in seasonal calendars far more detailed than summer, autumn, winter and spring. On a walk with Josh 'Koomal' Whiteland of [Koomal Dreaming](#) in Western Australia, his people six seasons are explained as a noticing of subtle changes in the land, which set in motion a new diet and activity. Certain flowers blooming might indicate that wallabies are plump for eating; or when a particular fruit is ripe, it may coincide with a salmon run. On the Tiwi Islands, off the Northern Territory coastline, there are up to 13 seasons, something you can ask about on a [SeaLink NT](#) – Tiwi by Design Day Tour.



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia

The connection goes deeper still, to the core of Aboriginal identities. When a newborn enters the world, it is assigned a Totem – a living creature, water, tree or geographical feature – and from that moment on, it's their job to ensure the Totem is protected. Juan 'Karanba' Walker of [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) teaches young people in Far North Queensland's Daintree Rainforest region about their Totems. He will tell you about it as he helps you spear crabs the traditional way – a thoughtful craft that ensures you only catch as much as you'll eat.

Traditionally, Aboriginal peoples also adhere to a kinship system, where they belong to a piece of land (not the other way around) and must care for it. In modern times, this role is also given to Indigenous rangers, tasked with using a combination of cultural practices and modern science to conserve their environment. In northern Queensland, Kuku-Yalanji man Johnny Murison, from [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#) works closely with Elders to preserve the astonishing Quinkan rock art sites that he takes guests to, while revealing the link between Aboriginal communities and the land through stories revealed in the art.



Jarramali Rock Art Tours, Queensland



Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours, Queensland

EXPERIENCE REGENERATIVE TRAVEL ON AN ABORIGINAL TOUR

Described as leaving a place better than you found it – or the next step in sustainable travel – regenerative travel is a rising trend. So how can you get involved in Australia? If you've taken an Aboriginal tour, you've likely experienced regenerative travel without even knowing it.

Giving back to nature after benefiting from its bounty is a cornerstone of Aboriginal cultures. Near Cairns / Gimuy in Tropical North Queensland, Victor Bulmer, a Djunbunji Land and Sea Ranger and a guide with [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#), takes guests to an ancient midden on the company's Hands

on Country Eco Tour. This, he'll tell you, is one of the world's earliest forms of conservation – shells and bones discarded here indicated to visiting Aboriginal groups which recently-consumed produce should be avoided to maintain a healthy ecosystem. By taking a tour with Victor or one of his fellow rangers, visitors can help to support their work preserving sacred sites like middens – and the important lessons they continue to teach us all.

The ancient aquaculture systems at southwestern Victoria's [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape](#) also continue to teach us important lessons about conservation and engineering.

The Gunditjmara-owned and -operated Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre stands on a unique UNESCO World Heritage site, listed solely for its Aboriginal cultural significance. This extraordinary region bears evidence of one of the world's oldest and most extensive aquaculture systems, dating back over 6,600 years. The Gunditjmara people ingeniously constructed an intricate network of channels, weirs and dams to capture and harvest kooyang (eels), showcasing their remarkable engineering prowess. From the Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre, visitors embark on cultural tours led by Gunditjmara guides, discovering ancient lava flows, fish traps, eel-smoking trees and remnants of Aboriginal stone huts.

Aboriginal tours also reveal that many traditional Aboriginal regenerative techniques continue to play important roles in safeguarding Australia's delicate ecosystems today. On the immersive Yuin Retreat hosted by [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) on the New South Wales South Coast, you'll learn how cultural burning developed by your Yuin guides' ancestors is now being harnessed to prevent destructive fires on this picturesque stretch of coast.

Regenerative tourism isn't just about regenerating the natural environment, as you'll discover at [Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours](#). Its art centre plays a part in preserving and regenerating the Miriwoong language, which has fewer than 20 fluent speakers remaining,



Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, Western Australia

by providing a place for Miriwoong artists to gather to work on their craft and share their language and culture.

All Aboriginal experiences, in fact, can be described as regenerative travel. At a time when positive-impact travel has never been more important, engaging in Aboriginal tourism offers myriad opportunities to pay it forward.



Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, New South Wales

DIVE INTO INDIGENOUS CULTURES IN CAIRNS



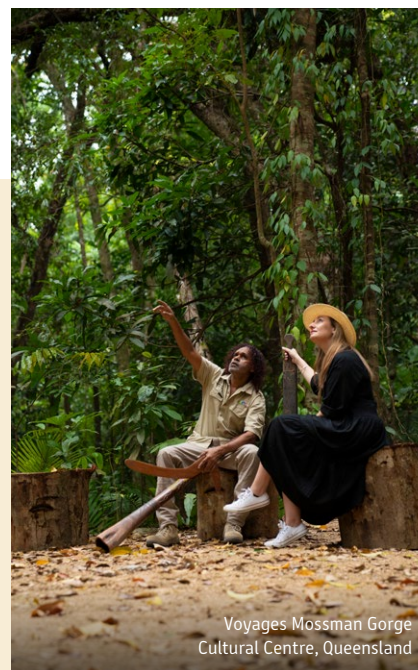
Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

Straddling the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef, Cairns / Gimuy doesn't just brim with natural beauty. This buzzing Tropical North Queensland city is also rich in Indigenous histories and cultures, with each and every Aboriginal tourism operator offering unique opportunities to experience them.

Admire the world's largest living organism from a fresh perspective on a day trip from Cairns with [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#). As you cruise to the Great Barrier Reef, First Nations cultural guides share its Creation story, deepening your cultural understanding of this special place before you dive in to explore a vibrant aquatic wonderland on an optional guided snorkelling tour or scuba diving experience.



Janbal Gallery, Queensland



Voyages Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, Queensland

Also departing from Cairns are cultural experiences on Aboriginal land run by [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#). From hands-on foraging for bush tucker and native medicines, to storytelling sessions hosted by Traditional Owners around a crackling fire, all tours offer a rare glimpse into the region's sacred and spiritual Mandingalbay Yidinji culture.

North of Cairns lies Kuku Yalanji Country. Discover how these rainforest people have lived in sync with the Daintree Rainforest for more than 40,000 years on an Indigenous-guided Dreamtime Walk run by the [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre](#). Proud Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker and his team from [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) also visit the magnificent Mossman Gorge and similarly lush Cape Tribulation



on their half- and full-day cultural Daintree tours, with guides sharing their own ancestral knowledge of the land's stories, bush tucker and medicines along the way.

The region's verdant rainforest also provides a magical backdrop for [Flames of the Forest's](#) Aboriginal Cultural Experience. As you savour a tropical alfresco dinner near Port Douglas, two Kuku Yalanji brothers share their remarkable culture through storytelling, music and song. In nearby Kuranda, [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park](#) also invites you to engage with Aboriginal cultures via a number of experiences including the Pamagirri Aboriginal Dance Performance and Dreamtime Walk, with both revealing fresh insights into local First Nations traditions and beliefs.

Get your creative juices flowing during an Aboriginal Art Workshop at [Janbal Gallery](#), where renowned Aboriginal artist Brian 'Binna' Swindley will teach you how to create your own piece of Australian art using Aboriginal techniques. Workshops with Binna can also be included as part of small-group, Indigenous-led tours departing Cairns and Port Douglas with [SEIT - Daintree Rainforest](#). Even if you're lucky enough to experience every Indigenous tour in Cairns, you can bank on learning something new every time.

A TASTE OF PLACE: ABORIGINAL DINING EXPERIENCES THAT ELEVATE NATIVE PRODUCE

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around Australia, the bush is a veritable supermarket – if you know where to look. There's wattleseed that can be used to make damper, Kakadu plum to deliver a hit of vitamin C, finger lime for a citrusy zing, and saltbush to season and enhance flavours. But all too often, we walk right past this native bounty, unaware how it grows, in which part of the country it exists, and how it can be used to elevate a dining experience.

That's where Indigenous fine dining comes in, offering the chance to experience bush flavours in nuanced dishes and dreamy settings. Take Ayers Rock Resort's [Tali Wiru](#) experience, where your open-air dining room comes backdropped by the natural drama of Uluru. Each dish in your four-course meal presents native produce in an innovative way. Think: pretty plates of wild Moreton Bay bug with finger lime wattleseed-crusted Dorper lamb with a pepperberry aioli, and desert honey and Kakadu plum mousse.

Meals are just as memorable at Flames of the Forest's [Aboriginal Cultural Experience](#), where chefs serve seasonal specialties that might include smoked crocodile rillettes with salsa verde, and lemon-myrtle-infused kangaroo loin on a bed of wild rocket and toasted macadamias. Your setting, however, shifts from the outback to the rainforest – you'll think you've been transported to the pages of a fairytale while dining amid thousands of twinkling lights and candles amid the Wet Tropics of Queensland outside Port Douglas.

Nearby in Cairns / Gimuy, the [Mandalgabay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#) team host their [Deadly After Dark – Sunset, Canapés and Culture](#) experience under a canopy of ancient melaleuca trees. There's a traditional welcome and inspired bites: green ant salmon gravlax with desert lime salsa, mud crab drizzled with lemon aspen mayo and perfectly seared Queensland scallops.



Saltwater Eco Tours, Queensland



Tali Wiru, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia -
Ayers Rock Resort, Northern Territory



Flames of the Forest, Queensland

Further south, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, Indigenous-owned [Saltwater Eco Tours](#) offers several immersive – and tasty – sailing experiences hosted on the peaceful waterways of Mooloolaba. Sign up for the Bushtucker Cultural Cruise and over lunch, you'll be served dishes like smoked barramundi with lemon myrtle aioli, prawn skewers dusted with native spices, and goat's cheese, fig and pepperberry tarts.

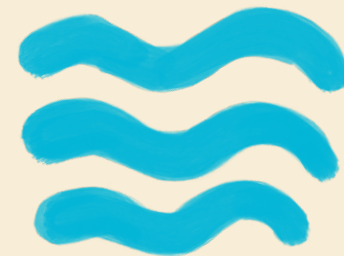
Even further south in Victoria, Budj Bim Cultural Landscape's Tae Rak Café offers a deep dive into the speciality of the ancient aquaculture site – kooyang (eel). You can try it smoked in arancini balls, or as part of a tasting plate with eel pâté and other sides. Other dishes on the menu include kangaroo souvlaki, squid seasoned with bush salt and lemon myrtle cheesecake.



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland

Hands-on activities make learning more fun for kids. And that's exactly how kids learn about Aboriginal cultures on the [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience](#) at Rainforestation Nature Park near Cairns / Gimuy in Tropical North Queensland. In addition to exploring the park on a guided walk with an Aboriginal guide, kids can practice throwing a boomerang and watch an interactive dance show.

They can also learn to channel their inner artist in painting sessions, an experience on offer at [Janbal Gallery](#) in Mossman, north of Cairns / Gimuy. Here, kids can get their kicks painting on canvas or paper under the guidance of Brian 'Binna' Swindley, the gallery's owner and a talented artist in his own right. At the end of the lesson, they'll have their very own piece of Australian art to take home – along with a memorable taste of Kuku Valanji culture.



5 ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES PERFECT FOR KIDS

Every Aboriginal experience you participate in is educational and eye-opening, but some are more contemplative than others. And for good reason – you're often visiting spiritual sites with Elders, and hearing revered sacred stories and perhaps also sobering histories. But there are other experiences that encourage you to have serious fun while gaining an appreciation for Aboriginal cultures. And many of these experiences are targeted at kids – and the young at heart.

There's something about zooming down the largest shifting sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere that makes young travellers get why Port Stephens, a two-hour drive north of Sydney / Warrane, is such a special place, and has been to the Worimi Aboriginal people for millennia. Here, [Sand Dune Adventures](#)' adrenaline-pumping quad-bike tours take kids young and old (kids aged 16 and above can ride their own bike; younger kids can double with a rider over 16 years) across Stockton Bight Sand Dunes in the Worimi Conservation Lands, covering some 4,200 hectares. This part of New South Wales is off-limits to most people

– unless you're with a Worimi guide and have good screaming lungs. Book the 1.5-hour tour for the thrilling chance to try sandboarding, too.

Little ecologists are also known to squeal in delight when they spy enormous saltwater crocodiles on tour with [Kakadu Tourism](#). Their Yellow Water Cruises offer a front-row seat to the Northern Territory's wildlife, which includes some 2,000 plant species, 280 types of bird and 60 different mammal species. How do you compress that into show-and-tell?

You can head out on the water less cautiously with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) in Western Australia, where kid-friendly kayaking around the azure Shark Bay comes minus the crocs. This World Heritage Site is one of Australia's great wilderness areas, a place where pindan soil fades into powdery sand and opaline water, perfect for paddling about with kids while on the lookout for turtles. This lesson in marine life – and its connections to Aboriginal cultures – is something your children won't find in any textbook.



Janbal Gallery, Queensland

CRUISE INTO ABORIGINAL CULTURES



Kakadu Tourism, Northern Territory

More crocs are in your sights on [Kakadu Tourism's](#) Yellow Water Cruises, where a sunset experience casts dazzling light over this Northern Territory billabong. This bewitching time of day is like happy hour for animals that come out to play – crocs aside, there are water buffaloes grazing along the shore, not to mention a cacophony of birds. In fact, around one-third of Australia's bird species can be found in Kakadu National Park, with at least 60 species in the wetlands. Which means you'll likely spot whistling ducks and magpie geese alongside brolgas, jabirus and eagles, the latter circling overhead in search of prey.

There's something special about being on a boat. Perhaps it's the immersion in nature, or the calming effect of gliding across the water. Maybe it's the prospect of spotting wildlife that calls the local marine environment home. Joined by an Aboriginal guide, the experience isn't just relaxing and restorative, it's also informative and educational.

[Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours'](#) Djunbunji Land and Sea Rangers navigate boats along Trinity Inlet, a serene tropical waterway fringed by mangroves that, in recent years, has been in environmental decline due to overworked land and the introduction of invasive species. On the Hands On Country Eco Tour departing from Cairns / Gimuy, you'll learn how the rangers have collaborated with scientists to bring the ecosystem back to life. Your ranger guides hold encyclopaedic intel of the inlet and know all the top vantage points to spot birds, fish and saltwater crocodiles.



Saltwater Eco Tours, Queensland



Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours, Queensland

Sunset is also a beautiful time of day to cruise the peaceful waterways of Mooloolaba on Queensland's Sunshine Coast with [Saltwater Eco Tours](#). Hosted on the beautifully restored, historic Spray of the Coral Coast, the company's tour options include opportunities to learn about local Gubbi Gubbi / Kabi Kabi culture as well as Indigenous co-owner Simon Thornalley's own Sea Country connections, all the while enjoying live music. Come back during the day for a lunch bush tucker cruise to devour dishes like smoked barramundi with lemony myrtle cream and prawn skewers dusted with native spices.

Back in Cairns / Gimuy, [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel's](#) catamaran tours offer eye-opening Indigenous perspectives on the Great Barrier Reef. As you cruise towards the World Heritage-listed ecosystem, the company's First Nations cultural guides share its evocative Creation story. When you drop anchor at Moore Reef, 47 kilometres (29 miles) offshore, there's the chance to flipper among some of the 1,625 species of fish that call the Coral Sea home. Drifting between bomboras and coral fans you'll spot cardinal fish, moray eels, clownfish and turtles – back on board, your guides will regale you with tales about the importance of these species to Indigenous cultures.





Firescreek Botanical Winery Aboriginal Experiences, New South Wales

FEEL THE RHYTHM OF ABORIGINAL INSTRUMENTS

Fancy yourself as a bit of a musician? Put your skills to the test during an experience that spotlights Aboriginal instruments in all their glorious diversity. Talented performers across Australia make it look easy, but the skill required to master some traditional instruments demands decades of practice. Take the didgeridoo, its haunting sounds ranging from a basic drone to rhythm-setting and trumpeting.

On the lush grounds of Firescreek Botanical Winery on the New South Wales Central Coast, Aboriginal Elder Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan will have you in a trance from the moment he picks up his didgeridoo as part of the property's [Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience](#).

The technique, he says, requires circular and wobble (pulse) breathing. If you're not familiar with either, you might find yourself spluttering into the didg when you're invited to give it a go. But Gavi is encouraging and will keep pace with wooden clapsticks.

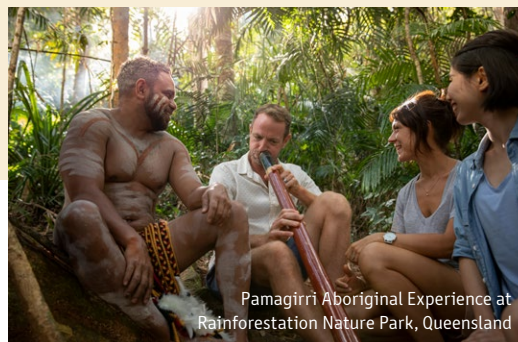
It's a similar story on a [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) tour in Western Australia's Shark Bay region. The Didgeridoo Dreaming Night Tour with owner and guide Darren 'Capes' Capewell is at once fun and moving, informative and relaxed. Spend two hours beside a campfire with Capes, who will regale you with Dreaming stories before belting out a couple of tunes on his didgeridoo, its resonant and tribal tones echoing across the star-bedazzled sky. It's your turn next, so pay attention.

It's important to be sensitive to cultural norms when reaching for a didgeridoo, as in some Aboriginal communities playing the instrument is off-limits to women. Be mindful that a woman, given permission to play, should not be photographed or videoed doing so. Similar etiquette may apply to other instruments, including the bullroarer, which makes a distinctive whirring sound when played, only

by men, during initiation ceremonies and other rituals, and at sacred sites. If you're unsure whether it's appropriate to play, just ask.

A virtual orchestra of didgeridoos echo through the rainforests of Tropical North Queensland during the [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience](#) at Rainforestation Nature Park near Cairns / Gimuy. Talented musicians can imitate the sounds of kangaroos and kookaburras – after the show, you can have a go at doing the same; or try the gum leaf, its vibrational sound imitates birds.

Over in Broome / Rubibi with [Kimberley Cultural Adventures](#), guests will discover the abundance of bush foods and medicine plants, get hands-on with some traditional Nyul Nyul artefacts – and then experience a private didgeridoo performance, the haunting notes echoing around this vast countryside.



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia



AUSTRALIAN PLACES YOU CAN ONLY VISIT WITH AN ABORIGINAL GUIDE

As vast and open as Australia is, pockets of the country are inaccessible because their sacred status requires they be visited only with an Aboriginal guide. This not only offers exclusivity, but also takes you on an immersive journey into Indigenous histories and cultures, with insights that reveal just how wide, wonderful and ancient Australia really is.

The Yuin Traditional Owners of [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) created their motto – ‘give it away to keep it’ – in the understanding that sharing their knowledge and Country was the ultimate way to expand visitor horizons. The organisation offers experiences that take you to parts of Gulaga (Mount Dromedary) on the New South Wales South Coast – culturally significant places you couldn’t visit or truly comprehend without a Yuin guide. The forested mountain is not only beautiful, but also extremely sacred, and your expedition here on a two-night Yuin Retreat reveals moving Dreaming stories that will change the way you see this special area.

Further north in New South Wales, [Sand Dune Adventures](#) is owned and operated by the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, with the ultimate goal of preserving stories, culture and heritage across this part of the state. While Traditional Owners allocate some concessional permits that allow other operators to visit the Stockton Bight Sand Dunes here, the only other way to experience the longest moving sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere is on an exclusive dune-bashing experience with Sand Dune Adventures. On quad bikes you’ll zip across some of the 4,200 hectares (10,400 acres) of sacred coastal land, all the while learning why it is so special to the Worimi people.

On its tours across remote Arnhem Land and the Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory, [Venture North Safaris](#) pauses at Injalak Hill, home to some of the world’s most significant rock art. The only way to visit the main rock-art site is with an Indigenous guide from Injalak Arts. This not only ensures the protection of the art for future generations,

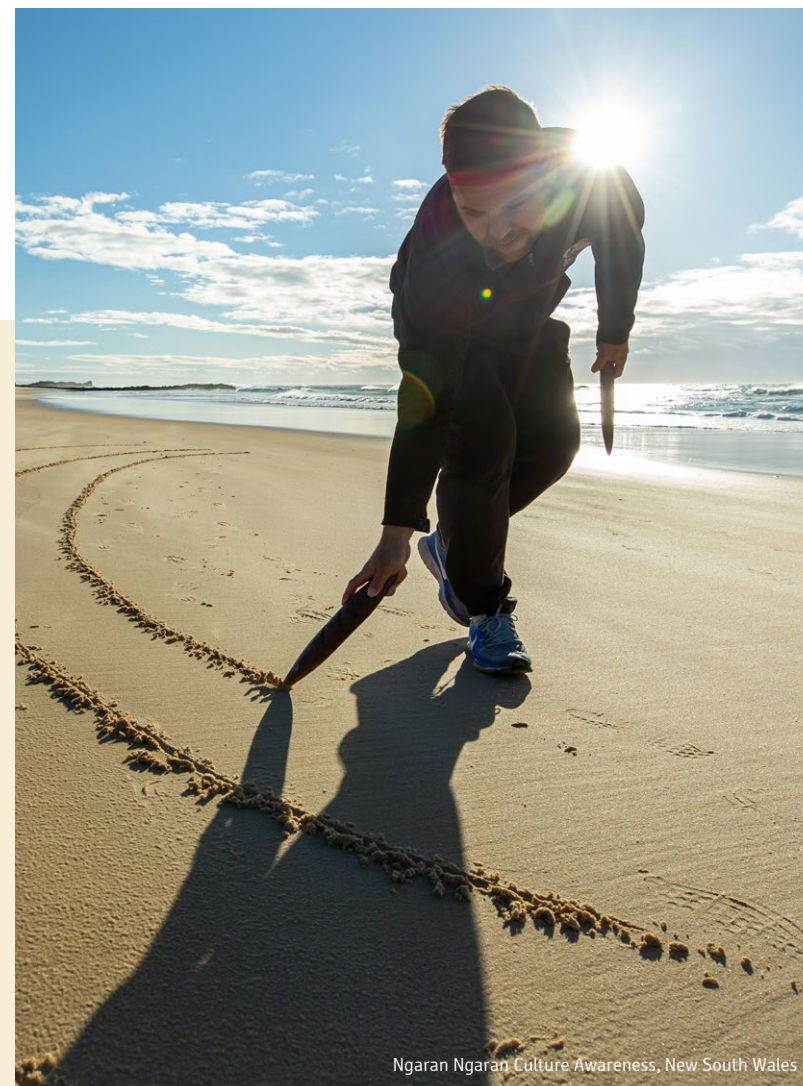


Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory

but also gives the work integrity and context – your guide is an artist and able to decode the work you see while you wander.

Sab Lord, the son of a buffalo and crocodile hunter and owner of [Lords Kakadu and Arnhemland Safaris](#), grew up in Kakadu alongside local Aboriginal clans, through which he formed lifelong connections. Thanks to these relationships he has permission to take his private charters on otherwise restricted cultural lands.

The [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism](#) offering is offered on Gunditjmara-owned land, a unique UNESCO World Heritage site listed solely for its Aboriginal cultural significance. This extraordinary region bears evidence of one of the world’s oldest and most extensive aquaculture systems, dating back over 6,600 years. From the Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre, visitors embark on cultural tours led by Gunditjmara guides, discovering ancient lava flows, fish traps, eel-smoking trees and remnants of Aboriginal stone huts.



Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, New South Wales

Wilpena Pound in the Flinders Ranges north of Adelaide is as wild as it is wonderful. Many sites surrounding the [Wilpena Pound Resort](#) are only accessible on an official tour. But with a Yura guide you can take an informative walk into the Sacred Canyon to learn about the cultural significance of the site and the creation of the lands, all the while marvelling at ancient rock engravings.



STEP INTO NATURE'S PHARMACY ON AN ABORIGINAL TOUR



Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

There's no denying the convenience of visiting a local pharmacy to pick up cough syrup, anti-inflammatories, toothpaste or soap. But for millennia, Aboriginal communities have used natural health and medicinal alternatives, found in the Australian bush.

"All this, everything around us, has a purpose," says Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler on his [Bundji Cultural Tours](#) around Wagga Wagga, in the Riverina region of New South Wales. "If you know where to look, you'll discover that the bush is like nature's pharmacy."

Indeed, you don't have to look far to find wild old man saltbush – it's tasty when consumed raw or cooked, and it can also be crushed and applied as a salve to cuts and stings. Along the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, Mark plucks



Bundji Cultural Tours, New South Wales



In Culture Tours, Western Australia

river mint, which, when infused in boiling water, provides relief for coughs and colds.

Aboriginal communities across Australia have various remedies for treating the common cold. Sign up for a walking tour of Kings Park in Perth / Boorloo with [In Culture Tours](#) and you'll discover bush foods and medicines growing in the world's largest inner-city park. Your guide might reveal how peppermint was used to treat sore throats and repel insects. And the many uses of the banksia trees for medicine, as food and to carry fire.

Kuku Yalanji guides at the [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre](#) are well versed in plants that can heal you – and help save your life.



The heart-leaved stinging bush gympie-gympie has fine hairs that can sting the skin for months; the root juice from the same plant relieves it. This, the Wet Tropics of Queensland, is one of the most biodiverse pockets of Australia, home to thousands of plants that have endless medicinal properties. Certain clays can be eaten to strengthen bones, pandanus fruit sap may relieve cuts and bites, and cheese fruit can soothe an upset stomach.

In Western Australia's Kimberley region, [Kingfisher Tours'](#) head guide Bec Sampi knows the Purnululu countryside intimately. On her tours you get the chance to sample bush medicines, then can take some home in the form of soap – Bec hand-makes bars under the label Garingbaa Native Bush Botanicals, each packed with skin-nourishing coconut oil and native lavender.

The [Royal Botanic Garden Sydney](#), [Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne](#) and [Adelaide Botanic Garden](#) grow a wealth of native plants, and the former two offer Aboriginal-guided tours that decode how they might be used for healing purposes – the latter you can explore with [Southern Cultural Immersion](#). Tea tree as an antiseptic; kangaroo apple in a poultice for joint pain; sticky hop-bush leaves to relieve toothaches and stings; calcium-rich lemon myrtle to strengthen bones; hop goodenia to stave off diabetes and help you sleep. Tried and tested for 65,000 years, it's knowledge that may well come in useful one day.

DISCOVER THE WORLD'S OLDEST CULTURES WHILE YOU LEARN A NEW SKILL

On any Aboriginal experience, you'll come away with a new appreciation for the world's oldest cultures. And on some, you'll also depart with a new skill. Starting a fire, sans matches; throwing a boomerang; or crafting an Indigenous-inspired work of art, perhaps a woven basket or a painting.

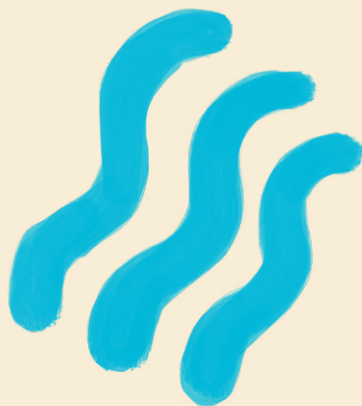
There's nothing quite like being handed the challenge to catch (not simply make) your own lunch. On his [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) in Tropical North Queensland, Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker does just that. While exploring Cooya Beach near Port Douglas, he hands you a spear and sets you loose to hunt for mud crabs. Relax – Juan's a talented and experienced hunter and provides guidance on how to best capture the delicious crustaceans that scuttle through the mangroves here. It's a similar story in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, where Bardi Jawi man Bolo Angus teaches you how to hunt and gather everything from bush potatoes to mud crabs and oysters. What a feast you'll have on his [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#).

Your arms also get a workout on a [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience](#) held nearby at Rainforestation Nature Park. Here, your hosts greet you with a Welcome to Country ceremony and traditional performance, then point you in the direction of spears and boomerangs to fling over people-free fields. It's not as easy as it looks, but you may just become a pro.

Your hosts are also talented musicians, and can teach you how to belt out a few notes on the didgeridoo – it's a skill that a number of Aboriginal tour operators around Australia have perfected and can help you hone, including Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan, host of the [Firescreek Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience](#) in New South Wales; and Darren 'Capes' Capewell of [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco](#)



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland



[Cultural Adventures](#) in Western Australia. If you sign up for a Didgeridoo Dreaming Night Tour with Capes, he'll also show you how to start a fire without using a single match – a handy life-saving skill to have up your sleeve.

While art may not save your life, it may well enrich it. A number of Aboriginal experiences around Australia offer insights into Indigenous art – whether dot painting, contemporary printing or weaving – then encourage you to create a masterpiece.

You can channel your inner artist during a [Tiwi By Design](#) day tour from Darwin with SeaLink NT. Immerse yourself in one of the oldest and most diverse art centres in Australia, where you'll have the chance to create your own screen print. Your dramatic surrounds provide plenty of inspiration. As do the wilds of World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, where [Kakadu Tourism](#) offers experiences that let you try your hand at art and weaving. And on the Gold Coast, the Jellurgal Journey group experience at [Jellurgal Cultural Centre](#) includes an art workshop. Participants get to design and paint their own Aboriginal-inspired art to take home.

Meanwhile, the Daintree Rainforest inspires the work of Kuku Yalanji man Brian 'Binna' Swindley, who also hosts creative workshops at his [Janbal Gallery](#) in Mossman, just north of Cairns / Gimuy. Paint on canvas or paper, then walk away with knowledge and skills that will provide endless enrichment.



Janbal Gallery, Queensland



RAINFOREST DREAMING: ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE WET TROPICS OF QUEENSLAND

Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland

The World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics of Queensland stretches for 450 kilometres along Australia's north-east coast. It's a place where rivers charge through gorges, waterfalls drop from vertiginous escarpments, and thousands of plant and animal species – many of them endemic – thrive in one of the country's oldest wilderness areas. Home to the Daintree Rainforest, its global significance is undeniable, but this ecosystem holds a particularly important place in Aboriginal cultures and traditions, and has done for millennia.

The Kuku Yalanji, whose Country lies north of Cairns / Gimuy, have a spiritual connection to the rainforest, says Traditional Custodian Juan Walker on his [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) tours through the verdant Daintree around Port Douglas. Having lived here his entire life, Juan knows every nook of the rainforest –



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland

hidden waterholes to swim in, where Ulysses butterflies like to show off their iridescent blue wings, and what native plants you can consume, like the luminous lime-green ants clinging to leaves of a bush. Most people wouldn't even notice them, but Juan encourages guests to give them a lick – they taste sour and lemony.

Indigenous Dreaming stories reveal just how deeply significant the Daintree is to Kuku Yalanji culture. And these Dreaming stories are ancient – your guide on a tour from the [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre](#) will gently remind you that you're exploring the world's oldest rainforest with a First Nations member of the oldest continuously living cultures on the planet. You may hear the story of why the region's cassowaries have a hard helmet on their heads, and how the rainforest was formed millions of years ago. You'll also discover the

rare fauna species that make the Daintree so special, like the Thornton Peak melomys and Bennett's tree-kangaroo.

Ancient stories will also bring the rainforest to life during a Dreamtime Walk as part of the [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park](#) outside Cairns. Your guide will describe the role of the Rainbow Serpent and demonstrate how local Aboriginal communities used spears and boomerangs to hunt for food.

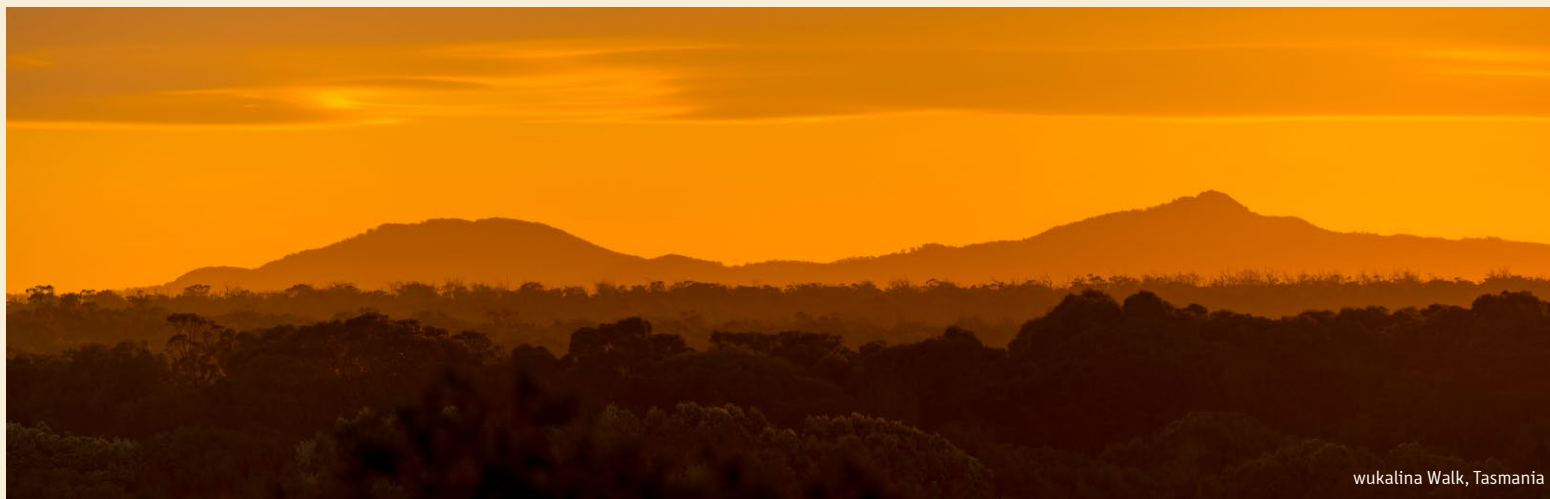
The Mandingabai Yidinji have sustained the land and water south-east of Cairns for millennia. But recent overuse and the introduction of foreign floral and faunal species saw biodiversity decline, a situation that Djunbunji Land and Sea Rangers were determined to reverse. They've spent years working with scientists to catalogue plants, animals and culturally significant sites, which you'll discover on a Djunbunji ranger-guided Hands On Country Eco Tour with [Mandingabai Authentic Indigenous Tours](#). As a result of the rangers' protection efforts, the rainforest region is once again thriving, and your eagle-eyed guide will point out the birds, fish and saltwater crocs that you'd likely cruise right past without a Traditional Owner at your side.



Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia - Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, Queensland

GOING WALKABOUT: AN ANCIENT MEANS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL TRAVEL

Going walkabout is the Aboriginal version of mindfulness: you leave your everyday worries and responsibilities behind in order to reconnect with Country and culture, returning to the basics and becoming centred as you travel lightly through Australia's diverse landscapes. The practice has been used for tens of thousands of years, traditionally as a rite of passage for young men who journey alone – on foot and guided by spirits – for extended periods of time, but also by those travelling to ceremonies and family obligations. Walkabouts often trace ancient paths known as Songlines, a network of orally shared routes marked out by



wukalina Walk, Tasmania



Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory

the stars and set by Creation ancestors during the Dreaming. Interestingly, many Songlines have ended up forming major transport highways across post-settlement Australia.

Today's walkabouts tap into the trend of transformational travel, creating immersive, perspective-shifting experiences which are both challenging and enriching.

Tasmania / lutruwita's [wukalina Walk](#) involves a conscious setting aside of time to deeply

engage with the stunning larapuna (Bay of Fires) and the island-faring palawa people – the only culture to evolve in isolation for more than 10,000 years. You'll also follow in the footsteps of ancestors of the Kuku Yalanji Rainforest Aboriginal people with [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) where, pattering through the Daintree, you'll see directional markers subtly crafted into tree branches by hunters and discover bush medicine growing under your nose. Take the multi-award-winning [Dreamtime](#)



[Walk](#) through Mossman Gorge for another perspective on Kuku Yalanji culture; your Aboriginal guide will walk you through local lore concerning bush foods, sacred ceremonies and connection to the land.

Down the coast from Sydney/Warrane, Ngaran Ngaran Cultural Awareness' two-night [Yuin Retreat](#) asks guests to walk on Country with their lead guide, reflecting on Aboriginal wisdom at several important places.

Extend the transformation with other multi-day journeys, such as [Venture North Safaris](#)' wildlife, rock-art and remote-culture expeditions through Kakadu, Arnhem Land and the Cobourg Peninsula. Additionally, to immerse yourself further into the life and rhythms of the communities, consider a multi-day itinerary with award-winning [Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris](#). Tailor-made luxury



Ngaran Ngaran Cultural Awareness,
New South Wales

experiences are run by long-time local character and guide Sab Lord, who has the blessing of local Aboriginal people to take these private charters on otherwise restricted cultural lands. And over three days you can explore two World Heritage-listed national parks in the Shark Bay region of Western Australia with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#). Learn the cultural story about ancient creation of Wilybidi (Francois Peron National Park) and Wirruwana (Dirk Hartog Island National Park) on a wild and wonderful immersive adventure.

HOW TO PURCHASE ABORIGINAL ART ETHICALLY

Tiwi Tours, Northern Territory

It seems like such a simple exchange, buying a piece of art from an Aboriginal artist. But there's so much behind it, with far greater impacts than most people realise.

Without art, many remote Aboriginal communities wouldn't survive. Art is a life source, both culturally and economically, with sales allowing Aboriginal people to remain on their traditional homelands – where other employment opportunities can be scarce – and share culture through their art.

That's why ensuring you make an ethical purchase is so important: it can be the difference between whether that artist gets to continue to create, or not.

[Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours](#) in Western Australia's Kimberley region suggests a number of ways you can feel confident you're making an ethical purchase, where the work is genuine and the artist is

fairly paid. A good way of knowing is asking if the seller is connected to the Indigenous Art Code (a system designed to preserve ethical Indigenous art sales), especially if it's a city gallery. This code dictates that you can be told how much the artist will get. At most art centres, an artist will receive about 60 per cent of the sale. Ethical dealers will be comfortable discussing such topics.

Another thing to check for is an authenticity document, or a digital label. Waringarri, for example, always offers a provenance certificate; it comes with every artwork. It gives you information about the artist and a story about that artwork. In some centres, scannable QR codes are being used for authentication; from 2021 to 2025, the Australian Government is supporting a wide rollout of the new technology to safeguard Aboriginal art.



Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, Western Australia

The other thing to consider is whether you buy from a gallery, or from a community-owned art centre like Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, or [Tiwi By Design](#) on Bathurst Island, off the coast of Darwin in the Tiwi Islands of the Northern Territory.

Art centres employ local Aboriginal people as arts workers and support the continuation of culture in the community. Purchasing art at one gives you the opportunity to support Indigenous communities and to help them develop economic independence. You're not just buying the piece of art, you're purchasing the opportunity for the whole community to be employed, because most art centres give 40 per cent of art sale proceeds to the community.

Here's what to ask before you buy Aboriginal art:

- What can you tell me about the artist?
- How did the artwork or product come to be in your art centre, gallery or shop?
- How is the artist paid for their work?
- Is your gallery a member of the Indigenous Art Code?

5 UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCES FOR CULTURE-LOVING COUPLES



Venture North Australia, Northern Territory

Date night in Australia isn't limited to dinner and a movie. If you're looking to spice things up, grab your partner and try one of these experiences spotlighting Indigenous cultures.

Jarramali Rock Art Tours, Queensland

Through hidden rock art, delve deeper and unravel the ancient stories of the Kuku Yalanji people to learn more about Australia's Indigenous history while visiting pristine and culturally meaningful Quinkan rock art sites, personally guided by Traditional Owners. Enjoy an unforgettable journey through what archaeologists say is a 20,000-year-old outback museum when you jump on board a helicopter in Cairns / Gimuy for a sky-high day ride to this incredible site with your host and owner of [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#), Johnny Murison.

Firescreek Botanical Winery Aboriginal Experiences, New South Wales

Forget chardonnay and pinot noir – when you visit Firescreek Botanical Winery, expect a wine tasting with a difference. Across a hectare in Holgate on the Central Coast, Nadia and Francis O'Connell grow fruits, flowers and herbs, much of their bounty spotlighting native produce. Davidson plums, mountain pepper and riberry are some of the botanicals infused into their distinctive drops, sample-ready at the cellar door. A more memorable way to gain an understanding of the produce is on respected Elder Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan's [Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience](#). Held every afternoon on the estate, this mouth-watering discovery of Indigenous ingredients culminates with a tasting of Firescreek's wines.



Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory and Western Australia

Is there anything more romantic than freshly shucked oysters and a flute of bubbles at sunset? It's just one of many moving moments you'll experience on a Top End expedition with [Venture North Safaris](#). Along with end-of-day treats served at your seaside eco-retreat, you'll get to splash about at the base of Kakadu's blissful Barramundi Falls, tour one of Australia's most exquisite rock art sites with an Aboriginal guide, and much more. It's a trip that doesn't only inspire connection with your significant other, but also with the world's oldest living cultures.

Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

Close your eyes and picture the colours of Australia: ochre soil, wide blue skies, dusty greens of eucalypt forest – these await in the Kimberley. [Kingfisher Tours'](#) Aboriginal guides lead tours on Country here, revealing landscapes that cleave off the edge of the Earth. Squeeze your partner's hand on a scenic helicopter flight over immense gorges painted with 40,000-year-old rock art. And chopper low over Western Australia's most dramatic waterfalls, pausing to cool off in a remote waterhole you'll likely have to yourself.

wukalina Walk, Tasmania / lutruwita

Snuggle in your architect-designed pod on the northeast coast of Tasmania / lutruwita, and sleep to the sound of the waves tumbling toward Cod Bay. This is krakani lumi ('place of rest'), your stylish campsite for two nights while on the [wukalina Walk](#). This four-day guided trek (Tasmania / lutruwita's first Indigenous-owned tourism experience) reveals the state's width and wonder. Days are spent hiking to sacred middens, clambering up mountains and padding barefoot along a Tiffany-blue coastline toward the Bay of Fires. Nights at the communal lodge pair saltbush chips with scallops cooked over the fire, and serious Southern Hemisphere stargazing.



wukalina Walk, Tasmania



TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL HEALING: THE ANCIENT ART OF WELLNESS

Dale Tilbrook Experiences,
Western Australia

Think wellness is protein shakes, superfoods, day spas and mindfulness? Aboriginal cultures put another spin on what we perceive as a modern trend. Practised for tens of thousands of years, Indigenous healers have nurtured the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of their people through food, massage, bush medicines and ceremony. If the spirit is healed, the body will heal.

Aboriginal peoples regard food as medicine, and a closer look at the produce they pluck from the bush reveals astonishing health qualities. The popular Kakadu plum, which grows in northern Australia, has the highest vitamin C content of any fruit in the world, offering up to 100 times the level of vitamin C found in oranges.

Meanwhile, native Australian herb lemon myrtle is rich in calcium, and endemic wattleseed is exceptionally high in protein, iron and zinc.

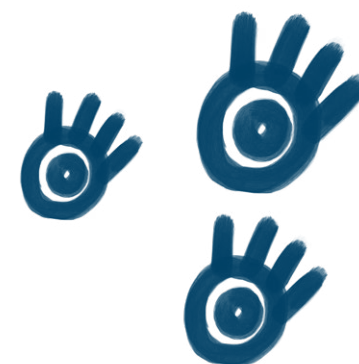
You can taste this wondrous bush tucker with [Dale Tilbrook Experiences](#) at Mandoon Estate in the Swan Valley, just outside Western Australia's capital city, Perth / Boorloo. Tilbrook will also proffer emu and goanna oils, which have long been rubbed on arthritic and sore joints. A one-hour tour with [Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours](#), near Kings Canyon in the central Northern Territory, also exposes you to such things, as well as the witchetty grub (an insect that produces a nutty, popcorn flavour when cooked).



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours,
Northern Territory

On the south coast of New South Wales, Dwayne Bannon-Harrison is proud to continue the oldest food culture in the world. As well as managing an Indigenous foods catering company where healthy eucalypt, tea tree and paperbark leaf are used, he runs [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#). Along with introducing people to medicinal plants, he shares Aboriginal healing methods. In line with his ancestors, he uses meditative vibration and song as a form of sound therapy, while smoking ceremonies act to cleanse those who move through the scented wafting air. His traditional Djiringanj sunrise ceremony recognises that each day is unique and must be lived well – a ritual that speaks to the mindfulness so many of us now practice. The healing properties of native produce are also revealed through Dwayne's Spirit Food @ Silos Kitchen tour - a five-course Indigenous dining experience that decodes the ingredients you're savouring, and their traditional uses as food and medicine.

It's vital that traditional remedies survive – something visitors assist in, by engaging in immersive learning.



CORPORATE CULTURE, ABORIGINAL LANDSCAPES: THE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES FOSTERING MODERN CONNECTION



Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland



Southern Cultural Immersion, South Australia

More than 1,100 Australian companies and organisations have a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), to integrate the principles of reconciliation into their business. It's a small step: embracing cultures and knowledge of Indigenous communities and cultivating pride in connecting with at least 65,000 years of storytelling, resilience and innovation is not a difficult task. Particularly given the wealth of forward-thinking Indigenous-owned and -operated organisations across the country. And it's a step bearing enormous rewards, positively impacting three million Australian workers daily.

Of the four official Reconciliation Action Plans you can adopt in partnership with Reconciliation Australia – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – each takes you one step deeper in your reconciliation journey. And each bears a common goal: developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and innovating to empower Indigenous communities.

Such opportunities abound, from workshops and tours in Arnhem Land to hikes around Tasmania / lutruwita, you don't have to go far to have immediate impact. Even if you're unsure about establishing an official RAP, Indigenous-led experiences enable corporate teams to reconnect with each other, and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

In Sydney / Warrane, the [Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience](#) gives your team a fresh perspective of the city, taking you 134 metres above the sea to the summit of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Just tackling the 1,332 steps is a bonding experience – but doing it in the company of an Aboriginal guide makes it compelling. Discover where an ancient, three-metre-high midden once stood and was later ground to lime to build the colony; and scan the horizon for Manly Cove (Kaimay), where Wangal man Woollarawarre Bennelong was recruited to act as an interpreter and mediator for then-governor Arthur Phillip. You will return inspired to seek out the city's many other secrets.

In Adelaide / Tarntanya, [Southern Cultural Immersion](#) is a 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned and -operated business, sharing culture on the Traditional Lands of the Kaurna People. The goal here is to create positive outcomes and a shared vision for a reconciled Australia via cultural tours, community engagement, art and authentic experiences. The one-hour Adelaide CBD Cultural Tour explores the heart of Adelaide / Tarntanya through a First Nations perspective, and is a brilliant way for your team to learn about the wonderful and tragic colonial history of the state's capital.

Further north in Queensland around Mossman Gorge, Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker offers a suite of cultural engagement experiences specifically tailored to corporate groups through [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#).

Whether a brief Welcome to Country smoking ceremony, or half a day immersed in interactive, team-building experiences, Juan's offerings highlight how Indigenous communities have cooperated in harmony for millennia...and how your company can follow suit.



Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience,
New South Wales

THE ANSWER TO MANAGING AUSTRALIA'S BUSHFIRE RISK COULD LIE IN TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL PRACTICES



Narlijia Experiences Broome,
Western Australia



Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness,
New South Wales

Australia's catastrophic bushfires during the summer of 2019/2020 wreaked havoc Down Under. More than six million hectares of land were burned across six states, leading to the loss of an estimated one billion animals.

The event has boosted calls for a new approach to fire and land management. But rather than come up with a fresh strategy, Australia may only need look to the past.

Aboriginal peoples have used fire as a tool in the natural environment for tens of thousands of years. Today, many Indigenous tour guides also work as park rangers who use the generations of fire knowledge passed down to them. If asked, they'll tell you that as their ancestors walked the land they would burn, lighting flames to lure animals out for hunting, as well as for traditional ceremonies

and cultural practices. Timing was everything: rather than spark flames when the land was crisp, Aboriginal forebears would only burn at the beginning of the dry season. That way, plenty of green growth would slow a fire's spread. The fires were also deliberately small, so they wouldn't get out of control. This careful method resulted in a mosaic style of burning that preserved wildlife habitats. It also triggered a gentle regeneration of the bush.

Mainstream interest in traditional measures is growing, but a combination of modern and ancient fire management is already used in many areas of the outback. In Western Australia's vast Kimberley region, where [Narlijia Experiences Broome](#) operates, such practices are commonplace. Narlijia guides are familiar with these collaborative fire management activities, as well as the skills

used in the past, and are happy to share what they know.

In the Northern Territory, where [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#) operates, local rangers also create fire breaks and burns to keep their country healthy. That means reducing dense patches of dry plant matter; Australia's oil-rich eucalyptus trees are particularly combustible. While exploring the World Heritage area of Kakadu National Park, guides are able to explain traditional fire practices to those with curiosity.

Similarly, [wukalina Walk](#) guides in northeast Tasmania, understand the necessity of implementing traditional burning to reduce weeds and boost biodiversity – a strategy used by palawa Elders for millennia. Much of the Australian environment responds positively

to fire, with some species only blooming and seeding after burning has occurred. The same new growth serves as an enticing food source for wildlife – making hunting easier – while ashy ground reveals animal footprints and burrows, reducing the effort in food sourcing. Ask, and you'll learn more.

Meanwhile, Dwayne Bannon-Harrison of [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) experienced Australia's devastating major bushfires firsthand. His business on the far south coast of New South Wales was within the impact zone. He can offer a personal insight to this shocking event, while also explaining his culture's long-held fire techniques and uses. Dwayne, like so many other Aboriginal people, knows that while looking ahead is important, we can also learn much from listening to the past.

WHAT ABORIGINAL TOTEM SYSTEMS CAN TEACH US ABOUT CONSERVATION

Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel,
Queensland

Imagine you were bestowed a plant, an animal or a geographical feature that protects you for your entire life – you're not permitted to hurt or damage that object in any way. Ever. In fact, it's your job to protect it. Now imagine if everyone around Australia was given the same task...

"It's a Totem, and it's a simple way to care for our Country," says Jai Singleton, a guide on [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel's](#) cruise expeditions from Cairns / Gimuy to the Great Barrier Reef.

"Having a Totem is the most basic form of conservation ever," Jai says. "It's a simple concept – yet so effective." So effective it has been practiced for millennia. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have always had Totems. It might be one of the fundamental reasons why the country is still so biodiverse today," says Jai.

Jai's Totem is the turtle, which is fitting, given that six of the world's seven species of marine turtles call the Coral Sea – Jai's backyard – home. He was assigned his Totem at birth, and from that moment it has been his job to protect it. He cannot eat it or harm it and, if given the opportunity, must go out of his way to nurture it. Sustainability 101.

Across Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples protect flora and fauna pertinent to their lands. And this special relationship with nature extends beyond the physical realm.

At Mossman in Tropical North Queensland, artist Brian "Binna" Swindley owns [Janbal Gallery](#), a place to showcase his own art as well as works from other Indigenous creatives. Binna's Totem is the cassowary – a large, elusive



Janbal Gallery,
Queensland

bird that lives in the surrounding rainforest. The cassowary appears in his paintings, and it also impacts his interactions with the world – at times Binna's "spirit animal" guides him through the wilderness.

Travel to south-western New South Wales, where Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler of [Bundiyi Cultural Tours](#) in Wagga Wagga *dreams* about his Totem – the blue-tongue lizard. "One night I had a dream about her," he says. "The next morning I woke up, and my wife told me she [my lizard] had showed up and was waiting for me outside. I should not be surprised – our Totems connect us back to the Country," Mark explains. "We protect it, look after it, and never eat it. It's a kind of land management we've been doing for 65,000 years."

Many communities also pay homage to their Totems through performance. Take a [Tiwi by Design tour](#) with SeaLink Northern Territory, for example, and your journey through the Tiwi Islands north of Darwin / Garramilla reveals artists telling their Totem tales through dance, song and music; depicting the animals and plants that have sustained the community for millennia.



SeaLink NT – Tiwi Islands,
Northern Territory

CULTURAL COMFORT: ANCIENT WISDOM FOR THE CURRENT ERA

First we fell in love with *hygge*, the Danish word that channels the delight of all things cosy and intimate. Then we got down with *wabi-sabi*, the Japanese term that embraces the beauty of imperfection. Now, as we collectively navigate a new era of uncertainty around the world, one of Australia's Aboriginal cultures offers up the perfect word for the times.

Wadekane is the word used by the Adnyamathanha people of South Australia's Flinders Ranges to describe the ability to sit in the moment, to wait for the next thing without worrying about how to make it happen, or when it will occur.

"It means something like 'wait on,'" explains Mick McKenzie, an Adnyamathanha Elder and a former guide at [Wilpena Pound Resort](#). To illustrate the point, he explains that the dry riverbeds in his country often fill with fallen branches from the big gums that line the banks. Rather than clearing them out, the Adnyamathanha wait to see what happens. "A big flood will come soon, or perhaps a fire – something will clear it out in time," says Mick.

This ability to allow things to unfold is part of the wisdom of Aboriginal Australia, born of a people who have mastered the art of surviving in a sometimes harsh landscape.

"Wadekane is a bit like the idea of karma – what's supposed to happen will happen."

Another of their rich lessons is the importance of maintaining strong relationships. During the COVID-19 crisis, many experts stressed that strong relationships are vital for making it through during difficult times. Aboriginal Australians have always treasured close family ties. In traditional culture, families are the networks through which lore is spread and through which identity is established.

"Your family is who you are," says Juan Walker of [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#), located in the Queensland town of Port Douglas. "Your family keeps you grounded,



Wilpena Pound Resort, South Australia

keeps you real. If I'm stuck, my family will help me, and I will help them."

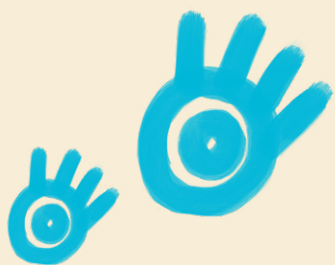
The idea of family – *jawun-karra* in the Kuku Yalanji language – is at the heart of Aboriginal cultures and extends beyond immediate relatives. "Everyone is close: I regard my cousins as my brothers," says Juan. "*Jawun-karra* includes friends as well as family – somewhere along the line, we're all *jawun-karra*."

Aboriginal peoples draw strength not just from their connection with family but also

their connection with the land. Like other Indigenous cultures around the world, they have an intimate relationship with the landscape around them. Scientific evidence increasingly shows that connecting with nature brings major stress relief. That is not news to Aboriginal peoples.

"The land gives us everything, from food to medicine," says Juan. "It nurtures us. Even when we are troubled, being on Country always helps us feel better."





DECODING ANCIENT MESSAGES IN THE LANDSCAPE WITH AN ABORIGINAL GUIDE

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities know how to read the land – they've been making decisions based on the behaviour and abundance of native flora and fauna for more than 65,000 years. And they've left messages for future generations across the country, whether to preserve traditions, to point toward food or to indicate underground water. Case in point: the “scar trees” characterising the plains around Wagga Wagga.

This New South Wales Riverina city is flanked by three of the state's mightiest rivers. There was probably more water here a few hundred years ago, when Wiradjuri communities carved canoes from the trunks of trees – leaving “scars” – as a means of transport through now-dry plains. Most visitors wouldn't glance twice at these still-thriving eucalypts, but with Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler as your guide on a [Bundiyi Cultural Tour](#), these clues to the past come into firm focus. “You just need to know where to look,” says Mark.

The banks of Wagga Wagga's Murrumbidgee River tell another story of Wiradjuri heritage. Historically, clans feasted on freshwater mussels and native fauna, leaving behind piles of bones and shells known as middens. The idea, Mark says, was to inform subsequent visitors about what had been consumed, and what should thus now be avoided – an early conservation strategy that allowed animal species to regenerate.

Some middens are sacred and protected; other Indigenous communities welcome visitors to these sites, including palawa (Aboriginal Tasmanian) guides on Tasmania / lutruwita's [wukalina Walk](#). Participants on this three-night hike across the state's east are invited to



Bundiyi Cultural Tours, New South Wales



Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland

explore an enormous cultural living site on the Cod Bay coast, the spot revealing the diet of palawa communities past and – given its size – their proclivity to return regularly.

In Tropical North Queensland, the Daintree Rainforest reveals where Kuku Yalanji communities searched for food. On a tour with [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#), guide Juan Walker shows how his ancestors marked their trail through dense foliage by bending young saplings. “The trees heal and continue to grow in a particular direction, creating a ‘path’ through the forest, directing future wanderers toward food,” he says.

Turtles, kangaroos and barramundi were that food for Johnny Murison's Kuku Yalanji ancestors, whose incredible rock art paintings span cave walls at the Magnificent Gallery. On an overnight adventure with [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#), you'll head off-road from the tiny town of Laura on Queensland's Cape York Peninsula to gaze at the collection of 450 well-preserved works covering a 40-metre swathe of remote sandstone. “It's like a snapshot of animals and stories told 20,000 years ago,” says Johnny. Like scar trees, middens and rainforest markers, these paintings were designed by their artists to benefit future generations – and like so many beneficiaries over millennia, we remain in their debt.



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

EXPLORING ABORIGINAL CONNECTIONS TO WATER

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia feel a strong connection to the land and sea. Their relationship with Country is reciprocal – they relate to nature in a holistic way and the living environment is a fundamental part of their identity. By taking an immersive, water-based tour led by an Indigenous guide, you'll gain a greater understanding of these shared living cultures while developing a more meaningful connection to the water that surrounds – and flows through – our island home.

The Gumbaynggirr people of the New South Wales Mid North Coast have been paddling its waterways for tens of thousands of years, their ancestors using their knowledge of the tides to travel long distances in dugout canoes carved from hollowed tree trunks. [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#)' owner-operator Clark Webb, a Gumbaynggirr / Bundjalung man, says Elders often refer to major tributaries and waterways as “old highways”.

The Gumbaynggirr are saltwater people, and you'll learn about their connection to the water

on Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours' 2.5-hour stand-up paddleboarding tours, which are held on three idyllic waterways within the Solitary Islands Marine Park: the Coffs, Moonee and Red Rock Creeks. While paddling, you can admire the fish darting through crystal clear waters as your Aboriginal guide brings the Dreaming to life, and introduces you to some coastal bush tucker.

On the other side of the country in Western Australia, explore the World Heritage-listed Shark Bay – where the red desert meets the clear turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean – with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#). Stand-up paddleboard along the region's network of waterways and lagoons or kayak in the bay, where you'll share the ocean with intriguing marine life including rays, dugongs and turtles – many of which have cultural significance to the Nhandu and Malgana peoples.

In another World Heritage-listed area, this time in Queensland's tropical north, [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) takes visitors from Cairns / Gimuy to the spectacular Great Barrier Reef. As you

cruise to your destination, First Nations cultural guides share the Great Barrier Reef Creation story, deepening your cultural understanding of this diverse ecosystem before you dive in to explore a vibrant aquatic wonderland on an optional guided snorkelling or scuba diving tour.

Down the Queensland shoreline at the Sunshine Coast, [Saltwater Eco Tours](#) can take you cruising off the coast – or gliding in a canoe. Paddle along the Mooloolah River and discover the ecosystem through a First Nations lens.

Saltwater Guided Canoe Tours offer the chance for adventurers of all abilities to discover the secrets of Mooloolah River beyond the main channel through a First Nations lens. In an intimate small-group setting, guests paddle upstream surrounded by the sounds of nature

while learning the significance of the diverse ecosystems, cultural sites and sources of bush tucker. A guided experience that combines nature and adventure.

Prefer a bit less physical activity? Float down the Northern Territory's East Alligator River, spotting saltwater crocodiles from a safe distance, on [Kakadu Cultural Tours' Guluyambi Cultural Cruise](#). As you glide through the ever-changing landscape of monsoon rainforest and sandstone escarpments, your Aboriginal guide will point out native plants with medicinal uses, share Creation stories and educate you on the correct spear to use for catching the various fish that have fed the region's Traditional Owners for millennia.



Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, New South Wales



INDIGENOUS SEAFOOD EXPERIENCES: SAMPLE THE SEA'S BOUNTY IN A NEW WAY

Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland

Think of fishing and chances are you'll picture a rod, line and hook. But spend some time with a Traditional Custodian and soon you'll be seeing pronged spears gliding through the air to land with a crack in the carapace of a mud crab. You'll discover toxins in native plants that can be used to stun fish in the water. And you'll learn about ancient stone fish traps laid across waterways, sharp hooks made from shells, and even fishing lines spun from vegetable "hair".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have harvested marine life for tens of thousands of years. The act is as cultural as it is sustaining, often guided by rules contained

in Dreaming stories: when to fish, who can fish, what can be taken and how much can be harvested. Indigenous fishing practices also smash modern fishing stereotypes – in New South Wales, women have historically been the chief fishers, balancing babies and handlines as they fished from canoes, often cooking their catch while still out on the water.

Coastal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did, and still do, have a varied seafood diet dictated by nature. Turtles and dugongs have traditionally featured on Torres Strait Islander menus, for example, while the beaches of Victoria have long been a popular

spot to forage for pipis, edible seaweeds and more. By learning about traditional fishing practices, and in some places re-enacting them, you can savour Australia's ocean fare in a whole new way.

North of Broome in Western Australia, you'll learn how to pop open oysters that are still stuck to rocks, using only spinifex grass and fire. The trick delivers an instant treat – just the way Bardi man Terry Hunter, of [Borrgoron Coast to Creek Tours](#), likes it.

In Tropical North Queensland, take lessons on how to spear mud crabs in the mangroves with [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#).



wukalina Walk,
Tasmania

If you're lucky enough to catch one, your Kuku Yalanji guide will cook it up the traditional way, with the taste of sweet, pale meat lingering in your memory long after worries of getting your toes nipped have disappeared. You'll also forage for your own lunch with [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#), wandering along the coast to gather mud crabs and oysters that you'll cook up over a fire and enjoy with damper beside the water. It doesn't get any fresher than this.

After following the footsteps of palawa Elders on the multi-day [wukalina Walk](#) in north-east Tasmania / lutruwita's Bay of Fires, you're nourished with a special dinner inspired by traditional coastal fare. Shellfish like abalone, mussels, oysters and limpet were popular in these parts, with discarded shells still visible in ancient middens – some among the world's largest.

Seafood also plays a starring role on experiences hosted by [Saltwater Eco Tours](#) on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Feast on fresh Mooloolaba prawns and oysters, and other bush tucker-inspired treats, on the Traditional Owner-led Bushtucker Cultural Cruise as you learn how the local Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi people have lived in harmony with these waterways for millennia. Join Indigenous co-owner Simon Thornalley for a relaxed seafood-focused feast and a chance to learn about his own Sea Country connections.

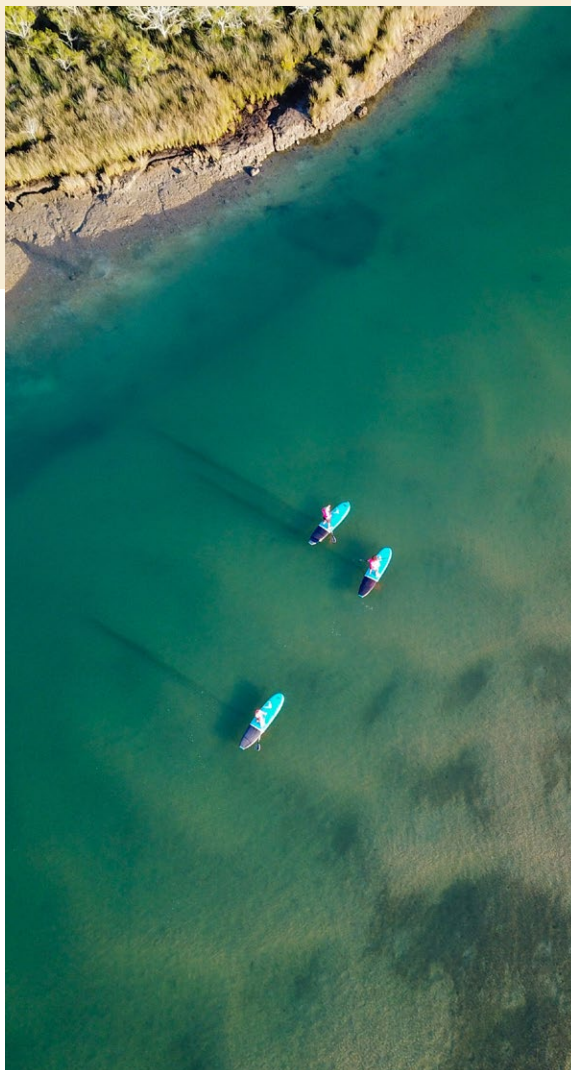
ISLAND DREAMING: LEARN THE UNIQUE STORIES BEHIND AUSTRALIA'S ISLANDS

The Dreaming is often connected to the creation of natural wonders: sacred places that hold special cultural significance for local Aboriginal communities. Many Dreaming stories see ancestral spirits visit Earth in human form – to create Australia's native animals and plants, waterways and landscapes – before transforming into a part of the landscape themselves. On a tour with a coastal Custodian, you'll learn that in some of the most evocative stories, these spirits become islands.

"In one of our Dreaming stories, two sisters made the ocean and then they rested on Split Solitary Island, which we call Wirriiga," says Gumbaynggirr / Bundjalung man Clark Webb, who owns and operates [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#) on the New South Wales Coffs Coast. "They placed their digging sticks in the shape of an 'X' and rested on either side of it – the younger sister on the northern side and the older sister on the southern side – before turning themselves into stone and becoming Split Solitary Island. They then made off into the night sky and became part of the Pleiades star formation, or the Seven Sisters."

This is just one of the captivating Dreaming stories you'll learn on a stand-up paddleboarding or kayaking tour with Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, which take place on three culturally significant waterways in the Solitary Islands Marine Park. Feel the magic of the landscape as your Aboriginal guide brings the Gumbaynggirr Dreaming to life.

Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours,
New South Wales



Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, New South Wales



From the two sisters to the two sons: [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) founding director Dwayne Bannon-Harrison, a Yuin / Ngarrugu descendant, says the Creation story of Barunguba (Montague Island) is central to his company's immersive guided experience on the New South Wales South Coast.

The Dreaming story, he says, is about Mother Gulaga (Mount Dromedary) – a sacred mountain within Gulaga National Park, in *Djiringanj* / *Yuin* Country – and her two sons. When Mother Gulaga's eldest son, Barunguba, wanted to move away and explore his independence, she entrusted him with the responsibility of holding the connection between saltwater and the land. He thus became the island that bears his name. But when her younger son Najanuga wanted to follow suit, Mother Gulaga insisted he shouldn't venture into the sea, so he became Najanuga (Little Dromedary mountain).

In Tropical North Queensland, Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker believes Dreaming stories are best

told on Country by an Indigenous guide. Book a tour with his company [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#), based near Port Douglas, and your Kuku Yalanji guide will happily share the evocative Creation story of Snapper Island, which is part of their traditional Sea Country in this lush corner of Australia. Just remember to keep an eye out for crocs while you're soaking up the fascinating stories.

Also in Queensland, Elisha Kissick is the founder of [Yura Tours](#) on North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah, just off the coast of Brisbane. "This is a magical island," says Elisha. "You can feel the old ones [Quandamooka Elders past] when you walk down the beach. They're everywhere. They're in the trees and the bush. You can feel it. You can feel their spiritual energy." Elisha operates walking and 4WD experiences across this postcard-perfect pocket of the state, including seasonal tours that take in the majesty of migrating whales.

5 SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT ABORIGINAL TRAVEL EXPERIENCES



Australia is home to some of the world's most outstanding Indigenous tourism experiences – yet, stunningly, most Australians have never experienced them. Lingerin myths, misconceptions and even a simple lack of familiarity hold people back from embracing our incredible suite of Indigenous travel experiences; most of which are better known by the global travel community than by Australians. Lean in, try something new and discover that the still-rare cultural exchange offered by Aboriginal travel isn't necessarily what you think it is.

You don't have to rough it

There's a misconception that overnight Aboriginal experiences mean back-to-basics digs. In fact, you can be immersed in genuine cultural enrichment while still coveting comfort. After hiking through the Bay of Fires on Tasmania / lutruwita's [wukalina Walk](#), snuggle in beneath dome-shaped huts crafted from native blackwood, which have an arresting, architectural aesthetic. At Uluru, the five-star [Sails in the Desert hotel](#), run by Aboriginal-owned [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#), intertwines Anangu culture with luxe, resort-feel amenities such as a day spa and tree-rimmed pool. In South Australia's Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, [Wilpena Pound Resort](#) delivers glamping-style safari tents as well as simple hotel rooms, all encircled by an 800-million-year-old natural amphitheatre.

Culture lives in capital cities, too

The outback isn't the only place to connect with Australia's Indigenous culture. Aboriginal people have lived in the places where our major cities now stand for tens of thousands of years, and even though the natural landscapes of those areas has changed somewhat, their connection to Country remains strong as ever. Invoke your own bond to this rich heritage on a walkabout through The Rocks in Sydney / Warrane with [Dreamtime Southern X](#), or on an Aboriginal Heritage Walk in the [Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne](#), a significant cultural site for the Eastern Kulin nation. You'll see that despite layers of concrete and glass, stories remain and wisdom lives on, shared in sight of Sydney Harbour and the Melbourne / Narrm skyline.

Aboriginal cultures are on the ocean, as well as in the desert

Few people would associate the Great Barrier Reef with Aboriginal cultures. But it's there, amongst the coral and tropical fish. First Nations cultural guides travelling aboard [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel's](#) boat unveil this aquatic environment's Indigenous Creation story, allowing you to see far beyond the view in your snorkel mask. In the equally captivating Shark Bay World Heritage Area, [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) remind us that the First Nations don't have to stick to wooden canoes or barefoot walking. Tours use kayaks and stand-up paddleboards to coast over dugongs and turtles while sharing Aboriginal heritage.



You can be part of an authentic cultural gathering

Most of the time, cultural gatherings are regarded as sacred, private ceremonies attended only by Aboriginal peoples. But the Wakaj Experience is an Aboriginal gathering with [Mabu Buru Tours](#) that invites you to experiences sacred traditions from Broome / Rubibi. The offering includes traditional cooking demonstrations, authentic dance performances, lessons about traditional lifestyle and Dreamtime storytelling. Enjoy a freshly cooked damper with some locally harvested bush honey. Both [Ngurrangga tours](#) in the Pilbara region of Western Australia and [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) in New South Wales reveal Aboriginal culture through immersive corroborees involving traditional dance and music, with plenty of storytelling along the way.

Not all art is on canvas

Aboriginal art is far more varied than most people realise. On the Northern Territory's [Tiwi Islands](#), artists screen-print distinctive patterns in myriad block colours as part of their daily practice. The remote culture also carves incredibly hard ironwood into sculptures and paints in natural ochres. Discover it on a [Sealink NT Tiwi by Design tour](#), which includes making your own screen-printed textile. Meanwhile, browse the collections of intricately woven baskets and beautiful pearl shell jewellery along with more modern ghost net art created by Australia's First Nations peoples at the Australian Museum in Sydney / Warrane. The ancient art of basket weaving is shown along with jewellery making, carving and painting at [Injalak Arts](#) centre in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, visited with [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#).



Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory

WHY EVERY AUSTRALIAN SHOULD BOOK AN ABORIGINAL TOUR

Did you know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are widely regarded to be the world's first astronomers? Or, that they were baking bread around 18,000 years before the ancient Egyptians? How about that some Aboriginal rock art is so old, it depicts megafauna that became extinct at least 40,000 years ago?

The depth of Indigenous Australian historical knowledge is unparalleled in any of the world's living cultures – and it's right here on our doorstep. As locals, we may have grown up tasting billy tea and damper, reading Dreamtime stories, and trying to play a didgeridoo, but there's so much more to know. And there's no better teacher than an Indigenous guide.

Spend time in Western Australia's World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park (home to the iconic Bungle Bungle Range) with an Aboriginal guide from [Kingfisher Tours](#), and



Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, New South Wales

discover that rock art doesn't just represent things people observed; the paintings also contain vital messages. Some serve as warnings, while others indicate which foods can be sourced locally. Meanwhile, at Mt Borradaile in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, rock art depicts the arrival of Europeans – see tall-masted ships painted on rock walls with [Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris](#), which has special permission to enter this land. In Western Australia's Pilbara region, Ngurrangga Tours can show you engravings of emu prints that once taught children how to hunt the flightless birds.

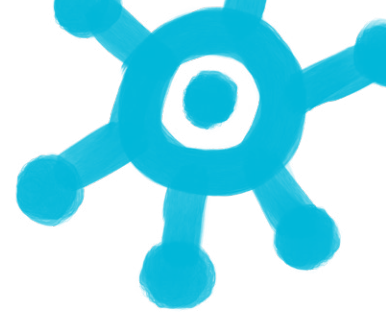
Aboriginal knowledge shared on tours often includes ingenious bush survival skills that, as Australians, we'd do well to know. For starters, how do you eat wild oysters when you don't have a tool to prise them off the rocks? With [Borraboron Coast to Creek Tours](#), you'll discover that a handful of spinifex grass and a flame is all the Bardi Jawi people have ever needed to prepare a delicious meal. In Tropical North Queensland, your [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) guide will show you how the Kuku Yalanji people have traditionally bent trees in arrow-like forms to mark pathways through the dense Daintree Rainforest.

Discovering the harmonious relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the land is just as inspiring. On a tour of New South Wales' Riverina region with [Bundji Cultural Tours](#), you'll learn how the Wiradjuri people have cared for nature in a mindful way as you smell native blossoms, listen to birdsong and feel the winds – making for a transformative experience.



Borraboron Coast to Creek Tours, Western Australia

Finally, banish any misconception that all Aboriginal tours are serious. Fun is at the heart of [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours'](#) stand-up paddleboarding excursions in the Solitary Islands Marine Park on the New South Wales Mid North Coast. As you paddle the waterways of Gumbaynggirr Country, your Aboriginal guide will introduce you to local bush tucker, teach you some Gumbaynggirr words, and regale you with Dreaming stories connected to your exquisite surroundings. It's yet another way to broaden your own knowledge of Aboriginal Australia.



THE PLAYFUL SIDE OF ABORIGINAL CULTURES

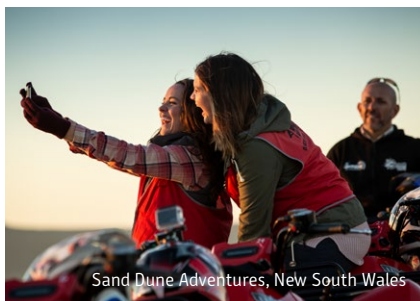


Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures,
Western Australia

When you're skidding down the largest moving coastal sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere on a 400cc quad bike, wind in your hair and "whoop whoops!" in the air, it's hard not to feel on top of the world. Combining culture with an adrenaline rush was Andrew Smith's goal when he launched not-for-profit [Sand Dune Adventures](#), owned and operated by the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, for which Smith is the CEO.

The sand dunes of Stockton Beach – in the Worimi Conservation Lands of Port Stephens, on the New South Wales North Coast – are the stuff of legend. They cover 4,200 hectares, reach 30 metres high, and deliver inclines of up to 60 degrees. That equates to serious speed when you're hurtling towards the sea on a sandboard or quad bike. "People say, 'Wow, riding the bikes was great,'" says Smith. "But even better was the Aboriginal component. This is the best thing since sliced bread!" Our culture is about relationships, family and fun. People turn up as strangers, but leave as friends."

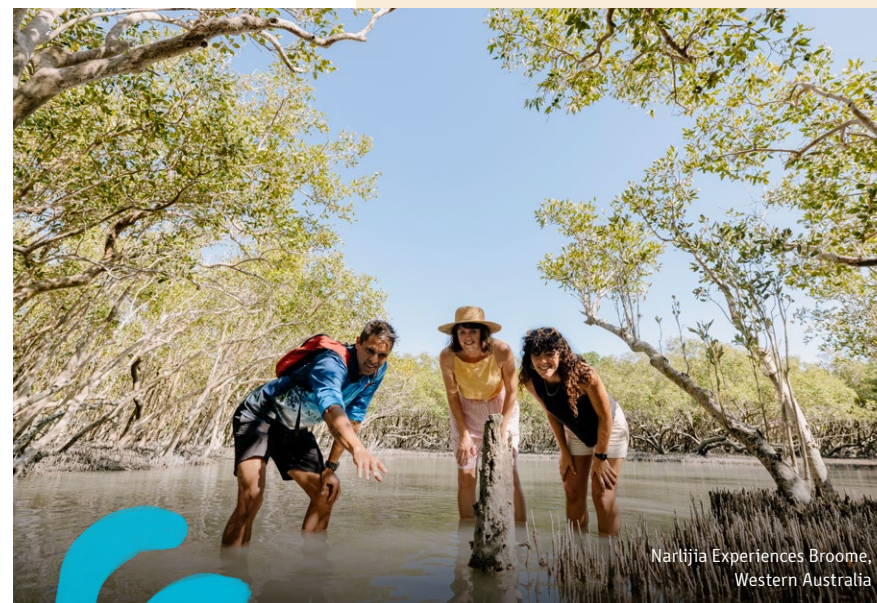
Australia's most respected Aboriginal policy maker, Gumbaynggirr man Dr Aden Ridgeway, agrees that while Indigenous tourism should be educational, there's no reason it can't be ridiculously entertaining. "Aboriginal cultures are sometimes portrayed as very serious and spiritual. Although it does have this meaningful side to it, Aboriginal peoples are pretty down to earth. It's the mix of the practical with the humorous that makes the experience meaningful."



Sand Dune Adventures, New South Wales

Over on the west coast of Australia, ex-football player Darren 'Capes' Capewell loves entertaining his guests on his [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) around Shark Bay and Monkey Mia, home of the Nhandu and Malgana people. When Capes plays his didgeridoo and kids start to dance, he joins in. He jokes about the local birds being gossips. And in the same breath, he tells you how they can predict the weather. In just a few hours, you'll dip your toe into tens of thousands of years of history – and come away remembering, perhaps most of all, Capes' distinctive laugh.

It's a similar story in the coastal town of Broome further north, where Yawuru man Bart Pigram is quite possibly Western Australia's top entertainer. Well, apart from his father Stephen Pigram, who happens to be one of the country's most revered musicians. He's even penned a song that spotlights the soup his mum used to make, and which Bart has shown local restaurateurs how to (almost) replicate, so you can taste it yourself. That is, after you eat pretty much every plant lining the coastline, and meet every other Broome resident on his [Narljia Experiences Broome tours](#) – Bart is a bit of a celebrity in this corner of the Kimberley.



Narljia Experiences Broome,
Western Australia



THE RISE OF AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE-INGREDIENT BEVERAGES

Mandarin and lemon myrtle. Zingy riberry. These are just some of the wine flavours that Nadia and Francis O'Connell are currently experimenting with at their dreamy Firescreek Botanical Winery on the Central Coast of New South Wales. All manner of flowers, herbs and fruits infuse their distinctive beverages, with everything grown organically on their lush one-hectare property.

Having consulted with Indigenous growers, the duo now nurture mountain pepper, Davidson plums and aspen, among a bounty of other native ingredients. "I really want passionfruit gum as well," says Nadia, her wines the perfect accompaniment to the [Firescreek Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience](#) hosted on the grounds.

Respected Elder Gavi Duncan leads the afternoon session, providing insights into how the O'Connells' plants were traditionally used for nutrition and medicine by Indigenous communities. "They taste just as good in wines today," he laughs. Gavi will also tell you about the Aboriginal rock art and sacred sites surrounding the winery, with each revealing lesser-known stories about Australia's wine country.



Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia
- Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, Queensland



Firescreek Botanical Winery Aboriginal Experiences,
New South Wales

The Firescreek estate was – and still is – a pioneer when it comes to infusing wine with native botanicals, not to mention showcasing them through an Indigenous lens. All manner of distilleries and drinks purveyors have followed their lead, including a collection of Aboriginal-owned companies like Lore, which makes kombucha infused with lemon myrtle and finger lime, or strawberry gum and lilly pilly. And Sobah, which brews a delicious non-alcoholic pepperberry IPA.

But you don't have to go to the supermarket (or a bar) to sip and savour native ingredients. In the Wagga Wagga region of southern New South Wales, Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler



Dale Tilbrook Experiences,
Western Australia

operates [Bundiyi Cultural Tours](#) around significant Riverina sites. En route, morning break might be a steaming mug of lemon myrtle tea, paired with Mark's own wattleseed damper slathered with Indigiearth Kakadu plum jam. "There are so many surprising native flavours in Australia. All the better if they're doing you good," says Mark.

Lemon myrtle is also on the menu at [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism](#) in Victoria, where you can visit the ancient World Heritage-listed aquaculture site showcasing an ingeniously constructed network of channels, weirs and dams to capture and harvest kooyang (eels)... then sit down to a meal of smoked eel, eel pâté, kangaroo souvlakis and lemon myrtle cheesecake.

In Western Australia, Wardandi Bibbulmun woman [Dale Tilbrook](#) is from the Margaret River region, but today hosts eye-opening bush tucker experiences at Mandoon Estate in the Swan Valley, outside Perth / Boorloo. Browse the Maalinup Gallery for Australian native herbs and spices and authentic Aboriginal Art, then discover all manner of native fruits, herbs and vegetables before Dale sits you down with a mug of tea infused with rosella flower or strawberry gum, perhaps. In Tropical North Queensland, the [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre's](#) guided Dreamtime Walks through World Heritage-listed rainforest ends with bush tea and damper.

Further north in Western Australia, Robert Dann operates [Kimberley Cultural Adventures](#). Join one of his tours and you'll get to sample his home-made (and now sold in stores) boab ginger beer and iced tea range, made using local boab nut flesh and maar grass, both of which have high nutritional qualities.

EXPLORE AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL PARKS WITH THEIR TRADITIONAL OWNERS

In Australia's national parks, learn about the Traditional Custodians' deep connection to Country, from Dreaming stories to bush lore. Stroll through an Australian national park and you might note the flora and fauna, the heave of a hill and the sparkle of a stream, the intoxicating scent of eucalyptus leaves or the trill of a nearby bird.

You wipe the sweat from your brow and rehydrate while tucking into a packed lunch. All five senses will be well and truly alive. Walk through that same region with an Indigenous guide, though, and you'll learn of more intangible layers. Landmarks are often intertwined with a Dreaming story. Perhaps you'll hear about ancient Indigenous land-management techniques. You may even dip into the spirit world.

After whisking you into Western Australia's Purnululu National Park by small plane, [Kingfisher Tours](#)' experiences begin with a Welcome to Country ceremony to ensure the safe passage of everyone present. During your exploration of this UNESCO World Heritage-listed Kimberley landscape, you might be lucky enough to experience the incredible natural acoustics of Cathedral Gorge as head guide Bec Sampi, a Gija woman, sings in language to the rhythmic beat of traditional clap sticks. On the company's Punamii-Uunpuu (Mitchell Falls) experiences, your local Aboriginal guide will point out ancient rock art depicting spirit figures that are tucked behind the waterfalls of Mitchell River National Park.

You can tap into Indigenous experiences and age-old wisdom at many of Australia's national parks. At [Mossman Gorge](#) in the



Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

southern part of Queensland's Daintree National Park, join a guided Dreamtime Walk that begins with a smoking ceremony to cleanse and ward off bad spirits.

You'll hear stories about the culture of the Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners, learn about bush foods and which plant can be used as soap, and finish with tea and damper.

In Tropical North Queensland, head out to explore the Great Barrier Reef from Cairns / Gimuy with [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#). First Nations cultural guides accompany the day tour to two outer reef sites where passengers can dive and snorkel among the reef's incredible marine creatures. While on the boat ride (which

starts with an Indigenous welcome), you'll hear the Great Barrier Reef Creation story.

South Australia's Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park is home to Wilpena Pound – a stunning natural amphitheatre. [Wilpena Pound Resort](#) offers a nightly Welcome to Country in the language of the area's Traditional Owners, along with a cultural walking tour that gives an Indigenous perspective on the landscape and its biodiversity. In Western Australia, [Koomal Dreaming](#) showcases the Wadandi people's deep connection to their Country in the Margaret River region. See the coastal landscape surrounding Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse,



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

a landmark within Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, through the eyes of an Aboriginal guide, before inspecting artefacts and listening to the thrum and whoops of a didgeridoo.



Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory

HIDDEN HISTORY: FINDING AUSTRALIA'S ANCIENT ABORIGINAL ART

Aboriginal art is much more than dot paintings on canvas. Hidden ochre depictions of spirits, animals, European explorers and masted ships coat rocky surfaces in the lodge grounds of [Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris](#) on the sacred Mt Borradaile ranges. UNESCO World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park is another [rock art](#) hotspot, with around 5000 sites recorded and some 10,000 more believed to exist, with works dated at up to 20,000 years old. Must-see paintings include the Lightning Man at Nourlangie and those depicting X-ray fish, a now-extinct Tasmanian tiger, a white fella hunter and the Rainbow Serpent Creation ancestor in the outdoor galleries at Ubirr.

Beyond, an [Arnhemlander Cultural and Heritage Tour](#) with Kakadu Cultural Tours reveals hard-to-access rock art atop an

outback hill before introducing you to today's Aboriginal artists – basket weavers, painters, carvers, jewellery makers and more – inside the Injalak Arts centre. Still in the Northern Territory, a cruise with [Nitmiluk Tours](#) takes you through spectacular Jawoyn Country, exploring sandstone escarpments that are millions of years old; some are home to ancient rock art, telling the story of the communities that lived here millennia ago.

In Queensland, visit pristine and culturally meaningful Quinkan rock art sites with [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#), personally guided by Traditional Owners. Enjoy an unforgettable journey through what archaeologists say is a 20,000-year-old outback museum, which UNESCO recognises as one of the 10 most significant rock-art sites in the world.



Janbal Gallery, Queensland

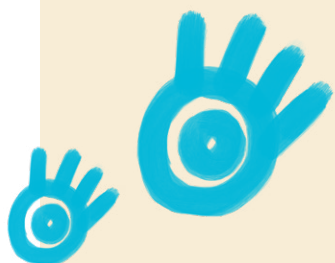
There are even art sites in Australia's major cities: ochre hand stencils and engravings can be seen at locations such as the [Aboriginal Heritage walk](#) in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, north of Sydney / Warrane.

For Aboriginal peoples, art is an expression of cultural identity and reflects their connection to Country, but it's often the act of creating art that holds equal or greater importance than the finished piece. This is why in the past rock art works have been painted over without causing upset – a fascinating nugget of information usually misunderstood without the insight of an Aboriginal guide. The interpretations offered by guides connect the viewer to the history behind the work and the story it is telling – something you won't deduce on your own or with a history book.

Trying your hand at producing your own piece of Aboriginal art is another way to deepen

your appreciation for it. Give it your best shot during a private hands-on workshop with Indigenous guides from Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre on the Gold Coast in Queensland, where you'll learn about the meanings behind the symbols and deepen your understanding of Aboriginal art. Conversely, the works at [Janbal Gallery](#) in Tropical North are understandably hooked in reef and rainforest culture; here, paint a boomerang or canvas, share stories with artists and observe the many works. You can also get to know Polynesian-influenced Aboriginal culture on a [Tiwi by Design](#) tour with SeaLink NT – watch a demonstration of screen printing before attempting your own screen-printing textile.





FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS: FUN ABORIGINAL TRAVEL EXPERIENCES THAT EVERYONE WILL LOVE

Few and far between are the cultural experiences that make the grade for kids – the toughest critics of all when it comes to educational excursions. But in Australia, guides bring an ancient culture to life amid outdoor adventures, wildlife safaris and interactive lessons the whole family will remember for a lifetime.

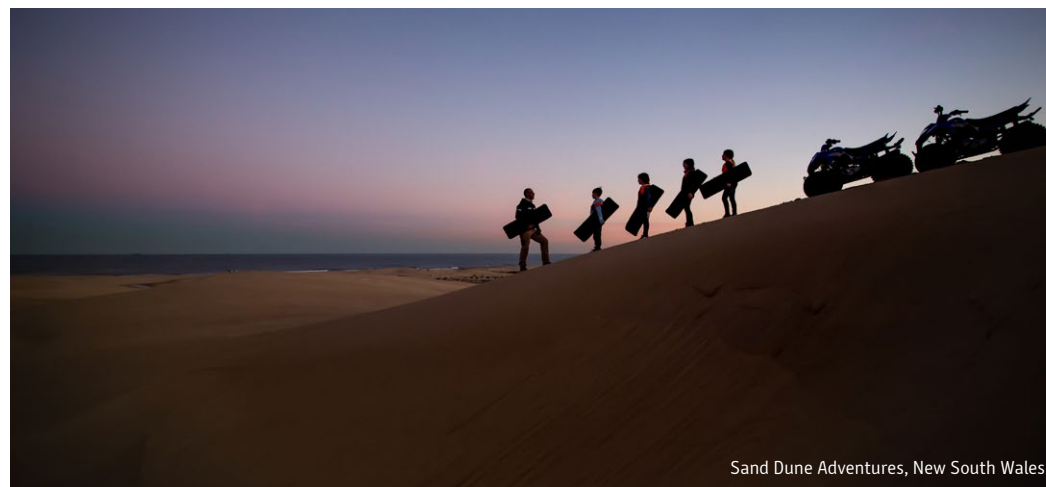
In Tropical North Queensland, guests can be introduced to the Kuku Yalanji people and remarkable World Heritage-listed tropical rainforest during a candlelit open-air dinner at [Flames of the Forest](#). Under a silk canopy dotted with hand-made chandeliers, be served a seven-dish banquet dinner as storytelling, didgeridoo and song are seamlessly melded into a mesmerising performance that every family member will learn from.

Based nearby, [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) offers the chance to spear your own mud crab on a tour of Kuku Yalanji Country, while not far away at Rainforestation Nature Park, the [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience](#) also provides some basic weapons training on a Dreamtime Walk, along with traditional song and dance.

Western Australia's Shark Bay area likewise offers Indigenous adventure: join an Aboriginal-led paddleboarding or kayaking experience, or a Didgeridoo Dreaming night tour (in which you learn about the didge and eat bush tucker or seafood cooked over an open fire) with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#). Shark Bay is a World Heritage area of red sand and turquoise waters and holds great cultural significance for the Nhandu and Malgana people.



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at
Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland



Sand Dune Adventures, New South Wales

In Sydney / Warrane, the First Nations collection at the Australian Museum has dramatic ceremonial dance masks and costumes from the Torres Strait Islands among its artefacts; if you join a personalised tour you'll get Indigenous stories and storytelling, too. For something a little more adrenaline-packed, head a couple of hours north and join [Sand Dune Adventures](#) for an Aboriginal cultural tour with a difference: you'll ride aboard a quad bike, then have a go at sand-boarding down the Worimi Sand Dunes, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere.



Dale Tilbrook Experiences, Western Australia

CULTURE IN THE CITY: FINDING THE ANCIENT AMONG AUSTRALIA'S MODERN HUBS

Australia's Aboriginal heritage isn't relegated to wild places – its heartbeat echoes through the centre of the nation's most vibrant precincts. You can experience this extraordinary juxtaposition on urban walking tours, short tours, day trips, at museums, galleries and cultural centres, and in the unlikelyst of outdoor places – like the middle of Melbourne / Narm in the [Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne](#).

There, just two kilometres from Melbourne / Narm's city centre, you'll find a traditional camping and meeting place for the local First Peoples. Join an Aboriginal guide on a walking tour of the gardens – one of the most impressive urban landscapes in the Southern Hemisphere – and take lessons in plant lore, medicine, tools and ceremony, while learning more about the ancestral traditions that evolved on this picturesque patch of Earth.

In Perth / Boorloo, local Aboriginal heritage is waiting to be uncovered in the most urban of landscapes. At Yagan Square, a landmark new precinct in the centre of the city, contemplate the statue that honours Aboriginal warrior,

Yagan. This nine-metre-tall creation is named "Wirin", which means "spirit" in Noongar language. Nearby, at the brand-new Elizabeth Quay precinct, the "First Contact" artwork by Indigenous artist Laurel Nannup welcomes visitors to the shores of the Swan River. The city's Kings Park – the largest inner-city park in the world – was once a camping and birthing ground for Indigenous Noongar communities, popular for its abundance of native plants that acted as medicine and food. Take a deep dive into this landscape with [In Culture Tours](#).

At Mandoon Estate, in the nearby Swan Valley, you'll find the fittingly named [Maalinup Aboriginal Gallery](#) ("maali" means "black swan" and up means "place" to the people of Wardandi Country). An Aboriginal-owned and -run enterprise, Maalinup has emerged as one of Western Australia's most fascinating cultural hubs, where visitors can immerse themselves in Aboriginal activities, cultural performances and talks; sample bush tucker treats made with local native ingredients and, of course, browse and buy art. Gain further insights into bush foods with [Dale Tilbrook Experiences](#).

Within Adelaide / Tarntanya, [Southern Cultural Immersion](#) shares culture on the Traditional Lands of the Kaurna People. Join a tour to discover First Nations history, significant Aboriginal sites, traditional practices, native plants and more on a Cultural Tour of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, giving you a deeper understanding of the connection that Aboriginal peoples hold with Country in South Australia.

Tropical North Queensland's city of Cairns / Gimuy might be best known for its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef, but it also allows privileged access to local Aboriginal heritage, which is alive and thriving in the local communities. The [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park](#) in nearby Kuranda offers interactive introductions to the traditional weapons, tools, bush tucker, song and dance of the area, while a tour with [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) will reveal how Kuku Yalanji people have lived in harmony with the tropical coastal landscape for more than 65,000 years.

Further south in Queensland, Australia's sixth-largest city, the Gold Coast, dazzles with its skyscrapers of Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise. This is your backdrop when you explore sacred Jellurgal Mountain in the suburb of Burleigh Heads, with walking tours and cultural activities from the [Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre](#).

A diverse range of Aboriginal experiences are available in the regional cities of New South Wales, from Aboriginal-guided stand-up paddleboarding tours in Coffs Harbour with [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#), to captivating cultural tours of the Wagga Wagga region with Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler of [Bundi Cultural Tours](#). Then, of course, there's Sydney / Warrane, where you'll find the walking tours of [Dreamtime Southern X](#), the fascinating First Nations collection at the Australian Museum, the sky-high [Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience](#) over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and the Aboriginal tours of the [Royal Botanic Garden Sydney](#). Read more about Sydney / Warrane's Indigenous side below.



Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Victoria



Dreamtime Southern X, New South Wales

THE INDIGENOUS SIDE OF SYDNEY / WARRANE

Australia's most famous city has grown into a multicultural metropolis of some five million residents, but Sydney / Warrane's first citizens – the 29 clans of the Eora Nation – have inhabited the area's beaches, hills, rivers and harbour for tens of thousands of years. Theirs is a presence that can be seen and felt in several ways.

To see some of Sydney / Warrane's most famous sites from an alternative view, join a [Dreamtime Southern X](#) tour of The Rocks precinct. Wander the city's foreshore in view of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge, and gain insight into everything from Dreamtime Creation stories to traditional fishing techniques employed by Aboriginal peoples on Sydney Harbour. You'll also learn about bush food, medicines and

ochre bark and body painting, gaining not just an education but a spiritual connection with the Sydney / Warrane region's First Nations peoples as you go.

Their presence can also be felt in the [Royal Botanic Garden Sydney](#), 30 hectares of green in the heart of the city, which has long been a significant site for the Gadigal people. The garden runs an Aboriginal Harbour Heritage Tour and a Bush Tucker Tour. From here it's a short walk to Sydney Opera House, where you can see a very clear sign of Sydney / Warrane coming to terms with – and embracing – its Aboriginal past and present. At sunset every day, the sails of the Sydney Opera House are lit with a seven-minute light show, [Badu Gili](#) ("Water Light" in the language of the Gadigal),



The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, New South Wales

which celebrates Aboriginal cultures at what was a traditional gathering place for millennia.

From here, it's also possible to walk to Sydney / Warrane's hottest precinct, [Barangaroo](#) – so named after a woman of the Cammeraygal clan, who lived here in the 18th century. A world-leading urban renewal project on some of the most expensive real estate in the world, Barangaroo wasn't just transformed into a thriving neighbourhood precinct, but also the Barangaroo Reserve. This breathtaking expanse of greenery, planted exclusively with native flora, was hotly pursued by several multinational corporations for development before ultimately being devoted to recreating the natural landscape – one similar to that which the Eora people would have enjoyed before European settlement.

Nearby, on the cusp of Hyde Park, Australia's long natural history come to life at the [Australian Museum](#), and the insights are particularly poignant on a Waranara tour with a First Nations guide. Learn about the knowledge systems and sustainable practices used for countless generations that helped Australia's First Nations peoples become one of the oldest living civilisations on the planet, all the while glimpsing artefacts of cultural significance through the collection. Every tour is different, depending on the guide, giving you the rare opportunity to hear personal stories about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Sydney and beyond.



The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, New South Wales



Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory

WHY EVERYONE SHOULD VISIT AUSTRALIA'S REMOTE ART CENTRES

An artist in the Tiwi Islands mixes pigments drawn from the earth, preparing to paint the Country she grew up in. She blends the iron oxide-stained ochre with water, stirring it with a twig in an old tin. As she creates, she talks with onlookers, inviting them into this practice that's been continued for some 65,000 years. It's an acutely authentic experience: one you're unlikely to have anywhere other than a remote Aboriginal art centre.

While the wording is subtle, art centres are distinctly different from art galleries. Owned and run by the local community, they provide a place for artists in far-flung destinations to gather to work on their craft and share their culture. They're able to share rarely spoken languages and circulate ancient stories, which is essential to preserving them.

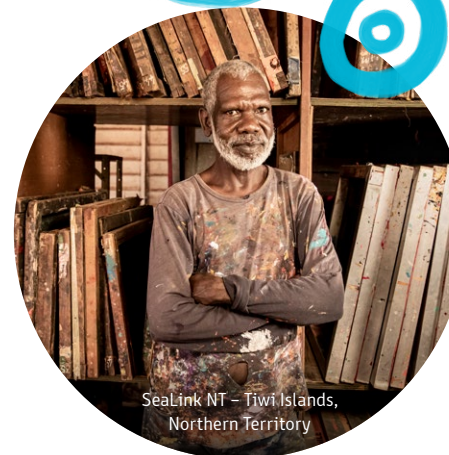
Going to an art centre gives you an incredible insight into the cultural strength of Aboriginal peoples in remote Australia – artists maintain culture and relive it through their work for future generations to be able to tell the same stories.

Within sight of Uluru in the Northern Territory, the [Gallery of Central Australia](#) takes pride of place at Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia's Ayers Rock Resort. Artists in residence from the Anangu community are on site to offer insights into their creations, while works on display showcase the beauty and fascinating stories linked to the sacred rock monolith. Further north in the Tiwi Islands, visited with [SeaLink NT](#), artists screen print in open studios or paint and carve outdoors. What this means for the visitor is the chance to purchase one-off pieces directly from the creator. Not only is there a connection made with the artist, but the contribution also allows artists to stay in their homelands, where employment is otherwise scarce. Any purchase you make is a step towards economic independence and pride for the artist.

Injalak Arts, in the Northern Territory's Arnhem Land, is one of Australia's most remote art centres; a haven for Aboriginal artists creating colourful weavings, paintings and screen prints while 'yarning' (talking) to observers brought there by [Venture North Safaris](#). Usually, about 60 per cent of each sale



Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, Western Australia



SeaLink NT – Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory

goes back to the artist, with the remainder shared between the community and the centre, which employs local Aboriginal people and supplies art materials. Sales also impact the buyer, and the emotional value a piece of

artwork has – when you hang up a piece of Aboriginal art in your home, it's a direct link back to your experience purchasing it.

World Heritage-listed Kakadu in the Northern Territory is known for its dramatic landscapes. It's here, on Murumburr Country, that you'll find [Kakadu Tourism's](#) Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre, replete with an interactive museum telling the story of Aboriginal culture in Kakadu, as well as an art gallery where you can pick up pieces ethically – you can also learn to weave with Bininj artists and Murumburr Traditional Owners.

To the west in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, [Waringarri Aboriginal Arts](#) operates cultural tours around the spectacular landscapes that surround Kununurra. Experiences operate from an art centre that doubles as a studio for Aboriginal creatives, and you can drop in to meet the makers and see them at work – their pieces are also for sale in the gallery, so you can support local artists while taking home a unique reminder of your time in this part of the country.



Kakadu Cultural Tours, Northern Territory

BRINGING THE LANDSCAPE TO LIFE: AUSTRALIA THROUGH INDIGENOUS EYES

On a stroll alongside the Murrumbidgee River in the Wagga Wagga region of New South Wales, there is much to look at: sandy river beaches glistening in the sunlight, majestic river gums lining the banks, perhaps a flash of turquoise as a kingfisher swoops to snatch its prey. According to Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler, however, you can't fully connect to this incredible landscape until you commit all your senses to the experience.

"We encourage people on our tours to look, listen, smell, and use another sense most people don't even think they have, and that's feeling the landscape without even touching it," says the owner of [Bundyi Cultural Tours](#). When you're at one with the landscape, Mark adds, it reveals its secrets.

"On a recent tour I noticed a ring tree I hadn't seen before," Mark says. "We used these trees (with their limbs twisted to form a ring shape) as territory boundary markers. This particular

tree was about 800 years old, and the tour group helped me to document it."

An intimate understanding of the landscape lies at the core of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. No matter where you are in Australia, a tour with an Indigenous guide will change your perspective.

In Nitmiluk Gorge in the Northern Territory's Top End, for instance, a Jawoyn guide with [Nitmiluk Tours](#) will point out ancient rock art hidden in plain sight. At Uluru, on tour with [SEIT Tours](#) - Patij, the rock is seen through the eyes of the Anangu people; guests learn the Creation story of how its caves and hollows have been transformed into scars, left by the battle between Kuniya, the [woma python](#), and Liru, the [poisonous snake](#).

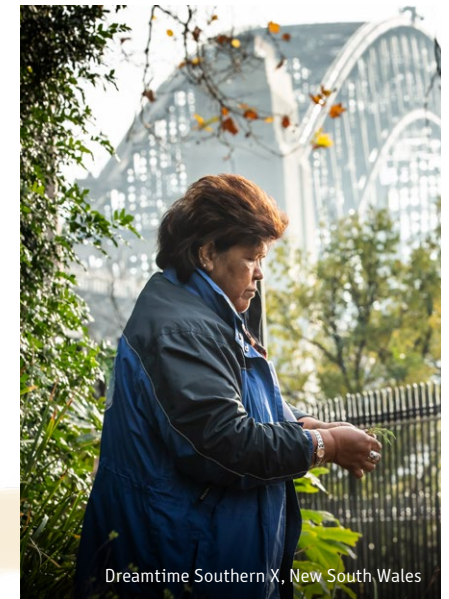
To read the landscape fluently, you must also understand the cycles of the natural world. Aboriginal peoples are attuned to the constant flow of changes in the plants and animals that surround us. Many communities note these changes so carefully that they can discern six separate seasons rather than four. The harbingers of each season vary with the locality – at Wilpena Pound in South Australia's

Flinders Ranges, for instance, the blossoming of the acacia trees signals the start of kangaroo hunting season.

It isn't just outback Aboriginal groups who know how to read the stories in the landscape. Margret Campbell of

Dreamtime Southern X, who runs walking tours through the heart of Sydney / Warrane, shows her guests that despite the skyscrapers and the highways, ancient landscapes survive – even in the shadow of the Harbour Bridge itself.

"Right next to the bridge, you can stand on this bedrock of sandstone strata which is billions of years old. It's what the city is built on – strip off the tar and concrete and there's the sandstone, with the saltwater running down it," she says. "And when you know where to look, you can see trees that still grow out of the ancient bedrock. That story is sitting right there – but most people can't see it."



Dreamtime Southern X, New South Wales

BEYOND ROCK ART: THE DIVERSITY OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SITES

Australia is home to some of the oldest and most extensive collections of rock art in the world. But these vivid paintings and engravings created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at least 17,300 years ago are not the only way their knowledge has been preserved. Across Australia, a range of cultural sites reveal how Indigenous communities have thrived for millennia.

“Middens are the earliest form of conservation,” says Mark Saddler, owner of [Bundyi Cultural Tours](#), who leads tours to freshwater middens on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River near Wagga Wagga in south-western New South Wales. Ancient piles of shells and bones, middens, Mark explains, are a marker of where Aboriginal communities set up seasonal camps and what they ate, showing future visitors which foods they should avoid to ensure the regeneration of specific species.

On Tasmania / lutruwita’s [wukalina Walk](#) in the company of a palawa (Aboriginal Tasmanian) guide, guests experience an enormous midden on the state’s north-east coast, where scallop and oyster shells have been decaying for thousands of years. “Imagine the Dreamtime stories told around a fire cooking up scallops,” says guide Carleeta Thomas. Visitors on the three-night hike still enjoy a similar seafood bounty, thanks in part to those early conservationists.

Back in Wagga Wagga, Mark’s guests also visit “scar trees”: native trees with part of their trunk removed to create shields or canoes. “When you see a scar tree, you can tell this was a hunting area, or was flooded in the past,” says Mark.



Koorie Heritage Trust, Victoria



Bundyi Cultural Tours , New South Wales

To find these cultural sites hidden in plain view, “you just need to know where to look,” says Rob Hyatt from the [Koorie Heritage Trust](#) in Melbourne / Narm. “Most people walk past scar trees along the Yarra River every day and have no idea of the history they hold.”

It’s a similar story for ancient grinding stones used for everything from grinding grain into flour, to crushing clays to make artistic pigments, which were often left in situ for communal use.



Venture North Australia, Northern Territory

You’ll see some on [Venture North Safaris](#)’ tour to the Cobourg Peninsula in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. [Ngurrangga Tours](#) in Western Australia’s Pilbara also share how local Aboriginal communities used similar tools to prepare food and communicate through art. It’s a tradition preserved today thanks to knowledge purposefully passed down over centuries.



TREND: THE UNSTOPPABLE RISE OF AUSTRALIA'S PHENOMENAL ANCIENT CUISINE

Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia - Ayers Rock Resort, Northern Territory



Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb, Western Australia



The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, New South Wales

Aboriginal experiences across the nation also provide plenty of opportunities to catch and cook your own bush tucker, such as the Wilubidy (Francois Peron National Park) Camping Safari hosted by [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) in Western Australia's Francois Peron National Park. Further north on a [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#) with guide Bolo Angus, you'll also get hands-on foraging for mud crabs, oysters and bush vegetables while exploring the spectacular coastline of the Kimberley's Dampier Peninsula.

Then again, you don't have to travel the length and breadth of Australia or spend a fortune to get a bush tucker education. If you're in Sydney / Warrane, simply head to the [Royal Botanic Garden](#) for an Aboriginal Bush Tucker Tour right in the middle of Australia's biggest city. Similar experiences are available at the [Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria](#) in Melbourne; the Adelaide Botanic Garden with [Southern Cultural Immersion](#); and Perth's enormous Kings Park with [In Culture Tours](#).

Slow food. Farm-to-fork. Food mileage. Provenance. The international interest in conscious food consumption has reached fever pitch, and Australia's food scene is no exception. But here, a different spin on the trend has emerged from the unlikelyst of places: the outback. Foods such as saltbush (a desert shrub with a beautifully clean umami) and Kakadu plum (a fruit packed with vitamin C and antioxidants) have been sustaining Aboriginal Australians for more than 65,000 years. Today, these special ingredients – complete with time-honoured

approach to preparation – are once again embraced, albeit with a very modern twist. Dine on them in some of the world's most acclaimed restaurants (including Melbourne's [Attica](#)) for insight into Australia's emergence as a leading food destination, or escape the bright lights for Australia's bush tucker capital, [Ayers Rock Resort](#). A hotbed of native food celebration and innovation, the resort offers a wide-ranging program of native food experiences which includes everything from free, accessible cooking demonstrations to the famous [Sounds of Silence dinner](#), which

will see you enjoy a bush tucker-inspired meal under the stars while a resident "star talker" decodes the twinkling canopy above you.

Taking things up a notch is the [Tali Wiru](#) feast – fine dining under the Southern Desert sky. Every dish in the four-course meal is infused with ancient native ingredients, whether that's kingfish with quandong salsa, scampi with desert lime, or toothfish with sea grapes and beach succulents.

DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS: INDIGENOUS INGREDIENTS TO TRY AT HOME

Open up most pantries in Australia and you will find ingredients from around the world, from Thai curry pastes to South American quinoa. Few of us, however, have cooked using native bush foods – and that is something [Mark Olive](#) would like to change.

“We have embraced every other food culture; I’d like to see us champion our uniquely Australian flavours, to start experimenting with them in our kitchens,” says the Indigenous chef and TV presenter. “Do a bit of research online and you will find there are Indigenous growers out there producing these ingredients. We need to support them.”



Dale Tilbrook Experiences, Western Australia

Many of our native ingredients are remarkably versatile. Wattleseed, for instance, can have very different flavours, depending on whether it has been ground or roasted.

“Green wattleseed tastes almost like peanut satay – it’s terrific in vinaigrettes, and adds a nice bit of texture and crunch,” says Mark. “Roast wattleseed has a lovely coffee-chocolate flavour; try adding it to Anzac biscuits or tiramisu.”

Wattleseed isn’t just delicious, it’s also remarkably good for you. “Wattleseed is high in protein, iron, zinc and fibre, and it’s naturally low GI,” says Dale Tilbrook of [Dale Tilbrook Experiences](#) in Western Australia, which champions bush foods. “Many of our bush foods are also packed with antioxidants, including quandong (also known as native peach) and muntrie berries, which have even more antioxidants than blueberries.”

Try them during Dale’s Bush Tucker Tasting and Talk experiences, where you will learn how to use these ingredients in simple recipes while listening to some of Dale’s best bush yarns. Alternatively, you can learn more at your local botanic garden. The [Royal Botanic Garden Sydney](#), for instance, offers [Aboriginal cultural tours](#) that showcase its many Indigenous plantings, including the *Cadi Jam Ora: First Encounters* exhibit.

“All bush foods have very distinct, powerful flavours, some of which are really surprising,” says Josh Brown, the Gardens’ manager of Aboriginal Strategy. “Take the native raspberries – they actually taste like watermelon.”



Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, New South Wales

Josh says that Indigenous plants are easy to find these days: “The Indigenous plants in our garden are all available from nurseries,” he affirms. They’re also easy to grow. “Unlike European plants, they are designed to survive in our climatic conditions. Some can even grow so prolifically, they’ll get out of control if you’re not careful,” Josh adds.

Among the latter are warrigal greens: a leafy, spinach-like vegetable found on the menus of top restaurants across the country. “Just be aware that you need to blanch warrigal greens before you eat them in large quantities,” says Josh. “Otherwise you could get an upset stomach.”

The bush food that most visitors fall in love with is lemon myrtle, says Josh – a citrus-scented plant that makes a great addition to cakes and pastries. “Guests love smelling it,” he says. “When you crush up the leaves and breathe in, it’s as if the whole world has suddenly changed for the better.”



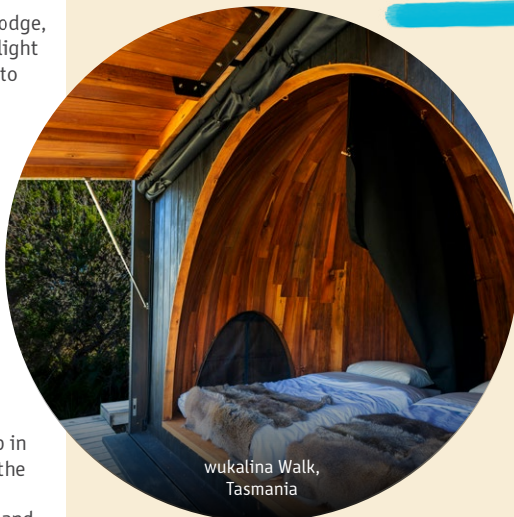
Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, New South Wales



FROM LODGES TO GLAMP SITES: EXCLUSIVE ABORIGINAL ACCOMMODATION LIKE NOTHING ELSE

For many people, a stay in an Aboriginal lodge, wilderness camp or glamp site is the highlight of their trip Down Under, thanks not only to an immersion in the world's oldest living cultures, but a stay in a truly spectacular location.

Remote wilderness and Aboriginal cultures also combine with dramatic effect at Mt Borradaile in West Arnhem Land, where [Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris](#) runs an eco-tour, fine dining and lodge experience amid the remarkable wetlands, billabongs, sandstone escarpments, catacombs and rock art galleries of the sacred landscape. It's a similar story at Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris' permanent bush camp in the heart of Kakadu National Park, also in the Northern Territory's Top End, where solar-powered glamping tents with raised floors and



wukalina Walk,
Tasmania



Wilpena Pound Resort, South Australia

twin beds offer an opportunity to connect deeply with the natural and cultural landscape surrounding you in comfort.

Meanwhile, in South Australia's Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, you'll find [Wilpena Pound Resort](#). A natural amphitheatre estimated to be 800 million years old, Wilpena Pound is an awe-inspiring landscape, and the traditional home of the Adnyamathanha (or Yura) people who, since 2012, have also owned the resort – the only accommodation in the park. Take part in a Welcome to Country ceremony and mix with Yura locals, and make sure you join one of the

resort's Aboriginal cultural tours to see this impossibly ancient land through the world's oldest, and perhaps wisest, eyes.

Further south, on Tasmania / lutruwita's Aboriginal-guided [wukalina Walk](#), you'll spend your first two nights in architect-designed huts inspired by the half-dome shelters traditionally used by palawa people, the island state's Traditional Custodians. Spend an evening around the fire in conversation with Elders and guides before snuggling up under a wallaby-fur throw and allowing the sound of the nearby ocean to lull you to sleep.



Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia

EXPERIENCING THE SIX SEASONS

Summer, autumn (fall), winter and spring might be the most common descriptions of the seasons, but they're not the only method of dividing up the year and its weather patterns. In Aboriginal cultures, many groups live by a six-season calendar, breaking up the months by the flowers that bloom, the fruits that ripen, the animals and fish that reach prime condition, and the ways the skies behave. The seasons don't change because of a date on a calendar; instead, the switch is closely observed in nature, and felt intuitively as conditions change. Far from being guesswork, science is increasingly recognising this [traditional knowledge](#), with the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) and Australia's Bureau of Meteorology working with numerous Indigenous groups to document their six seasons. Used by generations upon generations of First Nations peoples across Australia, each localised system plays to nuances and awakenings that don't necessarily fall neatly into four distinct seasonal categories.

Modern Australia is embracing this knowledge in other ways. Perth / Boorloo's best fine diner, [Wildflower](#), has leveraged the six seasons since it opened, using them to choose ingredients based on what's naturally available. This method allows the restaurant to ensure the sustainability of the food sourced, just as the Noongar people have done for thousands of years. As the year flips between the seasons birak, bunuru, djeran, makuru, djilba and kambarang, the menu changes; each new culinary creation is inspired by the characteristics of that season.

It's a system that Wadandi custodian Josh Whiteland of [Koomal Dreaming](#), three hours' drive south of Perth / Boorloo in Margaret River, explains to those joining his cultural tours. He points out that as well as determining what's best to eat at any particular time, the six seasons also indicate which medicinal plants are growing and right to use – knowledge that could save a life.



Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia

On Josh's Aboriginal Food, Cave and Didj tour enjoy a gourmet BBQ lunch around Josh's campfire, with native food tastings served with Margaret River Region wine and beer. Depending on the season, you might savour kangaroo, emu, quandong, emu plum, and salt bush.

Being a different language group, the words for each season differ to those used in Western Australia, as they do in [Kakadu National Park](#), where a locally appropriate version of the six seasons is observed. In April, for example, it's banggerreng – otherwise known as “knock 'em down” storm season – when windy weather flattens the region's spear grasses. Local guide Sab Lord of [Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris](#) knows the seasons intimately and reveals them on his tailored experiences of this World Heritage-listed natural reserve.

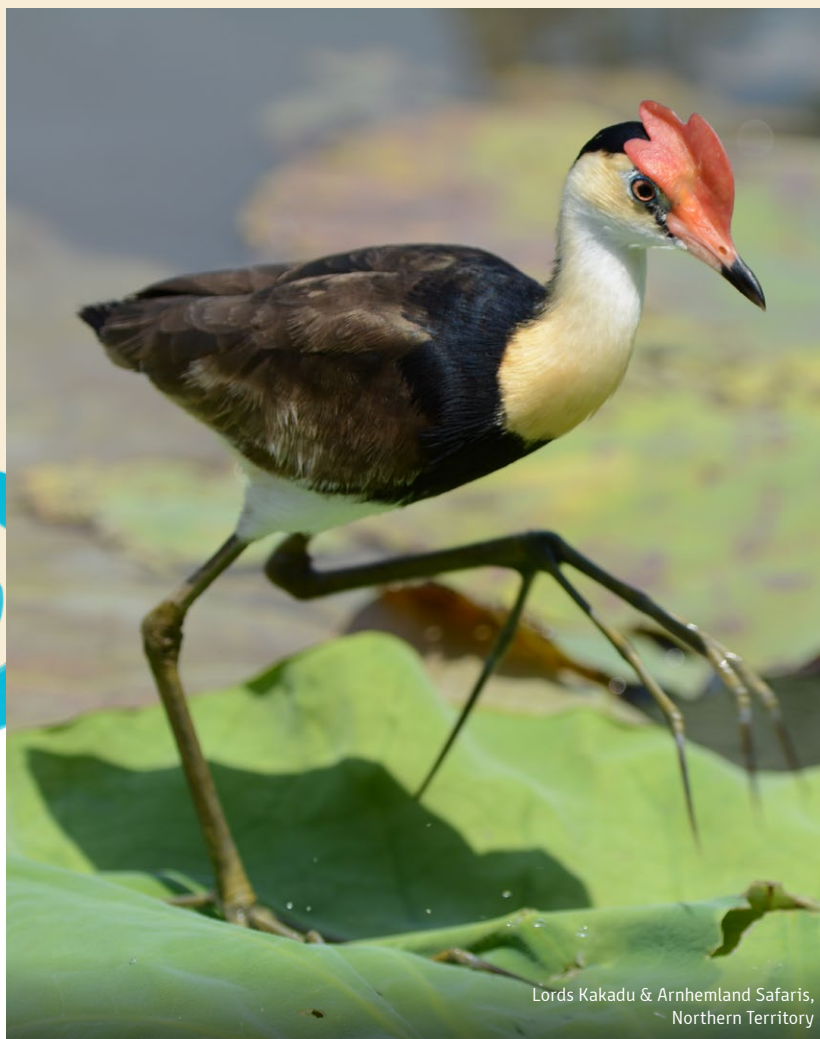
GOING ON SAFARI: AUSTRALIA'S WILDLIFE THROUGH AN INDIGENOUS LENS

Koalas. Kangaroos. Echidnas. Wombats. Without an Aboriginal guide, they're fascinating creatures only found in Australia. With one, they become cultural Totems, food sources, the bearers of wisdom and guides to the seasons.

Australia's unique wildlife and stunning natural attractions draw almost 70 per cent of the nation's visitors, or about five million people each year, according to research, and nature is named as the most influential trip-planning factor for almost 40 per cent of inbound visitors. Experiencing both through the lens of an Aboriginal guide adds a layer of understanding that's unobtainable in any other way.



Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill, Victoria



Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory

In the tricoloured, World Heritage-listed landscape of Shark Bay, [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) provides a unique take on the dugongs, whales, dolphins and, yes, sharks clustering below the West Australian

waterline. As the red earth merges with bone-hued sand and turquoise ocean, guide Darren Capewell leads skimmy kayaks or stand-up paddleboards across bountiful waters, sharing his people's unbreakable spiritual connection to the ecosystem that has long provided their life source. His purpose is to get you to feel the country, rather than just see it.

Local guides enhance Kakadu Tourism's [Yellow Water cruises](#) with their passed-down knowledge of the life cycles of the fauna living in the spectacular wetlands. They share stories as saltwater crocodiles emerge from motionless water in golden dawn light to the cackle of some of the 60 species of native bird.

Meanwhile, the guided walk through a rehabilitated wildlife reserve at Victoria's Tower Hill with [Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill](#) allows for up-close encounters with iconic Australian animals such as kangaroos, emus, koalas and

wallabies. As they roam freely, you learn about bush foods and handle Aboriginal tools that were once a part of daily life in the dormant volcano surrounds.

Whales are sacred to many Aboriginal communities around Australia, featuring in numerous Creation stories. Not in the least the ones you'll hear on a Yallingbilla Whale Watching Cultural Walk with Yura Tours on North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah. These seasonal experiences coincide with whale migration along the east coast of Australia (May through November, and give you the chance to spot these gentle giants alongside dolphins, kangaroos and all manner of native birds that thrive here on Quandamooka Country.



Kakadu Tourism, Northern Territory

ABORIGINAL ASTRONOMY: SEEING THE NIGHT SKY THROUGH A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Well before Galileo and the ancient Greek astronomers gazed upon the stars, Australia's Aboriginal peoples were interpreting the night sky. Believed to be the [world's first astronomers](#), they used the universe to navigate, read the seasons, predict weather patterns and explain the creation of the earth and the universe.

There's evidence of their sophisticated knowledge in the state of Victoria, at a stone-strewn astronomical observatory estimated to date back some 11,000 years. The site, called Wurdi Youang, tracked the setting sun at the solstices and equinoxes, accurate to within a few degrees, well before the creation of Stonehenge.

It's astounding to see the level of comprehension that existed amongst Aboriginal peoples tens of thousands of years ago, and which continues to be passed down. For example, the changing position of the sun and the stars has long been linked to the [cycles](#) of edible creatures and plants, signalling times of migration, breeding and birthing. It was also recognised that planets move differently from stars. Some Aboriginal groups worked out that moon haloes could help predict rain, while others observed star [twinkling](#) to forecast various weather events. Eclipses are mentioned in ancient storytelling, as well as the link between the moon and the tides.

The Creation stories and spirituality of Aboriginal Australians originate from the world around them, including the stars. It wasn't just the stars that were watched; Aboriginal peoples also looked into the dark patches of the Milky Way and made out a giant [celestial emu](#). A shift in its position would indicate when it was time to hunt emu or collect its eggs. Meanwhile, the footprint of this emu is marked by Australia's best-known constellation, otherwise known as the Southern Cross.



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia



SEIT - Patji, Northern Territory

On night tours, Darren "Capes" Capewell of [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) points out the emu and shares its stories, as well as other lessons taught when certain constellations emerge. The Seven Sisters Creation story, which tracks a fraught journey across Australia as the girls are pursued by an ancestral being, connects to the star cluster known as the Pleiades. Similar stories are revealed in the Northern Territory on a [Kakadu Tourism](#) Alhohgarrng Stargazing Tour while cruising Yellow Water billabong at night. In this part of the Top End, there's no light pollution, no highrises, no cars for miles. Nothing separating you from the bedazzlement of the Milky Way overhead.

Aboriginal peoples also used the stars to navigate their travels across the land. They created an extensive network of unmarked

routes used for trade and storytelling, well before Europeans set foot on their Country. These routes could stretch for hundreds, or even thousands of kilometres, and could be navigated by people who'd never used them, with the help of memory-jogging [star maps](#) that represent the landmarks, waterholes and turns on the route. Early explorers and settlers used Aboriginal peoples as guides, and it's believed that they would've been taken on these established routes – the best and easiest ways – leading to the creation of marked tracks. These turned into a number of what are now Australia's main roads and highways. Few know they follow paths mapped out thousands of years ago.

AFTER DARK – THE NIGHTTIME INDIGENOUS TOURS YOU NEED TO TAKE IN QUEENSLAND

There's something magical – and exclusive – about exploring the world after dark. Even better if you're doing so while discovering the world's oldest living cultures. Here's how in Queensland.

Creation stories of the galaxy, bush-tucker inspired meals, dramatic candle-lit rainforest settings, sunset cruises... these are just some of the experiences that await on an Indigenous-guided tour after dark in Queensland. Most memorably, each takes you on a deep dive into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures, like Kuku Yalanji traditions around Cairns / Gimuy or Gubbi Gubbi / Kabi Kabi history on the Sunshine Coast. Get set for an unforgettable evening out.

Flames of the Forest

Being amid the world's oldest continuously surviving tropical rainforest – the Daintree / Kaba Kada – is humbling in its own right. Visiting an exclusive pocket of lush green draped with a silk canopy and lit up with fairy lights, thousands of candles and crystal chandeliers takes the experience to a whole new, fairytale level.

This is your backdrop at Flames of the Forest, a prodigious alfresco dining experience on the outskirts of Port Douglas, enveloped by the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics of Queensland. The banquet itself is similarly exceptional: a seven-course progression of modern, mostly locally sourced, Australian flavours with an Indigenous bush tucker twist – seasonal specialties might include smoked crocodile rillettes with salsa verde, and lemon-myrtle-infused kangaroo loin on a bed of wild rocket and toasted macadamias.

As delicious as the experience is, the real reason you're here is to take a deep dive into Kaba Kada's Indigenous history. During Flames of the Forest's [Aboriginal Cultural Experience](#), two Kuku Yalanji brothers share their culture through storytelling, music and song. While you eat, you're treated to a mesmerising performance, heightened only by the sounds of the rainforest.

Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours

Visiting the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics of Queensland is like a salve for the soul. This pocket of Australia is home to a staggering 3,000 plant species, 400-plus different birds and more than 100 mammals, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. It's a bounty that Djunbunji Land and Sea Rangers have



Flames of the Forest, Queensland

been actively tracking and recording for over a decade, imparting their immense knowledge to guests who sign up for deeply immersive experiences hosted by [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#).

Departing Cairns / Gimuy, Mandingalbay's tours venture along Trinity Inlet to explore Grey Peaks National Park and East Trinity Reserve – a vibrant, tidal wetland where kingfishers dive, egrets patrol and powerful stories unfold – during the day. But you can also come back during the cover of dusk, to truly experience the stillness of the rainforest. On a Deadly After Dark Sunset Cruise, you glide out along the river as the sun begins to cast the water in a blushing glow, all the while discovering the world-first conservation efforts now in play here.

When you arrive at the Stingray Shelter (which does indeed resemble this marine animal) you're welcomed to Country during a smoking ceremony hosted by male Elders. While you're served canapes and drinks, you're regaled with stories about ancient languages and traditional practices, and shown implements that many local Indigenous communities still use to this day. Then slip back onto the water to the sound of a chorus of rainforest animals, the glittering lights of Cairns / Gimuy on the horizon.



Jarramali Rock Art Tours, Queensland

Jarramali Rock Art Tours

When you reach the 'Magnificent Gallery' outside Laura in Tropical North Queensland, you're truly in the middle of nowhere. The nearest town is miles away – there are no street lights, no cars, no skyscrapers; nothing separating you from the dazzling night sky. If you feel like someone has doused the heavens with glitter, you're not alone.

The ultimate Southern Hemisphere stargazing awaits on an overnight (or two-night) [Jarramali Rock Art Tour](#), hosted by Kuku Yalanji man Johnny Murison. His Elders were among those to create more than 450 works of rock art at Magnificent, spanning a 40-metre long swathe of sandstone and dating back more than 20,000 years.

It's thought 10,000 such rock art sites adorn these 230,000 hectares of wilderness in the Laura Basin, collectively known as Quinkan Country. The Magnificent Gallery is particularly special because there are no boardwalks or sealed roads to get here – only intrepid travellers make the off-road journey with Johnny.

Jarramali's camp of 12 safari-style tents is strung along the Laura River – the perfect



Jarramali Rock Art Tours, Queensland

place to cool off after a day of hiking, or to wake up with the birds the next morning. In between explorations you're treated to storytelling around a campfire, didgeridoo performances and spectacles of the natural kind – the wildlife in this pocket of Queensland is off the charts.

Saltwater Eco Tours

Further south on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, Indigenous-owned and -operated [Saltwater Eco Tours](#) offers several immersive – and tasty – sailing experiences hosted on the peaceful waterways of Mooloolaba.

Sign up for the Sunset Tour with Live Music and you'll be served local cheeses and charcuterie, dips and fresh Mooloolaba prawns while gliding along on the beautifully restored, historic Spray of the Coral Coast, a century-old sailing boat that casts a dramatic shadow as the last of the day disappears.

Entertainment comes courtesy of a rotating roster of talented musicians – in between sets, Saltwater's co-owner Simon Thornalley tells you about his own Sea Country connections to the Torres Strait, and the significance of local Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi culture. All while you sip a glass of bubbles or perhaps a cocktail infused with lemon myrtle. This part of the Sunshine Coast has never looked so good.



Saltwater Eco Tours, Queensland

AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES ARE IN NEED OF PRESERVATION

According to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, there are just over 2,500 people who speak Warlpiri, a central Australian language, making it one of the most spoken languages in Australia in terms of number of speakers. In 2006 it was estimated that there are just over 200 Meriam Mir speakers, one of the three main languages spoken in the Torres Strait. The numbers create a clear picture: that Australia's Aboriginal languages are highly endangered and in need of preservation.

At the time of Australia's colonisation in the late 18th century, at least 250 different Aboriginal language groups were counted, with an estimated [800 native dialects](#) in use. Today, the estimate is put at around [120 existing Indigenous languages](#), with most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples adopting English, or the blended Australian Aboriginal English as their first or second language; some also mix their mother tongue and other Indigenous dialects in a form of pidgin or Kriol.

Many older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples still speak numerous Indigenous languages, yet in 2019 it was estimated that [90 per cent](#) of Indigenous languages are considered endangered.

In the face of this loss of language, and with it, cultures and identities, many individuals are working to protect their spoken cultures. Indigenous singer songwriter [Gina Williams](#) switched to only singing in the Noongar language in 2013 and has been sharing the beauty of her ancestral tongue with concert halls and music festivals ever since. In 2016, she collaborated with [The Church's](#) Steve Kilbey to translate the 1988 global hit, [Under the Milky Way](#), which they went on to perform together (the song celebrated its 30th year in 2018). Williams, who was a foster child,



Dreamtime Southern X, New South Wales



Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, Western Australia

connected with her cultural backstory by learning the Balladong Noongar dialect at TAFE college in Perth / Boorloo and describes it as a “beautiful, musical language”.

Meanwhile, guides on [SEIT Patji](#) tours speak Pitjantjatjara, and explain how preserving the language is an important part of preserving culture, enabling the symbols, motifs and cultural methods to be translated across cultures and unlocked for modern appreciation. Similarly, [Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours](#) in the Northern Territory's Kimberley region provides a space where artisans can practice culture including the Miriwoong language, which has fewer than 20 fluent speakers remaining.

Clark Webb is the owner and operator of [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#) on the Central Coast of New South Wales. A proud Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung man, Clark has been an important part of Gumbaynggirr language revitalisation in the Coffs Harbour area. He works closely with community, and in 2022 opened the Giingana Gumbaynggirr Freedom School, the first bilingual school in NSW of an Aboriginal Language. “The aim is to revitalise the Gumbaynggirr language, as currently it is listed as endangered, while also providing education on Aboriginal culture, purpose, traditions and identity.”

With the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the background, a Welcome to Country ceremony delivered in language acts as a link between visitors and the area's Traditional Owners. The [Dreamtime Southern X](#) team explains Aboriginal language origins – Sydney / Warrane once had five Indigenous languages, now there are two – and reverts to language in stories and songs throughout its tours.

Plenty of Indigenous words are used in everyday Australian English vernacular, too. Kangaroo, galah, yabby and barramundi describe native fauna, while boomerang, willy willy, billabong and humpy are common names for objects and the environment. These words are a small, yet significant part of Australian culture, and point to the value of preserving the Indigenous languages that produced them.



ABORIGINAL ADVENTURE TOURISM IS TAKING OFF BIG TIME

From quad biking to spear throwing, Australia's Traditional Owners are offering tourists unrivalled adventure experiences.

It might be tempting to presume all Aboriginal experiences involve a serious appreciation of Indigenous cultures, its ancient ways and tens of thousands of years of history. But far from being restricted by the past, Aboriginal peoples are using their cultural backstories to enhance the fun of an ever-growing list of adventure activities. As nature-loving, outdoorsy people, they relish the fast-paced action of quad biking, the gritty thrills of sand boarding, and the centring peace of kayaking as much as anyone. Yet they hold an ace up their sleeves: often, traditional land rights mean they have access to secret corners where others can't go to; their shared cultural knowledge means they can find the way to hidden spots others don't even know about, and they can see things others overlook. For Aboriginal guides and those who join them, it allows people to walk among rarely seen rock art, spear and eat mud crabs using traditional tools, visit Aboriginal communities in remote areas and explore national parks in ways others simply can't.

Take New South Wales-based [Sand Dune Adventures](#), who rev 400cc quad bikes over the highest coastal sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere – measuring 12 to 30 metres (40 to 100 feet) high – and then invite you to sand-board down them. Tours weave in stories about the Worimi people and their long-running connection to the land, adding context to the adventure.



Sand Dune Adventures,
New South Wales



Nitmiluk Tours, Northern Territory

With [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) in Tropical North Queensland, you have permission to do something you'd never be allowed to do in real life: throw a spear. The traditional method of catching a fishy feed looks simple enough, but give it a go and it's surprisingly challenging. Then put your new skill to use in the nearby mangroves, where a mud crab feast awaits nimble hunters.

A tranquil sea kayak in Western Australia with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) becomes a wildlife education as you paddle above turtles, rays, sharks and perhaps even an elusive dugong in the World Heritage-listed waters. And peering into the rocky clefts and crevasses of Nitmiluk Gorge, in the Northern Territory, from a scenic cruise is one thing, but getting so close you can touch the age-sculpted

wilderness from a [Nitmiluk Tours](#) canoe – then plunge into the water for a swim – is quite another. Or, raise the bar even higher by glimpsing the 70-metre-high landforms from a helicopter.

Then, in the state's tropical wetlands, the crocodilian inhabitants become completely accessible on an aquatic safari. It's a fitting introduction to lands where some of the most extraordinary rock art galleries in Australia are hidden in caves, visible only through [Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris](#) guides, who have special permission to share them. Aboriginal adventure tourism adds extra layers, making experiences as meaningful as they are memorable.



Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris,
Northern Territory



SEEING UNDERWATER THROUGH ABORIGINAL EYES

Tasmania / lutruwita's Bay of Fires is arguably one of Australia's most extraordinarily arresting sites. Its glass-like water, rusty boulders and blindingly white sand is the subject of countless photographs. Delve beneath its surface beauty, however, and discover the Indigenous stories that hide in the rich earth, in the ancient rocks and in the elegant bushland, transforming the place into a living natural museum. Those stories are unlocked on a four-day guided tour known as the [wukalina Walk](#), led by the palawa people. Time spent with this Aboriginal group is particularly astonishing: they're the only group of humans to evolve in isolation for more than 10,000 years, developing a culture that's unique in the world. Their insight into the surrounding ocean, its islands and the magical coastline is transformative, and unobtainable in any other way.

A similarly immersive dive into the New South Wales coastland comes via a ninth-generation Yuin guide, who shares his homeland through a number of traditional Aboriginal ceremonies over two days. From a welcome dance to a sunrise beach ceremony, a yarning circle and a farewell whale dreaming ceremony, [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) offers saltwater interactions that simply don't exist elsewhere.

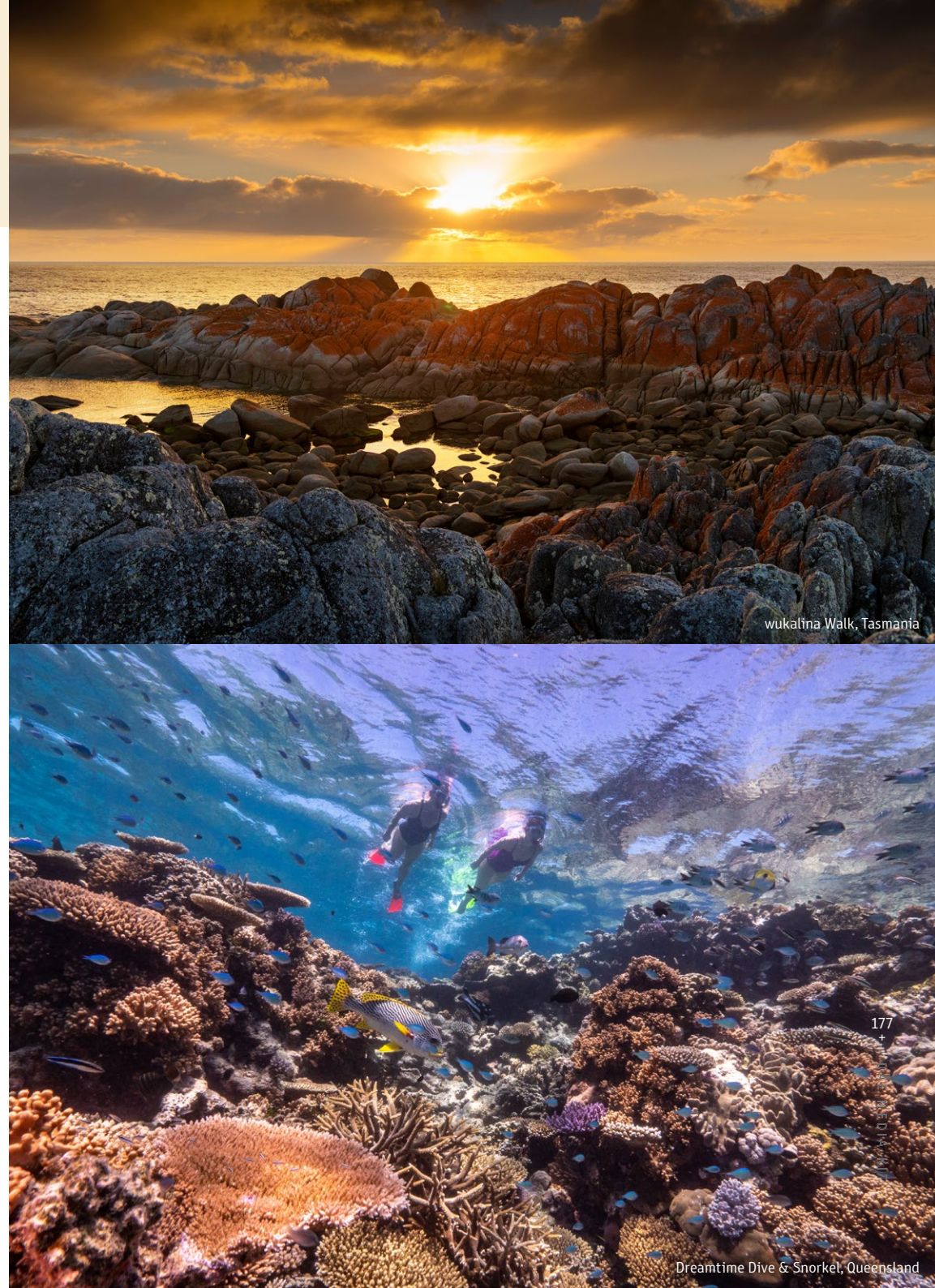
Well-known operator Josh Whiteland from [Koomal Dreaming](#), offers experiences that marry the fragrant Margaret River air – stung by wildflowers and the sea – with coastal foraging and an education into the ecology of this rugged coastline. The Noongar connection to the beaches, cliffs and capes is drawn both from the past, ongoing traditions and a present-day appreciation for the natural bounty of this water-lapped area.

At the other end of Western Australia, Yawuru man Bart Pigram, from [Narlijia Experiences Broome](#), tells the stories of the original saltwater people of Broome on his Mangrove Discovery Experience.

A canoe-bound perspective of the Katherine River is granted by [Nitmiluk Tours](#), bringing the grand waterway to life through the eyes of the Jawoyn. Most who approach the national park's 70-metre-high rock face will see only its grandeur: with an Aboriginal guide, you'll spot the rock art hiding near the water's surface. A remarkable, and remarkably unusual way to experience Australia's aquatic landscapes.

Of course, one of Australia's greatest underwater experiences is visiting the Great Barrier Reef, and [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) offer an enlightening perspective on this national treasure. A cruise presents a unique opportunity to hear Dreamtime stories about the reef told by Traditional Owners, while an optional guided snorkel tour allows you to get up close to the reef's marine life and better understand the cultural significance of this diverse ecosystem.

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wukalina Walk, Tasmania

Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours,
Northern Territory



Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory

GAINING A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF THE OUTBACK

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regard their Country as family. It is loved, cared for and respected, with a lifelong connection formed from birth. There's no exclusive possession, no fences, no development and no exploitation: people and earth live in harmony, inseparable from one another.

That deep connection to the natural environment is evident anytime you're experiencing the bush and the outback with an Aboriginal guide. Get an understanding of that connection with a [SEIT - Patji](#) tour led by Uluru's Anangu people. Your guides will share

the desert dunes of their homeland, plus take you off-road in a 4WD vehicle to parts of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park that most never see.

You'll also gain a different perspective of Watarrka National Park – home to the famous Kings Canyon – on a one-hour tour with [Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours](#). Christine Breden and Peter Abbott teach visitors about the history and significance of dot painting, weapons, bush tucker and medicinal plants as a way to share and perpetuate their Luritja and Pertame (Southern Arrernte) cultures. The chance to touch and

experience plants and artefacts enables a deeper appreciation and understanding of the outback; suddenly, you see it differently.

In South Australia, be introduced to Wilpena Pound's 800-million-year-old natural amphitheatre with a traditional Welcome to Country ceremony, followed by an Aboriginal guided walk that shares the importance of Dreaming to Indigenous culture and spirituality. The Yura people, who own and run [Wilpena Pound Resort](#), will also point out otherwise overlooked bush shrubs that change with the seasons and gorge fossil layers that defy comprehension.

Having disconnected from the "real world" for four or five days on a [Venture North Safaris](#) journey through Kakadu, Arnhem Land and

the remote Cobourg Peninsula, you'll start to perceive the land as family, as Aboriginal peoples do. Treasuring the one place that provides everything you need, from food and water to shelter, warmth and beauty, begins to make perfect sense. You'll wonder why you ever saw it any other way.

Covering almost 30,000 hectares, [El Questro](#) Wilderness Park in the Kimberley region of Western Australia is bigger than many countries around the world. It's now a working station with luxury accommodation, but Traditional Owners of the land take you back in time to discover Aboriginal culture and healing via the park's Injiid Marlabu Calls Us tours.



Garma Festival, Northern Territory

ABORIGINAL FESTIVALS, CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS: ANCIENT RITUALS FOR MODERN TIMES

Many Aboriginal ceremonies are still regarded as fiercely sacred and are open only to Australia's Aboriginal peoples. Others are more public, and readily shared with a wide audience through festivals that bring together song, music, dance, body decoration, sculpture and painting.

These events – sometimes known as “corroborees” – are a coming together of people to dance, sing, teach and talk. Performers are often decorated in paint, feathers, bark, headdresses, grass skirts and other cultural costumes. Whatever's on the schedule, they offer one of the best ways to connect to Australia's Indigenous cultures.

In northern Queensland, a circular dance ground is believed to have been in use for some 40,000 years. One of Australia's oldest cultural festivals, the [Laura Quinkan Indigenous Dance Festival](#) now invites people of all backgrounds to immerse themselves in the ancient practices of 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, some of whom travel for days to perform. Visitors cluster around the ground as the rhythmic banging of feet causes brown dirt to rise into the air.

[Garma Festival](#) is Australia's highest-profile cultural exchange, drawing Elders, politicians, artists, international travellers and the general public with its line-up of traditional performance, knowledge sharing and open conversation. Held in far-flung Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, it's coveted for the deep immersion and interactions that occur. [Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris](#) operates nearby, allowing visitors to attend the festival then take a deep dive into other Indigenous cultural experiences and accommodations.



Not all festivals are held in the bush. Sydney / Warrane hosts two important events each summer: the [Yabun Festival](#), held on January 26 (Australia Day, which is not celebrated by all Indigenous peoples), and [Dance Rites](#), which is staged outside the Sydney Opera House each November. Each bring cultural traditions to the city, but if you can't make them, the city's Dreaming tour, held by [Dreamtime Southern X](#), and the immersive Harbour Heritage Tour through [The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney](#) both run year-round.

Some are traditional festivals where music, song and dance tell the stories of ancestral heroes containing the blueprints for living within Aboriginal cultures and law (known as “lore”). Other festivals provide a contemporary

fusion of music and dance, featuring high-profile modern-day artists. Sport is also widely embraced by Indigenous communities and is a feature event at some festivals including the Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final and Art Sale accessed via [Sealink NT](#).

All ages are involved at Aboriginal festivals. Little children are “painted up” and brought out to dance with their relatives. Elders sit around the dance circle to sing, chant and clap sticks together. The communal spirit is palpable, something often absent from Western society.



Laura Dance Festival, Queensland



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia

Flames of the Forest, Queensland

CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL MUSIC: A WONDERFUL FUSION OF PAST AND PRESENT

Aboriginal songs and music have been passed down for generations and tell the stories of ancestral heroes. Today many Aboriginal musicians mix traditional music with contemporary forms, producing a world-renowned unique fusion. Traditional Aboriginal music is so much more than a mere melody or a catchy chorus – it is a deeply engrained aspect of culture, which has been handed down through generations for tens of thousands of years.

Aboriginal songs have been sung not only to bring people together, but to maintain Indigenous knowledge. Songs tell the story of

Creation, of how the sun, sky, sea and land – and people – came to be and the rules (lore) given by the ancestral spirits to ensure the continuity of all living things. There are songs to heal the sick, bring harm to the enemy and influence weather patterns.

Many of the Creation stories are represented as elaborate Songlines, the concept of traditional storytelling with song. Aboriginal peoples can travel through their custodial Country using Songlines as a map, like an ancient GPS.

This unparalleled connection to music has endured well into the 21st century. But beyond chart-topping performers such as Dan Sultan, Kev Carmody and Jessica Mauboy, musicians all around Australia are evolving the way you can experience the power of Aboriginal song and, in turn, culture.

Among them is Josh Whiteland, a musician, dancer and didgeridoo player, who runs [Koomal Dreaming](#) around the coastal town of Dunsborough, south of Perth / Boorloo in Western Australia. A Wadandi man – one of several Aboriginal groups in the area known collectively as Noongar – Josh draws on his deep understanding of Country to share Noongar culture and lore in the form of tours where music is a central component.

On a guided bushwalk through his ancestral lands, Josh will show you native foods and plants used for traditional medicine and explain the unique Noongar seasons as you head towards the spectacular Ngilgi Cave. Here, you will experience a magical didgeridoo performance, amplified by the cave's natural acoustics.

One of the most iconic Aboriginal instruments is the didgeridoo. Its resonant sound will set

your senses alight at Australia's only rainforest dining experience, [Flames of the Forest](#), set under the canopy of the Daintree Rainforest in Tropical North Queensland. Here you'll be served a seven-course gourmet dinner while local Aboriginal musicians play the didgeridoo and perform traditional songs.

Want to get a deeper understanding of this traditional men's instrument? Explore the Northern Territory's remote Arnhem Land region, where the didgeridoo is said to have originated. The yidaki – didgeridoo in the local Yolŋu language – is a profound part of Yolŋu culture, and is celebrated at the annual [Garma Festival](#), one of Australia's most significant Aboriginal events.



THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AN ABORIGINAL SMOKING CEREMONY

For Aboriginal peoples, the power of fire and smoke stretches well beyond the obvious uses of heating and cooking. For thousands of years, the two have been combined in traditional smoking ceremonies, a custom whereby native leaves and wood are burnt to produce wafts of pale smoke scented by the Australian bush.

A ceremony signifies many things, depending on the occasion. Most commonly, it's used to cleanse an area of bad spirits, offer healing and wish wellbeing upon those present. The ancient blessing is delivered as smoke wafts over each person, symbolising goodwill and generosity. The traditional practice is also used to pay respect to ancestors, the land and sea, and can be a sign of forgiveness for past wrongs.

Smoking ceremonies bring people together for celebrations, including marriages and births, for initiations or separate men's and women's business, but equally for solemn events, such as the end of a treasured life. In modern-day Australia, contemporary smoking ceremonies are regularly performed at public, urban events both in language and English as a Welcome to Country. They're seen as a sign of respect to the land's Traditional Owners, recognition of the Country's history, and of conscious social inclusivity.



Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia – Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, Queensland



El Questro - Injiid Marlabu Calls Us, Western Australia

Far from just lighting a fire, both the leaves and wood used are carefully selected for the different smoke they produce. Some woods are dampened to slow burning, or larger pieces are selected. Certain woods are believed to have cleansing properties, releasing natural oils as they burn. The plants used differ from region to region, and from clan to clan. At [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre](#) in Tropical North Queensland, the Kuku Yalanji people perform a smoking ceremony to introduce guests to their Land and culture at the start of their Dreamtime Gorge Walks.

On a [SeaLink NT](#) and [Tiwi Islands Aboriginal Cultural Tour](#) of the Tiwi Islands, a smoking ceremony will drive away any bad spirits you've brought to the island from the big city. As each smoking ceremony is performed, a gift is released from one culture and offered to

another; as the smoke clears, it's hoped the gift is wholeheartedly received.

The end of the day casting the Cairns / Gimuy rainforest in a peachy glow, a smoking ceremony launching your Deadly After Dark Sunset Cruise with [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#) is otherworldly. You can feel the deep connection that your hosts have to Sea Country, and to protecting this land as whips of eucalypt smoke drift through the air. Your hosts on an [Injiid Marlabu Calls Us](#) tour at El Questro in the Kimberly begin the experience with a burning and cleansing ceremony that is important to Ngarinyin cultural and spiritual life, awakening the senses to the call of Marlabu and inviting guests to listen, breathe, speak, see and immerse themselves in the culture and Country of El Questro through the perspective of its Traditional Owners.

MOVE TO THE BEAT AT AN ABORIGINAL DANCE PERFORMANCE



Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park, Queensland



Close your eyes and listen out for the sharp, flinty sound of wooden clap sticks as they're rhythmically hit together. Hear the song of an Aboriginal Elder singing in language, and the drone of a didgeridoo reverberating through the air. Then, tune your ears in to the softer, regular pounding of heels on ground. Aboriginal dance takes many forms, but the most common element is the "shake a leg" style of raising and lowering limbs to an earthy beat.

To an observer, traditional dance can feel all-encompassing. Rarely performed without music and song, it has been used for generations to share information. Aboriginal cultures are dominated by oral storytelling and many of the stories relate to native Australian animals. Bodies twist, turn, bend and dart as they morph into emus, brolgas, kangaroos and snakes. The movements are so expressive and so accurate, you can forget for a moment that you're watching a person.

Performers often dance their Totem (such as an animal species) – something they are assigned at birth and must look after for life. Totem dances are performed during a smoking ceremony to welcome guests on a Tiwi by Design tour with [SeaLink NT](#), as well as during Welcome to Country rituals at [Jellurgal Cultural Centre](#) at Burleigh Headlands on Queensland's Gold Coast. And in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, [Mabu Buru Tours](#) teams up with the Pintirri Dancers for a traditional

"Wakaj" (the coming together of family) dance performance, which takes you into the sunset while the sounds of traditional Karajarri songs echo through the surrounding bushlands

Dances vary widely from language group to language group and destination to destination, making this part of Aboriginal cultures as rich as it is deep.

Dances tell the stories of the Dreamtime, or Creation period, and the close relationship Aboriginal peoples and their ancestors have with the land. Aboriginal law, or lore, is also communicated through dance, with many teachings assisted by tales of evil spirits. There are also weather dances and medicine dances, as well as ceremonial dances for weddings, funerals, special gatherings and more.

The [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park](#) in Tropical North Queensland evokes long-passed-down teachings on hunting and gathering. The ritual, in a rainforest amphitheatre, is coupled with a Dreamtime walk, as well as spear and boomerang throwing.

Traditional Aboriginal dance is still performed today, but modern forms of dance are also being embraced. Younger generations have found particular connections to hip-hop and reggae, expressing their link to the land in new ways, and not just in an urban setting. Artistic contemporary dance is also performed by the internationally regarded [Bangarra Dance Theatre](#), with professionally trained Indigenous dancers forming a bridge between 65,000 years of history and the modern era.



SeaLink NT, Northern Territory

MODERN SPORT MEETS ANCIENT CULTURE: EXPERIENCE THE ABORIGINAL SPORTING SPIRIT



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

From hurling spears and wrestling to traditional ball games – sport has always been integral to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Traditional Indigenous games were a source of entertainment, socialising and an opportunity to finesse skills, with hunting tools often doubling as sporting equipment. While many of these games were largely lost with the arrival of Europeans to the continent, sport remains integral to Aboriginal life.

Chief among these is the Australian Football League (AFL), which some historians suggest was even influenced by traditional Aboriginal games. AFL began to emerge in the 19th century as white settlers adapted British codes such as rugby into a new form. Many believe

that Indigenous sportsmen joined in around this time, bringing with them unique skills that saw AFL evolve into its own distinct game of football.

One of the greatest places to watch AFL in action is at the Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final and Art Sale, just off the coast of Darwin / Garraamilla in the Northern Territory. Here, footy fans and art lovers alike take the two-and-a-half-hour ferry from Darwin / Garraamilla to Wurrumiyanga on the Tiwi Islands. Follow the art trail to various sale locales, learn about traditional Tiwi culture, and peruse (or purchase) a vast array of authentic paintings, carvings and textiles from across the islands. Then, in the afternoon, watch the Tiwi Islands

Grand Final kick-off, promising incredible power and strength on the field and zealous fans cheering from the sidelines. If you can't make the Grand Final, they are sure to also be up for a chat about football on their [Tiwi by Design Day Tour](#).

Aboriginal athleticism of a different kind can be explored on a stand-up paddleboarding experience with [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#), on the New South Wales Coffs Coast. The Gumbaynggirr traditionally used dugout canoes to navigate the idyllic waterways that now form part of the Solitary Islands Marine Park. Today, Aboriginal guides lead you on an energising paddle through this cultural landscape using a more modern form of watercraft, sharing Creation stories and

sampling bush tucker as you go.

In the dazzling underwater world of the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Tropical North Queensland, [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) combines ancient stories of the world-renowned coral reef system with eco-certified diving and snorkelling safaris, which bring you face-to-fin with some of Australia's most amazing marine life. With the expertise of an on-board marine biologist and First Nations cultural guides, gain an in-depth understanding of the reef's diverse ecosystem and its connection to Indigenous cultures.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL TRADITIONS: UNDERSTANDING MEN'S BUSINESS AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS

It's thought that over 300 Aboriginal clans or "nations" once existed across the continent of Australia – each with differing customs and cultural nuances – but one commonality to them all is the distinction between men's business and women's business. That is, the division of responsibility, of work, of insight and customs, practised by one sex but not the other, and vice versa. Aboriginal cultures see these as distinctly different but equally important roles, balancing one another so as to benefit the whole community. The division is neither discriminatory nor sexist – it focuses on cooperating so everyone lives in harmony.

Customarily, men are responsible for making tools and hunting larger game, while women take the lead gathering water and bush foods, and hunting smaller animals. But women's business goes above and beyond these day-to-day tasks: female Elders maintain law, the land, relationships, family, stories, healing and history.

You can learn about men's and women's business in several fascinating experiences across the country. In the Red Centre, for instance, whilst staying at Voyages Ayers Rock Resort, two guided walks to Talinguru Nyakuntjaku – the spectacular sunrise viewpoint over Australia's most iconic natural landmark, Uluru – will give an insight into the distinction according to local Anangu culture.

On the Minymaku Walk (Women's Walk), discover how Anangu girls and women were taught to track animals, hunt and prepare bush medicines. Meanwhile, on the Watiku Walk (Men's Walk), deepen your understanding of how only Anangu men made traditional tools and used fire to hunt. Both men and women are welcome on both walks.



Kingfisher Tours,
Western Australia

On many experiences, Indigenous women welcome everyone, regardless of gender, to learn about the world's oldest living cultures through their eyes. Enter Aunty Margret Campbell, who pioneered Indigenous tourism in Sydney / Warrane in the 1990s. Today, she runs [Dreamtime Southern X](#), a company offering tours around The Rocks region of Sydney / Warrane. She doesn't sugar-coat history, but also uses her experiences to highlight the positives: the heritage her Elders left, the generational stories they relayed, the hidden bush tucker and ancient art around every corner.

Across the country in Western Australia's Swan Valley, [Dale Tilbrook](#) has become one of Australia's premier founts of bush-tucker knowledge. Her beautiful property, home to a mob of friendly emus, is ripe with native produce – fruits, nuts, seeds, herbs and leaves – which vary over the six seasons in local

Aboriginal cultures. This means what you sample is a surprise. Her stories about growing up in the state as an Aboriginal woman are intimate and revealing, and demonstrate how she became a bush foods aficionado.

Further north, Gija woman Bec Sampi is the head guide at [Kingfisher Tours](#), where she reveals secrets of the Kimberley region in a way possible only for someone born, raised and educated with at least 65,000 years of intergenerational stories here. The landscapes you visit with her are out of this world, but Bec's knowledge and stories, as well as her female perspective, bring this fragile environment into focus.

Bummiera (Brown Lake) on North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah is a sacred women's place, traditionally off-limits to men. On a [Yura Tours](#) experience, founder Elisha Kissick shares the lake's cultural and natural significance. Passed down through generations, her stories tell of how her grandmother and great-grandmother gathered there to connect, share stories, and soak in the tea tree oil-infused waters, renowned for their healing properties.

The surrounding paperbark trees were essential in daily life, their bark used as natural sanitary pads, nappies, and bandages. Bummiera's reeds were also crafted into baskets, reflecting the resourcefulness of the women who cherished this sacred site. Elisha's tour offers a glimpse into these enduring traditions and the profound connection between the land and its people.



Dale Tilbrook Experiences,
Western Australia

DISCOVER THE RICH HISTORY AND MEANINGS BEHIND ABORIGINAL ROCK ART

Just as impressionism, cubism and traditional realism mark different styles of Western art, so too does Aboriginal rock art vary. Across Australia's Top End, from Western Australia's Kimberley to Kakadu in the Northern Territory, and beyond to Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, rock art bears fascinating differences.

In the [Kimberley](#), Wandjina art is tucked away beneath stone platforms, in caves and on gorge walls. The Wandjina is the Creator spirit, painted in ghost-like white ochre and characterised by saucer-like eyes, a haloed head, absent mouth and wide shoulders. Many would recognise the spirit from the Sydney Olympics in 2000; an enormous, 12-metre-tall Wandjina was part of the opening ceremony.

The Kimberley bears another style of rock art which has largely been disclaimed by local language groups, calling into question whether it is of Indigenous origin or created by another prehistoric culture. Bradshaw art, identified by pastoralist Joseph Bradshaw in 1891 and otherwise known as Gwion Gwion, is recognisable for its long, slender human figures wearing headdresses and body adornments. Usually painted in dark, cinnamon-hued ochre, it's believed to be some of the earliest figurative art in the world. The latest research points to a cluster of work done 12,000 years ago, although many other experts have claimed the works may date back 50,000 years. That's far older than Wandjina art, which is dated to 4,000 years.

Only a handful of Kimberley rock art sites are accessible to the public, but artists at [Mowanjum Aboriginal Art & Cultural Centre](#), just outside Derby, still paint sacred Wandjina art.



To learn more about the region's art styles, speak to Yawuru man Bart Pigram at [Narljija Experiences Broome](#) who worked as a curator for years before launching his cultural tours business. Or the artisans at [Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours](#) in Kununurra, some of whom lead fascinating tours into the dramatic landscapes that inspire their contemporary works.

Meanwhile, in [Kakadu National Park](#), the rock art is so prolific, it's described as an outdoor gallery. Long rock walls of rich, ancient work are open to the public in the World Heritage-listed wetland, 150km south-east of Darwin / Garramilla. At [Ubirr](#), the works incorporate the X-ray style, where fish and animals are painted with skeletons and insides visible, much like an X-ray. Most has been created in the past 1500 years. There are also handprints, where paint is spat over the hand to leave its outline, and Mimi spirits – bewitching creatures said to hide in rock cracks. Witness them on a tour with [Venture North Safaris](#) or [Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris](#).

In Tropical North Queensland, the Quinkan rock art found outside the town of Laura is regarded by UNESCO as among the world's top 10 rock art sites. Some five-and-a-half hours' drive north of Cairns / Gimuy, the galleries are defined by images of Quinkan spirit figures, some tall and slender, others stout and estimated to be 15,000 to 30,000 years old. There's also contact art, recording the first contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people. Viewing it on an in-depth trip with [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#) (via helicopter or four-wheel drive) brings it to life. Regardless of the type and variety experienced, however, the continent's exceptional rock art offers stunning insight into Australia's rich Indigenous cultural heritage.



A LITERARY JOURNEY AROUND ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA: 5 BOOKS



Bundiy Cultural Tours, New South Wales

The beauty of books is that they can take you anywhere from your armchair. Books also have the power to enhance your real-life experience beyond measure. Aboriginal literature doesn't only inspire adventure to Australia's faraway corners, it also arms you with cultural knowledge that will serve you well during your trip. Here are five books to stoke your wanderlust, and the operators who can take you there.

The Yield, by Tara June Winch

The acclaimed Wiradjuri writer's evocative novel about one man's determination to pass on his people's language and culture won the lauded 2020 Miles Franklin Literary Award. Explore its Wiradjuri Country setting with Traditional Custodian Mark Saddler of [Bundiy Cultural Tours](#), whose tours take you to a range of culturally significant places in the Wagga Wagga region of New South Wales.

Loving Country: A Guide to Sacred Australia, by Bruce Pascoe and Vicky Shukuroglou

In this unique travel guide, multi-award-winning author of *Dark Emu* and other important cultural works Bruce Pascoe joins forces with Vicky Shukuroglou, revealing Aboriginal Australia through 19 sacred places and the stories connected to them – including the whale story of Margaret River. Gain a deeper understanding of this corner of Western Australia with [Koomal Dreaming](#) on tours that feature didgeridoo playing, fire-making, native food tasting, wildlife viewing and more.

Fire Country: How Indigenous Fire Management Could Help Save Australia, by Victor Steffensen

Hearing from an Aboriginal land management expert about the environmental challenges Australia faces makes for a fascinating read, particularly following the 2019-20 bushfires. The devastating blazes renewed interest in Indigenous fire practices – something you can ask more about on an on-Country experience with [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) on the New South Wales South Coast, which felt the full force of the 2019-20 fires.



Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness, New South Wales



Venture North Safaris, Northern Territory

Welcome to Country: A Travel Guide to Indigenous Australia, by Marcia Langton

Knowing cultural etiquette helps to ensure a positive cultural interaction, and this guide offers plenty of helpful tips, along with insights into Aboriginal languages and customs, and explanations on storytelling, native title and art. This knowledge will come in handy when visiting a far-flung location like the renowned Injalak Arts Centre in Gunbalanya on a tour with [Venture North Safaris](#). It's in Arnhem Land, home to deeply traditional cultures.

Australia Day, by Stan Grant

In this excellent backgrounder on Aboriginal Australia, the Wiradjuri man and acclaimed journalist tackles the uncomfortable truths of Aboriginal history, the ongoing struggle for belonging and identity faced by Aboriginal peoples, and what it means to be Australian. Use the insight it offers while getting to know Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. Visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre then choose a wetland cruise, 4WD adventure or fishing trip with [Kakadu Tourism](#) and observe Australia's many cultures working side-by-side with its Traditional Custodians.

SEEING ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA THROUGH A PHOTOGRAPHER'S LENS

Arnhem Land, early evening. The sun is sinking spectacularly into the ocean, staining the sky shades of apricot and eggplant, but that is not what has caught [James Fisher](#)'s attention. His eye, and his camera, are focused on the children playing on the beach: boys doing backflips, girls singing cheerfully.

"They were having these amazing dance-offs, totally unchoreographed, fusing traditional dance and Michael Jackson moves," James remembers. "I loved their creativity, and the way that their traditional culture was woven into their everyday life."

The Australian photographer's globetrotting career has seen him work with stars like Nicole Kidman and Eddie Redmayne. He has also completed a number of assignments for Tourism Australia, meeting and photographing some of the many Indigenous tour operators making their mark on Australia. The experiences have been eye-opening experience, he says.

"Like many people in Australia, growing up I was unaware of the incredibly long history that exists in this country," says James. "We tend to go overseas in search of culture, but this is a country where there were once more than 600 languages and dialects, and 60,000 plus years of human habitation. Each community we visited had its own way of speaking, its own way of feeling. It felt like a completely distinct culture."

James' first encounters with Indigenous cultures came more than a decade ago, when he spent time at Kununurra as the on-set photographer for Baz Luhrmann's film, *Australia*.

Then in 2018 he was involved in shooting approximately 60 different communities on behalf of Tourism Australia's [Discover Aboriginal Experiences](#) program, which allowed him to immerse himself more deeply in Aboriginal cultures. "What really struck me was not just how strongly traditional culture shaped many of these communities – from what



Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

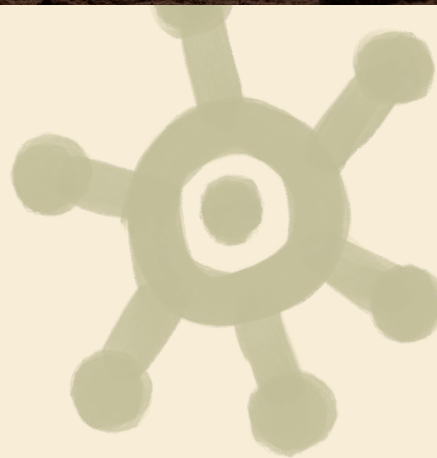
they eat to how they relate to the land – but how willing they were to share that culture," says James. "Whether you head up to Arnhem Land or somewhere like Shark Bay in Western Australia, where the red desert sands meet the white sand dunes that front the ocean, to be immersed in these landscapes and these ancient cultures is just extraordinary."

James and his videographer Archie Sartracom covered a lot of ground to get their shots, usually travelling by 4WD vehicle. Reaching some of the more far-flung locations occasionally required jumping on a plane, or – in some cases – a boat. "If you want to visit some of the more remote communities in the wet season, that's the only option," he says.

Shooting in the outback is very different from shooting in a studio, and James says a

flexible approach is essential. "Archie and I do it all – we drive the truck, we set up camp and start the fire, we do the shoots and do the interviews," he explains. "On occasion, we've even had to herd camels."

The most rewarding part of the experience, he recalls, was the opportunity to connect with such extraordinary Australians. "I met so many special characters," says James. "The energy emanating from them was just gorgeous. That a government initiative exists, specifically to foster connection between ordinary Australians like me and so many extraordinary experiences and people, is really quite special."



THE SECRETS BEHIND AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINAL DOT PAINTING

Ever wonder why you've never seen an Aboriginal dot painting on a rock face? The style may be synonymous with Aboriginal art and is often thought of as being of ancient origin. Yet dot paintings haven't been around for tens of thousands of years, as much of Aboriginal Australian cultures have. In fact, the artistic practice was only developed in the early 1970s, in Australia's Central Desert region.

Its origins can be traced back to an art teacher named Geoffrey Bardon, who was working with Aboriginal children in the outback settlement of Papunya (around three hours' drive from Alice Springs) during this era. Bardon invited the children to paint a mural depicting traditional Dreamings (Creation stories), which drew the attention of the rest of the Aboriginal community. Shortly afterwards, adults began to embrace the practice of painting on permanent surfaces – first on cardboard and wood, before moving to canvas.

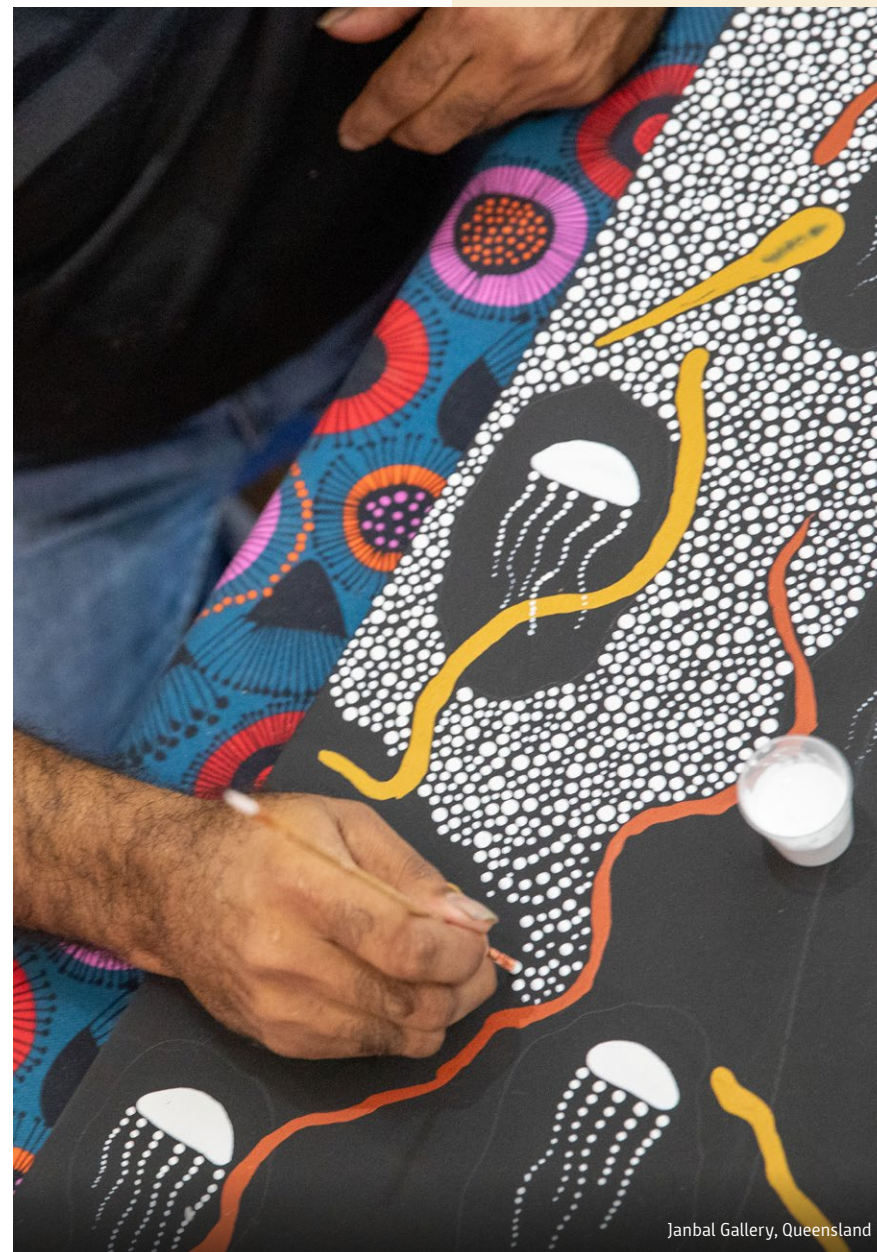
In Aboriginal cultures, tribal knowledge is enshrined in ritual and secrecy. To ensure that sensitive knowledge remains protected, sacred symbols are typically expressed on temporary surfaces. Some are traditionally drawn in sand and rubbed out or covered up afterwards; others are painted onto bodies for corroborees, and later washed off so that the uninitiated do not see.

Adopting these permanent surfaces therefore posed a problem for the Aboriginal community of Papunya – namely, that outsiders may be able to learn their tribal knowledge. To insure against this, the painters started layering, abstracting and camouflaging their sacred symbols with dots, so that only their mob could understand them. It's a secret to dot paintings that few know – rather than tell stories, dot paintings hide them. The method sparked what's now known as the Papunya Tula Art Movement.

Dot paintings have changed significantly over the years. While in the early days, artefacts, ritual objects and spiritual ceremonies were clearly represented, and earthy pigments such as red, yellow, black and white dominated, now works are less figurative and use a wide spectrum of colours. In the early days, the canvases were never intended to be sold, whereas now, works have become highly collectable. In 2017, a large dot painting by the late artist Emily Kame Kngwarreye sold for \$2.1 million. She first began painting on canvas when she was nearly 80 years old.

In Aboriginal communities, dot painting has become a social activity, as you'll discover at workshop hosted by [Janbal Gallery](#) in Tropical North Queensland. Here, you can produce your own dot painting, guided by local Kuku Yalanji artist Brian 'Binna' Swindley. This intimate discovery of the Creation symbols relating to the rainforest and the reef will allow you to better decode the works on display throughout the gallery space.

Just over three hours' drive from there, a [Karrke Aboriginal cultural experience](#) will go into depth about the history, culture and identity tied into dot painting. Questions are welcomed while walking through the national park surrounding Watarrka (Kings Canyon).



Janbal Gallery, Queensland



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia



SEIT – Patji, Northern Territory

UNDERSTANDING ABORIGINAL ETIQUETTE



Did you know it's impolite in Aboriginal cultures to look someone directly in the eye? Or that shaking hands isn't always the done thing? How about that it's taboo for women to play the didgeridoo?

Just as in Japan, where diners slurp loudly to indicate satisfaction with a meal, and in Malaysia, where people point with the thumb rather than the index finger, there are customs unique to Aboriginal cultures and, while Aboriginal peoples have adopted or become accustomed to numerous Western behaviours, there are deep cultural insights to be gained by learning about theirs.

A little knowledge aids positive interactions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples often take long pauses before responding to a question for example, comfortable with the silence as they consider their response. They may speak quietly, and if there's a question they'd rather not answer, they may say that it's secret men's or women's business, or gently

divert your attention elsewhere. Respectful of their Elders and their cultures, they're eager only to offer what they know, or what's appropriate for them to share.

In Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, [SEIT Tours'](#) guides explain customs on their off-road 4WD tours. Visitors learn that the local Anangu don't make eye contact when they talk, and don't shake hands (that's reserved for funerals); a simple hello is more appropriate. There's also a chance the Aboriginal people may not be there. They have extensive family networks, and culturally, everything is shared – be it cars, houses or food. If something or someone is needed, Aboriginal people will leave immediately.

In Queensland's Daintree Rainforest, [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) leads visitors along a path near a waterfall, but only women can enter the cascades, as it's a place for secret women's business. Male guide, Juan Walker, doesn't have

the right to talk about what goes on there, nor would he even know. Across the country in Western Australia's Shark Bay, only men are invited to learn how to produce the warble of a didgeridoo around the campfire, on the Didgeridoo Dreaming Night Tour with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#); culturally, it's not something women are permitted to try. Rather than read about Aboriginal cultural ways in history books, in Australia, you can hear first-hand from the world's oldest living cultures.



Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland



Borroron Coast to Creek
Tours, Western Australia

HOW TOURISM CAN HELP AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 crisis rocked us all, but for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, it was a particularly daunting time. Given the high levels of chronic illness among Indigenous peoples, the virus posed a particularly big risk for Aboriginal communities. Many had no choice but to go into total lockdown to prevent the virus taking hold.

Now that the worst is behind us, these communities are once again accepting bookings, and welcoming record numbers of visitors. For many First Nations communities, particularly those in remote areas with few other sources of income, tourism is not just a financial lifeline – it's also a chance to help reclaim their identity and help rebuild connections that were broken by white settlement. In Tasmania / lutruwita, where a concerted attempt to eradicate Aboriginal cultures saw Indigenous people removed to offshore islands, the multi-day [wukalina Walk](#) in the state's north-east has helped a community get back in touch with their Land.



wukalina Walk, Tasmania



Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia

"The government moved our people off our Land. For us to get back onto our Country, it makes us strong," says wukalina's Clyde Mansell. As well as providing local Indigenous people with an income, the wukalina Walk also gives staff a sense of connection with their Land.

"You can see the pride our guides have at being about to tell the stories about our landscape in that landscape," says Clyde. "We come from the Land, we were made from it; we will always be connected to it."

It's a similar story in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, where [Mabu Buru Tours](#) is committed to empowering Aboriginal youth to ensure they continue telling Indigenous stories through the generations. The group not only provides training and employment to local Aboriginal peoples, fostering skills development and economic empowerment, but also works with Indigenous communities to foster a broader community engagement and also protect the environment, using traditional practices.

One upside of the COVID-19 crisis is that we all have a better understanding that communities are stronger when they work together. Choosing to spend your holiday dollar with an Indigenous-owned business brings big benefits to some of our most vulnerable communities by preserving jobs, boosting the local economy, and helping stoke a sense of cultural identity. All that, and you also get to immerse yourself in the planet's oldest living cultures. How's that for a win-win?





Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland



Dreamtime Southern X, New South Wales

HOW TO ADD A LITTLE INDIGENOUS FLAVOUR TO YOUR AUSTRALIAN HOLIDAY

Aboriginal experiences offer the kind of life-changing, immersive experiences ... which make a great itinerary awesome and, most of all, memorable. Overseas travellers want to experience Australia's fascinating Indigenous cultures – but don't always know how. Here's an easy guide to immersing yourself in the ancient.

Aboriginal guide Juan Walker's guests once included an American couple travelling with their teenage granddaughter, who wanted to learn more about Indigenous cultures on a dream birthday trip to Australia. Juan took them on a day out with [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) and showed them around Kuku Yalanji Country near Port Douglas, north of Cairns / Gimuy. Over the morning, the multi-generational family learned which plants make good bush medicine. On a remote beach, they twisted their feet into wet sand to unearth pipis – small shellfish that would go into their lunch.

At Juan's home town of Cooya Beach, they picked up bamboo spears and cruised through the saltwater shallows towards a lone mangrove, scanning the clear water for mud crabs lurking on the rippled sand. They soon discovered spearing crabs isn't as easy as Walker makes it look. After several crabs were bagged, everyone scrubbed their hands with silver wattle (or soap bush) and headed to watch Juan cook their lunch they'd gathered through traditional hunting practices.

Adding an unforgettable Aboriginal experience like Walkabout Cultural Adventures to an Australian holiday itinerary is not as daunting as it may first seem. For first-time visitors to Australia – who tend to explore the “golden triangle” of Cairns / Gimuy, Sydney / Warrane and Uluru – here are some suggestions on how to include a layer of ancient knowledge from each place while ticking off the must-see sights of rainforest, reef, city and desert.

Tropical North Queensland is also home to [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#). Departing from Cairns / Gimuy for the world-famous Great Barrier Reef, the day tour includes storytelling

from First Nations cultural guides drawn from local Aboriginal groups and the Torres Strait Islands (scattered between Australia's northern tip and Papua New Guinea). The guides share their connection to Sea Country and show passengers the tools used for hunting and making fire, as well as clap sticks played in ceremonial dances. The tour takes you to two Outer Reef sites where you can dive or snorkel and there's also an optional helicopter ride over Moore reef.

In Sydney / Warrane, you can learn about the Aboriginal peoples' spiritual connection to the harbour and its surrounds in a 90-minute morning tour around the historic Rocks precinct with [Dreamtime Southern X](#).

Ochre is smeared onto your hand at the start of the tour and you'll learn about the role of ochre in Indigenous ceremonies and the deep relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the land, water and seasons.

Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock, is the landmark that symbolises Australia's geographic and spiritual heart. The destination offers a multitude of ways to connect to desert cultures. At [Ayers Rock Resort](#), you can browse incredible paintings and other artworks at the [Gallery of Central Australia](#), or perhaps join a tour to discover bush tucker and traditional medicines. Journey deeper into desert cultures on a [SEIT - Patji](#) tour where you will join the traditional Uluru family and hear how they survived in this desert environment before the advent of tourism in the region.

5 GLOBALLY SOUGHT-AFTER TRAVEL EXPERIENCES YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD HAVE IN AUSTRALIA

Australia isn't just home to the oldest living cultures on Earth: we also lay claim to an exceptionally rare suite of Indigenous tourism experiences. But incredibly – despite being highly sought after by global travellers – many of these activities are virtually unheard of by most locals. Here, find five of the little-known activities on offer: just a handful of the vibrant, contemporary and surprising Aboriginal travel experiences found in our backyard.



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia

1 Gaze at a new map of the night's skies

There are astronomy tours, and then there are Aboriginal astronomy tours. Turns out, there's more than one map of the night sky, and learning to look at the universe's dark patches for meaning, as well as the twinkling stars, is surprisingly revealing. Aboriginal peoples are believed to be the world's first astronomers – another fact few have heard – and have long used the stars as navigation tools. Get a new astral view with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) in World Heritage-listed Shark Bay.



Sand Dune Adventures, New South Wales

2 Go sand dune sliding

Aboriginal life and cultures are rarely perceived as also being exhilarating and adventurous.

[Sand Dune Adventures](#) turn this misconception on its head by putting guests on quad bikes and riding through the longest moving coastal sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere, just 2.5 hours north of Sydney / Warrane near Port Stephens. Aboriginal stories are shared while on exclusive Worimi land, inaccessible any other way. Deep connections are shared while gazing over the vast coastline, travelling through bush and sliding over sand.

3 See Tasmania / lutruwita's Bay of Fires through Aboriginal eyes

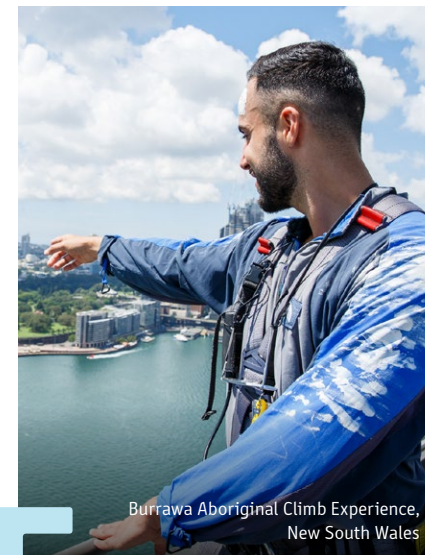
If most Australians were asked why one of Tasmania / lutruwita's most famous sites is called the Bay of Fires, they wouldn't know the answer. The Aboriginal connection is barely known, despite the countless postcard images of the glass-clear blue waters and sienna-hued rock tumblers. The name comes from the many fires lit by Aboriginal peoples along the coastline – the first and lasting impression of an explorer in 1773. Immerse yourself in the history, culture and traditional lands of the palawa people, who call the area larapuna, and follow their forebears' footsteps on the unforgettable [wukalina Walk](#).



Ngurrangga Tours, Western Australia

4 Explore the world's largest concentration of petroglyphs

You might have heard that rock engravings pepper the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia's vast, red Pilbara region. But did you know they were etched into some of the hardest stone on Earth some 20,000 to 50,000 years ago? The engravings are an extraordinary time capsule of the Earth's evolution. Spend a day with [Ngurrangga Tours](#) and travel back to before the last Ice Age, seeing depictions of megafauna that's long extinct, marine species that arrived after sea levels rose and turned the site into an island, and animal footprints that were used to teach youngsters how to hunt.



Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience, New South Wales

5 Climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge with an Indigenous storyteller

Climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge is at the top of the list for many visitors to the New South Wales capital. For a truly memorable experience, make the climb with a First Nations storyteller on the [Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience](#). As you take in sparkling views, your guide will share fascinating stories about Sydney / Warrane's rich Aboriginal heritage. Like where a three-metre-high midden (ancient pile of shells) once stood, revealing stories of intergenerational conservation. And how Cammeraygal woman Patyegarang became Australia's first Aboriginal language teacher, instructing botanist and explorer William Dawes from a base at Tallawoladah (The Rocks). Taking you to the top of 'The Coathanger' (as the bridge is known to locals), the experience is the ultimate introduction to Sydney / Warrane.







Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb, Western Australia

HOW INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES ARE FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

A collective of quality, authentic, Aboriginal-guided tourism offerings, Discover Aboriginal Experiences (DAE) members go to extraordinary lengths when it comes to sustainable tourism, whether that relates to protecting the environment, community, culture – or all three.

Recent figures published by [Statista](#) show that more than 80 per cent of global travellers regard sustainable travel as important to them, and that they are willing to adopt sustainable travel incentives – something that has led the global eco-tourism industry to be worth US\$172.4 billion.

Indeed, the vast majority of experiences offered by members of the DAE collective fall into this category. Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples don't see a piece of land as something to fence off and own. Nor do they look at the bush as a place to extract as many resources as possible. They don't regard waterways as reservoirs to feed mass plantations. Instead, they see themselves and the land as one.

The world's oldest living cultures have been embracing sustainability long before it became fashionable to lower food miles and use plant-based plastics. For at least 65,000 years they have lived in harmony with the environment, adhering to a reciprocal relationship that honours, rather than exploits the land. The Earth is their mother, a force that enables their existence in return for care and respect.

"The Indigenous connection to Country is fundamental across the DAE collective, as is sharing of culture through tourism, fostering a thriving living culture and economic and physical wellbeing of communities, and telling uniquely Australian Stories," says Nicole Mitchell, Executive Officer Discover Aboriginal Experiences. "We're delighted to spotlight three of our members who stand out in these fields. There are so many others. We hope this inspires guests and journalists to rethink and recognise the immense positive impact that the growing demand for Aboriginal tourism is having."

Case study 1: Mabu Buru Tours, The Kimberley, Western Australia

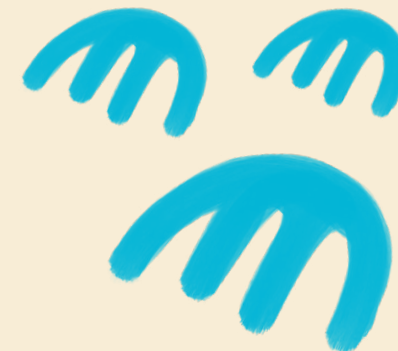
[Mabu Buru Tours](#) is the brainchild of Johani Mamid, a proud Indigenous man born and raised in Broome in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. His guided experiences take guests on a deep dive into culture, allowing you to savour seasonal fruits, meet local wildlife, and delve into ancient lore and traditions. More than a tour, it's an immersive cultural journey fostering understanding of Aboriginal life and history. And by learning about it, you're helping preserve it.

Mabu Buru donates 50 per cent of profits from the '3-day Broome Ultimate Aboriginal Culture Expedition' to the [Mabu Buru Foundation](#), an Aboriginal not-for-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring the survival and preservation of Indigenous culture through continued practice and knowledge sharing.

The Foundation's objectives include 'Cultural Practice and Knowledge Sharing', 'Training and Employment' for local Aboriginal people, 'Cultural Tourism' experiences, 'Conservation and Environment', and 'Community Engagement.'



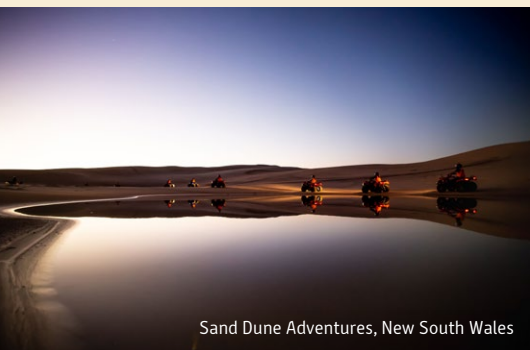
Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia



Funds are then used via a number of initiatives. Among them are workshops and training programs to facilitate cultural practices, knowledge transmission and skill development among cultural practitioners and emerging talents. "A big goal of ours is to protect knowledge," says Johani. "We've created a business that helps to bring together corporate Australia and Indigenous products and services and Indigenous businesses, which of course not just helps the corporate Australia companies, it also helps Indigenous businesses to connect with opportunities we find for them and create for them to see."

The foundation also channels funds into caring for Country by supporting initiatives that contribute to environmental conservation, land management, and the preservation of significant cultural sites and practices. Johani and his team also believe education is key, and they work with schools, organisations and community groups to deliver cultural awareness programs, educational resources and activities that promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture. And the Foundation helps create jobs and business opportunities for Aboriginal people, promoting entrepreneurship and supporting economic development initiatives that align with cultural values and aspirations.

Case Study 2: Sand Dune Adventures, Port Stephens, New South Wales



Sand Dune Adventures, New South Wales

There's something about zooming down the largest shifting sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere that makes you understand why Port Stephens, a two-hour drive north of Sydney / Warrane, is such a special place, and has been to the Worimi Aboriginal people for millennia. Here, [Sand Dune Adventures'](#) adrenaline-pumping quad-bike tours take guests across Stockton Bight Sand Dunes in the Worimi Conservation Lands, covering some 4,200 hectares. This part of New South Wales is off-limits to most people – unless you're with a Worimi guide and have good screaming lungs.

Sand Dune Adventures combines this thrilling quad-biking adventure with unique cultural preservation as you journey through bushland, in and around enormous sand dunes – you'll learn about traditional Aboriginal food and history, as well as the dunes' significance to Indigenous communities.

Sand Dune Adventures is owned and operated by the [Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council](#). Guides are all Worimi peoples; "Our tours are not about profit, they're about people and sustaining culture," says Andrew Smith, CEO of the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council. More than that, Sand Dune Adventures also funds the [Murrook Cultural Centre](#), whose purpose is to gather, sustain, protect and teach Aboriginal Culture to all people with an emphasis on Worimi culture.

"We've trained dozens of Aboriginal local people in our business," says Andrew, noting that the centre now employs more than 45 staff.

"We have a whole series of people who can be Aboriginal tour guides, they can ride the quad bikes, they know the local history, they're trained in business administration and marketing. All the things required to run a successful business. We also do training in natural resource management... we get our elders and Traditional Owners and knowledge holders out on Country with some of our younger generation and start talking about respect... discovering a combined balance in the ecosystem between our traditional natural resource management values and scientific values."

This forward-thinking centre is fundamental when it comes to gathering, sustaining, protecting and teaching Aboriginal culture, catering to everyone from school groups to community businesses, government groups and international travellers. It's also used by the local Aboriginal community as a gathering place. Aboriginal staff teach various facets of culture, ranging from boomerangs to weapons and tools, art and dance, bush food and medicine, craft and more.

The Council also funds a 'green team', dedicated to the rehabilitation and regeneration of natural environments alongside urban-based environmental education. Part of this has been the establishment of a nursery at Murrook.

"We also have a botanist, ecologist and archaeologist. We do seed collection and create stock supplies for our nursery to sustain native plants indigenous to this region. There are a lot of rehabilitation sites looking for native plants. We're here with a long-term investment," says Andrew.

And the return to the community? "Social Adventures Australia worked out that for every \$1 we invest into our businesses, it's giving around a \$25 return to a family. That's a massive investment into our people."

Case Study 3: Wajaana Yaam Gumbayngirr Adventure Tours, Coffs Harbour, New South Wales



Wajaana Yaam Gumbayngirr Adventure Tours, New South Wales

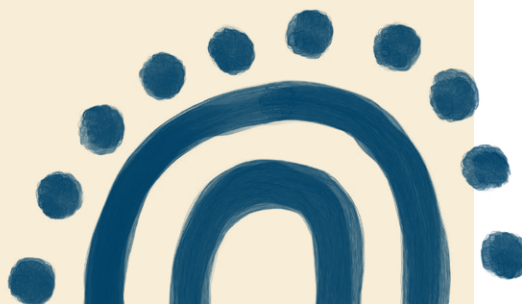
The Gumbayngirr people of the New South Wales Mid-North Coast have been paddling its waterways for tens of thousands of years, their ancestors using their knowledge of the tides to travel long distances in dugout canoes carved from hollowed tree trunks. [Wajaana Yaam Gumbayngirr Adventure Tours](#) continues this tradition via its stand-up paddleboarding tours, which are held on three idyllic waterways within the Solitary Islands Marine Park: the Coffs, Moonee and Red Rock Creeks. While paddling, you can admire the fish darting through crystal clear waters as your Aboriginal guide brings the Dreaming to life, and introduces you to some coastal bush tucker.

But more than being a scenic way to see the coast, Wajaana Yaam has its eye on the future – much of the company's profits are reinvested from tourism activities back into the community. The company's founder, Clark Webb, also established Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC) in 2010, with the overarching goal of sustaining local culture on Country. Over the last 14 years, the organisation has set up three learning centres, among other achievements.

Arguably the biggest achievement to date has been the 2022 opening of the [Giingana Gumbayngirr Freedom School](#), the first bilingual school in NSW of an Aboriginal Language. "The aim is to revitalise the Gumbayngirr language, as currently it is listed as endangered, while also education on Aboriginal culture, purpose, traditions and identity," says Clark. "It's of the utmost importance that our children can attend a school that holds their culture and the land in the highest regard."

In 2022, the school opened with 15 students; in 2023 there were 52 students and this year there are 85... with a waiting list. This is a 100 per cent Aboriginal student school.

The BMNAC is also planning to open the Yilaami Eco-Resort, with capacity to cater for 40 guests and including an on-site restaurant and facilities that connect people with an array of cultural tourism experiences. In addition to offering a minimum of 12 permanent jobs, profits from the Yilaami Eco-Resort will provide the main source of funding for the Gumbayngirr Giingana Freedom School, says Clark.



5 KEY LEARNINGS FROM AUSTRALIA'S AWARD-WINNING INDIGENOUS TOURISM PROGRAM

Indigenous tourism around the world is booming, expected to be worth US\$67 billion globally by 2034. The popularity is no surprise to Discover Aboriginal Experiences – after all, Australia is home to the [longest continuous cultures](#) on the planet, spanning some 65,000 years.

When DAE was launched by Tourism Australia in 2018 as part of the [Signature Experiences of Australia](#) portfolio, it was with a vision to highlight this legacy, but also unite like-minded operators – with a particular focus on those that didn't have a voice among other large players in the industry. It was also with the goal of ensuring that travellers around Australia heard cultural stories from the communities that own them, to ensure authenticity and genuine engagements and conversation.

“Being able to share these Aboriginal experiences with visitors when they are in Australia offers the kind of life-changing, immersive moments which create memories to last for a lifetime,” explains Tourism Australia's Managing Director, Phillipa Harrison. “Delivering these memorable moments for visitors when they are here, while also supporting the continuation of our rich Aboriginal heritage, is incredibly important to our organisation.”

Since then, the collective has grown in membership by 45 percent, and is now represented at the world's most significant trade, media and industry events.

We know how special our members are, and these are just a few of the ways we're helping them gain attention and traction, both domestically and internationally.

1

Collective is key

Tourism Australia has always been committed to supporting Indigenous tourism around the country. When it launched Discover Aboriginal Experiences, it not only recognised the prospect of exponential growth in the industry, but also the power of uniting like-minded and exceptional operators. As a collective of now 54 members, DAE provides a supportive environment where members can come together to share ideas and experiences and ask for advice among other members and the executive team – whether that's a lesson learned when developing a new product, tips on getting new business or contacts for media coverage.

“The Discover Aboriginal Experiences program acts as an international umbrella brand, competing externally on the world stage as a marketing body and industry representative while internally acting as a champion of great business and support,” explains Nicole Mitchell, Executive Officer for Discover Aboriginal Experiences.

“DAE has always been so good for our tourism businesses. We receive many trade enquiries due to our membership with DAE. Their reach into markets and opening doors to both trade and independent enquiries is invaluable.”

– Liam Maher, Kakadu Cultural Tours

Kakadu Cultural Tours, Northern Territory



2

Never overlook the importance of marketing and media

As a small or independent operator, developing a strong domestic and international marketing and media presence can be a challenge – and costly. As a collective under the Tourism Australia banner, Discover Aboriginal Experiences is in an ideal position to represent all members and foster partnerships globally. Not only does the collective have strong media, trade and industry connections in all markets, it hosts representatives from around the world to discover, first-hand, experiences offered by operators, with the aim of generating editorial coverage and driving new and ongoing business to members.

“While the Aboriginal businesses involved in the program existed before joining Discover Aboriginal Experiences, bringing them together as a suite of extraordinary cultural experiences to market to international visitors via the new membership has delivered greater reach and great marketing exposure globally for the businesses involved,” says Phillipa Harrison. “In many ways we are seen as an extension of their sales force and promotional activities.”



Southern Cultural Immersion, South Australia

“As a small business, we are grateful for DAE's international marketing efforts for trade, as it is not always within the budget to attend these events ourselves.” – Taylah Lochert, [Southern Cultural Immersion](#)

It also develops and updates a suite of collateral annually, including a media kit packed with interviews, story ideas and member profile; as well as a brochure and flyers detailing DAE members and experiences; and the biannual digital [Connect to Country](#) magazine, which offers deep-dive stories into Indigenous topics that matter and make a difference.

Perhaps most importantly, Discover Aboriginal Experiences is a ‘face’ for all members at events around the world – a central contact point for more than 200 guided experiences across the country – representing them at conferences, shows, events and workshops, pitching story ideas and assisting with opportunities for members to be present in person as well.

“I think it is crucial to have this membership and to have a team representing the authentic experiences that Australia has to offer.” – Simon Thornalley, [Saltwater Eco Tours](#)

Go social – and digital

The figures don't lie – more than 5.2 billion people around the world use some form of social media. Tourism Australia is a leader in the travel segment, and is the most followed tourism account on Instagram – a space that [Discover Aboriginal Experiences'](#) members are regularly promoted on, alongside the dedicated DAE account. This is in addition to Facebook and X, formerly known as Twitter, as well as the [australia.com](#) and [discoveraboriginalexperiences.com](#) websites, the latter of which features regular story and member news updates, and hosts dedicated media and trade portals.

Discover Aboriginal Experiences produces monthly updates to members on media coverage, as well as quarterly newsletters detailing new experiences and offerings for trade, consumers and media. There are also industry newsletters created by Tourism Australia, reaching tens of thousands of subscribers.

The collective is dedicated to ensuring members are presented in a fresh light through visual assets, and hosts photographers and videographers to create image banks for members, suitable for a wide range of mediums, whether marketing, traditional media or social media. And all visual assets are shared via the collective's regularly updated [asset hub](#).



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia



Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Queensland

Nurture employment opportunities

Tourism can be a powerful driver for positive change and the sustainability of culture, and nowhere else in the world can claim a cultural legacy like Australia. Through DAE's partnerships with Aboriginal tourism businesses around the nation, the collective plays an important role in creating meaningful employment opportunities for Aboriginal peoples on Country, supporting the preservation and continuation of cultures on traditional Aboriginal lands, and having a 'halo effect' on other businesses that surround.

"While Discover Aboriginal Experiences has 54 businesses with over 200 experiences, our members also work with another 2,600 businesses," says Nicole Mitchell, with fellow tour operators, National Parks, transport companies, artists and countless others seeing the benefit. "So, the effect of Discover Aboriginal Experiences is that it not only supports the members but the tourism industry at large."

Generate education tools and resources

In addition to Tourism Australia's useful series of guides for tourism operators – covering topics including search engine optimisation, Google listings, ATDW and photography – Discover Aboriginal Experiences produces a number of unique resources for members of the collective.

Since launching, DAE has hosted interactive workshops for members and partners on topics like developing a social media presence, paired with timely resources for operators to reference and contacts for them to further their skills and understanding of the industry. Tourism Australia's Head of Indigenous Affairs and the DAE team are always available to help members work and enhance their knowledge within the collective.

"As a one-person owner-operator company, with the support of Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm, DAE provides incredible support with marketing, trade and consumer education that I would not be able to achieve on my own from such a remote location."

– Terry Hunter, [Borraboron Coast to Creek Tours](#)



Borraboron Coast to Creek Tours, Western Australia

6 ABORIGINAL CREATION STORIES YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW

From its World Heritage-listed national and marine parks to its vast deserts and vibrant cities, there's no denying that Australia dazzles. But did you know there's another layer to the country's beautiful wildlife and landscapes?

Indigenous communities have called every corner of Australia home for some 65,000 years, and have vivid and varied stories about how it was created during what from a Western lens is referred to as the 'Dreamtime.' With an Indigenous guide, tourism experiences across the country shine light on these 'Creation' stories, revealing why many destinations feel so spiritual and special when you visit, and why they remain sacred to Aboriginal communities to this day. It's a highly complex belief system that interconnects the land, spirituality, lore, culture and care of Country – it explains how the land was created by spiritual ancestors.

Visiting Uluru in the Northern Territory is always a humbling experience, but your time there is deepened when you learn how Anangu spirits still reside in every crevice and on every plateau of the world's largest monolith. And when you hear how the rage of an enormous humpback whale carved Sydney Harbour, you'll never look at this dazzling waterway the same way.

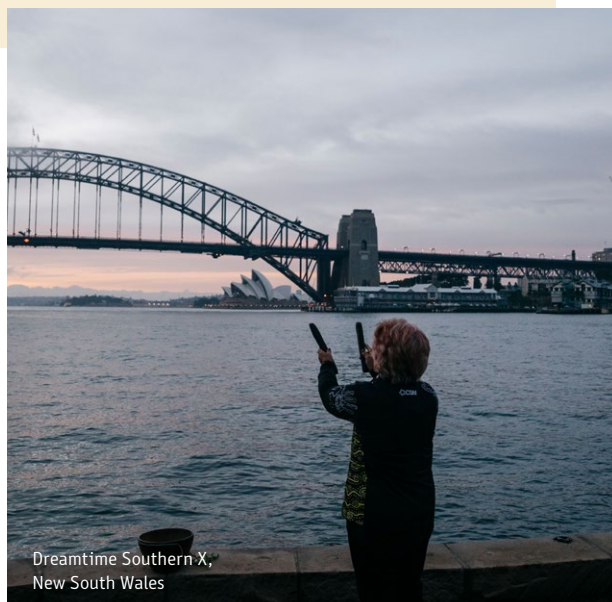
Indigenous tourism experiences around Australia are not only revealing these deeply important stories to visitors, but ensuring they are passed down through generations of Aboriginal communities – ensuring they remain alive for centuries to come.

Here are 6 Creation stories you might not have heard of, and five ways you can experience them yourself when exploring Australia.

1 Sydney / Warrane, New South Wales

As told by Auntie Margret Campbell, a proud Djunghutti-Djirringanj Elder and owner and guide of [Dreamtime Southern X](#) tours around The Rocks neighbourhood of Sydney Harbour.

"Many people don't realise there are so many islands in Sydney Harbour and along the coast, or how they were created by Buriburi. He was a bloke who had the only boat in the clan. After their food dried up along the coast, people wanted to go searching for more supplies and needed the boat. Buriburi wouldn't let the others use it, so they got into a fight and stabbed Buriburi in the head with a stick, before stealing his boat. He was furious, and jumped into the sea to chase them, turning into a humpback whale while he swam. The boat began to sink, and turned into the islands in the harbour. Buriburi is still searching for his boat today."



Dreamtime Southern X,
New South Wales

2

Uluru, Northern Territory

As told by Sammy Wilson (Djama Uluru), the former chair of the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management, and the Central Land Council. Sammy is also a guide on tours around Uluru via [SEIT Patji](#).

"There are a number of Dreamtime stories about the creation of Uluru. One talks about how a lizard named Tatji went to the rock, and threw a stick at it. It got stuck, and when he was trying to pull it out, it left dents in the side of Uluru. Tatji put so much effort into pulling out his stick that he was weak, and died in a cave afterwards. His body turned into large stones on the cave floor. Another says there were two brothers on an emu hunt, but two lizards killed the emu before the brothers could. The brothers burned the lizards' shelter as revenge, and the smoke from the fire remains to this day as grey lichen on the sides of Uluru."



SEIT Patji, Northern Territory

3

Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

As told by Jacob Williamson, a Master Reef Guide with [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#), offering a full-day cruise hosted by Indigenous Sea Rangers out of Cairns / Gimuy over the Great Barrier Reef.

"The Great Barrier Reef formed over 7,000 years ago, and my people lived on the sea floor back then. One day, two boys paddled out in their canoe to go fishing and dropped their anchor near a sand spit. Elders told them not to fish there because Dhui Dhui, a big shovelnose ray, lived there. They fished anyway, and caught Dhui Dhui, who towed the boys far out into the ocean. Bhiral, the Creator, was furious, and threw lava and hot rocks into the ocean from the sky, creating the coral that is now the reef and causing sea levels to rise. When you look into the sky at night today you can see the Southern Cross, which is Dhui Dhui, and the two pointers (the two boys in the canoe)."



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel,
Queensland

4

Melbourne / Narm, Victoria

As told by Rob Hyatt, manager of cultural experiences for the [Koorie Heritage Trust](#) in Melbourne, a creative hub not only offering a galley of historic and contemporary Aboriginal cultural artefacts, but also tours along the Yarra River / Birrarung led by Indigenous guides.

“Birrarung [the Yarra River] was created when two boys were playing in the bush one day. One climbed up a wattle tree to find some wattle gum, throwing it down to his friend on the ground. But when it hit the Earth, the gum disappeared. They poked a spear into a hole in the ground, thinking it had rolled in there. It woke an old man who had been sleeping underground, and he picked up one of the boys and began to carry him away. As he moved he made a furrow, which deepened into a gutter, then into a creek, and lastly became Birrarung.”



Koorie Heritage Trust, Victoria

5

Broome / Rubibi and surrounds, Western Australia

As told by Bart Pigram, owner of [Narljija Experiences](#), which offers guided tours through Broome's mangroves as well as to significant sacred Aboriginal sites around the city.

“If you visit Purnululu National Park north of Broome you can discover the Dreaming story of the frog and the brolga, and how they created all the rock domes that make the Bungle Bungles so famous today. The frog and brolga tried to steal water from a waterhole, and when they were stopped they caused a flood that transformed the spirits into the rocks, trees and animals. The region's diamonds came about when Daiwul, a giant barramundi, leapt from the water to escape an ancestral women trying to catch her in fishing nets. Her scales fell off when she jumped, and became diamonds.”



Narljija Experiences,
Western Australia

6

As told by Steven Jacobs from [In Culture Tours](#), operating experiences in and around Perth / Boorloo and Fremantle / Walyalup, taking you on a deep dive into Noongar culture.

“In the ancient times of Walyalup, long before white people arrived, a great battle shaped the land we know today. Yondock, the ancestral crocodile, roamed lazily until stirred by unrest. Down the coast he journeyed, leaving destruction in his wake. The once pristine waters were now tainted with salt, threatening life. In response, the Waagle – the guardian of fresh water – rose from the depths to confront his manners. With guidance from Worriji, the wise lizard who had watched Yondock and knew his spirit power lived in his tail, Worriji learned he needed to bite Yondock's tail off. Their quest took them through rugged terrain.

“Finally they reached the mouth of the river where Yondock's destructive force threatened to desecrate the land and the river. In a fierce battle for the soul of Walyalup, the Waagle confronted Yondock. As they became engaged in a death roll and tumbled, they carved out the Derbal Nara, or Cockburn Sound, and the sea water came rushing in. The Waagle was losing the fight, but remembered Worriji's advice, and bit the tail off Yondock. He took the tail and secured it across the mouth of the river. The tail became the limestone bar that stopped the seawater from entering the Derbal Nara, and protecting the freshwater environment.”



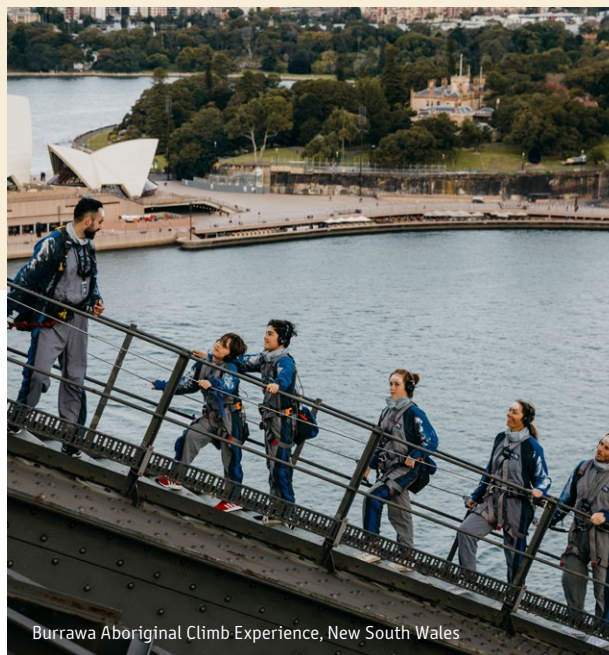


BARRIERS TO INDIGENOUS TOURISM - AND HOW DAE IS BUSTING THE MYTHS

Quad-biking down the largest moving sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere. Snorkelling with sea turtles and rays over a World Heritage Site. Seeing Sydney in a new light while climbing the Harbour Bridge. Sleeping in architect-designed eco-pods beside the beach. Catching crabs for lunch in the Daintree Rainforest... if you thought all Aboriginal-guided tours across Australia were about dot-painting, traditional dance and didgeridoos – you're about to have your mind blown.

From Western Australia to Sydney, Darwin to Tasmania, Australia is as vast in landscapes as it is Aboriginal cultures and traditions. And this equates to a countless number of dynamic Indigenous tourism experiences in the Discover Aboriginal Experiences portfolio, whether in urban centres or the outback, amid rainforest or over a reef. Each operator in the collective offers different insights into the destinations, cultures, histories and foods of the region you're visiting, with as little or as much 'education' as you want. One thing that remains the same is the exceptional quality of guides, who have a fine-tuned sense of humour, and are open to storytelling and sharing.

Every experience you partake in is part of a modern, evolving culture, which means that no two tours are the same – they revolve around your interests, questions and enthusiasm, as well as your guide's knowledge and background.



Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience, New South Wales

"Being able to share these Aboriginal experiences with visitors when they are in Australia offers the kind of life-changing, immersive moments which create memories to last for a lifetime," explains Tourism Australia's Managing Director, Phillipa Harrison. Delivering these memorable moments for visitors when they are here, while also supporting the continuation of our rich Aboriginal heritage, is incredibly important to our organisation."



Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Queensland

The myth: "All Indigenous experiences are remote and hard to get to"

The reality: Sydney Harbour never fails to dazzle. Imagine walking a couple of steps from your hotel room and seeing yachts and ferries come and go from the base of Sydney Harbour Bridge, before you venture north on a [Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience](#).

Sydney is not the only city where this deep immersion into Indigenous culture is easily accessible. Explore the Adelaide Botanic Gardens with [Southern Cultural Immersion](#) or Kings Park in the heart of Perth with [In Culture Tours](#) to learn about bush tucker. Discover ancient artefacts along the banks of the Yarra River that winds through Melbourne with [Koorie Heritage Trust](#). Or visit a sacred coastal cove with Jellurgal mountain as your backdrop on the Gold Coast on a guided walk with [Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre](#).

"I think people are surprised that they can be in one of Australia's largest cities on the Gold Coast, while learning about the world's oldest cultures. You walk to a sacred midden or ochre site that is thousands of years old, then see gleaming skyscrapers of Surfers Paradise in the background. It's breaking perceptions of discovering these ancient cultures," says Cameron Weightman, a Jellurgal guide.

Read more: Discover more Indigenous experiences in Australia's major urban centres, including the Gold Coast, Melbourne, Perth, Broome and Adelaide.

[Within easy reach: Aboriginal Experiences are more accessible than you think](#)

[Culture in the city: Finding the ancient among Australia's modern hubs](#)



Tati Wiru, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, Northern Territory

The myth: “It will be too academic and like a history lesson”

The reality: It’s true that whatever DAE Indigenous tourism experience you book, you’ll walk away with a newfound appreciation for Australia’s 65,000 years of continuous culture. But there are no textbooks, no lectures, no PowerPoint presentations. “We hold the stories that have been passed down through our Elders over generations,” says Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker of [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) out of Cairns. “But we tell them in a modern way – one that relates to our guests and is constantly evolving, and one that is fun.”

Think, learning the ancient art of spearfishing while catching crabs for your lunch. Discovering how to find fresh water while zipping down the Southern Hemisphere’s largest moving sand dunes on quad bikes. Finding out which native plants you can use instead of toothpaste or deodorant while wandering through the Daintree Rainforest. Or realising how the stars played an important role in Indigenous navigation while dining alfresco beside Uluru. You’re developing new and valuable skills and knowledge, without even realising it – and while having a life-changing experience.

The myth: “I don’t want to feel shamed about Aboriginal history”

The reality: “I tell every person on my tours that there is no wrong or right question, and that I will answer everything as honestly as I can,” says Mark Saddler, owner of [Bundi Cultural Tours](#) in Wagga Wagga, southern New South Wales. “The purpose is not to ever place blame or make anyone feel unwelcome – it’s about finding a connection and sharing knowledge. It’s about breaking down those barriers and stigmas around this concept that we should feel shame for the past. That’s not true – the only way to grow together is by working together. And laughing together.”

The myth: “There’s only one Aboriginal culture – every tour is the same”

The reality: From Kuku Yalanji traditions in Tropical North Queensland to Noongar traditions in Western Australia, from Sea Country to Desert Country, Aboriginal cultures across Australia are distinctive. In fact, more than 100 different Indigenous dialects are spoken to this day. And the experiences offered on Aboriginal-guided tours are just as diverse, each offering a snapshot into the unique customs that have been passed down through generations, whether you’re a foodie, adventure-seeker, art lover, star-gazer, music aficionado or nature enthusiast.



Here’s a snapshot of the diversity:

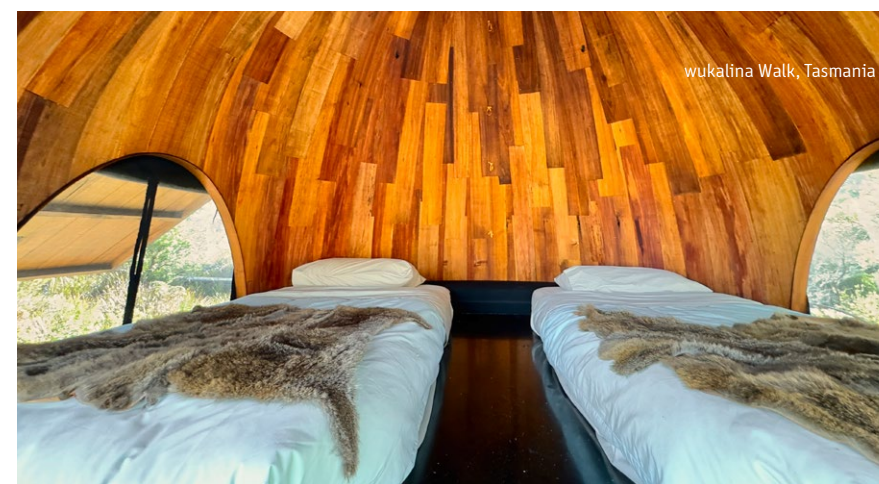
- Kayaking around World Heritage-listed Shark Bay in Western Australia with [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#).
- Foraging for mud crabs and oysters for lunch with [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#) in the Kimberley region of WA.
- Catching a helicopter to one of the world’s greatest rock art sites in Queensland, then swimming in a postcard-perfect waterhole before sleeping under the stars with [Jaramalli Rock Art Tours](#).
- Sipping botanical wines while learning about bush tucker at the [Firescreek estate](#) on the Central Coast of New South Wales.
- Gliding over dreamy billabongs to spot crocodiles and migrating waterbirds amid a World Heritage-listed national park with [Kakadu Tourism](#).
- Jumping aboard an historic ketch to cruise the Sunshine Coast at dusk, with live music and canapes provided by [Saltwater Eco Tours](#).
- Watching whales breach from the cliffs of North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah during migration with [Yura Tours](#).
- Taking a creative workshop that captures the beauty of the reef and rainforest at [Janbal Gallery](#) in Tropical North Queensland.
- Hiking the Tasmanian wilderness during the day, and dining on scallops and damper at night, on a [wukalina Walk](#).

The myth: “It won’t be truly authentic”

The reality: Sadly, there are some Indigenous experiences around the world that are tokenistic and scripted, and take advantage of Aboriginal communities and cultures. Every operator within the DAE portfolio is selected for the fact that it is the exact opposite, and that it is either Aboriginal-owned, -operated or -guided. The communities that own the stories, passed down through generations, are the ones telling the stories, bring Australian landscapes into vivid focus.

“Whatever form your encounter takes – whether that’s a walking tour through the heart of Australia’s urban hubs, or a wildlife safari in the distant reaches of the outback – you walk away with a more authentic connection to Aboriginal Australia. Every place in Australia has a different story and it’s about learning those stories so that you understand a bit more,” says Nicole Mitchell, Executive Officer for Discover Aboriginal Experiences. “It’s about the person who owns the story, telling the story.”

As you’ll fast discover on any experience – there are absolutely no scripts. The sights you encounter and the stories you hear are personal and relate to each individual guide, not to mention the flora or fauna that might appear on any given day. All guides within the DAE portfolio are paid according to strict national standards, and many operators invest back into the training and advancement of employees, whether that’s gaining qualifications in hospitality, management or land care, or building educational facilities and supporting community centres.



wukalina Walk, Tasmania

THE STORY OF DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES

Indigenous tourism around the world today is booming, and expected to be worth US\$67 billion to the global economy by 2034. The latest [report](#) from Tourism Research Australia confirms the burgeoning demand for Indigenous experiences around the country, showing that the number of international visitors partaking in Aboriginal-guided tours jumped 56 per cent in 2024, compared to figures reported in 2023.

When it launched in 2018 as part of the [Signature Experiences of Australia](#) portfolio – an initiative of Tourism Australia to promote outstanding tourism experiences within seven special categories – Discover Aboriginal Experiences had one main, yet hugely important, objective: “To first and foremost support and promote cultural sustainability, and in so doing ensure that the voice of Indigenous communities in Australia is heard globally from a tourism perspective,” says Nicole Mitchell, Executive Officer Discover Aboriginal Experiences. “The collective began as an extension of the already great work that Tourism Australia was doing – and has long been doing – to promote Indigenous Australia. It evolved through the power of collaborative marketing as a dynamic ‘one-stop-shop’ to assist trade and media partners and to elevate export-ready businesses. It has grown, overwhelmingly, into so much more than that.”

“Launching DAE was a chance for Tourism Australia – the most followed social media tourism account of its kind in the world, with an enormous and influential global presence – to support, give a voice to, truly amazing grassroots Indigenous operations, particularly in remote areas, that are changing the face of travel and tourism not just in Australia, but globally.”

It’s a concept that resonated. The Discover Aboriginal Experiences portfolio continues to grow exponentially, with seven extraordinary new members welcomed into the collective in 2025, taking the total to 54 members – a 45 per cent growth in membership since the collective launched in 2018 with 38 members. Across the portfolio there are more than 200 quality experiences, from catching a helicopter to an ancient rock-art site that is one of the most expansive of its kind on the planet, to spending

days hiking through unpeopled wilderness areas with an Indigenous guide and learning the story behind bush tucker, medicines and musical instruments.

While experiences are vastly different and span the country, common threads across all remain quality, authenticity and ethical practices, says Mitchell. “All experiences are either Aboriginal-owned or guided, and all offer a deep connection with Country, community, history and culture.”

Evolving the portfolio to this world-leading standard in Indigenous tourism has been achieved through various strategies, whether collective representation at a global level through tourism and trade events, providing guidance on the ground through workshops and training, assisting with media opportunities including photoshoots and journalist visits, and offering marketing representation at both a domestic and international level.

The results speak for themselves. In 2024, Discover Aboriginal Experiences was recognised by [Travel + Leisure in the Global Vision Awards](#) as one of the world’s top companies, individuals, destinations and non-profit organisations leading the way in developing a more sustainable travel industry. Also in 2024, DAE member wukalina Walk in Tasmania was acknowledged as one of the [World’s Greatest Places by TIME](#). Operators in the collective have been celebrated in features on the top places to visit in 2025 by the likes of Conde Nast Traveller, Bloomberg, AFAR and Lonely Planet due to their outstanding contributions to Indigenous tourism.

But above and beyond this recognition, the collective is proud to have become a world-class business incubator that combines global preservation of Indigenous cultures with modern corporate responsibility, changing the lives of not just the operators that are involved in tourism, but the communities around them.



Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia

The inaugural [First Nations Businesses Succeeding Internationally Report 2024](#) highlights the significant contribution that First Nations tourism businesses make to the community, creating jobs and driving Australia’s growth. “First Nations businesses typically create more jobs, and contribute more to the national economy, than non-trading First Nations businesses,” the report states. “First Nations tourism businesses employed almost 7,000 workers, and generated nearly \$1 billion in revenue in 2022-23, off the back of a rebound in international visitors.”

Tangibly, this equates to pioneering projects designed to empower Indigenous communities, offering training and mentorship programs to inspire, provide educational and employment opportunities, and promote positive thinking and leadership.

[Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#) on the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales, for example, reinvests profits from tourism activities back into the community – over the last 14 years the organisation has set up three learning centres, as well as the [Giingana Gumbaynggirr Freedom School](#), the first bilingual school in NSW of an Aboriginal Language.

Also in the state, [Sand Dune Adventures](#) funds the [Murrook Cultural Centre](#), whose purpose is to gather, sustain, protect and teach Aboriginal traditions, while [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) has been working in the male Indigenous health space since 2010 via its Bring Back the Warrior initiative, consulting with Aboriginal men at local, state and national levels.

[Mabu Buru Tours](#) in the Kimberley region of Western Australia operates the not-for-profit Mabu Buru Foundation to fund workshops and training programs to facilitate cultural practices, knowledge transmission and skill development. In the Northern Territory, [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#) has established the Anangu Communities Foundation, a charitable trust designed to fund projects to deliver positive outcomes in health, wellbeing and education through social and economic advancement.

“One of the truly beautiful things about tourism is that it can be an incredibly powerful force in building and supporting new creative, cultural, economic and social opportunities – particularly for Aboriginal communities,” explains Tourism Australia’s Managing Director, Phillipa Harrison. Discover Aboriginal Experiences is dedicated to doing just that.





PRODUCT FEATURE STORIES





Borggoron Coast to Creek Tours, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- The ultimate oyster experience
- Pearls of wisdom: A bush tucker walk with a difference
- The Aboriginal connection to Australia's pearling industry
- Learning the ancient secrets of the Kimberley tides
- Sustainability secrets of the First Australians

BORRGORON COAST TO CREEK TOURS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Bush magic takes many forms in the beguiling Kimberley region – as you'll discover on a tour with a Traditional Custodian.

Our guide Terry Hunter gathers handfuls of spinifex grass, layering the long, thin stalks over a rock encrusted with oysters. As he lights the grass and it bursts into flames, his face breaks into a cheeky grin as he anticipates our imminent surprise.

Pop! Pop, pop! The molluscs burst open, their mineral-rich brine sizzling in the handmade bush barbecue. For the youthful Bardi man who grew up along this remote Kimberley shore, it's a common-sense way to access a fresh feed without the need for tools and exertion. To us, it's like witnessing bush magic. And the oysters are absolutely delicious.

Terry's [Borggoron Coast to Creek Tours](#) walking tour is a two-hour transportation into another world – one that exists parallel to our own, yet is unknown to most non-Indigenous people. Exploring Bardi Jawi country, where red earth and saltwater meet, reveals as much about Terry's day-to-day life as it does his Aboriginal culture and the local pearling trade his family has been part of for four generations.

Terry's father taught him how to source fresh water in this salty seascape, but as he leads us along tidal beach flats, it seems impossible that we'll find any here. Yet he squats at one of the many rockpools that dot the landscape, cups his hands and scoops up liquid. As Terry drinks, we wait for a salty grimace, but he just flashes that megawatt smile again. As a young child he was shown this spot, where spring water bubbles up at low tide. We drink too, disbelieving until we taste purity.

Terry's people decree that you take only what you need, and care for what you have. This ancient sustainability practice has granted the land a sense of being untouched – it's raw, wild and alive. We feel it as we walk alongside mangroves, as Terry shows us just how far the largest tropical tides on the planet come in. He reveals how his ancestors used a species of local mangrove to create rafts that would float them out to faraway islands; they were experts at harnessing these tides to trade and commune with other saltwater clans. Today, those same tides bring minerals to the pearl oyster beds owned by Cygnet Bay, Australia's oldest continuously operating pearl farm.

Terry has watched the farm evolve alongside his best mate James Brown, who now runs the property. He tells us the two learnt outback skills from Bardi Jawi Elders, spending as much time foraging, fishing and skylarking as they did in the tiny farm's tin-shed school. The pearl farm opened to visitors in 2009 and, after being pegged as a storyteller by his family, Terry began leading tours, sharing the 22,000-year connection the local Aboriginal people have with pearl shells. Having worked just about every role on the farm, from cleaning boats to grading pearls, Terry – and his guests – reckons he's found his calling.

BUDJ BIM CULTURAL LANDSCAPE TOURISM, VICTORIA

Australia's newest World Heritage Site reveals the 6,600-year-old ingenuity of the Gunditjmara people.

It's early morning when I arrive at [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape](#), and a heavy mist blankets the countryside like a protective cloak. Dew dapples spider webs that resemble intricate lacework, clinging to spindly gums and tufts of reeds that appear amid sculptural lava rock as the sun burns through the fog. It's impossibly quiet; an insanely beautiful setting. I can feel my pulse slowing.

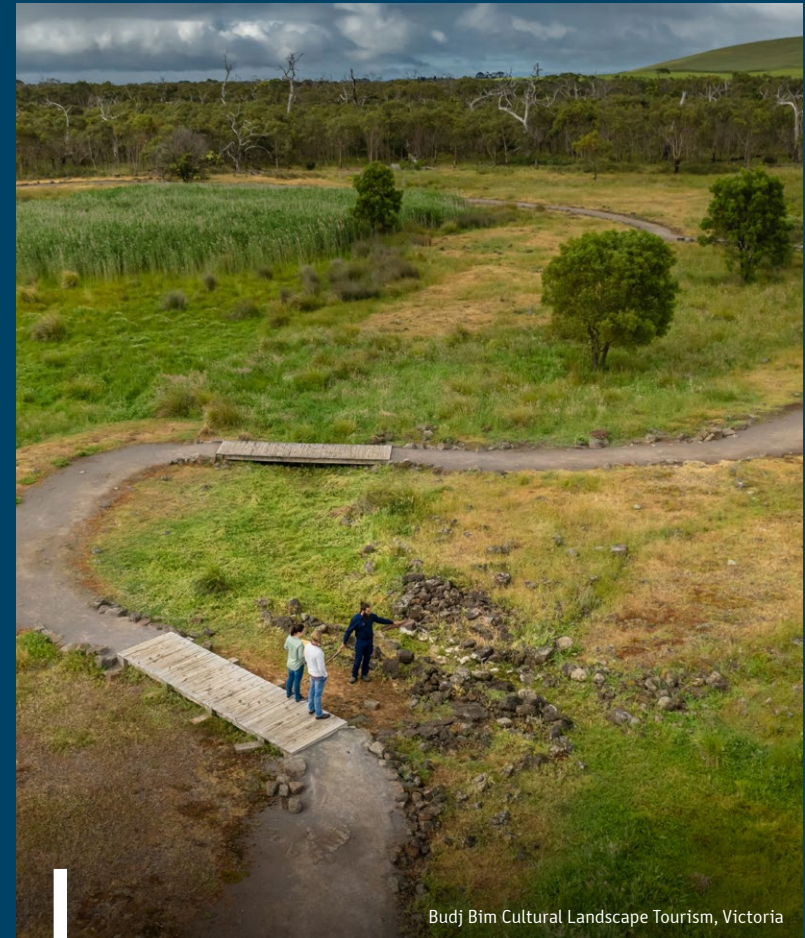
I'm on Gunditjmara Country in southwest Victoria, at the end of the Great Ocean Road. And I'm privileged to be visiting Australia's newest World Heritage Site – one of 20 across the country, and the only one recognised for its Aboriginal cultural values. “Welcome to a very special place,” says Gunditjmara man Braydon Saunders, a guide coordinator at the site.

He's showing me around the dramatic volcanic landscape, which comprises three components: Budj Bim National Park, which is cooperatively managed by Gunditjmara Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria and includes the long-extinct volcano formerly known as Mt Eccles, the source of the Tyrendarra lava flow; Kurtonitj, which means ‘crossing place’; and the ceremonial wetlands of Tyrendarra, all of which show extensive evidence of the largest, most complex and oldest-known aquaculture system in the world.

Braydon tells me that the Gunditjmara people used the volcanic rock here to manage water flows from Lake Condah to exploit kooyang (eels) as a food source. “They constructed an advanced system of channels and weirs to manipulate water flows to trap and farm migrating eels and fish for food. They did all this more than 6,600 years ago,” says Braydon. “Pretty amazing, hey?”

Today, the aquaculture systems are maintained by a team of Budj Bim rangers, who work in revegetation, feral animal control, weed control and give tours to visitors. The landscape is fragile, so we explore on a series of raised boardwalks, Braydon pointing out the smoking trees where eels were prepared for eating or trade, and the stone huts where people lived near their aquaculture sites – there are more than 100 of them. “For a long time, people thought all Aboriginal communities were nomadic,” says Braydon. “These huts show we put down roots as a community and that we had strong farming practices.”

It's almost noon, and the smell of smoked eel wafts over the boardwalks. “Must be lunchtime,” says Braydon leading me back to architect-designed, off-grid Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre, carved from red and spotted gum, blue and volcanic stone. The source of that delicious aroma is the on-site café, where chefs prepare eel tasting plates (think smoked kooyang, kooyang arancini balls, kooyang pâté) and other dishes infused with native ingredients like bush pepper and lemon myrtle. It's a tasty end to the tour, and like Budj Bim in a mouthful.



Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism, Victoria

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- The cultural significance of Australia's newest World Heritage Site
- Discover the world's most complex aquaculture system
- A slippery story: eel on the menu in southwest Victoria
- Aboriginal ingenuity: the world's most complex aquaculture system
- Eel farming secrets of the First Australians



Bundy Cultural Tours, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- See Wagga Wagga in a new way with Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler
- Get a different taste of the New South Wales Riverina
- Scar trees and other secrets of the New South Wales Riverina
- Learn how to decode ancient messages in the landscape with an Aboriginal guide
- River Dreaming: learn the Aboriginal stories of the New South Wales Riverina

BUNDYI CULTURAL TOURS, NEW SOUTH WALES

“I share from my heart,” says Mark Saddler, just minutes after we meet on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River in Wagga Wagga. His sentiment sets the tone for the rest of our four-hour tour, which is as personal and moving as it is educational.

A Wiradjuri man, Mark has spent most of his life in this pocket of New South Wales, around 460 kilometres south-west of Sydney / Warrane in the state’s Riverina region. His knowledge of the land is encyclopaedic – not surprising given his ancestors have had a connection with, and shared stories of, the Wagga Wagga countryside for more than 65,000 years. Despite this, Mark is incredibly humble about his presence here. “We don’t own this place,” he tells me. “We belong to it. I talk to the land, I really feel it, so I keep my connection to Country.”

While we wander the banks of the Murrumbidgee, Mark points in the direction of sacred middens: blackened earth discoloured by centuries of decomposing shells and bones. This is where local Wiradjuri people would feast, leaving behind piles of remains to show visitors what had been consumed and, as a result, what should be avoided. “Middens are like the earliest form of conservation,” Mark says. “If the next mob found mussel shells piled up, they would avoid mussels, so the population could regenerate, and eat another food instead.”

From here, our drive west to Galore Hill Scenic Reserve takes an hour, but Mark fills every minute with fascinating stories of exploring the surrounding bushland. Most people, he says, pass by roadside “scar trees” without a second glance – these living eucalypts are missing a hunk of trunk, respectfully cut (and with the tree’s permission) by Wiradjuri people centuries ago to craft canoes. “You’d be unwise to build a house around a canoe scar tree like

this,” Mark says when we pull up beside a grey box gum. “The area clearly floods.”

At the top of Galore Hill we linger for soul-reviving views over Wiradjuri-stewarded land, the scenic reserve home to 850 species of native plants. During my spring visit, it’s a colourful patchwork of wattles, grevilleas, hakeas and flowering eucalyptus. Much of the bounty is edible if properly prepared, says Mark, including old man saltbush and nardoo – a desert fern resembling a four-leaf clover that the Wiradjuri would traditionally grind and bake.

“It’s really a supermarket out here,” says Mark, who used some of the surrounding produce in our morning tea. His still-warm, home-baked damper is infused with roasted wattleseed, river mint and lemon myrtle, and slathered with tart Indigiearth quandong jam.

On our way back to Wagga Wagga, we pass The Rock Nature Reserve – Kengal Aboriginal Place, a spiritual Dreaming and ceremonial location included in some of [Mark’s tours](#). “That enormous ridge was created by Baiame – the Maker of all things,” Mark tells me. Legend has it that The Rock’s hills are Baiame’s dingo companions, which he left here when he ascended into the sky. “I love telling these stories and explaining our culture,” Mark says. “It connects everyone back to who we really are, and is empowering for our Country and our people.”

BURRAWA ABORIGINAL CLIMB EXPERIENCE, NEW SOUTH WALES

Discover Aboriginal heritage while scaling the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

I've climbed the Sydney Harbour Bridge several times, once at dawn as the sun was peeking over the Pacific Ocean to the east, and once at dusk, when the city's sky reflected an artist's palette of fiery colours. Both ascents were unforgettable, but only when I signed up for the [Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience](#) did I truly see Sydney / Warrane in a new – and overdue – light.

BridgeClimb Sydney's latest addition to its portfolio, Burrawa was conceptualised by Wesley Enoch AM – the Sydney Festival's artistic director from 2017 to 2021. It was then developed in consultation with not-for-profit organisation Tribal Warrior; a portion of my ticket price supports the group's community projects.

The combined goal was to step through at least 65,000 years of history, revealing the city through Indigenous eyes and explaining what the surrounding landmarks mean to the Eora Nation.

My lead guide is Shona Davidson, who worked for BridgeClimb before Burrawa was a twinkle in Wesley's eye – she not only knows every nook of the city, but also the Aboriginal stories defining them.

As we climb, harnessed to the enormous steel arch, Shona teaches us a few Indigenous words, including burrawa, meaning 'above' or 'upwards' in the local Aboriginal language. It's fitting that we learn this in view of Dawes Point in Tallawoladah (The Rocks), where Cammeraygal woman Patyegarang became Australia's first Aboriginal language teacher, instructing botanist and explorer William Dawes.

The pearly sails of the Sydney Opera House are always in view as we continue up the 1,332

steps. As we pause for breath, Shona points out where a three-metre-high midden (ancient and sacred pile of shells) once stood on Bennelong Point. For the Eora Nation, middens were an important inter-generational conservation story, speaking of what had been eaten, and what needed preservation. When Europeans arrived, she told us, the shells were burnt to lime and used to build the colony.

When we reach the summit, 134 metres above the water, Shona takes our obligatory selfie and we gaze at ferries zipping across the harbour from Circular Quay to Manly Cove (Kai'ymay). This, says Shona, is where 18th-century Wangal man Woollarawarre Bennelong lived when the colony first arrived in Sydney / Warrane. He was recruited to become a mediator and interpreter for then-governor Arthur Phillip, and was the first Aboriginal man to travel to Europe and return.

His wife, Cammeraygal woman Barangaroo, was an equally powerful leader, and today Sydney / Warrane's newest inner-city precinct bears her name. The enormous spire of Crown Sydney dominates the skyline here, but Shona explains that at ground level, expansive parklands are planted with native trees in homage to the district's namesake.

As we descend, Shona points to where the Tank Stream once flowed below Sydney / Warrane's central business district. It's a trickle today, but this freshwater supply once supported the Gadigal people for millennia, and was the main reason Captain Phillip chose this spot as the foundation for European settlement in Australia.

Three hours and countless eye-opening stories later, we're back at ground level. I can't help but wonder what other Indigenous secrets Sydney / Warrane holds.



Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience, New South Wales

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Reaching new heights to see Sydney / Warrane through Indigenous eyes
- A First Nations view of Sydney / Warrane from the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge
- Climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge puts Aboriginal cultures into perspective
- Learn Sydney / Warrane's Aboriginal story on a bridge climb with a difference



Down Under Tours - Daintree Dreaming, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- A cultural connection in Tropical North Queensland
- Fishing and gathering in Tropical North Queensland
- Catch your own tucker in Tropical North Queensland
- The art of fishing in Tropical North Queensland
- An ancient foodie feast

DOWN UNDER TOURS - DAINTREE DREAMING, QUEENSLAND

Mud-crabbing offers a taste of tradition in the Daintree.

Linc Walker's smile is as wide as the horizon. It's low tide at Cooya Beach, the traditional fishing grounds of the Kuku Yalanji people. The ocean shallows ripple like the bed of sand beneath them, the water too cloudy to see the mud crabs we're hunting. We carry traditional spears, hesitantly raising them in anticipation of a sidestepping crustacean that might come our way. But whenever one does, each of us would-be hunters lets out a screech, jabs blindly then hops on each foot, fearful that our sharp-pincered target might take revenge on our toes.

It must be a funny sight, one that never gets old for our guides, Linc and his brother Brandon. The pair grew up in this saltwater Country at the feet of the lush Daintree Rainforest, a 20-minute drive north of Port Douglas. To them, spearfishing is a way of life – a tradition passed down by their ancestors, and one they keenly want to keep alive. It's what motivates them to share their culturally inherited skills as they introduce curious visitors to their home, one story at a time. As they talk, it's clear the brothers feel such a sense of connection to this beach, its mudflats and nearby mangroves, that it's indivisible from their identity.

I spy movement beneath the water and raise my arms as Linc has taught me, trying to affect a stalking pose. But instead of cleanly spearing crab shell, I miss. The crab retaliates, raising its powerful, storm cloud-coloured claws and latching on to my spear with breathtaking strength. As I try to lift our dinner into a bucket, it releases and scampers free. Cue more laughter from Linc.

Fortunately, their talent for mud-crabbing ensures our communal buckets are soon full – but not overflowing. One of the distinct

messages of this experience is the importance of living in harmony with nature and treasuring its resources.

Time spent with one or both of the charismatic brothers is part of [Down Under Tours Daintree Dreaming Tour](#) which also includes venturing into Mossman Gorge for a traditional Welcome to Country smoking ceremony by [Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre](#) and lunch.

In keeping with the Aboriginal custom for sustainable living, we take only as much as we need. It's an intelligent approach that has allowed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to step lightly throughout Australia for tens of thousands of years. Now, Linc hopes the sharing of these inter-generational teachings will ensure he, and other Kuku Yalanji people, will be able to remain on Country. Tourism, he says, provides the employment Aboriginal peoples need to stay in the rural locations their hearts, minds and spirits are tied to.

The brothers sport long locks, black wraparound sunglasses and rugby players' physiques, but they are big softies – something we experience first-hand when they invite us to feast on homemade damper and the tender, white flesh of the crabs. Having caught it ourselves (sort of), under the guidance of members of the world's oldest living cultures, naturally makes it taste even sweeter.

DREAMTIME DIVE & SNORKEL, QUEENSLAND

The natural wonder of the Great Barrier Reef is perhaps seen most memorably through the snorkel mask of an Aboriginal Australian.

A spotted ray digs itself into the sand below as I hover above it, flukes fluttering like butterfly wings, sending clouds of sand adrift into the current. “We call her Millie,” First Nations cultural guide, Sissy Myer says later, when I’ve described my encounter. “Did you see the turtle?” I shake my head, no, and she looks disappointed. There was plenty else to gaze upon through my snorkel mask, though: parrot fish, clams and iridescent blue staghorn coral, as well as giant clams the size of my torso, their luminescent speckled mantles wedged into the seabed.

Sissy is one of 15 Aboriginal crew employed by Reef Magic on their [Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel](#) cruise. These cultural guides provide a connection between visitors to the Great Barrier Reef, and the area’s Traditional Owners, whose Sea Country extends from the Frankland Islands just south of Cairns / Gimuy to the Torres Strait Islands 850km away in Queensland’s far north.

First Nations cultural guides from four Traditional Owner groups, the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji, Gunggandji, Mandinglbay and Yirrganydji people, as well as Torres Strait Islanders, mingle with passengers as we steam towards the reef’s outer boundary, some two hours from the Australian coastline.

We’re passing Cape Grafton when cultural guides Fred Mundraby and Tim Creed sit down beside me. Creed explains the importance of fire to his people while Mundraby starts rapidly spinning a firestick in a hole gouged into a block of wood. Despite the 20-knot headwind, he has the beginnings of a fire in his lap. He presses the tip of the stick into my palm so I can feel the heat. “Fire is everything,” Creed asserts. “We use it to make spears, hardening the barb by heating it in hot coals. We use fire to manage the bush. And we cook roo tails on it too!”

Looking back towards Cape Grafton, he points out the distinct outline of a saltwater crocodile whose head, neck and shoulders are obvious as the light catches the contours of the ridge. He then demonstrates how the silhouetted peaks of Fitzroy Island line up with the profile of his cupped hand. “No need for a GPS out here,” he says. “We know where we are from the shape of the landmarks.”

Creed and fellow cultural guide Lazarus “Laz” Gibson-Friday take us on a glass bottom boat tour of Dog’s Paw Reef, one of the 2900 individually named coral reefs that make up the Great Barrier. Lazarus introduces us to the Great Barrier Reef Creation story. “You see all this water around us?” he asks, sweeping his arms wide. “This was once rainforest. Where those breaking waves are on the horizon, my ancestors hunted kangaroos. When the sea rose and the Great Barrier Reef was formed, they hunted turtles.”

The Great Barrier Reef Creation story begins with a respected hunter spearing a sacred stingray which infuriated the spirit of the ocean. The sacred stingray flapped its wings, creating large waves and strong winds which caused the sea to rise. The spirit of the ocean unleashed a ferocious storm that threatened to wipe out the hunter’s tribe. His people heated up rocks and boulders with fire and rolled these into the ocean. This barrier they formed appeased the spirit who subsequently calmed the sea which now covers the Great Barrier Reef. “The Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Dreamtime story is 10,000 years old,” Lazarus comments. “Sir David Attenborough figured out that the coral beneath this boat was 9,000 years old.” Returning to Cairns / Gimuy, I have a deeper understanding of Traditional Owners’ connection with the sea.



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Travel back to the Dreamtime on a Barrier Reef cruise with a difference
- Take a cruise into the Dreamtime on a unique Barrier Reef trip
- See the Barrier Reef through Indigenous eyes
- See the Barrier Reef differently on an Indigenous-led cruise
- Immerse yourself in the Creation story of the Great Barrier Reef



Dreamtime Southern X, New South Wales

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Modern city, ancient heartbeat: seeing Sydney / Warrane through Aboriginal eyes
- Exploring Sydney / Warrane's exceptional history on foot
- Immerse yourself in Sydney / Warrane's ancient Aboriginal history
- A city walking tour with a difference
- Experiencing Sydney / Warrane's incredible Aboriginal heritage

DREAMTIME SOUTHERN X, NEW SOUTH WALES

A pioneering tour of one of the world's most spectacular harbours highlights Sydney / Warrane's saltwater Aboriginal cultures.

I've lost count of the number of times I've wandered around the Sydney Harbour foreshore, perhaps stopping under that bridge to gaze up in wonder; sometimes sitting under century-old fig trees for a picnic with enviable views of the Opera House, watching yachts and ferries zip past.

This part of the city never fails to dazzle. But I've never fallen quite so in love as when on a Rocks Aboriginal Dreaming Tour with [Dreamtime Southern X](#).

Many credit the company's founder, Margret Campbell, with being the pioneer of Aboriginal tourism experiences in Australia, having launched expeditions to spotlight Sydney / Warrane's Indigenous heritage more than two decades ago. Today, Margret – an Elder from the Dughutti Jerrinja Nation – and her team take visitors on a 90-minute interpretive amble around one of Sydney / Warrane's most historic neighbourhoods, The Rocks, adding depth and context by telling stories and highlighting important Aboriginal landmarks.

Our tour begins at Heritage-listed Cadmans Cottage, in a pocket of the city that belonged to the Gadigal Aboriginal community when the British First Fleet landed in Australia in 1788. My guide for the day is Margret's niece, Dalara Williams, who welcomes us to her land and acknowledges the Earth Mother by adding a symbolic smear of ochre to every visitor's hand.

A large part of Dalara's tour focuses on her saltwater ancestors' "good manners" practices, relating to the environment and seasonal food sustainability.

"Aboriginal people are the world's earliest conservationists," she says as we wander under the Harbour Bridge. "From the beginning we knew about the importance of rotating the land and not overfishing. We'd use middens [piles of discarded shells and bones] as a sign to show what had been consumed at a particular campsite. If there were oyster shells, the next mob would know to eat scallops instead, to make sure the oysters could regenerate. We'd never take more than we needed."

Dalara's insights into Aboriginal saltwater traditions are as engaging as they are informative. "It's about demystifying," she says, "and showing that our culture is not just about the outback and corroborees [Aboriginal ceremonies]."

While we walk, Dalara points out native medicinal plants – who knew they grew in the middle of Australia's largest city? – and speaks of the link between nature and Indigenous art. We stroll along the foreshore, pausing under a huge Port Jackson fig tree that casts dappled light on the grass. Dalara passes around Aboriginal artefacts, regaling our group with mesmerising tales of Indigenous Totems and Songlines, which she describes as "a type of spiritual musical poetry to recount and keep alive history and traditions".

Because each of Margret's guides has a unique history and connection to the water and land, no two Dreaming Tours are alike: different stories are shared, and there are varied diversions along the way.

But regardless of who's at the front of the pack, you will walk away from this experience with a newfound appreciation for the Aboriginal heritage of Sydney / Warrane, not to mention a few insights into where to have the most scenic, and spiritual, picnic in the city.

EL QUESTRO – INJIID MARLABU CALLS US, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A vast expanse in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, El Questro homestead's recent Land Rights shifts have given rise to a new Indigenous perspective of the top of Australia.

A splendidly chic lodge that unites style with sustainability, El Questro is a working cattle station at the top of the country in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. It's a destination like no other – all deep gorges and thermal springs, mud and salt flats, rainforests and cascading waterfalls. It offers the chance to explore one of Australia's last true frontiers.

Most people come here to sleep in luxe suites or glamping tents, with the property's 300,000 hectares opening up opportunities to hike, bike, ride, fly, drive or boat over jaw-dropping Kimberley landscapes. But I'm here to take a deep dive into the region's 65,000 years of Indigenous history, recently given renewed focus.

The Traditional Owners of this land are the Ngarinyin people, but for the last 120 years they had no ownership of it thanks to European settlement. That all changed in 2022, my guide Mary tells me, when 165,000 hectares of El Questro's raw and ravishing landscapes were returned to the Ngarinyin by the West Australian Government.

"When the handover happened, El Questro committed to offering opportunities for young Aboriginal people to be trained," says Mary. "To gain employment and lead cultural tourism activities," like El Questro's newly launched tour, [Injiid Marlabu Calls Us](#). On top of this, the homestead has committed to annual scholarships that will provide pathways to full-time employment and rewarding careers in tourism, hospitality and land management for local Indigenous students.

"The tour was named after Injiid, the Traditional Owner of this land," says Mary. "She initiated contact with non-Indigenous communities less than a century ago," and changed the face of the region in the process. "We're so happy to see that today El Questro is a beacon of cultural preservation, and that on this tour we can safeguard the right tapestry of Ngarinyin language and traditions for generations to come."

Visiting El Questro's wild and wonderful landscapes is incredible whenever you visit. But on an Injiid tour, it shows you just how special this part of Western Australia really is. I'm welcomed to Country by Mary and her team with a smoking ceremony, to cleanse bad spirits from my aura – wet eucalyptus leaves wafted over flames to create an addictive aroma and gentle smoke. It's part of an ancient healing ritual, accompanied by generational stories retold in language.

Ngarinyin language is a big part of this experience, and Mary is open in explaining Indigenous words to me while we walk through the incredible landscape – she points out bush tucker that Injiid and fellow Landowners relied on for food and medicine for generations, and waterways where they would feast and leave behind middens.

Mary seems to know every nook of El Questro: "I haven't seen all of it," she laughs. "It's so big! But it feels like my soul. Knowing this Country is natural to me."



El Questro – Injiid Marlabu Calls Us, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- A true frontier: Discovering one of Australia's most wild, wonderful and historic regions in the Kimberley
- A pioneering land decision hands El Questro back to Traditional Owners
- Seeing the Kimberley through Injiid eyes
- El Questro's landmark Indigenous transformation



Firescreek Botanical Winery Aboriginal Experiences,
New South Wales

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- A tantalising taste of the New South Wales Central Coast
- Bush tucker and wine? Find the perfect pairing on the Central Coast
- Discover Aboriginal cultures on the Central Coast
- A Central Coast winery tour with a difference
- Dive deep into Aboriginal cultures on an Elder-guided tour

FIRESCKEET BOTANICAL WINERY ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES, NEW SOUTH WALES

Aboriginal culture is perfectly paired with botanical wine on the Central Coast.

Uncle Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan is a bit of a celebrity on the New South Wales Central Coast. A member of the Darkinjung Land Council, he is a passionate supporter of protecting the region's waterways, and an active tour guide, revealing the thousands of ancient Aboriginal sites scattered around this part of the state. He's also a talented musician, as I discover when I arrive at Firescreek Botanical Winery one balmy afternoon.

The wind recedes to a whisper when Gavi pulls out his didgeridoo and clapsticks, serenading us with haunting notes that reverberate through my bones. A respected Elder, Gavi's refined skill for circular breathing – the secret behind playing the 'didge' – is not easily acquired, as I quickly learn when I try to make a noise through the wooden instrument and instead sound like I'm blowing up a balloon. Note to self: stick to the clapsticks.

This is just one of the immersive and interactive experiences we enjoy over the 1.5-hour [Firescreek Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience](#), held on the lush Firescreek estate in Holgate, 90 kilometres north of Sydney / Warrane. The property's owners, Nadia and Francis O'Connell, discovered that this part of the Central Coast was the ideal environment to grow all manner of fruits, flowers and herbs, with much of their bounty now native: think mountain pepper, Davidson plum, lemon myrtle and riberry.

Gavi's ancestors survived eating these plants for millennia, recognising not only their bold taste, but also their immense medicinal and

nutritional value – did you know the Davidson plum is a rich source of calcium? Or that riberry contains an antioxidant thought to aid cognitive function? You will, following your afternoon at Firescreek.

These are some of the insights Gavi provides as we sample the seasonal produce he's carrying in his coolamon, this traditional wood-carved vessel the perfect showcase for Indigenous ingredients.

While Gavi can speak a number of Aboriginal languages – he welcomes us to Country with yaama, a Gamilaraay word for 'hello' used in northern New South Wales – he tells us that sadly the Darkinjung no longer have a spoken tongue. But revival projects are underway, with researchers working to document vocabulary, and in doing so bring about a renewed sense of pride and belonging among the community. Language is crucial in self-determination, Gavi says, which is why the Indigenous tours I've enjoyed always involve teaching participants a few Aboriginal words.

While we wander the Firescreek grounds, Gavi tells us Dreaming stories about how this land and the sky was crafted by Baiame, the Creator spirit. Then, under lemon-scented gums, we're met by Nadia and Francis, who not only own the estate but also make the wines we're about to sample. These are no ordinary tipplers – the duo use many of the estate's botanicals to create up to 25 different drops. We get to sample a seasonal selection, including chilli citrus, and a sweet pomegranate and apple.

It's a sip I'll never forget – a bit like this whole afternoon, really.

IN CULTURE TOURS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Within the heart of Perth / Boorloo lies an immense green space that is as scenic as it is spiritual – a sacred place to the Noongar people who have come here to meet, feast, hunt and give birth for millennia.

“Did you know that Perth is home to the largest inner-city park in the world?” proud Whadjuk Noongar man Steve Jacobs asks me. “Yep, Kings Park is even bigger than New York City’s Central Park – pretty crazy, hey?” It turns out this moment will be just one of many times my jaw is on the floor during my 90-minute [In Culture Tours](#) walk through Kaarta Gar-Up (Kings Park).

Spanning some four square kilometres over Perth / Boorloo’s Mount Eliza, Kings Park is indeed enormous. At different lookouts there are gleaming views of the city’s Swan River (Derbal Yerrigan), skyscrapers on each bank linked by architecturally striking bridges. But when you’re here, surrounded by this immense green space, it doesn’t feel like you’re in one of Australia’s major capital cities. Time seems to slow.

“You can feel the energy, right?” says Steve. This time it’s not a question. “That’s the energy of my ancestors. They knew this park was full of food and offered good lookouts, and this was their home for 65,000 years. My Elders told me the story of how the shape of the river you see down there was carved by the water serpent, WagyL.”

The city of Perth / Boorloo is one of the most progressive in Australia when it comes to preserving and spotlighting Aboriginal culture. Throughout Kings Park there are

plaques detailing the Indigenous history of the region – we follow the Boodja Gnarning trail over the Lotterywest Federation Walkway (which includes a treetop walk) for insights into both the Noongar people and native flora, still surrounding us to this day. We can read about it while we wander – but it’s Steve’s intimate connection to Country and passion for storytelling that takes the stroll to the next level.

While we walk, Steve points out plants that were traditionally used by Noongar communities as food and medicine: karkalla (a tangy and salty succulent), wild plums, barrier saltbush. “The southwest region of WA, including Boorloo, is Australia’s only biodiversity hotspot. That’s pretty rare and special. There’s a lot of good stuff to eat here,” says Steve.

We pause when the Boodja Gnarning trail splits into two: “You men folk take the Maarm Track, and you women take the Yorgra,” says Steve. I’m on the latter – it’s less than a kilometre – which meanders through a garden of banksias toward Gija Jumulu (Giant Boab), before ending at the Pioneer Women’s Memorial. “This is a really special place,” says Steve when we reunite. “Back in the day, only women were allowed here. They came here to give birth. The husbands could visit to drop off kangaroo and other bush tucker, but they weren’t allowed to stay.” And once more, my jaw is on the floor. Now I just need to sign up for Steve’s two other tours in Fremantle and Rockingham, south of Perth / Boorloo on Cape Peron.



In Culture Tours, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Discover sacred Noongar birthing grounds in the heart of Perth
- Perth’s bush tucker and medicine revealed
- Explore the world’s largest inner-city park with a Noongar storyteller
- An Indigenous bounty awaits in Perth’s Kings Park



Jarramali Rock Art Tours, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- When getting there is part of the adventure
- Getting “gnarly” on a tour to see ancient rock art
- The long and winding road to stunning outback rock art
- The “beast” and the incredible outback rock art gallery

JARRAMALI ROCK ART TOURS, QUEENSLAND

Buckle up for a wild ride to an ancient outback art gallery.

Kuku Yalanji man Johnny Murison was working as a carpenter when he and a cousin made an astonishing discovery while out bush in northern Queensland. “We were four-wheel-driving, chasing rock art, and when we found this rock art we were like, ‘Whoa, this is awesome,’” recalls Murison. “Because of the location of this particular gallery, we were like, ‘Mate, this would rival Kings Canyon [in Central Australia], flamin’ Arnhem Land and the Kimberley. We’ve got a crown jewel right here.”

So inspired was Murison by his discovery of this ancient outback art gallery – thought by archaeologists to be 20,000 years old – he decided right then and there to launch an adrenaline-pumping tourism venture. [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#) started in 2017 to showcase the Quinkan rock art within the so-called “Magnificent Gallery”.

The multi-dimensional journey to the site near the historic town of Laura, 330km north-west of Cairns, is usually aboard Murison’s “beast” – a 4WD that can seat 11 passengers. Along the coach road out of Laura, he points out highlights such as the pick-axe marks left by old-timers who hacked out this track from difficult, rugged country and tells Dreaming stories about how the landscape was created.

As for the Quinkan rock art, expect to see “every dietary item” depicted on the sandstone walls, along with female ancestral bodies, lore men and medicine men. The animal figures include crocodiles, kangaroos, emus, echidnas, barramundi, catfish and birds. “I can show you the whole structure of our society by looking at that gallery,” says Murison.

Certainly, it’s a completely different experience from Cape York’s star attractions of reef and rainforest. This tour involves buckling up to travel by 4WD along the historic Maytown-Laura Old Coach Road through savannah grasslands and open woodland to reach Magnificent Gallery.

Those who are driving their own 4WD – and are keen for a spot of extreme four-wheel-driving along one of Australia’s “gnarliest” roads – can also tag along from Laura on a daytrip. Needless to say, the super-practical Murison is an expert when it comes to dealing with the driving challenges presented by the dirt track. “I’ve gotten myself out of some ridiculous situations, even if it has taken hours,” he says with a laugh.

The overnight tour includes camping at a stunning spot overlooking a gorge. As dinner roasts over the coals, everyone gathers around the campfire to listen to the evocative sounds of the didgeridoo being played. As the sun rises over the escarpment the next morning, a bush breakfast is cooked on the campfire while guests admire a view of Country that resembles “a mini-Grand Canyon”.

The road trip can’t be undertaken during the wet season, when the track becomes impassable, but the gallery is still accessible year-round on Jarramali’s helicopter tours which depart from Cairns.

JJELLURGAL ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CENTRE, QUEENSLAND

Against a backdrop of Gold Coast glitz, dive into ancient times across Burleigh Head National Park.

Between the sea and the hinterland, the ancient mountain of Jellurgal sits in quiet eternity. Known to most as Burleigh Headland, this lush area has been a place of special stories for the Kombumerri people for millennia.

“Jellurgal means ‘little bee’s nest’ in Yugambeh language,” says Cameron Weightman, my guide for the morning on a walking tour from [Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre](#). “It’s a Dreaming spot, and really significant to our people. In recent times there has been a call from our Elders to change the name of the area from Burleigh to Jellurgal, to reflect its origin.”

It’s an impossibly picturesque pocket of the Queensland Coast, curving around the Pacific Ocean and wrapped in dense rainforest. Joggers cruise past on the beachside walkway, pounding the pavement that leads to the glimmering towers of Surfers Paradise, the Gold Coast’s glitzy beacon. In the waves there are surfers and swimmers – dolphins and whales and even turtles are a common sight. “It’s beautiful, hey?” says Cameron. “So pretty, and so important to our people that they even made a documentary about it: Dreaming Mountain.”

A Jellurgal Walkabout isn’t your typical sightseeing tour. Yes, the landscape and views are spectacular. But this experience connects you to nature on a much deeper level. In the space of just two hours, trekking to the pinnacle of Dreaming Mountain and back again, I begin to see the Gold Coast through Yugambeh eyes.

Geological formations take on new shapes as Cameron tells me Creation stories that date back millennia; the plants are not just scenery, but also materials with which to make hunting tools and bush remedies; a pile of discarded shells (a midden) reveals evidence of a thousand-year-old feast; small insects transform from a mild nuisance into a mid-morning snack.

When we pause at an ochre pit to be anointed – a smear onto my forehead and hands – Cameron tells me about Gwonda, a hunter who came back as a dolphin to help the Yugambeh fish, and Jabreen, a honey-covered giant who dove into the sea to cleanse himself only to crystallise into the boulders around Burleigh foreshore.

And when we finally return to the Cultural Centre, my aura gets another boost. “We host these smoking ceremonies to cleanse your spirit – get rid of bad energy,” says Cameron. Jellurgal staff begin burning the wet leaves of native plants in a small wooden dish, inviting me to walk through the smoke. Blood pumping from the hike, I certainly feel energised as I partake in the ritual – although I walk through a second time, just to be sure that any bad juju is fully extinguished.



Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Jellurgal dreaming: The ancient stories behind the Gold Coast’s Aboriginal history
- The ancient stories behind Queensland’s most glamorous modern city
- From Gold Coast glitz to ancient Dreaming stories
- The Gold Coast’s ancient Aboriginal dream



Kakadu Cultural Tours, Northern Territory

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Crocodiles, rock art and ancient culture: cruising Kakadu
- Cultural connection on an Aboriginal Kakadu cruise
- Exploring Kakadu's ancient Aboriginal heritage
- Experiencing the Kakadu landscape through Aboriginal eyes
- An Indigenous introduction to Kakadu National Park

KAKADU CULTURAL TOURS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

On the East Alligator River, a Guluyambi Cultural Cruise offers a different perspective on an ancient landscape.

“What’s that you see ahead of us?” asks our guide Hilton Garnarradj, gesturing towards the riverbank as our tender cuts through the water. The answer seems obvious: a copse of paperbarks, untidy-looking trees that get their name from the ribbons of pale bark that unfurl from their trunks. To Hilton and his fellow Aboriginal Australians, however, this is more than just another stand of trees.

A paperbark tree is the equivalent of a supermarket: a one-stop shop where you can pick up all sorts of daily necessities. As Hilton peels off long strips of bark, he demonstrates the many uses his people find for the tree. That soft bark can be used to swaddle a baby, provide soft bedding, or wrap up fish to cook in a ground oven, adding paperbark leaves for a kick of flavour.

“This Country, it looks after us,” he says happily.

It doesn’t stop there: the waterproof bark can also be twisted to form a drinking vessel, or layered in large sheets over branches to create a simple raft, or guluyambi – from where our cruise, the Guluyambi Cultural Cruise, gets its name. It’s one of several experiences on offer from [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#).

There is much more to learn as we cruise along the East Alligator River, bathed in late-afternoon sunlight. As we trace each bend, we are greeted by a series of different landscapes, from monsoonal rainforest to towering sandstone escarpments.

Traditionally, these diverse environments offer the local Aboriginal people a rich range of bush tucker, from barramundi fish to magpie geese eggs to water lilies. “The stems, they are delicious; taste like celery,” Hilton says. He also points out the area’s rich bird life, from sea eagles soaring above to egrets and cormorants

frolicking in the water, and tiny flashes of blue that disappear almost before we see them, which, he tells us, are azure kingfishers.

And then there are ginga, or saltwater crocodiles – plenty of them. Lazing on the banks, or semi-submerged in the water, these fearsome salties are as relaxed as only apex predators can be. Safe in our boat, we thrill at the close encounters.

As we drift along, Hilton happily answers questions about everything from Creation stories – which trace the adventures of Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent, and Namarrgon, the Lightning Wielder – to how the area’s Aboriginal inhabitants live today. He even gives us a crash course in spear technique, letting us handle a range of spears to appreciate the way each one is formed for a specific purpose.

“You want to hunt a buffalo, you need a heavy spear,” he says, before handing over a much lighter option. “This one we use for fishing.”

“Why is it so light?” someone asks. Hilton flashes his radiant smile again. “So it floats, of course!”

By the time we pull up to the dock and say our goodbyes to Hilton, it’s late afternoon. We take the five-minute drive to the nearby Ubirr – home to some of the most exceptional rock art in the world, including depictions of first encounters with white Europeans – for yet another memorable experience, exploring these ancient paintings and the interpretive signage accompanying them. Finally, we conclude the day with the short ascent up Ubirr rock – a famous lookout, offering spectacular 360-degree views of the surrounding floodplains and rock escarpments. Ending our time here, with a spectacular sunset for company, is a rite of passage for all Kakadu visitors – and all the more poignant for our deeper understanding of the people who have lived here for so many thousands of years.

KARRKE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EXPERIENCE & TOURS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Taste a witchetty grub and discover Aboriginal culture near Kings Canyon, in Australia's Red Centre.

A plump white witchetty grub wriggles in the hot ashes of the campfire. A few seconds later it is cooked and ready to eat.

Aboriginal tour operator Christine Breden holds the delicacy out to me encouragingly. I hesitate, unsure I want to taste this particular example of bush tucker: the larva of a moth found in the Central Australian desert. But curiosity wins, and I tentatively bite, chew and swallow. It's a little bit eggy, a little bit nutty, and definitely not as unpalatable as it looks.

Christine and her partner Peter Abbott live on the land of their ancestors in the Aboriginal community of Wanmarra (population 10), just inside Watarrka National Park in Australia's Red Centre, about three and a half hours' drive north of Uluru, or four hours' drive south-west of Alice Springs on the sealed highway. (Alternatively, you can explore the area over several days, with stops and diversions, if you take the Red Centre Way, for which a 4WD is essential.)

Christine is a Luritja woman and a Traditional Owner of the Wanmarra community, and Peter is a Western Aranda / Pertame (Southern Aranda) man, also from Central Australia.

They run [Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours](#), introducing visitors to their ancient culture and Creation story, and teaching them about traditional foods and medicines used by the Luritja and Pertame people, as well as hunting skills, dot painting and carving with fire.

After a traditional smoking ceremony to welcome us, we are soon immersed in stories of the Dreamtime, Aboriginal culture and living on Country.

The business, we learn, takes its name from the western bowerbird, or "karrke" in the Aranda language. The male of this beautiful species,

found in this part of Central Australia, is noted for the pink plume on top of his head. Like other bowerbirds, he collects and decorates his bower with shiny things – flowers, berries and anything else that catches his eye – to attract a mate.

The name was chosen because it conjured for Christine an image of visitors "flying away to share their experiences with their friends" and attracting them to pay a visit here themselves.

There is more bush tucker: Christine shows us how to use large stones to grind mai, or food, in the form of edible tree and grass seeds, and explains how they have been used by countless generations of hunters and gatherers. We lick the sweetness from tjala (live honey ants), and try seasonal fruits including wild passionfruit, quandong, desert raisins, bush plums, wild figs and onions.

We emulate the light taps and the rhythm that Peter sets with the clap sticks before throwing a spear and a non-returning boomerang (with mixed results).

Sitting on the red earth, we marvel at a vivid expanse of seeds from a bats-wing coral tree. Laid out on the ground, they reflect the colours of this Country: green, red, yellow, orange, brown and dark purple.

An accomplished and multi-talented artist, Christine shows us how seeds are used to make bracelets and necklaces for the women, explains the cultural symbols and shapes found in dot painting, and demonstrates fire branding.

The wealth of information – provided generously over the hours of our time together – is worth noting, but it's the warmth and positivity of our hosts that proves the most exceptional aspect of this experience. Peter and Christine's quiet devotion to their heritage, and willingness to share it open-heartedly, sets the tone for a rich and rewarding few hours, that leaves each visitor feeling closer to the land.



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours, Northern Territory

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Cultural flavours of Australia's Red Centre
- A cultural connection to "desert country"
- A modern taste of ancient culture
- Bush tucker in Australia's exquisite Red Centre
- A taste of Central Australia's Aboriginal cultures



Kimberley Cultural Adventures, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- A tantalising taste of the Kimberley
- The power of native Australian plants in food and medicine
- The pearl of the Kimberley: Broome's fascinating history
- Explore Broome with an Aboriginal insider
- Taking a deep dive into Broome's history

KIMBERLEY CULTURAL ADVENTURES, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A deep dive into Broome's pearling history, with a side of bush tucker.

When Robert Dann plays the didgeridoo, the rest of the world seems to fade to insignificance. The notes are haunting, and they rumble over the pandan soil and create vibrations through the impossibly blue sky. He makes it look effortless, although of course it's the opposite – mastering the art of didg playing takes years, and involves complex breathwork and stamina.

We're standing on a cliff in Broome, the vast Indian Ocean our backdrop. Robert, a Nyul Nyul man, was born and raised on the Dampier Peninsula and is a Traditional Owner of the Winawul Country – the Sandy Point region of Beagle Bay, just to the north of Broome. His Rubibi (Broome) Cultural Tour is one of two experiences he offers through [Kimberley Cultural Adventures](#), and it's like taking a deep dive into the fascinating history of this northern pocket of Western Australia.

Today, Broome / Rubibi is renowned as the pearling capital of Australia. "But not many people know its history, particularly when it comes to Aboriginal communities," says Robert. He describes how many Aboriginal people were conscripted to become pearl-shell divers in the 1860s, when the region's bounty was discovered. "The practice of blackbirding is illegal, but it happened," says Robert. "Many Aboriginal women were kidnapped to work on pearl luggers under extremely harsh conditions."

Robert doesn't sugar-coat his stories, but he also doesn't tell them to make guests feel uncomfortable. "We need to discuss history and make everyone aware of the facts. Only then can we move forward," he says.

Indeed, Robert is keen to progress many aspects of his past. "When I was growing up, we didn't have a lot of money for food. When we were hungry, we'd walk around, and if it was in season, get the boab," he says, referring to fruit from the tree iconic to the Kimberley. "We'd climb the tree, break it open and eat it straight up. Sometimes we'd take the fruit back home and put it into a pot and make iced tea or porridge."

When we reach Gantheaume Point, Robert gives me a taste – it's chalky, a little tangy, and almost citrusy. "It has amazing healing properties, as most native plants do," says Robert. It's high in vitamin C, magnesium, zinc and iron. Its leaves are rich in calcium, and its kernel is a source of fibre and good fats. Robert then shows us the fruit's versatility, serving us freshly made boab damper and pesto made with boab leaves, as well as boab ginger beer created under his own label, Bindam Mie. It's the perfect refresher to the Kimberley heat.

Over the course of our tour, Robert introduces us to other Kimberley native plants, including gubinge, or Kakadu plum, high in vitamin C and a powerful immune booster and antioxidant. He also reveals how to make red, yellow and white ochre pigments, which he smears on our hands. It's a spiritual gesture, and one that is as colourful as Robert himself.

KINGFISHER TOURS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Travel deeper into to the heart of the Kimberley with the region's Traditional Custodians

The rhythmic sound of clap sticks fills the cavernous space of Cathedral Gorge, and my skin prickles. As Gija woman Bec Sampi adds her lone voice to the sharp, flinty beat in this naturally formed theatre, goosebumps spread across my entire body. Bec's song – delivered in her native tongue – resonates in this vast yet intimate space, amplified wondrously by nature.

Bec is the head guide with [Kingfisher Tours](#), a small-group tour company that employs only Aboriginal guides to lead its immersive journeys in Western Australia's spectacular Kimberley region. And today she's showing us the wonders of Purnululu National Park – a World Heritage-listed marvel deep in the dusty red outback, a nine-hour drive from the tourism hub of Broome, or a much shorter scenic flight. It's famous for the Bungle Bungle Range, rocks weathered into their unusual domed shapes over 20 million years. Our first glimpse is from above; we fly low over the outcrop in a light plane, gazing with jaws agape at the ribboning formations. Now on the ground, we gain an entirely different perspective as we wander between them, touching their textured surfaces and gazing up to their 300m-high peaks, feeling the cool of their shadows.

Bec first came here with her grandmother as a 13-year-old, before planes and helicopters could whisk you in. Purnululu, which loosely

translates to “sandstone” in the Gija language, is their Country, shared with the Jaru people. The pair camped on a riverbed for two weeks, catching fish with spinifex grass, looking at Dreaming paintings on rock walls and walking to the hidden spots Bec now shows visitors.

At the entrance to Cathedral Gorge, Bec points out bush lavender, a fragrant plant used by Aboriginal peoples to treat colds and coughs. As we leave, we pass caves and Bec suggests we look for warning signs. With her guidance, we see boomerangs long ago painted on rock walls. They were used as fighting sticks, she says, and their images are like signposts, pointing to the warriors that would've been positioned up high, guarding this place. Permission to pass would be granted only after connections were made: you'd need to acknowledge the local people and Country you're walking on, and talk about who you are and where you're from, says Bec. It seems like a good approach to life.

There are many lessons to be learned on Bec's tours. Spending an afternoon – or a few days – with her is not only an education in bush tucker, rock art, outback medicine, astrology and Aboriginal spirits, it's also an invitation to see the world differently, to think openly and to appreciate nature's beauty. As we gather for sunset drinks atop a lookout, watching the Bungle Bungles morph from deep red to purple in the fading light, I feel incredibly lucky to be here.



Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Learn the secrets of the Kimberley with an Aboriginal guide
- Beyond Broome: The ultimate Kimberley day trip
- Exploring the Songlines of the Kimberley
- Chasing waterfalls in the Kimberley
- Why you need to see the Bungle Bungles from the air



Koomal Dreaming, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Discover nature's subtle thrills on a Cape Naturaliste walking tour
- Experience nature's secret thrills on a Cape Naturaliste walking tour
- Experience nature's secret thrills on a spectacular coastal walking tour
- Immerse yourself in the natural beauty and Indigenous history of Cape Naturaliste

KOOMAL DREAMING, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Indigenous heritage of Australia's bucolic Margaret River wine region warrants closer inspection with [Koomal Dreaming](#).

I never knew you could make a bird sound by blowing on a peppermint leaf. Or mimic the warble of frogs while playing a didgeridoo. Or clap boomerangs together to make a sharp, flinty sound that keeps the beat in a communal, traditional music session.

Josh Whiteland's "Kaya" Cape Naturaliste walking tour is as much an aural experience as it is a lesson in the Aboriginal relationship with the bush. As we walk together towards the tip of the cape, cooled by the ocean breeze blowing over the Margaret River coastline, the Wadandi man stops and plucks a slender green leaf from a tree. He places it between his thumbs, brings his lips close and lets out the head-turning bird call. Just as swiftly, he rubs leaves from the same tree on his skin, telling us the oils released will keep away pesky mosquitoes. The native peppermint tree is incredibly versatile, we learn: you can make rope from its bark and fishing spears from its saplings. Our eyes roam over the twisted trunk with new appreciation.

We continue our stroll up the rugged, scrub-smothered point, reaching a wide deck that grants wraparound views of the azure Indian Ocean, stretching until it melts into a blue haze on the horizon line. "My people call this place Kwirreejeenungup," Josh says. "It means place of beautiful scenery."

From September to December, thousands of whales migrate past this point, the playful humpbacks clearly visible as their bodies break the surface, spurting water into the air. Several species visit these waters, including the world's largest animal, the blue whale. "This is one of the only places where you can see blue whales off the rocks," says Josh.

The constant changes in nature correspond with the six-season calendar that Josh's people live by. The start of the new year is Birak season, he tells us. It's when native Christmas trees bloom with bright orange flowers, signifying the celebration of Aboriginal ancestors. It's also when berries are ripe for the picking, abalone can be prised from the rocks, crayfish are best for eating and Indigenous greens such as dune spinach, sea celery and coastal figs should be foraged.

As we turn towards the cape's stout lighthouse that Josh's grandfather used to manually light, he tells us kangaroos may be sleeping beneath the tight, green shrubs beneath the boardwalk. Apparently, they can't sweat, so they only come out at night – yet another thing I never knew.

Josh leads us to what he calls his "meeting place", a sheltered spot hidden in the bush. There, wooden tools are spread out on kangaroo skin. He shows us how a firestick works, using a dried banksia flower as kindling, then passes around several boomerangs. The different sizes indicate different uses: a large one might fell an emu, while a smaller one can be thrown into water to stun a school of fish. The way it's carved and shaped affects the way it flies. He also shows us how a kangaroo skin can be turned into a bag, using the tail as a handle; in traditional times, sinew and bones were used to knit the sides together. That's when the didgeridoo comes out and together we create music and share culture. Blending traditional instruments and tools with a modern jam session builds a bonding bridge that we'll all remember.

KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST, VICTORIA

Walk in the footsteps of Melbourne / Narm's Aboriginal clans.

So many of Australia's absorbing Indigenous experiences happen against a backdrop of red dirt or blue ocean, but the country's Aboriginal history is just as compelling in the cities as it is in the outback.

Melbourne / Narm's [Koorie Heritage Trust](#) offers "a different type of Aboriginal experience", says the trust's cultural education manager, Rob Hyatt – one focused on urban Indigenous culture, and providing a deeper understanding of both the past and present.

Some international visitors have "been there, done that" and experienced a little Indigenous culture, says Hyatt, and "now they want to know what happened".

"Knowing the story is becoming really important to people," he says, explaining how the Trust can provide a deeper look into Aboriginal Australia within an urban setting. "They like getting the personal story and engagement rather than just sitting down to watch a show."

The not-for-profit Trust offers several ways for people to gain insight into how Aboriginal peoples once practised their cultures in Melbourne / Narm and are keeping it alive today.

For one, you can simply drop into the Trust (entry is free), located in Federation Square, to browse its museum-style collection, which includes pre-colonisation artefacts such as hunting tools and shields and post-Colonisation pieces such as items from the old missions. It also charts the transition of some items – such as weaving and boomerangs – from being merely functional items to revered art forms. A gallery space hosts exhibitions that change every three months.

But it's the guided walks that offer an absorbing, and often deeply personal, take on Aboriginal culture in Melbourne / Narm, with Indigenous guides sharing some of their own story as they lead guests through the city.

The one-hour Birrarung Wilam (River Camp) Walk heads from Federation Square to the banks of the Yarra River that flows through the heart of Melbourne / Narm. "When we walk alongside the river, we talk about its history, what the traditional landscape looked like and how Aboriginal peoples lived in the area, as well as the impact of colonisation on the land itself, and the impact on the people," Hyatt says.

Walkers continue to the Birrarung Wilam art installation that celebrates the physical and spiritual connection between Indigenous people and place. "That gives us a chance to talk about the Aboriginal lifestyle on the river," says Hyatt of the artwork that was installed in the lead-up to Melbourne / Narm's 2006 Commonwealth Games.

The longer Scar Tree Walk (90 minutes to two hours) includes this route, continuing to the William Barak Bridge connecting Birrarung Marr (an 8.3-hectare park neighbouring Federation Square) and Yarra Park. Barak, born into the Wurundjeri clan, became a 19th Century leader who worked to bridge the divide between settlers and Aboriginal inhabitants. "He was probably one of Australia's first Aboriginal activists," says Hyatt.

At the Melbourne Cricket Ground, known as the MCG, participants will see the so-called "scar trees" outside Gate 4. "They're canoe trees and a culturally protected site," says Hyatt. "They're remnants of Aboriginal occupation prior to Europeans arriving in the Melbourne area."

The area was traditionally a ceremonial ground and Aboriginal Elders still practise ceremony at the MCG during major events such as the Australian rules grand final with a Welcome to Country, an ancient protocol for welcoming visitors to the land.



Koorie Heritage Trust, Victoria

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Dig deeper into urban Indigenous cultures
- A revealing insight into Indigenous cultures in Melbourne / Narm
- A deep dive into Aboriginal culture in the city
- A journey into Aboriginal experiences in an urban setting
- Melbourne / Narm's Aboriginal cultures brought to life



Mabu Buru Tours, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Where culture and Country collide in the Broome Outback
- Feel the embrace of family on a Broome expedition
- Exploring Broome with an Aboriginal local puts family into perspective
- See Broome through Aboriginal eyes
- Here's how to take Broome's Aboriginal pulse

MABU BURU TOURS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Discovering the importance of family through song, dance, storytelling and food in the Kimberley.

Johani Mamid is not only one of the most affable guides I have met, he's also a damn good cook. Two skills that should put any tour high on your 'must-do' list. Johani is the founder of [Mabu Buru Tours](#), which operates a series of experiences in and around Broome to showcase his Karrajarrri and Yawuru culture. Actually, Johani is a proud Karrajarrri, Yawuru, Nyul Nyul and Bardi man, born and raised in the northern Western Australian town of Broome.

He operates three main tours: one that takes you to Broome's famous Cable Beach for a muwarrt, which is an authentic storytelling session introducing you to Aboriginal connection to Country; another seeing you spend three nights exploring the region with a number of Aboriginal guides and hosts along the way; and the Wakaj Experience, which I'm doing... and am enthralled by.

Johani has one of the most diverse backgrounds you'll come across. In a former life, he was a Yawuru Country Manager Coordinator (that is, part of a ranger group to look after Yawuru Country, monitoring flora and fauna and conducting research in both land and sea). He also keeps his own crocodiles at home and conducts crocodile feeding tours at Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Park. He loves interacting with people and is a natural storyteller.

He invites us into his family's history through the emotive yarns he spins. Aptly, wakaj means 'the coming together of family'. I feel like we're doing just that. It begins with Johani telling us about his Yawuru culture while cooking up some damper (a type of bread) over an open fire – perfectly crisp on the outside (he taps

it with a spoon), and warm and dense on the inside.

I slather mine in locally harvested bush honey, and enjoy a mug of billy tea while Johani talks about the different native plants traditionally used to make damper. You don't need wheat.

The Kimberley is a very special part of the world. With its immense and ancient landscapes, it makes you feel very small – in the best possible way. That's how I feel when Johani introduces The Pintirri Dancers, who take us on a whirlwind tour of culture through a dance known as maru. Their songs echo through the bushland as the day disappears, the dust their feet kick up like a curtain to their magical movements.

We're speechless afterwards – it's a good thing Johani is not. He tells us the significance of the maru performance, which has a strong spiritual message about connectivity. Our group certainly felt it – we all had goosebumps. The performance is also popular at family gatherings, Johani says, in order to pass down stories and keep culture strong.

Another way Johani aims to do this is by donating 50 per cent of profits from the experience to the Mabu Buru Foundation, which is then contributed to the Karajarri Lore and other cultural-related programs in this part of Western Australia.

MANDINGALBAY AUTHENTIC INDIGENOUS TOURS, QUEENSLAND

A new appreciation for the world's oldest rainforest comes easily in the company of a Traditional Owner.

It's hard to comprehend just how ecologically diverse and important Tropical North Queensland is globally – this pocket of Australia is home to a staggering 3,000 plant species, 400-plus different birds and more than 100 mammals, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. It's a bounty that Djunbunji Land and Sea Rangers have been actively tracking and recording for over a decade, imparting their immense knowledge to guests who sign up for deeply immersive experiences hosted by [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#).

My guide for the Hands On Country Eco Tour, Djunbunji Land and Sea Ranger Victor Bulmer, tells me while a decade of research may sound impressive, in the scheme of things, it is nothing – his Mandingalbay Yidinji ancestors, the native title holders of this Country southeast of Cairns / Gimuy, have been nurturing and developing an understanding of this part of Australia for tens of thousands of years.

They know every nook and nuance of this special area, where the rainforest meets the sea, and saltwater meets fresh. Over generations, they have also developed an intimate relationship with every insect, bird, reptile, mammal and plant. Victor tells me that this setting we're walking through is at once an Indigenous bush supermarket, pharmacy and hardware store.

After zipping away from Cairns Marlin Marina, we venture along Trinity Inlet to explore Grey Peaks National Park and East Trinity Reserve – a vibrant, tidal wetland where kingfishers dive, egrets patrol and powerful stories unfold.

Victor leads us into lush rainforest, pausing along a trail to reveal the healthful properties of the plants we pass. Like the cocky apple, with anaesthetic properties appreciated by teething babies. And the red beech tree, which (when ingested) will get your heart started just as fast as a cup of coffee.

Next, we follow him to a rocky overhang where he shows us a pile of long-ago discarded shells, commonly known as a midden. This, he tells us, is one of the world's earliest forms of conservation – shells left behind by Victor's ancestors showed future visitors what type of produce had recently been consumed, and what should be avoided to keep the local ecosystem in balance.

Being here, among the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics of Queensland rainforest, is like a salve for the soul – there's nothing more humbling than having the story of the world's oldest rainforest decoded by a member of the world's oldest civilisation. It's an unforgettable connection to the land, sea, animals and plants.

Victor is a direct descendant of the region's lead warrior Jabulum Mandingalpai, who was born around 1858 and survived the era's occupation and settlement of Australia. But as told by Victor, Jabulum's story is not a political one – it's a tale of how we can work together to make the land a better place, and it's something Victor inspires us all to do during the three-hour tour.



Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- How traditional knowledge is protecting the Wet Tropics of Queensland
- An eye-opening walk on Country in Tropical North Queensland
- A Tropical North Queensland safari on Aboriginal land
- Connecting with Indigenous cultures in Tropical North Queensland
- Experience Aboriginal cultures in Cairns / Gimuy



Ngurrangga Tours, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- A larrikin guide with a foot in two worlds
- See the rugged Pilbara region through Clinton Walker's eyes
- Rock art, bush tucker, Songlines: welcome to the Pilbara
- The guide who shares his love of Pilbara country with the world

NGURRANGGA TOURS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Look for rock art, bush foods and stories in the sky with an incredible guide.

Ngurrangga Tours' Clinton Walker bridges the divide between modern and traditional cultures with an easy humour. On his company's Instagram feed, for instance, he posts a video of a goanna (his favourite bush tucker and the first animal he learned to track and catch) that suddenly scrambles into action, racing away from the crunch of his approaching boots. "That's what us blackfullas like to call fast food," he jokes in the caption.

When we catch up on the phone, Walker, who started his tour company in 2013, has just emerged from spending a month on-Country initiating his son into the responsibilities of adulthood as an Aboriginal lawman – a process that was documented on social media. "I wanted to give people an insight into what we do in the off-season with our ceremonies and stuff like that," Walker says.

There are no better guides to the ancient, often mysterious cultures that are still very much alive in this remote part of Australia than Walker, a descendant of the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi people, Traditional Owners of Western Australia's West Pilbara region encompassing the city of Karratha, Dampier Archipelago and Murujuga and Millstream Chichester National Parks, and his team from Ngurrangga Tours.

It's estimated up to a million rock-art images are scattered throughout the Burrup Peninsula and Dampier Archipelago. Walker's tour of Murujuga National Park, home to the world's highest concentration of rock art, shows off some of the stunning images that document everything from first contact with Europeans to megafauna and other extinct species.

Guests who are happy to get a little dirty can combine rock art with bush tucker on Ngurrangga Tours' Bush Tucker and Rock Art tour. After

admiring rock-art images estimated to be at least 40,000 years old, you'll make your way through mud, spinifex, scrub and wildflowers to help forage for seasonal ingredients. This might include berries, wattle seeds and mud crabs.

On any of his tours, Walker may tell you about Songlines running through this striking outback region. "A Songline is a series of stories connected to various landmarks and each landmark has a song attached to it," he says. One of the key stories tells how the Warlu (Rainbow Serpent) created the Fortescue River that irrigates the Millstream Chichester National Park – a picturesque oasis in the desert. The park is an oasis in the middle of the desert, nestled within the chocolate brown rocks of the Chichester Range. Permanent pools are fed by springs that draw water from the underground aquifer within porous dolomite rock.

Many of Walker's former guests return wanting deeper immersion and opt for an overnight 4WD tagalong experience revealing the Dreaming stories associated with the constellations. "You can actually see the Songlines in the sky," he says. "The stories don't end during the day – they go on into the night." This favourite spot of Walker's is also a repository of artefacts such as stone axes and knives, spearheads and grinding stones.

Those with their own 4WD can also do a tag-along tour. "Some 4WD enthusiasts chase the wet season," Walker says. "With the rain comes the waterfalls and the river crossings."

Wet or dry, it's Country that has a fascinating story to tell – and storytellers don't come any better than the affable and deeply knowledgeable Walker.

NITMILUK TOURS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

A river cruise through an ancient gorge leaves a lasting impression.

On a crisp dry season day, the Katherine River cuts an emerald path through the cliffs of Nitmiluk Gorge. I've arrived to bed down in one of the outback's most luxurious stays, gaze at ancient art sites, swim in rock pools and, importantly, take a cultural cruise along the waterways of Nitmiluk National Park, which connect a total of 13 sandstone gorges, like the beads of a necklace.

So far, it's easy to see why locals rave about Nitmiluk Gorge (previously known as Katherine Gorge). Located three hours' drive south of Darwin / Garramilla, this Aboriginal-owned natural playground attracts less hype than its better-known cousin, Kakadu. Yet that only adds to its appeal; Nitmiluk feels like a well-kept secret, albeit one that teems with spiritual significance, owing to an association with the 17 clans that make up the local Jawoyn people.

It's still early in the morning. After dropping my bags at [Cicada Lodge](#), I walk the one-kilometre trail to a lookout perched above the first gorge. The rising sun paints the sky in a tropical cocktail of colours – orange, red and pink. I gaze down upon the river, where rainbow bee-eaters soar above the water's surface. On either side of the banks, walls of florid foliage sway in sync with the breeze.

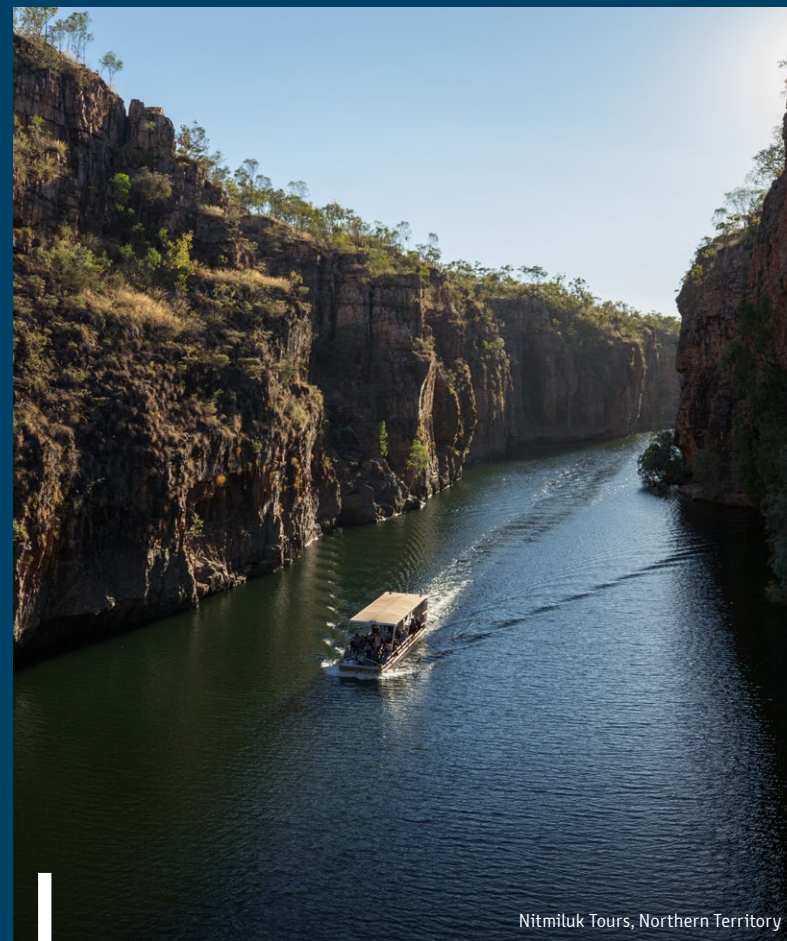
A small array of travellers has gathered to take the river cruise, which glides along the first gorge en route to ancient rock art galleries. Our Aboriginal guide explains that

the name "Nitmiluk" was bestowed upon the park by Nabilil, a figure from the time of Nitmiluk's creation – commonly called the Dreaming. Beside the gorge, Nabil heard the song of the cicada, a chorus of "nit, nit, nit!" He then crowned the park a place of Cicada Dreaming. We pause for an art fix, and our group wanders around cliff-face galleries filled with ancient etchings.

After floating along the second gorge, it's time to return to the first for our water-borne finale. Southern Rockhole offers an idyllic swimming spot, tucked away from view. A short walk up the riverbank leads us to a tumbling waterfall that tips into a clear pool. I dive in and spot silver fish swimming beside me. "Nitmiluk is alive with delicate creatures," I say to the guide. "It is," he replies, "but there are complex rules as to what we can hunt and what we must leave behind to appease our Creation ancestors." The park, he explains, is governed by a mystical and deep lore and history.

As daylight starts to fade, I return to the lodge, set amid a blooming native garden – one that swirls with wattle, bottlebrush and banksias. Here, 18 discrete units encircle a poolside outdoor dining area, where the friendly staff serve the evening's three-course meal prepared using local bush foods. Beyond my table, a cicadas' chorus starts up. "Nit, nit, nit!" The song chimes in with the sinking sun.

Nitmiluk's dreaming stories seep into my sleep that night, and they continue to do so long afterwards – when, like clouds, my visit here reshapes into dream-like memory.



Nitmiluk Tours, Northern Territory

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Outback dreaming on the Katherine River
- Journey through the ancient Nitmiluk Gorge
- A cultural cruise through Nitmiluk Gorge
- Welcome to Nitmiluk – the place of Cicada Dreaming
- Soaking up the spiritual significance of Nitmiluk Gorge



Saltwater Eco Tours, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Cruise into Indigenous cultures on the Sunshine Coast
- Forge a cultural connection to the Sunshine Coast
- Get a taste of Indigenous cultures on a Queensland cruise
- A delicious way to experience Queensland's Saltwater Country
- Pair fine food with Indigenous cultures on the Sunshine Coast

SALTWATER ECO TOURS, QUEENSLAND

Indigenous cultures and bush food-inspired cuisine come together on a Sunshine Coast cruise with a difference.

The sky is blushed crimson when we set sail down the Mooloolah River with Simon Thornalley, skipper and co-owner of [Saltwater Eco Tours](#), at the helm. As I settle in on the deck of the Spray of the Coral Coast, Simon reaches for his didgeridoo while his wife Jenna takes the vessel's wheel.

The water is flat, gleaming like galvanised steel, as Simon walks slowly to the ship's bow, calm and purposeful, where he sits, cross-legged, and brings the instrument to his lips. Minutes pass as we sit listening to the deeply resonant music produced by Simon, who uses the ancient instrument to great effect. As the rhythm, timbre and volume builds to a crescendo, he asks us to close our eyes and imagine his ancestors, preening and dancing, their silhouettes stepping in and out of the light.

As the sun sinks below the horizon, a festive mob of kookaburras perched in the trees on the riverbank starts laughing uproariously. Suddenly Simon flashes a wide grin and bounds to his feet, bending over the bow of the boat to point to a turtle. "The turtle is one of my family Totems," he says. "I have two Totems. One is the turtle and one is the dugong. They are significant animals for saltwater people."

Everything from the staff T-shirts to Saltwater Eco Tours' website logo features the green turtle. It's an animal Simon saw a lot of as a child while sailing around Tropical North Queensland with his family, including the Torres Strait, where his maternal grandmother is a respected Kaurareg Elder and his great-great-grandfather owned a fleet of

pearl-lugging boats. Guests onboard the 58-foot ketch (two-masted sailing boat) for today's Bushtucker Cruise listen intently to stories about Simon's Indigenous heritage while sipping signature lemon myrtle cocktails made from gin produced by BeachTree Distilling Co., one of the many local Indigenous businesses showcased on the two-hour cruise. As Simon returns to the helm, Jenna and their team produce a tray neatly arranged with skewered prawns served with a lemon myrtle and native chilli aioli, oysters mornay made with macadamia cheese, as well as slow-cooked kangaroo served on tacos with a coleslaw and bush tomato relish from another local Indigenous business, My Dilly Bag.

Simon leans both arms on the wheelhouse as the sun beats down, and the river becomes like a shiny road that we follow back to Mooloolaba's wharf.

As well as stitching his story of Indigenous and seafaring heritage together as we cruise the protected waterways of Mooloolaba, Simon, a former commercial diver, touches on some meaningful maritime history relating to the beautifully restored historic vessel we cruise on.

"There is something unique about this boat. As well as being more than 100 years old, the boat was copied from a blueprint of a ketch owned by Joshua Slocum, who was the first person to sail solo around the world," says Simon.

"Joshua's spirit lives on with this vessel," he adds. "I also come from Sea Country, so this boat celebrates my own personal journey and everything in my life that has led me to here."

SAND DUNE ADVENTURES, NEW SOUTH WALES

A quad bike tour across the spectacular dune system of Stockton Bight is full of excitement and cultural insights.

Though we're still getting used to our quad bikes as we enter the sand dunes of Stockton Bight, near Port Stephens, New South Wales, we already know we are in a special place. Spread out ahead, the dunes rise and dip like the swell in a caramel-hued velvet ocean, patches of glinting shells appearing like flotsam on the surface. The discarded shells belong mostly to pipis, edible clams, and are the main component of many middens (feasting sites), visible in the dunes, covered and exposed, over time.

"This place is sacred to the Worimi," says guide Rachel Syron, a member of the Worimi community herself, as we pause beside a large midden. "An underground freshwater table runs beneath the dunes here, making it a perfect spot to gather and eat, both pipis, foraged by our women from the seashore, and kangaroo hunted by our men, inland." As well as middens, there are significant burial sites secreted in the private Worimi conservation lands we are travelling through. So, the pre-tour plea to stay on existing tracks, in order to avoid damaging sacred spots, is as important as the safety briefing.

Begun nine years ago with eight quad bikes, **Sand Dune Adventures** is a venture staffed entirely by local Aboriginal people, mostly from the Worimi community, whose nation is bound by the Hunter River (further south), and the town of Taree to the north. It now has around 100 bikes.

What's impressive is how tours deftly deliver cultural insights along with the adrenalin-pumping fun of riding quad bikes across an otherworldly Mad Max-like landscape. At one point, Rachel leads us to the summit of a 20-metre dune before giving us the option to plunge down its sheer slope. "Now, don't use the brakes and try to keep straight," she advises as I survey the drop, trepidation jangling in my stomach, before I counter-intuitively manoeuvre the bike over the edge.

We are soon confident on the sturdy red machines, and after that it feels like we're gliding over the lithe, curvaceous body of Mother Earth. It's a constantly changing scene; the entire dune system is moving inland at 4.5 metres per year. One 15-metre dune halved in size over the past month.

Our one-hour adventure concludes with Rachel revealing the many uses the Worimi have for coastal vegetation. Wattleseed is used to make damper bread; the paperbark of melaleuca trees can be grafted off to create perfectly waterproof bowls or coolamons (a dish with curved sides, for which Aboriginal Australians have many uses). Its leaves can also be used as anaesthetic.

Flying out of nearby Newcastle airport after the tour, I glance out of the window and see for the first time the extent of Stockton Bight, which reaches for 32 kilometres along Australia's east coast. Then, in one corner, I spot a looping trail of tiny beetle-like quad bikes, and wish I could still be down there, exploring the extraordinary dune system, with the people who've called it home for thousands of years.



Sand Dune Adventures, New South Wales

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Saddle up for a family adventure: quad biking on giant sand dunes
- Expect thrills galore riding the giant sand dunes of Stockton Bight
- Ride the coastal dunes of Stockton Bight on a quad bike
- Thrill-seekers apply here: ride giant sand dunes on a quad bike
- Action-packed adventure: quad biking on sand dunes



Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Is this the ultimate bush-foraged feast in Western Australia?
- Life on the land: foraging for your supper on the Dampier Peninsula
- Follow in Bardi Jawi footsteps on the land outside Broome
- Forage, hunt, feast, learn: An immersive day on Bardi Jawi land

SOUTHERN CROSS CULTURAL TOURS AT LULLUMB, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mud crabs, oysters, stingrays, clams – the ultimate bush-foraged feast awaits on a coastal adventure outside Broome / Rubibi.

I've been to many Michelin-starred restaurants. But the seafood feast I have at the end of my tour with [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#) trumps them all. There's no starched white tablecloth or crystal wine glasses. There are no foams or emulsions. There is smoke, however. But it doesn't come from underneath a cloche.

Over an open fire on a remote West Australian beach, Bardi Jawi man Bolo Angus cooks up mud crabs, bombshells (mangrove snails), clams and stingrays. Oysters open with a pop, seasoned with saltwater and that smoke. There are nargarah (bush carrots) as well, and I sip water flavoured with the lemony leaves of surrounding melaleuca trees. Every bite is like the Kimberley in a mouthful. I can't get enough. Incredibly, everything we're eating, we've just foraged. When every last briny morsel is devoured, Bolo throws branches covered in soft leaves onto the fire, a purifying and cleansing ceremony to end the meal.

Bolo's tours around the Dampier Peninsular in the north of WA – his ancestral homeland – are intoxicating on so many levels. Bolo's a born storyteller, and he also knows how to live off the land. "In our language, we call it gumahleed, which means being caretakers of the land," Bolo says. "Not only do we look after the land, we look after knowledge that's been passed down to us from our people."

Bolo makes foraging look easy as a result – he knows the exact saplings to dig under for the nargarah, the best mangroves for those crabs, the rocks where oysters are the plumpest. "But I'm not going to do all the work," he laughs. "This is a hands-on experience – get looking!"

There are a couple of kids on our tour, and they're scampering along the sand barefoot chasing fiddler crabs, whooping while they run. Earlier, they'd climbed through mangroves on the hunt for mudskippers, then pressed their ears to trees listening for the honeybees inside. It's like they've just discovered what being young and adventurous is really all about, and they don't want to let the feeling go any time soon.

"I see this tour as a chance to close the gap between cultures," says Bolo. "Out here today, we're all the same – we're walking together, we're learning together, we're laughing together and we're hunting together, and then we get to eat together. You're pretty much living a day of the old ancestors when they were living off the land."

SOUTHERN CULTURAL IMMERSION, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A walking tour of Adelaide / Tarntanya reveals the South Australian capital through an Aboriginal lens.

Exploring the streets of Adelaide / Tarntanya on your own, it's likely you will walk straight past some of the city's most significant Aboriginal sites. "A lot of Aboriginal history was lost when Adelaide city was built during colonial settlement," says Elijah Bravington, a cultural officer with Aboriginal-owned and -operated [Southern Cultural Immersion](#), which offers a suite of experiences celebrating First Nations stories and communities.

An Arabana man with a background in biodiversity and community development, Elijah is all about "truth-telling" on his hour-long guided walks through Adelaide's city centre. And while he doesn't shy away from telling important stories, he does it in a way that is insightful and educational. "This is not about making anyone feel guilty," says Elijah, noting that sometimes people are reluctant to join a tour because they think it will be depressing or involve finger-pointing. "It's actually really uplifting and inspiring to know there is so much Aboriginal culture still all around us."

Elijah is the kind of person who knows pretty much everything about everything. His career has included roles with the Department for Environment, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, and the South Australian Film Corporation. He has served on the Aboriginal Lands Trust Board, Arabana Parks Advisory Committee, Neporendi Aboriginal Forum Inc. board, chaired Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute and is a signatory to The Uluru Statement from the Heart. When you ask him questions, he answers honestly, and with passion.

When we stop past the Kurna Reconciliation Sculptures – a limestone constellation – in the front of the Adelaide Festival Centre, Elijah describes how the site was once associated with secret men's business. Before colonisation, it was a large rocky outcrop, but it was quarried and used to build much of Adelaide, including Parliament House, which we also pass on the walking tour before visiting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander War Memorial. It's a poignant site, and one of the few of its kind in Australia that recognises the sacrifices of Aboriginal people during war, says Elijah.

"I'm really glad that more people, both Australian and international, are interested in having a better understanding and awareness of our history. We want to be able to demystify any misunderstandings people might have."

Elijah and his team at Southern Cultural Immersion also do just this at the Adelaide Botanic Garden, where they lead groups through the lush, leafy space while decoding native bush tucker and medicine. Things like macadamia trees, pepperberries, karkalla, rosella, quandong and lemon myrtle – "ingredients you'll find on a lot of restaurant menus these days," says Elijah. "It's about time, too. We've eaten them for 65,000 years. Now the world can taste them."



Southern Cultural Immersion, South Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Truth-telling in the spirit of harmony and reconciliation
- A deep dive into Adelaide's colonial and Aboriginal history
- A First Nations perspective of Adelaide
- Demystifying Adelaide's Aboriginal culture
- Aboriginal Adelaide: the city's most poignant sites



Taribelang Bunda Cultural Tours, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Turtle dreaming: Ancient stories from Taribelang Bunda culture
- Born storytellers: Taribelang Bunda culture revealed
- Discovering turtles and spirits in Bundaberg
- Bundaberg's spiritual and sacred stories brought to life

TARIBELANG BUNDA CULTURAL TOURS, QUEENSLAND

From turtle Totems to ancient spiritual footprints, the Bundaberg region of Queensland holds a long and enduring Taribelang Bunda history.

"Taribelang Bunda people are very gentle souls," says Bec Domaille. "Almost as gentle as the turtles," she laughs. We're standing on the beach at Mon Repos, a postcard-perfect cove around 15 minutes from the heart of Bundaberg, around 350 kilometres north of Brisbane. It's fitting Bec mentions turtles – this part of Queensland supports the largest concentration of nesting marine turtles on the eastern Australian mainland, and has the most significant loggerhead turtle nesting population in the South Pacific.

"They're two of our Totems," says Bec. "The milbi (freshwater turtle) and meebar (saltwater turtle). Mon Repos is a significant and sacred site to us."

The beach is one of the stops on [Taribelang Bunda Cultural Tours' Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow Tour](#), revealing the Bundaberg region's Aboriginal history in a raw and honest way. "Sometimes what we tell you is going to be confronting," says Bec. "Things haven't always been sunshine and rainbows here toward the Taribelang Bunda people. But the stories are honest – they've been passed down to me from our Elders. Most locals don't even know this history."

Over the next four hours we'll visit a number of significant Aboriginal sites around the region, once called 'Burning Mountain'. To get some perspective of this land Bec drives us to The Hummock, a lookout that is the remnant of an extinct volcano. I can see why the Taribelang Bunda lived here for 65,000 years – the countryside, all the way to the coast, is spectacular. But there's no mention of their long history at The Hummock summit; instead,

a memorial to Bert Hinkler, a pioneer Australian aviator and inventor in the early 1900s.

"What my Aunties told me is that our people used to come here to this lookout way before colonisation, to pray," says Bec. "It was a sacred place and really spiritual. They told me there were footprints on the rocks that were left from a spiritual being who came down to visit the area. Later, it became a meeting place for the Taribelang Bunda men." I sip lemon myrtle tea Bec has brewed while gazing over the landscape, feeling the grooves carved into clapsticks and boomerangs that Bec pulls out to show me.

Bec and I met earlier in the day on the banks of the Burnett River, which carves through the town of Bundaberg. "Before colonisation, the roundabouts here in town were billabongs. There would be emus and booroo (kangaroos) everywhere. Over in the east at Bundaberg Creek where the famous distillery is, that was another significant cultural site to my people. Now they make rum there."

While the town today is certainly extremely liveable, it's a sobering thought to think about how much wildlife, and how many Taribelang Bunda people, have lost their traditional homes since it was settled.

"We want to preserve this rich history and culture," says Bec. "And the only way to do that is through storytelling and truth-telling. Knowledge and acceptance of the past will only create a better future for our entire community as one."

TIWI TOURS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Home to one of Australia's northernmost Aboriginal communities, the Tiwi Islands are as remote as they are ravishing, and nurture a thriving creative culture just a 2.5-hour ferry ride from Darwin / Garramilla.

It's the middle of the day in Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island, and the only thing blazing brighter than the sun glinting off the Timor Sea, is our guide's smile. This is one of the most northerly points in Australia, a beguiling patchwork of footprint-free sand (well, aside from those left behind by crocs) and azure water backdropped by silvery paperbarks and shockingly green monsoon rainforest. Bathurst is one of 11 islands in the Tiwi archipelago, a 2.5-hour ferry ride from Darwin / Garramilla. It feels like another world – one preserved in time.

That's enough of a reason to come here – aside from the Wurrumiyanga township, Bathurst's largest community, there's nothing around for hundreds of kilometres. Some people visit for the epic fishing: barramundi, threadfin salmon, jewfish and golden snapper are in abundance in the surrounding sea. But I'm visiting to take a deep dive into Indigenous culture with [Tiwi Tours](#).

With other Darwin day-trippers, I'm met at the ferry terminal and immediately Welcomed to Country with a smoking ceremony and dance performance, to bless spirits and demonstrate traditional Tiwi Totems in equal measure.

Crossing sun-scorched earth we visit Patakijiyali Museum to learn about the Tiwis' love affair with Aussie rules football and the impact of missionaries here, then step into the Catholic Church, which starred in the 2019 film *Top End Wedding*. I can almost feel its bones creaking.

The Tiwi locals are a creative bunch, and there are galleries, studios and design centres throughout Wurrumiyanga. In one, women demonstrate traditional weaving practices and offer to tell me about the symbols incorporated into their paintings, whether on wood carvings, fabric or canvas, in a palate of colours that resemble the countryside: ochre, silver, pink, turquoise.

This is the place to purchase Aboriginal art ethically – direct from the creative – and I can't resist picking up a swathe of linen with a mesmerising pandanus print. The artist is Osmond Kantilla: "My brothers and sisters follow the footsteps of my father's clan when we dance at ceremony. My dad used to be a songwriter and a dancer and that is why I did a design called pandanus in memory of him. When you see that pandanus tree out bush it is very green with long pointy leaves. I had those ideas in mind when I made my design."

This story lingers with me long after I put my purchase away and bid farewell to Bathurst.



Tiwi Tours, Northern Territory

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Full immersion in one of Australia's most northern Aboriginal communities
- Tales from the Top End: Art and culture in the Tiwi Islands
- The colours and characters of the Tiwi Islands revealed
- Tiwi Island Indigenous culture in full colour



Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, New South Wales

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- A stand-up paddleboarding tour with a difference
- Discover ancient Aboriginal connections to the sea
- Paddle into the Dreaming with Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours
- The paddleboarding tour helping to revive Aboriginal language
- See the Coffs Coast through Aboriginal eyes

WAJAANA YAAM GUMBAYNGGIRR ADVENTURE TOURS, NEW SOUTH WALES

Take a tour with the descendants of Australia's first paddlers in the idyllic waterways of the New South Wales Mid North Coast.

"In one of our Dreaming stories, two sisters made the ocean and then they rested on Split Solitary Island," says [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure](#) Tours owner-operator Clark Webb. "They placed their digging sticks in the shape of an 'X' and rested on either side of it – the younger sister on the northern side and the older sister on the southern side – before turning themselves into stone and becoming Split Solitary Island. They then made off into the night sky and became part of the Pleiades star formation, or the Seven Sisters. On our Moonee paddling tour, guests can actually see this island that we're talking about while we tell the story."

It's location-specific Aboriginal Creation stories like this – shared by Webb, a Gumbaynggirr / Bundjalung man, or one of his fellow guides, all of whom are Aboriginal people with strong familial ties to Gumbaynggirr Country – that make a tour with Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours such a meaningful experience.

The Gumbaynggirr are saltwater people, which inspired Webb to launch 2.5-hour stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking tours in three serene waterways within Solitary Islands Marine Park: Coffs, Moonee and Red Rock Creeks. From the Moonee Creek meeting point, guests paddle about 800m downstream with the gently flowing tide towards the welcoming aquamarine waters of Moonee Beach; your elevated perspective provides the perfect vantage point for spotting various species of fish, from stingrays to flathead, as they dart through the crystal-clear creek.

During each tour, Aboriginal guides identify native flora and fauna, reveal the traditional uses of various plants, and collect seasonal bush tucker for your group to sample.

"Bracken fern's just for pharmaceutical use; you can rub it on stings and bites," Webb says. "And paperbark has heaps of uses: you can get fresh water out of it, you can boil up the leaves to make your bush tea, and also when it flowers it tells us there's heaps of mullet around. Then on the beach we have what they call pigface, and that's edible in summer."

It's likely that the soothing sound of paddles moving through water will be momentarily interrupted by the squawk of a cockatoo or two. And Webb recommends keeping a keen eye out for the dollarbird, so-named because of the prominent white spot that resembles a coin and decorates each teal-blue wing, only visible when this beautiful bird is in flight.

As Split Solitary Island drifts into view, paddlers pause to soak up this significant place while your Aboriginal guide brings the Dreaming to life. If a sea eagle soars overhead, your guide will delight in teaching you how to pronounce "Waranggarl" – the Gumbaynggirr word for this majestic bird of prey.

Webb's passion for the revitalisation of Gumbaynggirr language and culture runs deep, with a proportion of Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours' proceeds invested into the not-for-profit Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Corporation (BMNAC), which he set up in 2010 to help uplift Aboriginal youth.

WALKABOUT CULTURAL ADVENTURES, QUEENSLAND

At the only place on Earth where two World Heritage sites collide, a poignant exercise in cultural connection unfolds.

It's mid-morning, and I'm knee-deep in the ocean. Thankfully, we're in the tropics, so being partially submerged is more like a warm hug than a wake-up-call. Also, thankfully, I have a bamboo-and-steel spear in my hand, which makes me feel a little less concerned about the fact that the surrounding mangroves have been known to host the occasional crocodile. Our host and guide, Juan Walker, certainly isn't fazed by the notion however, smiling broadly as he wades through the water, showing us how to throw the spear to catch mud crabs and fish.

Walker has been hunting on and around two-kilometre-long Cooya Beach his entire life, following the traditions of his Kuku Yalanji ancestors, who've had a presence here for more than 50,000 years. This pocket of Queensland, just north of popular holiday destination Cairns / Gimuy, is where the Daintree Rainforest meets the Great Barrier Reef – two World Heritage sites responsible for nurturing some of Australia's most incredible flora and fauna. It's hard to imagine a more blissful, and emblematic, Australian setting: an opaline fringing reef on one side, dense jungle on the other, the aroma of barbecuing seafood and baking damper on the breeze. Little wonder this has been the picture-perfect backdrop for Walker's half- and full-day [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) for over 20 years.

From the sand we can hear an orchestra of birds chattering in the treetops. Walker identifies the notes of noisy pittas and varied trillers, and points to what he's just sighted: the elusive cassowary, an endangered flightless Australian bird foraging on the forest floor.

Aside from sharing hunting tips – which do nothing to improve my wobbly spear throwing technique – Walker tells us stories of his grandparents and parents, who happen to live nearby. Over the course of the day, Walker shows us how to forage for pipis, crack open almonds and decode bush medicine, guiding us through some of Tropical North Queensland's most significant cultural sites around Cape Tribulation and this pretty stretch of beach.

We also visit Mossman, a tiny, sugar-cane-laced town that happens to be the gateway to one of the state's most sacred Kuku Yalanji sites, Mossman Gorge.

Our day ends at the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, browsing the eye-popping artworks of Kuku Yalanji people, who often paint using natural pigments sourced from the surrounding countryside. But my mind remains where I left it moments earlier, at the gorge itself. An immensely spiritual place, where the Mossman River tumbles over granite boulders into freshwater swimming holes, it's a beautiful place for a dip.

As we floated in the water, a giant Ulysses butterfly drifted past on the breeze – a graceful electric-blue creature thought to be a returned ancestor, according to Walker, looking over those who remain on this earthly plane. After hours of Dreamtime tales, learning about Aboriginal legends and lore in this heavenly place, it doesn't sound implausible at all.



Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Queensland

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Discover the natural wonders of the Daintree
- Discover the Daintree: where the rainforest meets the reef
- Go walkabout in Queensland's Daintree Rainforest
- Get into nature in the Daintree
- Immerse yourself in nature in Queensland's Daintree Rainforest



Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Is this Australia's best Aboriginal art tour?
- On Country with the Kimberley's Aboriginal artists
- An immersive Aboriginal art tour in the Kimberley
- The innovative Aboriginal arts centre you shouldn't miss in the Kimberley

WARINGARRI ABORIGINAL ARTS & TOURS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Aboriginal artists reveal the landscapes that inspire them on intimate tours of the outback.

The didgeridoo isn't just something to be heard. It's something that is felt. There's a rumbling vibration that dances over the skin and beats deep within your chest. Here, in Western Australia's Kimberley region, its tactile sound fills the air just as the sun kisses the horizon and amber light illuminates the rusty red rock formations of Mirima National Park.

Within sight of this lone viewpoint is [Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours](#), an art centre that draws more than 100 Miriwoong artists in to practice their craft, yet offers far more than artworks alone. A number of the artists and arts workers lead tours of the country that fuels them, sharing traditions such as bush foraging and Dreaming storytelling, while they reveal their home.

The Mirima sunset tour begins at the art centre with a traditional welcome, called a muntha: you're greeted in language as wet leaves are flapped over your head, hands and feet to ensure you're kept safe from ancient spirits. You meet artists – aged 20 to 80 years old – as you're led through the centre's gallery and working studio spaces, hearing

about its rich history as the first wholly Indigenous-owned art centre established in Western Australia. The centre opens onto the cultural knowledge garden, where you discover the symbolism of kangaroo and crocodile sculptures, identify useful bush figs and taste the chalky, citric flesh of a boab nut. From there you're driven to Mirima – and nature's light show begins.

There's a similar daytime tour, which sees you walk through Mirima's rounded, curving formations that are said to echo the towering domes found in UNESCO World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park and the Bungle Bungle Range, several hours' drive away. As you gaze at an Aboriginal rock art site, you might see a wallaby hop past, or spot a lizard warming itself, then crush fragrant leaves in your hand and learn how they're adapted for bush medicine. It's a sensory experience finished with a roam through the multimedia art centre.

WILPENA POUND RESORT, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In South Australia's Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, the Adnyamathanha people share their extraordinary Country.

"How can we expect people to understand us if we don't share our culture with them?"

These simple words, spoken by Aboriginal Elder Mick McKenzie, underscore the wish of the Adnyamathanha (or 'rock people') of South Australia's Flinders Ranges to teach others about the rich history and mystique of ancient and contemporary Aboriginal cultures.

I join Mick on the Yura Undyu - Our Culture - Your Culture walk, a guided walk through his land, at [Wilpena Pound Resort](#) in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, about 400 kilometres north of Adelaide / Tarntanya. The leisurely three-kilometre walk meanders along a creek to Old Wilpena Station, one of the State's best-preserved pastoral settlements, dating back to the 1850s. The once 200,000-hectare working station is today just a cluster of old farm buildings, including the original homestead and a cemetery for the working dogs that were always part of the family.

Mick takes us through the intertwining histories of Aboriginal and European cultures as we take our seats at the Ikara meeting place, a public art space that tells the story of his people and the impact of settlement and pastoralism. The early European settlers, lacking the knowledge and wisdom of those who lived on this land before them, struggled to cope with the drought and frequent floods, he explains. Their farms, inevitably, failed. Eventually, the stock fences came down and properties like Old Wilpena Station became part of the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, co-managed today by Traditional Owners.

The next day we hear more of the impact of European settlement during a half-day drive with Adnyamathanha guide Jimmy Neville.

During the [Time Travel and Gorgeous Gorges](#) 4WD tour, we spot the beautiful but elusive yellow-footed rock wallaby whose existence was threatened, first by fur hunters, and then by introduced species such as goats, foxes and rabbits who compete for precious resources. An eradication program is now underway to clear the park of the non-native species.

We travel through creek beds, past ancient, gnarled river gums and dramatic gorges to a remote fossil site deep in the park. The exact location is kept secret because of fears of looting, so Jimmy and his fellow guides are among the few entrusted to bring people here. Jimmy explains that what we are looking at is not just a sandstone rock but a snapshot of the sea floor from 550 million years ago.

Preserved here is the first evidence of multi-celled animals (Ediacaran Fauna) on Earth. The fossil imprints were discovered in 1946, the first time the fossilised remains of an entire community of soft-bodied creatures have been found in such abundance anywhere in the world.

We realise how privileged we are to see it and standing in one of the oldest landscapes on Earth with a proud member of the oldest living cultures on Earth only deepens the experience.

Home for the night is the solar-powered Wilpena Pound Resort, whose spacious safari tents overlooking the escarpment give you the experience of camping without having to touch a tent peg or pole. I awake in the morning to find kangaroos and an emu with his chicks grazing on the grass just metres away. It's a wonderful reminder of just how exquisite this Adnyamathanha Country really is.

NB at the time of print Yura guides cannot be guaranteed on the Time Travel and Gorgeous Gorges Tour, however the Sacred Canyon Cultural Walk and Yura Undyu experience are guided by Indigenous guides.



Wilpena Pound Resort, South Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Walking Country with South Australia's "rock people"
- Walk the stunning landscapes of Wilpena Pound
- Be wowed by one of the oldest landscapes on Earth
- Led by the ancients: a journey into Wilpena Pound
- Glamp in one of the oldest landscapes on Earth



wukalina Walk, Tasmania

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Culture and nature in the Bay of Fires
- Hike into an ancient culture in the Bay of Fires
- Middens and marvels in the Bay of Fires
- Beaches and bush tucker in north-east Tasmania / lutruwita
- An ancient pathway along the Bay of Fires

WUKALINA WALK, TASMANIA / LUTRUWITA

A four-day walk along a vibrant slice of Tasmania / lutruwita's coast offers a rare window into Tasmania / lutruwita's Aboriginal cultures.

It's a dining table that time has turned into a sand dune, an Aboriginal midden so deeply layered with shells that it rises metres above my head. If I was to hike past it alone, I might barely notice it among the other dunes along the gleaming Bay of Fires coastline, but I'm here hiking with the [wukalina walk](#) – the first tourism venture from Tasmania / lutruwita's palawa (Aboriginal) community.

Suddenly this dune is far more than a lump of sand and discarded shells. It's a timeline of seafood dinners – so many thousands of them that it's almost beyond comprehension.

"It hurts my brain to think of how many meals had to be eaten to make a midden this size," says guide Ben Lord.

It seems appropriate that this ghost of meals past is just steps from the wukalina walk's krakani lumi camp, where last night I'd been welcomed to the end of my first day of hiking by a fire-grilled dinner of wallaby (the smaller cousin of a kangaroo) and native mutton bird.

For two nights this camp will be my home, albeit it's more home than "camp". Wooden sleeping pods dot the scrub, with walls that winch open to reveal safari-tent-style accommodation and beds draped with wallaby skins. In the large central hub, a domed living area is designed to reflect the shape of the palawa shelters that once lined this coast. Fruit sits in kelp baskets made by palawa Elders, and beanbags and more wallaby skins dot the wooden floor.

For four days I will walk this coast, rising over low Mt William ("wukalina" to the palawa people) and following the dazzling white beaches of the larapuna (Bay of Fires) to the lighthouse on Eddystone Point.

Through the bush behind the beaches, I feel as though I'm wandering the aisles of an ancient grocer as Ben and fellow guides Jacob and Janaha point out edible plants such as pigface, currant bush, she-oak apples, lettuce weed, and the hearts of grass trees. Where once I saw only scrub, I now see a wild pantry.

On the beaches, nature catches up with culture. As we walk for a full day between krakani lumi and Eddystone Point, it's a journey along a stretch of coast so brilliantly beautiful – blue seas, white sands, the Bay of Fires' signature orange lichen – and yet so empty of people. Granite boulders cluster between the beaches, and the fine-grained sand is so white it's like hiking on a sheet of paper, but we walk only in the company of seabirds.

At Eddystone Point, I spend my final night sleeping in the refurbished lighthouse keeper's cottage. Wombats dawdle across the lawns outside, and it's a short walk to a second midden, sprinkled with stone tools, that seems to cling to the edge of the point as it tips away into the Tasman Sea.

From the midden, I look south along the coast, where the beaches continue as bright white streaks. But this beautiful place is now more than just a view. It's also a living tale about Tasmania / lutruwita's often-forgotten Aboriginal cultures.

WULA GURA NYINDA ECO CULTURAL ADVENTURES, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Darren “Capes” Capewell loves to show the world his Country – Shark Bay on Western Australia’s magnificent coast.

We’ve barely ventured into the Francois Peron National Park when an emu halts our progress. Against pindan red sand, a colour synonymous with the north of Western Australia, the emu parades in front of us with her chicks. There’s a flurry of excitement as our guide, Darren “Capes” Capewell explains they’re likely just six weeks old – and the adult, which we all assume is the mother, is actually the father.

We’re with Capes on one of his [Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures](#) tours, exploring Gutharraguda (meaning “two waters”), the Malgana name for Shark Bay, a World Heritage site around 800 kilometres north of Perth / Boorloo.

As we bounce along the red unsealed road that spears the Peron Peninsula, Capes, a Malgana and Nhanda man, says that Wula Gura Nyinda combines his great passions of culture and Country and is a way to keep his language alive. As we drive, he speaks loudly in language, sometimes rising to a call through the open window. “To our ancestors, to let them know we’re here,” he says with a smile.

Capes reminds us constantly to “look, listen and smell”. Our encounters throughout the day are a reminder that most of us are not exposed to the natural world daily, and that we fail to notice much. Being with a guide, so connected to his ancestral Country, provides profound insights. “Up ahead,” Capes says at one point, before pulling up and sitting back a moment. We scan the red road and the bush. “Tawny Frogmouth

[an owl-like native Australian bird] up there on the nest,” he says. Again, we scan. He points, saying, “You see that branch?” I do, as the branch moves ever so slightly; the nocturnal creature is a master of camouflage.

On a dune above a sheltered bay, Capes gestures towards the ocean and talks of the seagrass and its importance to Gutharraguda. There’s 4500 square kilometres of it supporting the precious marine ecosystem here and it’s vital for the wildlife, which includes dugongs, dolphins, loggerhead turtles and abundant birdlife. There’s a meeting of Aboriginal respect for Country and science as Capes explains that up to 30 per cent of the seagrass has been lost due to environmental factors and discusses the successful efforts by the University of Western Australia to replant and rejuvenate the species.

As he stops to collect saltbush – an edible coastal herb – and sandalwood nuts, Capes likens Country to “one big supermarket”, with one essential proviso: “When nature is talking, we are listening. If you understand how nature can talk, then you know where to find food medicine and water.”

On a deserted beach where vivid red cliffs meet a brilliant white strip of beach, Capes leads our small group to rock pools. He prises native oysters from the rocks and opens them: we gladly slurp them, the intense saline hit a taste of the coast and its traditional food. Taking dry driftwood and scrub, Capes builds a small fire – forbidden to all but Traditional Aboriginal Owners – and gently cooks the remaining oysters while we take the plunge into the gentle Indian Ocean waves.



Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Western Australia

SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Look, listen, smell: how to really explore Western Australia’s Shark Bay
- Exploring the stunning ecosystem that is Western Australia’s Shark Bay
- Emus, dugongs, saltbush: welcome to Western Australia’s Shark Bay
- Immerse yourself in Western Australia’s Shark Bay with a local legend
- Red dirt, blue ocean: the incomparable Shark Bay in Western Australia



SUGGESTED FEATURE TITLE

- Is this Queensland's ultimate island paradise?
- An unimaginable wildlife encounter on Brisbane's doorstep
- Natural healing on a special Queensland island
- Whale dreaming stories, dolphins and kangaroos – oh my!
- An Indigenous bounty on Brisbane's doorstep

YURA TOURS, QUEENSLAND

If the dolphins and whales surfing the waves around North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah don't make your soul soar, then the impossibly beautiful story of its Quandamooka cultures will.

Bummiera (Brown Lake) is a sacred woman's place – Elisha Kissick's grandmother, and her grandmother's mother, would gather here to share stories and soak in the waters, rich in healing properties thanks to the fact they're infused with tea tree oil from the surrounding paperbarks. The bark from these trees had many purposes: it was also used as sanitary pads, nappies for babies and bandages for wounds. Bummiera's reeds were turned into baskets. "When the weaving started, so did the gossip!" Elisha tells me.

A proud Quandamooka woman, Elisha grew up on the island, off the coast of Queensland's capital of Brisbane, and now raises her three young daughters here while she runs [Yura Tours](#), following in the footsteps and stories of her grandmother. Elisha is the epitome of chill, despite my rapid-fire questions when I first meet her. As the day goes on, I begin to understand why – being on Minjerribah is like a tonic. Nature heals – we've known it for centuries, and science proves it. And North Stradbroke Island is the ultimate 'slow down' tonic.

This is the world's second-largest sand island (after K'gari / Fraser Island, also in Queensland). And like Elisha, it has an omnipresent laid-back vibe. I'm visiting in winter, which is whale (yallingbilla) migration season. And I'm pretty sure I can hear the gentle giants singing off the coast when I arrive. But before I get to see them, I meet resident kangaroos grazing where Elisha picks me up. They have as many cares as I will in a few hours.

Mulumba (Point Lookout headland) has the tightest funnelling of humpback whales along the Queensland coastline. It's one of the best land-based viewing areas of these migrating creatures in the world. Researchers flock here to inform international conservation efforts – they've even spotted Migaloo ('white fella'), the only known white humpback in the world. He doesn't make an appearance on my visit, but we do see a pod – mum, dad, calf – breaching and blowing on their way south to Antarctica. "To Quandamooka people, the presence of whales in the ocean is really significant in Culture; it symbolises a Welcome to Country," says Elisha.

The 1.2-kilometre Gorge Walk around the headland is like a patchwork of blues and greens. While we wander, Elisha points out goat's foot, with its blushing mauve flowers, and daisy-like purple pigface. We try chickweed (packed with vitamin C), native spinach and a salty succulent known as pigweed. On the sand, Elisha shows me how to forage for eugarie (a type of saltwater clam), which we barbecue and dunk in a sauce prepared by one of her daughters.

With a full stomach, it's time to dive in – I need to see if the energy of the manta rays, turtles and dolphins in the ocean is as blissful as the animals on land.



STORYTELLERS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

STORYTELLERS

A visit to Australia without an Aboriginal tourism experience is like going to Bondi without a surfboard. Or going outback and never seeing a kangaroo.

From gateway destinations like Sydney / Warrane, to Central Australia or the red earth of the Kimberley, Aboriginal peoples across the country are waiting to tell their stories and share the meaning of their cultures and way of life.

Aboriginal cultures date back more than 65,000 years. They existed long before Stonehenge, predate the Pyramids and are older than the Acropolis. What's more amazing is that these cultures can be experienced today.

Who better to introduce you to the world's oldest living continuous cultures than those who live, breathe and dream them every day – Aboriginal guides who call this vast continent their home.

Whether it's through feeling the light strip of ochre across the forehead or walking along the beach with an Aboriginal Elder who can read the tides by how the birds call, Aboriginal peoples bring another side of Australia to life.

Every part of Australia is Aboriginal Country and every part of that Country has a series of unique stories and experiences. The Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective offers

an exciting array of activities, tours and accommodation; from exploring labyrinths of ancient and contemporary rock art, quad biking, kayaking, fishing, mud crabbing, hiking, taking a walking tour in a city centre or staying in a lodge on lily-laden flood plains teeming with wildlife.

It's often who you meet when you travel to Australia that stays with you. Aboriginal guides are no exception. They bring a unique cultural insight to the land and history of Australia through their stories and way of life. Meet just a few of Australia's notable Aboriginal guides to see just what makes them so unforgettable.

MORE INFO

For more information on any of these experiences, including famil opportunities, high-res imagery or to arrange interviews, reach out to:

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BORRGORON COAST TO CREEK TOURS – TERRY HUNTER

Dampier Peninsula, Western Australia



Terry Hunter is the fourth generation of his family to work in the pearling trade, but the first to become a tour guide. The proud Bardi man grew up on a remote pearl farm in Western Australia. His home, 220km from the nearest town of Broome, is part of the state's famed Kimberley region.

To many visitors, it's a vast, raw wilderness, where dusty red deserts meet empty beaches lapped by the world's largest tropical tides. For a young Terry, it was the ultimate playground, where he and his best mate James Brown grew up practicing Aboriginal skills such as foraging for bush tucker, sourcing water on salty tidal flats, and carving pearl shells – all learnt from Terry's father and other Bardi Jawi Elders. The pair went to school in a basic tin shed on the pearl farm with only a handful of other kids, before each was sent off to boarding school in Perth / Boorloo. But neither was destined for city life.

Now James is the managing director of Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm – Australia's oldest continuously operating pearl farm – and Terry runs Borrgoron Coast to Creek Tours. On his signature two-hour walking tour, Terry shares stories of his childhood, his culture and his deep knowledge of these lands. But it's not just Terry's guests who gain a better understanding of his Country, it's also his own extended family – and he hopes to inspire them to preserve the Hunter connection to Cygnet Bay for generations to come.

"I love to share my home, share our culture, and see guests' reactions as they get a better understanding of Aboriginal culture, knowledge and heritage. It's all about sharing with me."

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BUDJ BIM CULTURAL LANDSCAPE TOURISM – JOEY SAUNDERS

Breakaway Creek, Victoria



“My dad’s a bit of a storyteller, and he’s very passionate about this part of Victoria,” says Joey Saunders, acting general manager at Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism in southwest Victoria. “He helped secure its World Heritage listing – the only one of its kind dedicated solely to Aboriginal significance – along with other Elders.”

Having worked with the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria and the Yoorrook Justice Commission, Joey returned to the ancestral lands “my dad used to drag me around. It didn’t seem fun at the time, but he had a plan to prepare us younger ones to follow in his footsteps protecting the land.”

Today, Joey not only oversees the vast Budj Bim site but also guides visitors across it. “Here, the Tae Rak (Lake Condah) aquaculture system is one of the oldest in the world. It highlights the uniqueness of Indigenous communities engineering the wetlands, setting fish traps to catch eels for food. People are amazed at how significant the engineering feat really is, and how it happened 6,600 years ago.”

Joey says that the site not only showcases early Aboriginal ingenuity but also challenges stereotypes about Indigenous communities being entirely nomadic. “When you visit, you can see a stone dwelling that my ancestors lived in permanently thousands of years ago. We’re dispelling myths and giving people a new narrative to take away.”

“The landscape here is truly dramatic. It’s inside a dormant volcano, and everything changes with the seasons – the water levels, the birds, the wildlife. I love showing guests how we work for Country, and how Country gives back.”

“It’s so cool to say that this genius Aboriginal engineering feat is older than Stonehenge and the pyramids.”

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BUNDYI CULTURAL TOURS – MARK SADDLER

Wagga Wagga, New South Wales



“Yamandhu marang mudyi?” This is how Mark Saddler welcomes visitors to the banks of the Murrumbidgee River. He’s asking if you’re well, in his Wiradjuri dialect. “When you start to learn the language of the Country you’re in, you start to learn the Country itself,” he says.

This particular Country is Wagga Wagga in the Riverina region of south-western New South Wales, Mark’s homeland and the base for his tours by bus, van, motorbike and on foot. “My goal is to get people to see the land differently,” Mark says. “We visit places that are very special to the Wiradjuri community, and where few others get to go. It should open your eyes and your mind.”

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Mark’s Bundyi (“share”) tours are indeed personal and eye-opening, lasting from two hours to a full day. “I share from the heart. It’s the only way I know how,” says Mark, who is also a member of the New South Wales Aboriginal Tourism Operators Council (NATOC). “It comes from 100 per cent genuine experiences across 65,000 years of my people teaching me how to bundyi with people today.”

Mark is on a mission to get people to slow down and reconnect with the land. “You may go to a place where you feel a bit special and you don’t know why – non-Aboriginal people can feel the same way, because we’re all connected to Mother Country,” he says.

“And if we don’t connect back to Mother Country, we might as well be on the next shuttle to Mars,” Mark adds. “We’ve done a pretty poor job of protecting her over the last couple centuries. Hopefully, through education and tourism, we can change that process and make sure we stay around a little longer.”

“Aboriginal peoples have been doing land management for 65,000 years. We watch the animals to learn how the land’s going and watch the plants to time the seasons.”



BURRAWA ABORIGINAL CLIMB EXPERIENCE – SHONA DAVIDSON

Sydney / Warrane, New South Wales



"I flew from Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) in Queensland to New South Wales in 2018 to become a guide for BridgeClimb Sydney," says Shona Davidson. "Little did I know that a few years down the track, Wesley Enoch AM – also from my island – would conceptualise an experience to showcase Sydney's Indigenous cultures in all their glory. It's a small world, but also a big world," she says.

Shona is one of the storytellers on a tour that Enoch (the Sydney Festival's artistic director from 2017 to 2021) developed to offer guests not only a bird's-eye view of the city – 360-degree panoramas from the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – but also countless insightful Indigenous observations.

Traversing 1,332 steps, Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience gives you plenty of time to pause and take in Australia's largest city through Aboriginal eyes. "It still amazes me that there were three-metre-high, 65,000-year-old middens [ancient piles of shells] at Bennelong Point until the late 1700s," says Shona. "The fact they were burnt to lime to build the colony is astounding."

Shona is a natural storyteller, both of Creation tales and of Australian history. "A lot of people on the Burrawa climb are surprised by how much Indigenous culture still remains here," she says. "Telling our stories, making sure they are heard, means they are preserved for generations."

"I am so happy I get to inspire people every day – and not just with the view."

"People climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge with me and then say, 'Well, now I have to go do a behind-the-scenes-tour of the Opera House and hear its Indigenous history'."

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DALE TILBROOK EXPERIENCES – DALE TILBROOK

Perth / Boorloo, Western Australia



After returning from 10 years overseas Dale's journey in Aboriginal tourism began 25 years ago starting with a boomerang and artefact-making enterprise with her brother, then an Aboriginal art and gift gallery with some bush food products. From there Maalinup Gallery was developed where activities around bush tucker, culture and Aboriginal art are promoted.

Dale expanded her work with Maalinup Gallery and created Dale Tilbrook Experiences. Today Dales two signature experiences focus on taking guests on an in-depth, hands-on journey into Aboriginal native edibles as food and medicine. "Food is our medicine," Dale explains. During these experiences guests are able to eat the bush foods and learn many interesting facts about their nutritional profile and medicinal plants. Dale also reveals some remarkable insights into Aboriginal food traditions such as the yam garden along the Swan River, the Noongar six seasons and sustainable hunting and gathering. In her art experience, the history of Aboriginal art and dot paintings is explored and participants create their own piece to take home. Dale's storytelling skills come to the fore when she delivers her Local History and Culture experience.

Dale Tilbrook needs little prompting to discuss her favourite topic, the native foodstuffs Australians call "bush tucker". "People regard lots of them as superfoods because of their nutritional make-up. Kakadu plums have the highest vitamin C content of any fruit in the world," says the Wardandi Bibbulmun Elder and chef. "If something interests me, I'm like a big sponge – I suck it all in and retain it."

Today, Dale is such an expert on Indigenous bush foods that she's in high demand to talk about them and cook them in far-flung countries such as Italy. That makes her one busy woman as she also runs Dale Tilbrook Experiences in Perth / Boorloo.

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"People call me the Bush Tucker Queen as I have a passion that borders on obsession regarding native edible plants and their pharmaceutical and nutraceutical qualities. This obsession has continued to build for the last 20 odd years and is something I never tire of."

DREAMTIME DIVE & SNORKEL – QUINN ROSS-PASSI

Cairns / Gimuy, Queensland



Looking up from the vibrant depths of the Great Barrier Reef is what first hooked Quinn Ross-Passi on scuba diving. It's something he shares with day-trippers on a Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel cruise, a unique Indigenous tour taking visitors across the World Heritage-listed reef in a catamaran before pausing to allow guests to dive in and explore the underwater world.

"It's like looking into a stained-glass window. It has all those waves in it, but it's not static: it's moving. It's just like the whole world around you is moving at the same time," says Quinn.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander man was born and raised in Cairns, where he was "lucky" to be part of a six-month dive traineeship in 2019. This included a stint on the Dreamtime boat, just after the experience launched.

"I was on board for about two weeks and loved it." He joined the crew of First Nations cultural guides soon after.

Day trips to the outer reef weave together Dreamtime stories, clapstick and didgeridoo playing demonstrations and dance. "It's the hook that draws people in," says Quinn.

On snorkelling and diving expeditions, he points out the pageant of fish and coral in the Creation story of the reef. "The bombora [submerged rock shelves] were the boulders that the angry spirits rolled out into the ocean. It means standalone and they're huge," he says. "They're just a small part of this immense natural wonder that has sustained and inspired Indigenous communities for millennia."

"A lot of our people go out and hunt fish, turtles and dugongs, but we do it sustainably. If there's a big wedding, it's a lot easier to get a dugong than 300 fish. If it was a turtle, you wouldn't use one part and chuck the rest of it away. It's something that's frowned upon in Indigenous cultures."

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DREAMTIME DIVE & SNORKEL – JACOB WILLIAMSON

Cairns / Gimuy, Queensland



Six species of sea turtles come here to breed, alongside 215 different types of birds. To understand everything that goes on here is not an easy feat, but Jacob Williamson is a wealth of knowledge on the marine environment, not to mention holding sacred stories on the Indigenous Creation story behind its existence.

Jacob is a Kuku Yalanji and Djabugay man, at 21 years old working as an Indigenous sea ranger with Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel out of Cairns. He's one of a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders hosting catamaran journeys to the outer Great Barrier Reef, enlightening guests on the ecological importance of the Coral Sea as well as its Indigenous Creation story.

Jacob began his Certificate III in Tourism while still in high school with a placement at Queensland's Rainforestation Nature Park. "Today with Dreamtime Dive, I talk to customers about Indigenous practices and our connection to Sea Country. It's cool because we have so much history with the reef and all these stories."

Jacob is still working out his career goals but is flirting with the idea of earning his dive certificate and coxswain licence, or potentially moving into tourism sales and marketing.

No matter what he decides, he feels lucky to be working in Indigenous tourism. "It gives me a chance to further my understanding and make me feel more empowered and more in touch with my culture."

"Visitors to the Great Barrier Reef are always blown away by the colour, and even more so by how it was created so many millions of years ago."

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DREAMTIME SOUTHERN X – MARGRET CAMPBELL

Sydney / Warrane, New South Wales



When you meet Margret Campbell, feel free to call her Auntie Marg. In Australia, addressing an Indigenous Elder as “Auntie” or “Uncle” is a sign of respect, although it’s polite to ask for permission before using these terms. Auntie Marg is the founder-owner and managing director of Dreamtime Southern X, which runs tours offering fascinating insights into Sydney / Warrane’s Aboriginal Dreamtime beginnings.

You might encounter her – or one of her guides – cradling a tiny pot of ground ochre while standing in The Rocks waiting to welcome you to the 90-minute walking tour. The pale paste is dabbed onto your wrists to connect you to Earth Mother and the sandstone lying beneath your feet. Auntie Marg might also draw symbols on herself with the ochre paste, which dries in the sun as she talks.

As you stand in front of modern wonders such as the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Auntie Marg’s stories will take you back to a time when this land and the harbour looked very different. Before colonisation, Indigenous peoples would watch out for the whales they considered a spiritual ancestor. They’d also bring fish here to cook over their campfires.

Auntie Marg is from the Dughutti and Jerrinjha nations of New South Wales, but has 10 other ways of identifying herself, including various animal Totems. These all link her into a deep network of kinship and connection. Spending time with Auntie Marg will highlight how the Dreamtime still shapes the world’s oldest continuous living cultures – estimated to be more than 65,000 years old – and the responsibilities of Elders in today’s society.

“Reconciliation is not just about shaking hands and feeling welcomed into Country. Reconciliation is about all people connecting with Aboriginal peoples’ cultures to learn how we can respect and conserve our Earth Mother that we all live and walk upon.”

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FIRES CREEK BOTANICAL WINERY ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES – KEVIN ‘GAVI’ DUNCAN

Central Coast, New South Wales



While Gavi is a well-known face on the New South Wales Central Coast – a member of the Darkinjung Land Council, passionate supporter of protecting the region’s waterways, and an active guide – perhaps his most fun role is at Firescreek. In Holgate, just 90 minutes north of Sydney / Warrane, Gavi captivates visitors with a showcase of Aboriginal artefacts and instruments, followed by a tasting of bush tucker and the estate’s botanical wines.

“There are so many beautiful medicinal and nutritious native Australian foods,” he says. “And they’re just now being appreciated across the country and around the world. I would love to have knowledge of this bounty embedded into Australian school curricula – to take kids through the bush and show them how amazing and sustaining the land is.”

For visitors to Firescreek, Gavi has a simple goal: “To teach people who the local Aboriginal people are, and have them understand our spiritual culture. I want people to appreciate the native plants that have been sustaining Indigenous communities for millennia. Talking to people on Country is by far the best way to get the message across. It really is a spiritual and life-changing experience.

Uncle Kevin ‘Gavi’ Duncan is the kind of person you meet and never forget. The respected Elder’s stories sear into your memory. As do the haunting tunes he plays on his didgeridoo, with notes that reverberate through your soul for weeks – even years – after you leave the Firescreek Botanical Winery where Gavi hosts an Aboriginal Storytelling & Wine Tasting Experience.

“Indigenous cultures in Australia date back more than 65,000 years. But we’ve only been allowed to tell it for the last 50 years. There’s a lot of catching up to do.”

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FLAMES OF THE FOREST – GARY CREEK

Port Douglas, Queensland



Cultural education and entertainment have been Gary Creek's passion for as long as he can remember. "It's all I want to do, and know how to do," he says. While he has been part of dance troupes and Aboriginal performing groups for three decades, today his focus lies in Flames of the Forest, a spectacular rainforest dining experience in Port Douglas that is given a twist every Thursday evening.

Under the cover of darkness, with fairy lights and candles all around, Gary and his brother Yanganda take things to the next level, highlighting their Kuku Yalanji heritage through music, songs, stories and performance.

"An integral part of the belief system of the Kuku Yalanji people is centered around nature and the intimate knowledge of Mother Nature's cycles," says Gary. "We asked permission from our Elders to tell this and other stories. They know when you are ready to pass them on. It's a very proud moment when you, as an individual, have shown excellence in an area – whether it's as a hunter or as a song man – and are given permission by the community to share this knowledge with other people."

The performance he and Yanganda curated for Flames of the Forest is extremely personal and individual. "It's only for the night. You won't see anything else like it, anywhere else in the world," says Gary. "The key is keeping it very private. We talk about our upbringing through a Dreamtime story, and its meaning to us. We share a lot about our language. We play the didgeridoo and sing in traditional language."

"I've heard people in the audience mumble under their breath, 'wow', when we perform."

Gary says it's very humbling experience. "It changes people's perceptions or enforces them," he says. "We're able to share spiritual information that people can take away. It can change lives."

"It's hard to put into words our lifetime of knowledge. Through Flames of the Forest we're able to bring together so many elements that reveal 65,000 years of culture."

"It's very addictive to see how enlightened people become after watching a Flames performance."

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IN CULTURE TOURS – STEVEN JACOBS

Perth / Boorloo, Western Australia



"For me, In Culture Tours is all about truth-telling. It can be confronting at times, talking about citizenship and land ownership. But guests appreciate the stories I tell – things you can't read in books or on the internet. It's a very honest and open discussion, and no question is ever wrong. That's important, for us as a community and for reconciliation."

One of the destinations in Perth that Steve tours is Kings Park, an enormous green expanse in the heart of the city. "This was traditionally a women's birthing site. There was an abundance of bush food and medicine here. Only women were permitted, and they would stay for months. The men could visit to drop off food, but they weren't allowed to stay. When I tell people this story they're amazed. It brings new light to just how ancient and spiritual our lands really are."

"I am not afraid to tell people Indigenous stories and truths that they have never heard before. We dive into very personal topics, and every answer I give is honest and heartfelt."

"I grew up on Country as a shearer," says Steven Jacobs, a proud Whadjuk man with "a real passion for people and Australia."

"Being a shearer was hard work, but it was honest. And I met a lot of people, which sparked my enthusiasm for spreading the knowledge of our West Australian Aboriginal culture."

Following a stint in local government, Steven realised just how important his Noongar culture was – just how much people wanted to know about it, and just how much he knew about it thanks to stories passed down from his Elders.

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JANBAL GALLERY – BRIAN “BINNA” SWINDLEY

Mossman, Queensland



Binna is a contemporary artist who respects tradition. Much of the detail in his paintings comes from painstakingly applied dots, a traditional technique of his people. “We belong to the rainforest; the dots represent the raindrops,” he says.

Binna first learned to paint from his uncles, who belong to the local Kuku Yalanji tribe. “They painted didgeridoos and boomerangs and bark paintings; I’ve never painted on bark in my life,” Binna says, laughing. “Things always change. You can’t go backwards, you have to go forwards. How I paint changes every year.”

What doesn’t change is Binna’s dedication to his art, which, he says, is a reflection of his life. “My art is about me – what I’m hunting and what I’m gathering, what I see and what I feel,” he says. His paintings are filled with local flora and fauna, especially the cassowary, a large flightless bird that lives in the rainforest. “That’s my Totem bird – it’s very special to me.

When you sign up for an art lesson with Brian “Binna” Swindley, expect the unexpected. The only Aboriginal artist in Tropical North Queensland to own his own gallery – Janbal Gallery in the town of Mossman, in the shadow of the Daintree Rainforest – Binna runs his painting workshops his own way. So instead of using a paint brush, for example, you might be wielding a bamboo stick. “They’re great for dot paintings,” he says.

“Red and yellow and white – the colours of ochre that our ancestors used – are the oldest colours in the world, and those are still colours that we still use today.”

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JARRAMALI ROCK ART TOURS – JOHNNY MURISON

Laura, Queensland



“My jaw hit the floor when I saw the art the first time,” says Johnny. “There are paintings of turtles, barramundi and kangaroos; fertility symbols, spirits and hunters. It gives me goosebumps to think they were painted by my family members, Kuku Yalanji people.”

It’s thought 10,000 such rock art sites adorn these 230,000 hectares of wilderness in the Laura Basin, collectively known as Quinkan Country. The Magnificent Gallery is particularly special because there are no boardwalks or sealed roads to get here – only intrepid travellers make the off-road journey with Johnny. “The 4WD track we take is one of the gnarliest I’ve ever been on,” says Johnny. “It’s steep and rugged, and often washes away during the wet. We call it the ‘Thousand-Dollar Track,’ because that’s what you need to fix your car after you’ve driven it.”

Johnny’s camp (replete with a natural rock infinity pool filled with rainwater) is on the edge of an escarpment, just 400m from the art. “My Elders would come here for shelter during the wet season, to avoid the rain and heat and flies. And they’d paint to pass the time,” he says. In doing so, they transformed this hidden pocket of Far North Queensland into an outdoor Dreaming story that does complete justice to its name – and then some.

“A lot of the time I have people on my tours who are in tears after seeing the art. It’s such a special place – it will grab you by the heartstrings.”

To call Johnny Murison a character is an understatement – this animated Kuku Yalanji man only knows one speed, and right now that’s full throttle towards the Magnificent Gallery. This outdoor site on the Cape York Peninsula is home to more than 450 works of rock art covering a 40m-long swathe of sandstone. It’s the camping base for Johnny’s overnight Jarramali Rock Art Tours, which decode the stories his ancestors left behind more than 20,000 years ago.

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JELLURGAL ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CENTRE – CAMERON WEIGHTMAN

Gold Coast, Queensland



“I don’t just try to educate people – I try to connect them to our culture,” says Cameron Weightman, one of the Indigenous guides with Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre on the Gold Coast.

Jellurgal, named for the spiritual umbrella-tree-draped mountain at Burleigh Heads, offers a range of immersive experiences, from smoking ceremonies designed to bless guests to ochre anointments. What follows on walking tours

with Cameron and fellow guides is a parade of heart-stopping vistas, all the way to the skyscrapers of Surfers Paradise, and just as memorable lessons about the land.

“Standing here, overlooking the ocean, we’re only a few kilometres from the heart of Australia’s sixth-largest city. But in my mind, I’m tens of thousands of years away,” says Cameron, nodding to his ancestors’ long and enduring history in this part of Queensland.

“Jellurgal, the mountain, was an essential meeting point for all our tribes on the Gold Coast. Every year we’d come here and have big celebrations. You wouldn’t even know you’re on the Gold Coast if you come here. It’s like a lush rainforest surrounded by crystal-clear water.

“A lot of people don’t know anything about our culture. They don’t realise they’re walking past these ancient sites that are thousands of years old. When people realise that you can have so much history within a big city, it blows their minds.”

“It’s amazing to be able to open people’s minds and give them a different perspective of the area. It’s not just skyscrapers – there’s a spirit here that goes back thousands of years.”

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KAKADU CULTURAL TOURS – NEVILLE NAMARNYILK

Kakadu National Park and Western Arnhem Land, Northern Territory



It’s a story Neville recounts as a guide on the Guluymambi Cultural Cruise, a journey that sluices through the murky, crocodile-infested waters of the East Alligator River, deep in the heart of the Northern Territory’s World Heritage-listed Kakadu.

“I say to people, see those melaleuca trees? I was born in the bush, wrapped in that paperbark and my umbilical cord cut with a mussel shell,” he says.

Neville spent his formative years in Kakadu, learning to hunt by the seasons. “June, July and August – there’s barramundi, black bream, snakes, water monitors, water chestnuts and water lilies. In September, it’s bush apples and plums. In December, bush carrots and bush potatoes [yams].”

He eventually trained as a plumber, working in both Darwin / Garramilla and Jabiru (the park’s main township), before switching gears. He joined Kakadu Cultural Tours as a guide in 2010. “I have good memories growing up. I learnt from my parents, my nana and poppy. I was always watching and listening. Now I get to share my knowledge of Country and storytelling,” he says.

On cruises, Neville recounts his earliest childhood memories. “It was all Arnhem Land. There was no tourism. Nobody came in. I’ve been living off the land since I was 13 years old.”

There was no Kakadu National Park when Neville Namarnyilk was born. The East Alligator River formed a semi-permanent divide between what is now one of the country’s largest national parks, and spiritual Arnhem Land. When the river flooded, members of Neville’s clan would be cut off from one another.

“I can still remember watching my father engraving a message stick [a letter carved into a tree branch], in the same way our people have done for more than 65,000 years. He gave it to another fella to take to West Arnhem Land. Today we have mobile phones. There’s no more message sticks.”

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KAKADU TOURISM – DENNIS MILLER

Kakadu, Northern Territory



Murumburr man Dennis Miller knows Kakadu National Park like the back of his hand. “I’m from this country, and have had pretty much every job going in Kakadu over the years. But I really love this one,” he says of his role as a senior guide with Kakadu Tourism for more than 12 years. “I love that it combines culture, community, wildlife, and these amazing landscapes that take your breath away every time.”

Covering some 20,000 square kilometres, Kakadu – Australia’s biggest national park – is World Heritage-listed for good reason, says Dennis. “The amount of wildlife will blow your mind. When I take people out cruising across the Yellow Water billabong, we see everything from enormous saltwater crocodiles – there are an estimated 80 per square kilometre – to an endless variety of bird species. There are 280 species here, which is a third of Australia’s total birdlife. One time, when I was cruising with guests, we saw a croc catch a pig. Then another ‘saltie’ that was 6.1 metres long came along and lifted the other croc into the air, taking off with the pig. It caused quite a bit of excitement in the boat!”

Dennis says that aside from the diversity of work in Kakadu – where days might be spent foraging for bush tucker or following animal tracks – a highlight is seeing how strong Indigenous culture remains. “Most Aboriginal people here still speak three or four languages, and we’re always working to educate our youth and inspire them to go to school and pursue a good career. We’ve seen a huge increase in interest in Indigenous tourism in recent years, and there are so many opportunities for our people to share stories of their community and culture, ensuring it remains strong for future generations.”

“We’re pretty lucky where we sit in Kakadu – we have land rights now that Indigenous communities in other countries still don’t have.”

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KARRKE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EXPERIENCE & TOURS – NATASHA ABBOTT

Watarrka National Park, Northern Territory



“Our bush foods are seasonal. The majority are spring and summer. We have berries, fruit, natural honey and acacia tree saps. Our people grind the seeds from prickly wattle and make a damper. We eat lizards.”

The Aranda woman worked in mining and land rights, before joining Karrke in 2014 as a guide and operations manager. “It was a way to give back to my community,” she says. “My brother is an Aranda man. His wife is a Luritja woman. Together they are preserving the language of Watarrka.”

Early tours were held “under the shade of the trees”. Today, people wind between huts to listen to the Aranda language and learn about bush medicine and the beauty behind dot paintings. “It’s how we show spirit beings who still live in their land.”

Bush tucker plays a big part. “We show how our people winnowed acacia seed pods using the wind and their hands to make a round-shaped patty they cooked in hot ash. It was bland, but our people ate it.” It’s something that resonates with guests. “People write back and say: “On my drive back, all I could do was look for the acacias.”

“People always question how we survive in this harsh country,” says Natasha Abbott, nodding to the rugged ranges and semi-arid desert of Watarrka National Park, near Kings Canyon in Central Australia. “Our people have been coming to this land for tens of thousands of years.”

“When people experience us, they get a deep appreciation that everything has a purpose – every rock, every tree, every animal and being. Jukurrpa, our Creation beings, are always still in the land and they watch over us.”

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KIMBERLEY CULTURAL ADVENTURES – ROBERT DANN

Broome / Rubibi, Western Australia



Robert Dann is one of those talented people who excels at anything he tries his hand at. A proud Nyul Nyul man and Kimberley local, he's a dancer, choreographer, musician and also a hospitality legend, thanks to his company Kimberley Cultural Adventures.

"I was born in Broome in the 1970s and am a Traditional Owner of the Winawul Country – the Sandy Point area of nearby Beagle Bay. Growing up here, hearing my family's stories and seeing things change so rapidly, it was a natural progression for me to tell this to other people," Robert says.

Following a stint serving in the Norforce (North-West Mobile Force, an infantry regiment of the

Australian Army Reserve), Robert became involved in performance through Modern Dreamtime Dancers and the Aboriginal Dance Development Unit, before being accepted into the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. In many ways, this background gave him the grounding skills to be the engaging guide that he is today.

"My tours go into depth about Broome's history. With guests we talk about how the town became the centre of Australia's pearling industry, and how blackbirding became a thing," says Robert, referring to the illegal (but practiced) process of kidnapping Aboriginal women to work on pearling luggers. "I tell very intimate stories. They're not always happy, but they're the truth. And people like that honesty."

Robert also takes his guests on a deep dive into native Australian bush tucker, which he has turned into a side business called Bindam Mie. "When I was young and we were hungry, we'd walk around, and if it was in season, get the boab," he says, referring to fruit from the tree iconic to the Kimberley. "We'd climb the tree, break it open and eat it straight up. Sometimes we'd take the fruit back home and put it into a pot and make iced tea or porridge."

Today, Robert turns boab into ginger beer and iced tea, as well as a healthful powder and syrup – he also makes Jiggal Ointment, infused with essential oils including kunzea, honey myrtle, eucalyptus and vitamin E, and used to treat everything from bites to sunburn. "We have a supermarket and pharmacy all around us in Mother Nature. I love using this bounty to create things that are both healing and delicious," Robert says.

"I've learnt that you need to take care of yourself and Country first – then you can take care of others."

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KINGFISHER TOURS – BEC SAMPI

The Kimberley, Western Australia



sandstone domes during a cultural immersion trip with her grandmother. The pair camped in the bush, with Bec learning how to read hidden messages in Aboriginal rock paintings, find plants that serve as bush medicine, catch fish using spinifex grass, and understand cultural Songlines that reveal ancient, unmarked paths through the wilderness.

Bec, a former schoolteacher who is fluent in the Gija, Wola and Kriol Indigenous languages, shares much of this knowledge on her tours of Purnululu, home to the extraordinary Bungle Bungle Range. As the head guide with Kingfisher Tours, she blends modern science with traditional education to provide fascinating explanations for how the formations in her homeland came to be, woven together with song and softly spoken truths.

"The way you see my Country is different to how I see it. Some people are amazed, because they only had an impression of Aboriginal peoples on the street. I see this as a reconciliation tour; you'll see we're First Nations peoples and we've lived through hard times."

Gija woman Bec Sampi grew up in Woolah Country (also known as Doon Doon), a tiny outstation community near Western Australia's World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park. It's a wonderfully remote place, nine-odd hours' drive east of the Kimberley region's tourism hub of Broome. This remoteness has informed Bec's personality: her observational skills, her ability to connect with Country, her comfort in isolated, outback locations. As a 13-year-old, she explored Purnululu's curious landscape of red rock boulders and rounded

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KOOMAL DREAMING – JOSH WHITELAND

Margaret River, Western Australia



As the only Aboriginal guide in the Margaret River, Yallingup and Dunsborough regions south of Perth / Boorloo, Josh has the stunning south-west of Western Australia in firm focus.

Cultural tours to Cape Naturaliste trace the dazzling blue coastline. “There’s always something moving on the water,” he says. In February, schools of fat salmon make their annual run up the coast. “Our people would retell that in song and dance.” Come July, it’s migrating whales. “They come right up to the rocks,” says Josh. “We tell the Creation story of mamang, the whale.” This story tells of a young Noongar man who travels to new lands in its belly.

Walking tours are a chance to share bush medicine and bush tucker. “We use peppermint leaves for whistling different bird calls or lighting fire the traditional way, with sticks from the bush.”

Tours to Ngilgi Cave are truly special. “I was going into the cave to play the didgeridoo and I thought: ‘Why not bring people with me?’” says Josh. It’s a natural amphitheatre dripping in stalactites, stalagmites and beautifully coloured shawls. “The acoustics are incredible. You couldn’t get a better sound with an amplifier. People love it.”

When Josh Whiteland began Koomal Dreaming back in 2010, he didn’t need to look far for inspiration. “I wanted to share all the things I loved doing on Country. Noongar people are saltwater and forest people. My tours move between the two. I share a lot of our language and traditional stories. People love that connection to place, identity and native foods.”

“You’re not talking about someone else’s stories; you’re talking about your own stories and experiences. You’re sharing knowledge that’s been passed down through generations. You can’t get that anywhere else in the world.”

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KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST – ROB HYATT

Melbourne / Narm, Victoria



The trust began in 1985 at the Melbourne Museum as a way to “give Aboriginal peoples a voice on how artefacts are displayed, in a cultural rather than anthropological way,” says Rob. It has since become an independent not-for-profit, housing more than 6,000 items from pre-colonisation to today, and covering everything from photographs to oral stories told by Elders.

“It’s just one of the ways we’re able to show the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in both Victoria and Australia,” says Rob, who spends a lot of his time curating cultural competency workshops for government and corporate groups. “We have this amazing opportunity to talk about our collective history and the impact of colonisation, and what that means today,” he says. “It’s truth telling, but without any attached blame or guilt.”

Rob and his team also run tours around Melbourne / Narm, revealing the city and its stories through Aboriginal eyes. “Every tour is unique, because the guides tell their own stories – having an individual expression of culture is really important,” he says. “People get to see our heritage on display, including ‘scar trees’ and cultural sites. It makes our heritage feel tangible.”

“A lot of visitors to the Koorie Heritage Trust have no idea what Aboriginal cultures look like in an urban setting,” says Rob Hyatt, the organisation’s education and visitor experience manager. They enter the Aboriginal-operated trust’s architecturally dramatic gallery and cultural centre at Federation Square in the heart of Melbourne / Narm, he says, and are “somewhat taken aback by what they discover.”

“Visitors sometimes ask us, ‘Where are the real Aboriginal people?’ Our role is to educate that diversity is us – we’re all different because we all have individual cultures and experiences.”

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MABU BURU – JOHANI MAMID

Broome / Rubibi, Western Australia



Johani was a Yawuru Country Manager Coordinator in 2018 when he caught up with Bart Pigram, a legendary tour guide in Broome and owner of Nartlijia Experiences. “Back then I was part of an Indigenous ranger group, employed to look after Yawuru Country, conducting flora and fauna surveying, and monitoring and research in both land and sea,” Johani says. Spending time with Bart got him thinking about venturing out on

“A lot of people may not have engaged with Aboriginal people before. Mabu Buru gives them a chance to ask questions.”

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his own. “Chatting to him I learnt there’s plenty of space for people to get into Aboriginal tourism. There are so many different and interesting things to explore, and so many niche areas to take on.” So Johani did just that, launching [Mabu Buru](http://MabuBuru.com.au) (which means ‘healthy place’, or ‘good land’) in 2020.

Thankfully, he was also a crocodile wrangler and tour guide at Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Park. Because as we all know, there weren’t many tourists visiting Western Australia that year. In retrospect, Johani says this was a blessing, giving him the levity to fully perfect the Mabu Buru offering.

“I decided that to be unique, I needed to make Mabu Buru really personal and hands-on. I wanted it to be focused on sharing stories about us, and our culture,” Johani says. “Culture is always front-and-centre. And you can’t talk about culture without talking about how we maintain a connection to Country.”

While Johani is adamant he doesn’t want his tours to get political, he says that sometimes controversial topics get raised by guests. “I never dismiss a question or topic. Talking about issues, historical and present, helps teach everyone why Aboriginal communities in this part of the world are the way we are. A timeline often comes up, and while it’s confronting, it can also change people’s perspectives immensely. Some people say it is life-changing. We share things that aren’t on the web.” When he says ‘we’... Mabu Buru is a family affair, and often Johani’s uncles, sisters, aunties, brothers, kids and friends get involved.

Johani says his tours often run overtime, because he loves keeping the conversation going. “I’m happy for that to happen, because you know that through this discussion, in a way reconciliation is happening. I really care about the greater good. And at the end of the day, I’m just doing what I can to protect our mob and our culture.”

MANDINGALBAY AUTHENTIC INDIGENOUS TOURS –

VICTOR BULMER

Cairns / Gimuy, Queensland



in issues concerning our people, and how we connect through our Songlines, Storylines and Dancelines.”

Mandalgalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours operates out of Cairns / Gimuy, cruising along estuaries and exploring the rainforest to reveal ancient Aboriginal Dreamtime stories, native animals and bush foods. Before Mandalgalbay, Victor launched the Djunbunji Land and Sea Ranger program to give back to the community he has such an affinity for, providing training and employment opportunities for the Indigenous community. “I’ve seen a huge growth in interest in Indigenous tourism since we launched,” says Victor. “People who take our tours cannot believe what they are seeing – we give them a fresh perspective of the land.”

“We have people who have lived here their whole lives and didn’t know these ecosystems existed and that this area had an Indigenous history and was a food bowl for our ancestors. I meet botanists who come on tours and had no idea that the plants we see had nutritional and medicinal uses. And we’re an active part of regenerating this ancient landscape, passing on our knowledge and traditions. That makes me so proud.”

“My people were here from day dot. And day dot is pretty much the beginning of existence,” says Mandalgalbay Yidinji man Victor Bulmer, a guide with Mandalgalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours. “Growing up in this region was pretty awesome because of the culture that surrounds it. Knowing your culture and sharing it with the wider community is a must. My grandparents pretty much built me up into doing the work I do today, in the sense of showcasing my culture. I grew up with them on Country knowing my strong connection to the land and community.

And since I was a kid I’ve always been involved

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“Sadly a lot of our culture is still under threat. I’m pretty much the only fella that can speak our language fluently. But education is key, and the more people that know about it, the stronger it will become.”

MANDINGALBAY AUTHENTIC INDIGENOUS TOURS –

BRENDA MUNDRABY

Cairns / Gimuy, Queensland



"I'm a single mum of two girls," says Brenda Mundraby, a tour guide with Mangingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours based out of Cairns / Gimuy. "The biggest thing I love about my job is that it inspires them to retain their culture and become better people. It's all about the next generation."

This ethos drives much of the work Mangingalbay undertakes to preserve and protect the environment around Trinity Inlet, which the company's tours cruise along from Cairns / Gimuy.

"Indigenous rangers have helped restore the wildlife here," Brenda explains. "It's a beautiful environment today, with lush mountains and edible plants that we teach guests about. But in the past, it was in a devastating state. Along our walking tracks, we share the long history of Mangingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal culture, including our Dreamtime stories. We also explain how we've rehabilitated the land through a blend of science and cultural knowledge, passed down through generations."

Brenda notes that everything is thriving today as a result. "The mangroves are lush, and there are birds everywhere. We often spot black-necked storks, kingfishers and jabirus, as well as snakes, crocs and wild pigs. It's a big 'wow' factor for guests –they're always surprised to find so much untouched, pristine nature so close to a big city like Cairns. But what really blows them away is our deep connection to Country, and how Indigenous communities have cared for this land for so long."

"This place is very special to me because I grew up here as a child," Brenda continues. "Most of our guides are siblings or cousins, which means that through our stories, we connect with guests on a very personal level."

"Being on Country is like a cure for everything. You can come here in a bad mood, but your troubles and the rest of the world fades away pretty quickly when you're in this incredible nature."

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NARLIJIA EXPERIENCES – BART PIGRAM

Broome / Rubibi, Western Australia



When Bart Pigram gazes across the flat, Tiffany-blue expanse of Roebuck Bay in Broome / Rubibi on the Kimberley coast of Western Australia, he doesn't just see water. He sees mangroves harbouring crabs and molluscs, and pearling luggers that used to dot the horizon.

Bart, who started Narlijia Experiences in Broome in 2015, takes people on an engaging walk through the mangroves and mudflats which come to life with mud crabs, mudskippers and abundant birdlife at low tide. He recounts ancient stories of the saltwater Yawuru people giving his guests a greater appreciation of Broome's natural environment, marine life and a complete understanding of Aboriginal history and settlement of the town.

Bart embodies the rich multiculturalism that runs through Broome. He has Aboriginal, Asian and European heritage, and he uses it to express the way locals embrace cultural diversity. His family history also links back to the pearling boom at the turn of the 20th century, enabling him to share both fascinating and sinister stories of the past on his walks between bays, along the mangroves and through the town.

He weaves Dreaming stories through his well-researched talks, as he points out ancient shell middens or plucks an amazing oyster fresh off the rock. "I'm close to this area," he says. "My people's language, our understandings, our Creation stories all come from here. I believe the environment here is among the best in the world and my culture belongs here."

"I want to get people grounded when they get to Broome and reveal all the secrets and all the history. The good, the bad, all of it – and give them a true experience of what it's like here."

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NGARAN NGARAN CULTURE AWARENESS – DWAYNE BANNON-HARRISON

Narooma, New South Wales



Dwayne Bannon-Harrison, a descendant of the Yuin people of New South Wales' far South Coast, was an accomplished football player and a plasterer by trade in Bathurst, west of Sydney / Warrane, before experiencing what he describes as his "call back to Country".

"In 2010 everything really turned on its head. I was all set up in Bathurst but I had a really strong urge to return to the New South Wales South Coast, like I was being spiritually called back," says Dwayne, who hadn't lived on his ancestral land since he was a very young child.

Unable to resist the pull any longer, he sold his house and business, packed up his young family, and moved 400 kilometres (250 miles) south-east to the coastal town of Narooma. There he was welcomed back to Yuin Country by his grandfather, a renowned Elder, who quickly became Dwayne's cultural mentor.

"Because I was his eldest grandson, he really took me under his wing to teach me the ways. You've got to be chosen to receive that kind of in-depth teaching," explains Dwayne.

At 26, the transformative experience was so profound that it inspired Dwayne to establish Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness (NNCA), an Aboriginal-owned and operated cultural training service, that today shares Yuin culture in the form of immersive travel experiences.

You can learn about the Yuin way of life by joining NNCA's Yuin Retreat experience. Hear sacred Dreaming stories passed down for tens of thousands of years, and bear witness to traditional ceremonies, song and traditions; at night, retire to your lavish "glamping" tent, complete with plush bedding, ensuite bathroom and gourmet catering that showcases native ingredients.

"I believe that's why I had the calling to come home, to create a vehicle to continue the traditional teachings of our bloodline."

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NGURRANGGA TOURS – CLINTON WALKER

The Pilbara, Western Australia



Containing one of the world's largest concentrations of petroglyphs (rock engravings), his Burrup Peninsula backyard (part of an area known as Murujuga, which means "hipbone sticking out") is the perfect setting. When Clinton approaches a rubble of boulders etched with images of animals, fish, footprints, symbols and people, he stops to greet the Spirit Ancestors in his language, requesting safe passage through this sacred spot. Then, he picks his way to a rock face depicting long-gone megafauna, such as a giant kangaroo. "They went extinct 30,000 years ago, so the rock art is, at a minimum, that old," Clinton says. It's believed there are more than a million engravings in Murujuga National Park, 1800 kilometres (or a two-hour flight) north of Perth / Boorloo.

Clinton's tours follow the Songlines of his ancestors. Songlines are ancient wayfaring pathways shared through stories and songs, using landmarks as guideposts. Clinton's hope is that by teaching others about these Songlines, his beloved history, culture, and Country will be preserved for another 2,500 generations – and beyond.

"I want to educate people about my ancestry and protect what's here."

"We've been here forever and a day, probably longer," says Clinton Walker, who estimates his family has lived in the Pilbara region of Western Australia for more than 2,500 generations. A descendent of the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi people, Clinton has thousands of years of cultural knowledge at his fingertips and he's passionate about using it. Leaving behind a career in the state's mining industry, the former mechanic now channels his energy into sharing Aboriginal stories through his tourism company, Ngurrangga Tours.

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NITMILUK TOURS – JAMES ‘BROOKSY’ BROOKES

Nitmiluk, Northern Territory



“No two days are ever the same,” he explains. “I love the changing seasons of Nitmiluk and the variety of guiding conditions, some more challenging than others.

“I also get to meet amazing people – there’s something about this part of the Northern Territory that attracts visitors with a spirit for adventure.”

It also draws people with a thirst for knowledge.

“When I started in the role there was not a lot of information out there on the Jawoyn people,” Brooksy says. “In fact, there was nothing written down at all; I had to rely on my knowledge passed down through generations. Now, visitors are really interested in the First Nations peoples and how we manage Country here.

“The focus of conversations I have has also changed. In the past it was just about wildlife. Now, people are not afraid to ask about Aboriginal cultures and history. Plus, there’s a huge interest in Indigenous art. I love showcasing this side of Jawoyn heritage.”

“I never tire of seeing the excitement on people’s faces when they see the gorge, and then learn its history. You can’t learn the stories we tell you in guidebooks.”

Born and bred in Katherine in the Northern Territory, Jamie ‘Brooksy’ Brookes knows a thing or two about Australia’s most remote wilderness areas. His formal education came courtesy of School of the Air, although his family taught him everything he needed to know about the Jawoyn people and life on the land.

Still, despite being a local, Brooksy didn’t actually glimpse Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) – a string of 13 ancient sandstone gorges – until he was 19. The same year he got a job as a guide with Nitmiluk Tours; that was more than 25 years ago. But Brooksy’s passion for his role hasn’t waned.

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SALTWATER ECO TOURS – SIMON THORNALLEY

Mooloolaba, Queensland



“Mum and Dad bought an old timber boat and cruised up and down the coast,” says Simon. “I was almost born on that boat. Dad and Mum had to come ashore in Tin Can Bay and hustle to hospital in Gimpi Gimpi [Gympie].”

His family later settled on the Sunshine Coast, and after finishing school, Simon, too, pursued a career at sea, including stints as a commercial diver and six cruises to Antarctica as a first officer on a charter vessel. His work eventually brought him back home to the traditional lands of the Gubbi Gubbi / Kabi Kabi people where, in 2020, he and his wife Jenna bought a century-old timber sailing boat and co-founded Saltwater Eco Tours in Mooloolaba.

“I belong to the saltwater people,” says Simon, who shares stories about his own Sea Country connections on his unique marine experiences hosted on the Spray of the Coral Coast.

“My most treasured memories revolve around being able to visit remote islands, go to shore on a sandy beach looking for coconuts, and catching fish for dinner,” he adds with a smile.

“I get to combine all of my passions: eco-tourism, sustainability, and Indigenous culture and share that with visitors and see the satisfaction of what people take home from that experience.”

Simon Thornalley spent the formative years of his childhood sailing around the turquoise seas of Tropical North Queensland with his parents. It was this experience of living on a yacht and exploring coastal Queensland that he says gave him a lifelong yearning to stay connected to the sea – and his culture.

Simon’s father hails from Lincolnshire in the UK and his mum has Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal heritage. His parents met in the Whitsundays, where his dad worked as a boatbuilder and his mum as a sailor.

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SAND DUNE ADVENTURES – ANDREW SMITH

Port Stephens, New South Wales



Andrew Smith is the boss of a thrilling venture that combines high-adrenaline quad biking with ancient Indigenous coastal culture. The CEO of Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, which operates Sand Dune Adventures at Port Stephens on the New South Wales North Coast, was a long-time Australian Taxation Office employee when the opportunity arose in 2006 to do something completely different.

“I didn’t know anything about quad bikes or Aboriginal tourism or tourism in general,” he says. He did know a lot about governance and accountability, though – expertise that helped as he pondered how to turn the Southern

Hemisphere’s largest moving sand dunes into a viable business that supported his community as a not-for-profit social enterprise. “We were asset-rich but cash-poor,” he says.

When Andrew started developing the business, he had only eight quad bikes and “stood by the side of the road waving signs at passing cars hoping they would come”. Tourism Australia backed the venture, naming it an Indigenous Tourism Champion. Business mentorship, along with great word of mouth, also helped turned Sand Dune Adventures into a thriving enterprise within just a few years.

Profits are poured back into the local Indigenous community, funding employment, housing, education, health and Elders’ programs. “It’s about the growth and empowerment of our community,” Andrew says.

Quad-bike riders journey up to 20 kilometres over the awe-inspiring dunes – some of which are more than 30 metres high.

“About 95 per cent of people who come on our tours are really after the quad bikes, but every single tour gets exposed to the occupational history and Aboriginal culture of the area.”

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SEALINK NT – KEVIN BAXTER-PILAKUI

Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory



Kevin Baxter-Pilakui was born in the air, way above his remote island home. His mother was flying from the Tiwi Islands to hospital in Darwin / Garramilla, the capital of the Northern Territory, to deliver him, except that Kevin arrived early, halfway between both. He jokes that he’s from no-man’s land, but in truth, Bathurst Island (which is 60 kilometres off the mainland) has always had his heart.

He lived on Bathurst Island until he was 12, when schooling in the big smoke called, and he started guiding tours after he graduated. Seven years ago, he decided the scenery in Darwin / Garramilla was no match for the “islands of smiles”. He wanted to return to his ocean-lapped roots to help share its culture.

Now, the former football player leads SeaLink NT’s Tiwi by Design tours. He introduces visitors to smoking ceremonies, where wafting plumes from native leaves rid people of bad spirits and feelings. He takes them through the island’s lauded screen-printing art centre, where iconic designs make their way onto colourful materials. He teaches them about sourcing ochre pigments from the island and mixing them for painting.

He also shows off the hard, heavy ironstone used for carvings of birds and towering pukamani poles, the sacred, decorative posts placed at burial sites during a traditional ceremony. Kevin also loves to surprise his guests with the news that neither the didgeridoo nor the boomerang is found on the islands – revealing the differences between them and greater Australia.

“There are some 900 to 1000 different dialects across the Northern Territory, and sometimes it’s taboo for the mainlanders to share parts of culture, but the Tiwi Islands and our culture are open to the world. For us, it’s important to share.”

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SEIT PATJI – SAMMY WILSON (TJAMA ULURU)

Uluru, Northern Territory



In the way of the Anangu, Sammy Wilson is the Custodian of Uluru because he is the eldest grandson of the late Paddy Uluru. The grandfather and grandson relationship (tjama) is one of the most significant relationships in Anangu life. It is his relationship with his grandfather that gives Sammy his real name, Tjama Uluru. "I was given my name Sammy Wilson when I went to school," he says. "I was born on a station and there was no school there. My mum wanted me to learn other things. But I only know one thing – the land. My school is the land and the people."

Sammy lives in the small community of Mutitjulu, the closest to Uluru. He's a Custodian and Traditional Owner, and former Chair of the Central Land Council. "People call this country the desert, and they think it's a hard and difficult place to live. But I feel the same way when I go to a city. For me, this is my home, this is where my heart is. This country has all of this Lore that has been passed on, that is still here. I see the evidence of my ancestors everywhere. I feel them here."

"In our culture we have a tradition of alpiri – it's early morning as dawn breaks or evening as people drift off to sleep. It's a calling together of people's thinking, of reflections of the day past, or ideas about the day to come. It was a way for our seniors to call out the ideas for the day; the reinforcement of messages or things that needed to happen. We were pooling our wisdom."

"We are going to keep doing what we are doing; pooling our wisdom and telling our stories, speaking our language. This will keep culture strong."

"You lose your language; you lose your culture. Our understanding of the world is handed down by our ancestors. Without our heritage we are nothing – we're lost."

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SOUTHERN CROSS CULTURAL TOURS AT LULLUMB – BOLO ANGUS

Broome / Rubibi, Western Australia



"You're going to get a bit dirty," he says. "But that's part of the fun. I want to show you how my Elders survived up here, on my grandfather's country – how they found water and shelter, their hunting methods. Then we do a cook-up at the end using all the amazing bush tucker we've found."

You travel light on one of Bolo's tours. "We don't carry water – we've got fresh water everywhere. These freshwater springs give life to this area. And there's food everywhere."

"On the tours we go look for crab and fish so we can feed this hungry mob. It's easy if you know where to look. You don't need a fishing line and a hook. We catch rock cod by hand, mud crabs with a spear, then at the end of the day, my dad cooks up a feast."

Bolo says, "My aim is to teach a bit of knowledge – if you get stuck out in the wild, after this tour you'll know how to find water and food. I just want to give insights into how my people survived out here for so many millennia."

"Foraging for bush tucker, hunting without too many tools, finding water and medicine in nature... I'm passionate about keeping these skills alive for future generations."

Bardi Jawi man Bolo Angus may have bare feet when he wades through the mangroves at coastal Lullumb on the Dampier Peninsula around Broome in Western Australia. But he has tough soles. "My ancestors and I have been doing this for years. When you don't wear shoes you have a better connection to the land and can feel where the food is at," he says.

From the Ardyaloon Community in Western Australia's Kimberley region, Bolo is all about family. The stories he tells on his tours are passed down from law and culture taught to him by his grandfather and other Elders, and his aunties and other family members accompany him on the four-hour Southern Cross Cultural Walk.

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SOUTHERN CULTURAL IMMERSION – COREY TURNER

Adelaide / Tarntanya, South Australia



Kurna man Corey Turner began his life in Aboriginal tourism at an early age, when he worked on tours of South Australia's postcard-perfect Fleurieu Peninsula with his mother. It sparked a passion that saw him take over the Living Kurna Cultural Centre at Warriparinga, a nature reserve south of Adelaide / Tarntanya. He nurtured an art gallery and retail space on the culturally significant grounds, and began expanding operations – think cultural training, workshops, performances... and then tours through his company [Southern Cultural Immersion](https://southernculturalimmersion.com.au).

"I noticed that some of my staff were really interested in, and had amazing knowledge of, plants. So we sat down and worked out a way to

explore Aboriginal knowledge of native plants at the Adelaide Botanic Garden," Corey says. He and his staff today lead hands-on tours through the leafy expanse, decoding medicinal plants and bush tucker, as well as walking tours through Adelaide city centre. "There are lots of Aboriginal sacred sites around the gardens and the city," says Corey. "Like scar trees [where bark was removed from trees to be used for various purposes, from creating canoes to baskets], and a site where Elders past would camp out."

Corey's reason for growing Southern Cultural Immersion comes down to a single point: demystifying Aboriginal culture. "People who don't understand or know about our culture have this romance about what it is... they generally think we dance around in loin cloths and play the didgeridoo. Our tours are about telling the truth, and informing people so we can move forward. They're also about showing people how absolutely incredible and beautiful this country is, and what a natural bounty we have offered to us. Aboriginal people have been conserving it for millennia. And we want to share our knowledge on how to do this for future generations," Corey says.

"For example, plants need slow burns, to ensure that there are no out of control bushfires. We have been doing this for thousands of years. And Aboriginal communities leave middens [piles of shells and bones], to tell other mobs what has been eaten in an area recently, and what should be protected. It's incredible to think this has been our knowledge for so long."

"It has been a fantastic and emotional journey to go from a sole trader to a thriving Aboriginal-owned company."

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TARIBELANG BUNDA CULTURAL TOURS – BEC DOMAILLE

Bundaberg, Queensland



She set out to ensure it would be preserved, launching Taribelang Bunda Cultural Tours with her partner Nigel. "This is an experience where you really get to go deep into our traditions from centuries ago but also up to European contact. But it's much more than that – it's very personal, and all about storytelling and friendship. I can't tell you how many guests I still keep in contact with. There's a lot.

"One of the greatest moments running the tour was when a 99-year-old local Bundaberg woman joined the experience and at the end told me she was blown away by the fact she didn't know these truths about the region's Aboriginal heritage before. She was almost in tears. If we can help educate and move just one person like that... well, job done."

Bec says that while she and her fellow Taribelang Bunda community members are happy there's a renewed spotlight on Aboriginal culture around Australia, "we still have to fight to have our stories told and our traditions preserved. Even to this day we fight. And we will keep doing that – for our Elders, and for the generations to come."

"I distinctly remember the moment I was speaking to Bundaberg Indigenous Elders and they told me they were afraid our Aboriginal culture and language here would be lost forever in the near future," says Bec Domaille. "It made me so sad. I couldn't let that happen."

"Australian society was not ready for Indigenous tourism 20 years ago. Even 10. But today it's thriving around the country, and I'm determined to make sure it will stay that way."

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INJALAK ARTS CENTRE (VENTURE NORTH) – JOEY NGANJIMIRRA

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory



A talented artist himself, Joey has been revealing the stories behind the sacred sites here for more than 20 years. “It’s mind-blowing to think there are more than 50,000 rock-art sites in the region, dating back 20,000 to 30,000 years,” he says.

Visiting the hill is a powerful experience, says Joey, referencing the many different layers of history: the ancient tunnels, paintings of spirit figures, caves, burial sites. And everything is raw – there are no formal pathways here, no signs.

“I tell people about the animals depicted in the art, and how this tells a story of what communities saw on the land and conservation. There are also different layers of art from different communities, which means different styles,” Joey says. “The art of West Arnhem Land is very unique – it has its own style and tells its own story through language.”

On its tours across the Northern Territory’s remote Arnhem Land and the Cobourgh Peninsula, Venture North Safaris pauses at Injalak Hill, one of the world’s most significant rock-art sites. The only way to visit is with an Indigenous guide from the Injalak Arts Centre in Gunbalanya, someone in-the-know like Joey Nganjmirra.

“It always amazes people that there is such an important piece of history in such a remote part of the country.”

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VOYAGES INDIGENOUS TOURISM AUSTRALIA

– AYERS ROCK RESORT – JAYDEN WEETRA

Uluru, Northern Territory



For Jayden, the training was in hospitality, which allowed him to take up an apprenticeship at Ayers Rock Resort in Uluru, before becoming a chef at acclaimed Tali Wiru, then at the resort’s Mangata and Arnguli restaurants at Desert Garden Hotel.

“The training gave me a lot of support, and I’ve had a lot of mentors. It gave me the chance to work with chefs from all around the world,” Jayden says. It also gave him the chance to work with the native Australian ingredients that he grew up eating as a child.

“I love experimenting with bush ingredients. I like zesty flavours, like desert lime and rosella. Quandongs are also very nice. I had them growing up as a kid – they were everywhere in the countryside of Adelaide. We also use a lot of lemon myrtle at Ayers Rock Resort. We have a lemon myrtle cocktail at Walpa Lobby Bar, and I use it in dressings, salads and as a dry rub on meats. It’s a really versatile herb.”

When Jayden moved to the Northern Territory in 2018, it was his first time away from home in Adelaide / Tarntanya. “When I finished school, I wasn’t sure what to do. I saw an ad to be a trainee with the National Indigenous Training Academy at Ayers Rock Resort. And I took it up.”

The Academy is an innovative program run by Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, established to provide young Indigenous Australians with solid career prospects in retail, horticulture, hospitality and tourism at Voyages properties, as well as wider employment opportunities with other organisations.

Jayden says one of his greatest joys is teaching visitors about native ingredients. “I am proud to share my culture with our guests. It’s good to show tourists something that they might have never tried. It is nice to see their reaction straight away – I like that we can talk to the guests directly. I find they might not have many expectations, but they are generally keen to try things.”

“I grew up eating all this amazing native bush tucker raw. And now I get to use it in my cooking. It’s exciting.”

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VOYAGES INDIGENOUS TOURISM AUSTRALIA – MOSSMAN GORGE CULTURAL CENTRE – ROBERT LAFRAGUA

Mossman, Queensland



“When the blue ginger flowers, that’s the time the cassowary starts hanging around. It also tells us the brush turkeys are laying their eggs, so we need to look for their nests,” says Robert ‘Skip’ Lafragua.

The seasonal floral and faunal calendar is among the knowledge bounty the Kuku Yalanji man shares on Ngadiku Dreamtime Walks at Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Port Douglas in Tropical North Queensland. “It’s a way to respect the rainforest and keep our knowledge and culture alive,” he says.

The Daintree Rainforest’s lush, boulder-strewn Mossman Gorge was Robert’s backyard

growing up. “I used to sit around the fire with the Elders, especially at night, and they’d tell me stories I now share,” he says.

Robert was working in tourism in 2007 when Uncle Roy Gibson asked him to become part of the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre project. “He took me for a walk, and said ‘What plants do you know?’ Twenty minutes later he asked, ‘Look, you want a job?’.”

Mossman Gorge was a very different place back then. “We’d get up to 1,000 cars a day,” says Robert. Thanks to Uncle Roy, in 2011 the road was closed to private vehicles between 8am and 6pm daily, with electric shuttles instead carrying visitors to the Centre, which opened in 2012. “We started to see more animals come out,” says Robert, noting he even spotted a rare bush kangaroo not seen in these parts for 30 years.

Plants are Robert’s greatest passion. “It can change your outlook of the rainforest by knowing the purpose of trees,” he says. “I point out the stinging tree first. It has a heart-shaped leaf with prickly edges like fibreglass. The trick: you take the spikes out with the root of the tree.”

“The buff-breasted paradise kingfisher is our meteorologist. When it flies here from Papua New Guinea, we know the wet season is coming.”



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WAJAANA YAAM GUMBAYNGGIRR ADVENTURE TOURS – CLARK WEBB

Coffs Harbour, New South Wales



“I’m really passionate about the revitalisation of our language and culture, so that is what drives Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours,” says Clark, who has been learning the Gumbaynggirr language for 14 years. Clark loves a good yarn and will happily share the Gumbaynggirr word for any marine life, animals or native plants that guests spot during one of Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours’ guided stand-up paddleboarding / kayaking or walking tours, which are conducted at three spectacular locations within the Solitary Islands Marine Park on the New South Wales Mid North Coast. Clark and his team are passionately doing their bit to make the Gumbaynggirr language accessible and keep it alive, even though a lot of it was lost.

“When we can’t find a word for a certain plant or an animal, it’s part of the disruption that happened to our culture,” Clark says.

But that doesn’t stop Clark from bringing the Dreaming to life on his fascinating stand-up paddleboarding trips, with his contagious smile and welcoming nature putting you immediately at ease, even if you’re paddling for the first time.

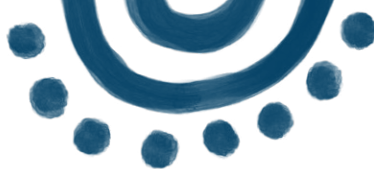
“Our language is our soul, so when we speak our language in Coffs Harbour – when we speak Gumbaynggirr – we’re making our soul strong again.”

Gumbaynggirr / Bundjalung man Clark Webb doesn’t do anything by halves. After becoming Coffs Harbour High School’s first Aboriginal school captain in 2002, Clark went on to set up the not-for-profit Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC) in 2010, which works to uplift Aboriginal youth. Now, a proportion of profits from his ecotourism business, Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours, is invested back into language teaching programs and other projects run by the BMNAC.

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WALKABOUT CULTURAL ADVENTURES – JUAN WALKER

Port Douglas / Daintree, Queensland



Juan Walker was a shy young man considering an electrician's apprenticeship at a mine when relatives talked him into staying on Country in Tropical North Queensland. The Kuku Yalanji man can thank his grandmother for directing him onto a different path when she found him a job as a tour guide with Daintree Ec lodge in 1999.

"It took me a while to be able to talk to strangers – that was the hardest part, getting over that shyness," says Juan. Today he runs his own business, Walkabout Cultural Adventures, from his Cooya Beach base near Port Douglas.

There's no trace of that shyness now as Juan leads visitors through the landscape he knows so well. In the mangroves and shallows, he demonstrates how to spear a mud crab and identify coastal food sources. In the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest, he shows visitors the lush layers where cassowaries roam.

"It's one thing to learn about Aboriginal history through textbooks, sitting down in a classroom, but out on Country, it makes things a whole lot more real," he says. "It's a lot more hands-on – you can see how we know about bush medicine and bush tucker."

You'll also see his Country through new eyes, as just about every landmark comes soaked in myth and legend. Juan can tell you, for instance, a Dreamtime story about how a hungry snake slithered down from the mountains towards the coast to look for food, its body carving out the sinuous Daintree River along the way.

"I tell my kids Dreamtime stories at night for their bedtime stories," he says.

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WARINGARRI ABORIGINAL ARTS – CATHY WARD

Kununurra, Western Australia



"I love art, but I also love taking guests out on Country, to places like Mirima National Park (the 'mini Bungle Bungles') at sunset. Listening to my dad, Chris, sing Corroboree as the day ends – it's truly magical. You can feel our culture is still very strong when he sings. It means so much to me to be able to tell my ancestors' stories and keep them alive while we walk. It opens people's minds and hearts at the same time."

Cathy notes that interest in Indigenous tourism in Western Australia has grown exponentially in recent years. "It's about truth-telling for us, and I think more people in Australia and around the world want to hear that – they want to hear our Elders' wisdom. It has sustained this country for so long, and it's still so strong. You can feel it everywhere."

And you can hear it, too. "Indigenous communities here in Kununurra still speak language – multiple languages. Sometimes my dad speaks to me in Miriwoong, and I answer him in English. I switch between the two subconsciously, but my Miriwoong is still strong. We take trips out onto Country to teach kids how to keep the language strong as well, because that's our future – strength in culture."

"My goal is to be an artist for the rest of my life, to teach my kids about their culture, and to pass down this knowledge."

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WUKALINA WALK – CARLEETA THOMAS

Bay of Fires, Tasmania / lutruwita



As a young girl, Carleeta Thomas went muttonbirding, foraged for abalone and learnt to fish and dive off the rocks of Cape Barren Island, a tiny Aboriginal community in Bass Strait, off the north-east coast of Tasmania / lutruwita.

It's this connection to Country that shines on the wukalina Walk, a breathtaking four-day, three-night journey through wukalina (Mount William National Park) and larapuna (Bay of Fires), home to the palawa people for up to 65,000 years.

Fittingly, muttonbird is served on day two of the walk. “We also do rock wallaby,” says Carleeta. And then there are scallops cooked in the shell over the fire, and a mean damper [bush bread].

Carleeta, a young palawa woman, was approached to become a guide on the experience – the first Aboriginal-owned tour in Tasmania / lutruwita – fresh out of high school. “I was really lucky for the Elders to see something in me at such a young age,” she says. “Being on Country is powerful. Learning about my culture and being able to share what I know and what I learned growing up on Cape Barren has been amazing.”

For Carleeta, wukalina is a chance to walk in the footsteps of ancestors. “We’ve had signs from the old fellas,” she says. Yellow-tailed black cockatoos often appear when they speak about chief Mannalargenna. “It was his Totem,” she says. It’s the same when they tell the fire Creation story. “Kaylarunya [the black swan] doesn’t fly at night,” says Carleeta. “But the last few times we mentioned her name, she swooped over the campfire.” When the embers fade, visitors retire to architect-designed huts, the waves a lullaby inducing sound sleep.

“It might not look big, but from the summit of wukalina, you can see the entire north-east coastline of Tasmania. The old fellas used to signal to our people over on Cape Barren that the sealers were coming through. Just being up here, and being able to see home, is special.”

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WULA GURA NYINDA ECO CULTURAL ADVENTURES

– DARREN “CAPES” CAPEWELL

Shark Bay, Western Australia



Capes came home from the big city in 2000 and started his tourism venture in 2004. “Apart from my family, it combines two of my greatest passions – and that’s the environment and my culture,” he says.

Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures will take you kayaking through the region’s stunning bays. Along the way, you learn about the strong spiritual connection between this land and its Traditional Custodians. You can also slip from the double kayaks into crystal-clear waters to snorkel and swim with rays, fish and turtles.

Capes also runs a Didgeridoo Dreaming night tour – a didgeridoo meditation around an open campfire. Bush tucker and fish are cooked over the fire, and males can try their hand playing the timeless instrument. Traditionally, only men play the didgeridoo, but females on the tour can try coaxing music from a conch shell. On a 4WD tour of Francois Peron National Park, you might spot the thorny devil – a spiky lizard that stars in one of the region’s Dreamtime stories.

“When you visit places it is easy to ‘see’ Country, but to truly take something away with you – you need to feel the spirit of Country. This is what I share with visitors. People walk away with a deeper appreciation of what Country means to my people, here in Gutharraguda (Shark Bay).”

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YURA TOURS – ELISHA KISSICK

North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah, Queensland



There's something about arriving at Quandamooka Country on North Stradbroke Island / Minjerribah in Queensland that slows your pulse. "You can feel the old ones [Quandamooka Elders past] when you walk down the beach," says Elisha Kissick, founder of Yura Tours. "They're everywhere. They're in the trees and the bush. You can feel it. You can feel their spiritual energy."

"This is a magical island," says Elisha of Minjerribah, just off the coast of Brisbane. "My nan taught herself how to read and write, and when she did, boy did she annoy the crap out of government. She wrote letters and letters saying she was going to put this island on the map. And she did."

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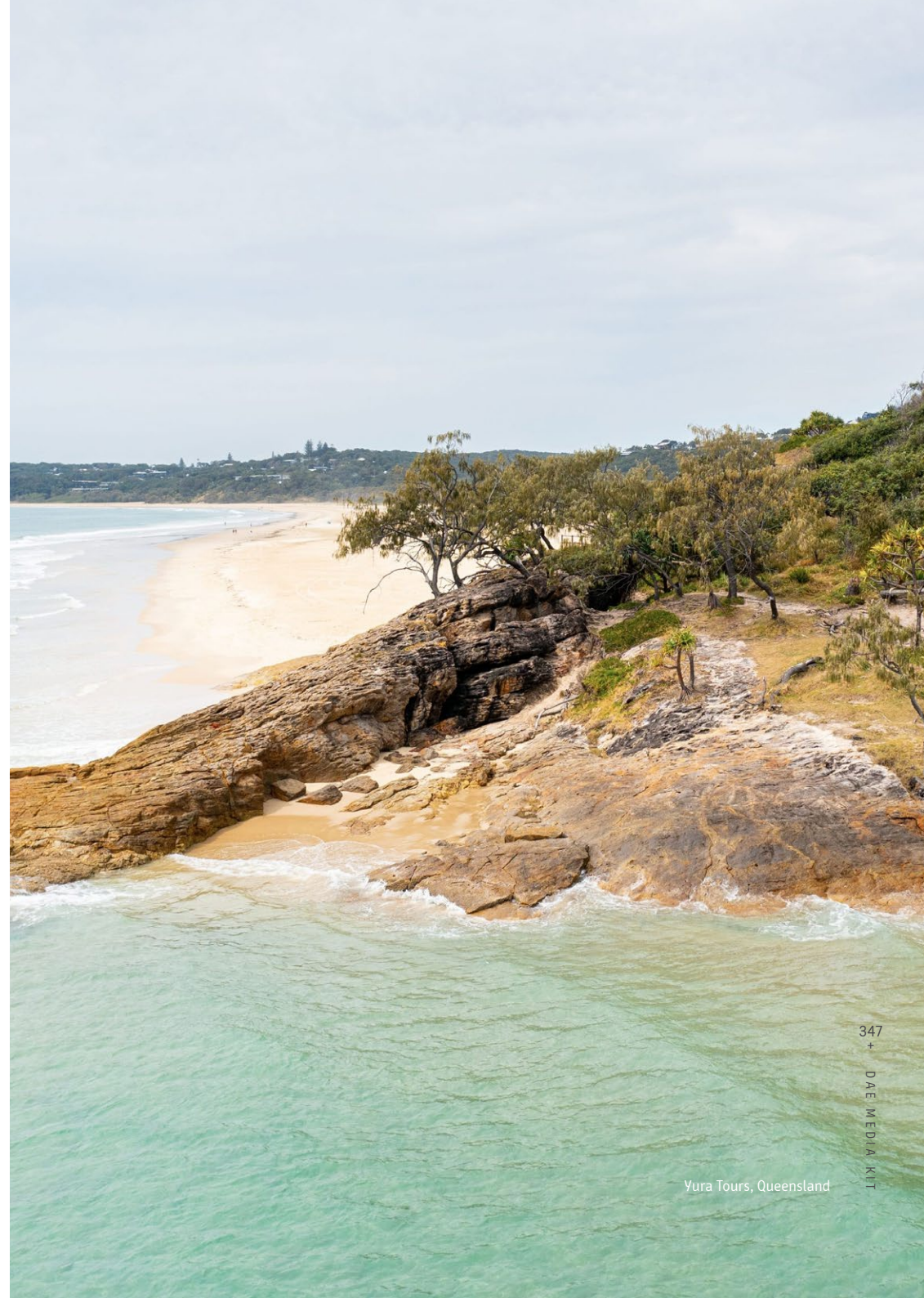
🌐 yuratours.com.au

Since then, Elisha has gone on to continue putting it on the map, hosting tours that take in the spectacular surrounds of her home. "We visit places like Brown Lake, a traditional women's gathering spot that many people just drive past. The tea tree oil from the surrounding paperbark trees seeps into the water making it almost like a spa with healing properties. The bark from the trees has so many uses – my Elders would use it as sanitary pads, bandages, nappies."

It's continuing this knowledge that drives Elisha's tours. "The stories I tell are directly from my grandparents – they were such great storytellers. For me to be able to do the same, I know our living culture is going to be here for my children and their children."

"I've got three young girls and my middle child is really interested in what I do. She loves her culture and loves to speak in front of people. The thing is there's not a lot of Aboriginal women tour guides around. I want to make it accessible and let the girls know that you can make a living from actually being on Country and doing what you love."

"It's so important to empower our young people to be proud of their Country, and the unbelievable stories it holds."



Yura Tours, Queensland



JOURNEYS ...
IMMERSE YOURSELF
IN THE ANCIENT ON YOUR
TRIPS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE ANCIENT ON YOUR TRIPS ACROSS AUSTRALIA



Kakadu Cultural Tours, Northern Territory

Aboriginal experiences offer the kind of life-changing, immersive experiences that make a great itinerary awesome and, most of all, memorable. Flavour your Australian journey with Aboriginal-guided experiences to bring the landscape to life.

Travellers want to experience Australia's fascinating Indigenous cultures – but don't always know how.

Here is an easy guide to immersing yourself in the ancient with a selection of experiences throughout Australia by region.



New South Wales

Sydney / Warrane and surrounds

Northern Territory

Central Australia

Central Australia Road Trip

Top End Australia

Kakadu and Arnhem Land Road Trip

Queensland

Tropical North Queensland

SE Queensland Road Trip

Victoria

Melbourne / Narm and surrounds

South Australia

Southern Cultural Immersion

Wilpena Pound

Western Australia

Perth / Boorloo and the Margaret River region

Broome / Rubibi and The Kimberley region

SYDNEY / WARRANE AND SURROUNDS, NEW SOUTH WALES

Explore Sydney / Warrane and its surrounds with the Traditional Custodians of the land

Sydney / Warrane may be famous for its sparkling harbour, iconic buildings and beautiful beaches, but it's also home to vibrant Aboriginal cultures that can shed a fascinating new light on the Harbour City and surrounds.

The First Nations collection at the [Australian Museum](#) is a great place to discover Australia's First Peoples. Through film, audio recordings and artworks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples tell their stories in their own voices, alongside objects from the museum's 40,000-strong collection. On the one-hour Waranara: First Nations Tour, an Aboriginal guide offers deeper insights into the Aboriginal experience, including stories from their own Country.

The Rocks neighbourhood on Sydney Harbour is often referred to as the city's oldest district because of its colonial history. But the Aboriginal people of the Eora Nation were living in Sydney / Warrane tens of thousands of years before the First Fleet arrived in 1788. Join [Dreamtime Southern X](#) for a 90-minute Rocks Aboriginal Dreaming Tour (Illi Langi) to learn all about Aboriginal life past and present, spirituality and connections to land and water, in the shadows of both the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge.

You can also appreciate the city's Aboriginal heritage from atop the Sydney Harbour Bridge, New South Wales on the [Burrawa Aboriginal Climb Experience](#), which pairs urban adventure and sparkling views with evocative Aboriginal storytelling. Visiting groups can also opt to enjoy a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony with [Dreamtime Southern X](#) at Dawes Point, under the Bridge, before making the climb.

Aboriginal owned and operated, [Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness](#) takes people on a deep cultural immersion into Yuin country, a five-hour drive south of Sydney in Narooma. The two-night or three-night Yuin Retreat experience offers the chance to take part in ceremonies involving dance and yidaki (didgeridoo), explore sacred Gulaga Mountain or Djiringanj Dreaming trail,

meet the land's Traditional Custodians, hear Creation (or Dreamtime) stories, enjoy local foods, and take part in yarning (talking) circles.

In Wagga Wagga, a five-hour drive south-west of Sydney / Warrane in the Riverina region, Wiradjuri man Mark Saddler reveals messages in the landscape left by his ancestors on his [Bundyi Cultural Tours](#). While 5.5 hours north of Sydney / Warrane, you can learn about the cultural significance of the Coffs Coast's idyllic waterways on an Aboriginal-led stand-up paddleboarding tour with [Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours](#).

What could be more fun than quad biking and sand boarding on the highest coastal sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere? Answer: quad biking, sand boarding and learning about Worimi Aboriginal culture at the same time. [Sand Dune Adventures](#) – located at Port Stephens, a two-hour drive north of Sydney / Warrane – will take you on a 90-minute adventure that's one-third quad biking, one-third sand boarding and one-third Aboriginal culture: visiting midden sites, digging for fresh water on the beach and discovering bush foods and resources.

Less than 90 minutes' drive north from Sydney / Warrane on the New South Wales Central Coast, boutique wine and Aboriginal culture come together on the [Firescreek Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience](#). Join Aboriginal Elder Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan for a fascinating deep-dive into Aboriginal cultures and traditions in the serene setting of Firescreek Botanical Winery before joining the winemakers for a tasting experience, learning how native botanicals, also important to Aboriginal cultures, are used to make their unique wines.

In Sydney / Warrane, the [Royal Botanic Garden](#) is an oasis of 30 hectares (74 acres) right next to the Opera House. It's also a means of exploring Sydney Cove's history from the point of view of its Traditional Owners, the Gadigal people. Explore the Cadi Jam Ora – First Encounters Garden, on the site where Europeans first cleared native land or embark on an Aboriginal Harbour Heritage Tour or Bush Tucker Tour to learn about plant uses, traditional culture and seasonal bush foods.



CENTRAL AUSTRALIA, NORTHERN TERRITORY



Aboriginal cultural experiences at the heart of the Red Centre

It's an authentic journey of discovery when you travel to the heart of Australia's Red Centre with the land's Traditional Custodians.

Central Australia, also known as the Red Centre, is the Northern Territory's southernmost region, and a vast expanse surrounding the outback city of Alice Springs. At its heart sprawls one of the country's best-known attractions – the sacred sandstone monolith that is Uluru (formerly known as Ayers Rock). Beyond this UNESCO World Heritage-listed icon, Central Australia is brimming with culturally significant landmarks, incredible Aboriginal art, dramatic landscapes, and a wealth of travel offerings that ensure your exploration of the Red Centre is memorable.

North of Uluru is the surprisingly lush Kings Canyon National Park, known as Watarrka to its Traditional Custodians. Here you can gain first-hand insight into the cultural importance of this outback oasis with [Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours](#). On a one-hour guided bushwalk, learn about the traditional Aboriginal food known as bush tucker, as well as native plants used as ancient medicines for spiritual and physical healing, and

sample the unusual (and surprisingly good) witchetty grub, a native insect that tastes like popcorn when cooked. You will deepen your understanding of the cultural significance of dot painting – the now world-renowned art style that originated in Central Australia – as well as learn how traditional timber implements like clapping sticks and weapons were created.

To really see, touch and feel the drama and scale of Central Australia's rich culture, [SEIT Tours](#) takes you to some of the region's most magnificent and sacred landforms. SEIT's [Patji tour](#), for instance, named after the Aboriginal land it explores, takes you on an exclusive off-road adventure just south of Uluru. Travelling through Patji by 4WD with an Aboriginal guide, expect to learn about the cultural and historical significance of the area, as well as stories passed down for generations about how the Traditional Owners survived in this desert landscape. You may also have an opportunity to forage for witchetty grubs and other bush tucker and medicinal plants along the way.



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience & Tours,
Northern Territory



SEIT - Patji, Northern Territory

SEIT's cultural tours can also be booked through [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#), offering an impressive portfolio of Aboriginal experiences around one of their most widely known properties, Ayers Rock Resort. Voyages is owned by the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, so profits are reinvested into Aboriginal training and development across Australia.

Situated at the gateway to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, [Ayers Rock Resort](#) offers a wide array of accommodation, from spectacularly located camping to the upmarket [Sails in the Desert hotel](#). Partnering with local people and operators, the resort can also arrange memorable cultural experiences, from bush tucker walks to helicopter tours. However, one of the most decadent selections is dinner at [Tali Wiru](#), the resort's open-air restaurant overlooking Uluru and the domes of Kata Tjuta beyond. While a local Aboriginal storyteller shares insights about Anangu culture and history, you'll be served a sumptuous four-course dinner, showcasing native flora and fauna and ancient herbs and spices.

Another iconic property overlooking Uluru is [Longitude 131°](#), which sits atop red sand dunes, made up of 16 tented pavilions, each

with a king-sized bed, custom furnishings, work by local Indigenous artists and all the trimmings you'd expect of a five-star boutique hotel. The treatments available at the lodge's [Spa Kinara](#) use products native to Central Australia, including Kakadu plum, desert lime and Australian yellow clay.

Longitude 131° can also arrange an array of bespoke cultural experiences, including a fascinating full-day private tour of [Ernabella Arts](#) – the oldest, continuously running Indigenous arts centre in Australia. With exclusive access to the closed community of artists, you can gain insight into the ancient techniques, symbols and stories that inspire their artworks, which promise to be as colourful as the art itself.

CENTRAL AUSTRALIA ROAD TRIP, NORTHERN TERRITORY



Outback awakening: Aboriginal Australia and the Red Centre Way

From the desert town of Alice Springs to the towering undulations of Uluru, one of Australia's most iconic outback routes, the [Red Centre Way](#), is a road trip that takes in Aboriginal cultures, from galleries to forested canyons. Devote at least five days to it.

Day 1: Alice Springs

Wake up to the call of sulphur-crested cockatoos in Alice Springs. Ringed by purple-hued mountains, Alice may be small (with a population of about 25,000), yet it's rich in urban delights, including Aboriginal art galleries and a burgeoning foodie scene.

Kickstart your morning inside [Olive Pink Botanic Garden](#). This beautifully calm space, an Australian arid region flora reserve, was founded more than 60 years ago by Indigenous-rights activist Olive Pink. The garden features a rustic outdoor eatery, the [Bean Tree Café](#), known for its delectable coffee and fresh fare (try the shakshouka eggs with chilli and zaatar).

Head west for a few kilometres and burn off breakfast by exploring [Alice Springs Desert Park](#), a sprawling 1300-hectare space dedicated to Central Australia's desert cultures and environment. Resident animals include princess parrots, bilbies and the 50-centimetre-tall mala, or rufous hare-wallaby, which is a key Creation figure for the Traditional Owners of Uluru.

Spend a lazy afternoon browsing Aboriginal art in Alice's many galleries, being sure to include a visit to the Araluen Arts Centre, where the excellent Aboriginal art collection includes works by renowned watercolourist Albert Namatjira and contemporary Western Desert art pioneer Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. Grab a coffee or a light snack at the onsite Yaye's Café, named after the Arrernte word for "sisters".

Bed down at [Vatu Sanctuary](#), a private villa curated by a former gallery owner.

Day 2: MacDonnell Ranges to Kings Canyon

Hit the road and set out on the [Red Centre Way](#). About 90 kilometres west of Alice you'll find Ellery Creek Big Hole, a swimming spot that cuts through a red-toned gorge in the West MacDonnell Ranges. The accompanying scenery is like a painting – replete with ochre soil, soft green eucalypts and, typically, skies ablaze in electric blue.

From here, drive the unsealed road to Watarrka National Park, and keep your eyes peeled for [Karrke Aboriginal Experience & Tours](#), about a three-hour drive from the swimming hole, and 2km from Kings Creek Station (its signage features a bowerbird). Sit among a thicket of bright-green plants beside husband-and-wife team, Peter Abbott and Christine Breaden. The couple's one-hour chat covers bush food, medicine, hunting weaponry, art and Luritja and Pertame language and culture – knowledge they delight in sharing.

With sunset drawing nearer, embark on the 6km rim walk at Kings Canyon, where a 100-metre ascent over rose-coloured rocks and boulders gives way to lush bush, including the Garden of Eden, a peaceful pool flanked by ferns and cycads.

Spend the night at [Discovery Kings Canyon Resort](#).

Day 3: Uluru and Kata-Tjuta

Pack up and set off on the 3.5-hour drive to Uluru. Once at [Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park](#), 325km from Kings Canyon, you've reached the beating heart of the Red Centre. This region is the Dreaming site for the Anangu people, Uluru's Traditional Owners, who see these lands as a living map of ancestral heroes' births, battles and deaths. Little compares to the jaw-dropping experience of witnessing this glowing monolith up close.

Check into Ayers Rock Resort's [Sails in the Desert](#), so-called because of the white, sail-shaped awnings that line the property's outdoor spaces. These add to the breezy, open

feel of the hotel, which boasts an abundance of natural light. Airy rooms arc around a shaded pool, while other facilities include a tennis court, day spa and sun-drenched restaurants. Opt for a room with views of the Rock.

Later that afternoon, drive the 40 minutes to Kata Tjuta. With a name meaning "many heads", this collection of 36 red domes rivals the beauty of Uluru. Wander to its western side for a stroll through Walpa Gorge, a men's sacred ceremonial area, before watching as the sun sets over Kata Tjuta, setting it aglow.

Back at the resort, visit in-house restaurant Ilkari, which features Indigenous flavours and offers an extravagant three-course buffet that includes seafood, Asian dishes, roasts, a selection of cheeses and, perhaps best of all, a chocolate fountain.

Day 4: Uluru

Rise early and travel to the [Talinguru Nyakunytjaku](#) sunrise viewing area to witness Uluru at dawn. With a height surpassing the Eiffel Tower's, plus a circumference of nearly 10km, Uluru is quite the spectacle, and you'll need a bit of distance to fully appreciate its scale – not to mention its changing colour palette, which shifts from maroon to ochre.

At 7.30am, the doors of [Kulata Academy Cafe](#) swing open, staffed by members of Ayers Rock Resort's National Indigenous Training Academy. Here you'll taste some of the best coffee in Yulara village (home to Ayers Rock Resort) and find sandwiches and salads to stock your backpack for the rest of your day.



Kick this off in earnest with a ranger-guided [Mala walk](#), beginning at the Mala carpark. The free 1.5-hour walk delves into the rock's



Anangu Creation stories, or Tjukurpa, as well as its geological features (such as the fact that only a small portion of Uluru pokes above land, with the rest of it descending 2.5km underground).

Next, channel your inner artist at the [Gallery of Central Australia](#), introducing you to traditional art and symbols (as well as a few Pitjantjatjara words). You can join a guided tour, or browse (and purchase) the artworks at your own pace – the space also hosts an artist in residence, which means you have the chance to glimpse the creative process.

In the evening after a leisurely afternoon at the resort, return your gaze to Uluru at a [Tali Wiru](#) dinner. Relax among sand dunes over a glass of sparkling wine, enjoy a decadent four-course meal infused with ancient native herbs and spices, and exhale as an Indigenous storyteller shares stories of this sacred land.

Day 5: Uluru

Meet up with [SEIT Tours](#) at the entrance of Ayers Rock Resort and accompany the Traditional Owners to their homelands south of the Rock on the Patji day-tour. Just outside the limits of the National Park, explore the Patji homelands by 4WD in the company of an Aboriginal guide, as you learn about the history of the Anangu.

Over afternoon tea, hear stories detailing Paddy Uluru's fight for Indigenous recognition in the park, as well as an overview of centuries-old bush survival techniques.

From atop a private sand dune, farewell your day by witnessing a final exquisite, multicoloured sunset against the silhouettes of Uluru and Kata Tjuta. This Red Centre journey has reached its finale.

TOP END AUSTRALIA, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Explore the Top End through the eyes of the land's Traditional Custodians

The northernmost part of Australia's Northern Territory – known as the Top End – is the perfect place to get to know the world's oldest living cultures.

In the wilderness of the Top End, [Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris](#) offers a rare opportunity: the chance to stay overnight at an Aboriginal sacred site. This remote eco-lodge is on a registered sacred site at Mt Borradaile (a 50-minute flight east of Darwin / Garramilla) in West Arnhem Land – a vast wilderness that's home to a rich Aboriginal cultures and astonishing natural beauty. Small-group tours from the eco-lodge explore rock art sites, cruise billabongs, spot crocodiles, roam through rainforest and delve into catacombs (home to ancient burial sites) to discover the country and culture of Mt Borradaile's Traditional Owners, the Amurdak people.

Closer to Darwin / Garramilla, Kakadu National Park comprises almost 20,000 square kilometres (about half the size of Switzerland) of raging waterfalls, wetlands teeming with birdlife and 10,000 pairs of crocodile eyes peeking from rivers. Home to Aboriginal peoples for more than 65,000 years, it is World Heritage listed for both its natural and cultural significance. [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#), owned and operated by Traditional Owners, hosts 4WD tours of northern Kakadu and Arnhem Land, cruises down East Alligator River and offers multi-day adventures to Cannon Hill, a restricted, sacred area of Kakadu. Learn traditional survival skills, discover ancient rock art, meet artists and soak up sunsets that have illuminated these unchanged escarpments for thousands of years.

Whether you want to spot crocs, climb rocks or fish for barramundi, touring Kakadu with its Traditional Owners is the best way to get to know this area's unique culture as well as its natural beauty. [Kakadu Tourism](#) is an Aboriginal-owned collection of 4WD tours, wetland cruises, cultural experiences and



accommodation. Stay in the croc-shaped Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel, spot the real thing on a Yellow Water billabong cruise and catch a pop-up art workshop at the Warradjan Culture Centre, all within Kakadu National Park.

Sab Lord, the son of a buffalo and crocodile hunter, grew up in Kakadu alongside local Aboriginal clans, through which he formed lifelong connections that help make his [Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris](#) as culturally insightful as they are entertaining. A great Aussie outback character, Sab and fellow guide Dean Hoath offer private tours only: from one-day trips to bespoke multi-day safaris. Guests venture into Kakadu and Arnhem Land, stay overnight in luxury lodges or a bush glamping site and visit Aboriginal communities. "You really see people's attitudes change," says Sab. "They walk away with a more open mind."

Nitmiluk Gorge, also known as Katherine Gorge, winds for a spellbinding 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) between sheer sandstone walls that reach more than 70 metres high (230 feet). About a 3.5-hour drive south of Darwin / Garramilla, it is deeply significant for the Jawoyn people, who own and operate [Nitmiluk Tours](#). Head off on a self-guided canoe tour, take a boat cruise through its magnificent gorge, or take a helicopter ride that stops at rock art sites and secluded swimming holes. If you want to base yourself here for longer, book into Nitmiluk's Cicada Lodge, where all the rooms feature Aboriginal artwork and the restaurant combines traditional herbs and fruit with fresh local fare.

If you think you know what Australia's Indigenous cultures are all about, think again. On the Tiwi Islands, a unique culture has evolved independently from the mainland. With carved pukamani burial poles, renowned screen-printed fabrics, an obsession with Aussie Rules football and a famously warm welcome, the Tiwis (comprising Bathurst and Melville islands) are well worth the 2.5-hour boat ride from Darwin / Garramilla. [SeaLink NT](#) operates ferries to Bathurst Island and offers day tours

with Tiwi guides that include a Welcome to Country smoking ceremony, a visit to a remarkable church that combines Christianity with Dreamtime beliefs and a behind-the-scenes art session. The [Tiwi Island Aboriginal Cultural Tour](#) also ventures to Bathurst for the day, with a strong focus on visiting cultural sights and meeting the island's creative talents.

On a small-group intimate tour with [Venture North Safaris](#), you'll head into some of the most remote and pristine parts of the Top End. A five-day tour of Kakadu, Arnhem Land and the Cobourg Peninsula includes traditional mud-crabbing at a spectacular Cobourg Peninsula coastal camp, at the northernmost tip of Arnhem Land, and a visit to the Gunbalanya

community, where artists produce traditional works inspired by the Dreamtime. Some of Australia's most significant rock art, painted by their ancestors, adorns nearby Injalak Hill.



Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris, Northern Territory

KAKADU AND ARNHEM LAND ROAD TRIP, NORTHERN TERRITORY



Immerse yourself in Indigenous cultures on a road trip through the Top End

Cruise to tropical islands, go croc watching and indulge in bush tucker in Australia's Northern Territory.

Set aside five days to delve deeper into the Top End's Aboriginal cultures, as well as this region's Creation stories and its spiritual links to the landscape. From Darwin / Garramilla and the Tiwi Islands, to the Mary River, Kakadu and the Katherine area, this road trip will see you mix with cultural custodians, colour-soaked art, dramatic stone country, thunderous waterfalls, and wetlands awash with wildlife and wonder.

Day 1: Darwin / Garramilla and the Tiwi Islands

Wake up in the seaside town of Darwin / Garramilla, grab a tropical breakfast, then head to the [Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory](#). After exploring its many intriguing exhibits, head to its outdoor deck for views of the Arafura Sea – an azure-toned body of water that links the homes of local Larrakia and Tiwi Aboriginal people. To discover more about the latter, go to Cullen Bay, near the city centre, to board the [SeaLink NT](#) ferry to Bathurst Island. This two-and-a-half-hour trip cuts a path to one of the main townships within the 11-island collective comprising the Tiwi Islands, Wurrumiyanga.

Arriving at Wurrumiyanga, take a seat inside art production house-cum-gallery [Tiwi Design](#) for a traditional smoking ceremony and totem dances performed alongside a morning tea service. Tiwi people are known for their friendliness and pride in their culture ("Tiwi" means "we, the only people" and the archipelago is nicknamed the "islands of smiles"), so – for a more personal window into the islands – chat to any of the ever-present Tiwi locals floating around these gallery spaces.

Next, your Aboriginal guide will lead you over the road to explore the stunning nearby church, St Therese's, where Aboriginal artworks line

the walls of the front altar. As afternoon arrives on the island, return to Tiwi Design to try your hand at screen-printing, before setting sail for the return trip to Darwin / Garramilla.

Day 2: Adelaide River

In your hire car, head east from the city along the Arnhem Highway, a road flanked by wetlands and paperbark forests. About 45 minutes into the trip, make your first stop at the Fogg Dam Conservation Area, which teems with freshwater crocodiles (shy, and generally no threat to humans), waterbirds and lotus flowers. Next, take a thrilling [Wildlands 45-minute Airboat Safari](#) across the seemingly endless floodplains of the Mary River wetlands system where you will discover a vast array of native wildlife and amazing flora. This is a truly unique experience which takes you into privately owned areas that no one else can access.

Your evening's accommodation at Kakadu National Park's gateway town, Jabiru, will see you enter the [Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel](#) through the croc's mouth and cool down at a pool planted firmly inside the inanimate creature's belly. You have to see this kitsch hotel from an aerial view to truly appreciate its architectural splendour – perhaps on a scenic flight with [Kakadu Air Services](#).

Day 3: Kakadu's Ubirr Rock + Arnhem Land

One of this park's most peaceful views erupts every sunrise and sunset at Ubirr Rock in the northern section of Kakadu. Rise early and travel into stone country where artful rock formations dot the landscape and 20,000-year-old artworks decorate natural galleries and cave walls (keep an eye out for those depicting the story of Kakadu Creation story spirit, the Rainbow Serpent).

After you've climbed your way onto the main rock face to soak up vistas of Arnhem Land beyond, join an all-day 4WD tour with [Kakadu Cultural Tours](#). Your Aboriginal guide will lead you through private art sites and introduce you to [Injalak Arts](#). Here, you'll meet local artists and enjoy a lesson in bush tucker preparation.



Kakadu Tourism, Northern Territory

That evening, continue down Kakadu Highway and bed down in a glamping tent or one of the luxury Yellow Water villas at [Cooinda Lodge](#). This is the site of Kakadu's first general store, and later its first accommodation site. The lodge rests beside Yellow Water Billabong, a magical mix of water and wildlife.

Take a [Yellow Waters Cruise](#) here with [Kakadu Tourism](#) at sunset or sunrise, keeping an eye out for giant sea eagles, artfully coloured forest kingfishers, and – of course – the Northern Territory's favourite mascot, the croc.

Day 4: Kakadu's waterfalls + Nitmiluk

Further south in the park, the landscape transitions from stone country and wetlands into more dramatic terrain: towering waterfalls. Some of the most stunning sites are Gunlom, Twin Falls, Jim Jim Falls, and Maguk. Make sure to sample at least one of these roaring treasures – preferably in a swimming costume – before exiting Kakadu for Nitmiluk National Park.

Sitting further south, just outside the township of Katherine, Nitmiluk is jointly operated by government and Aboriginal Traditional Owners (just like Kakadu). The park is named after the sound of the cicada ('nit, nit!') and its crown jewel is a network of 13 gorges, alive with freshwater crocodiles, fish and sky-patrolling black cockatoos. Combine an on-water experience here with a hike. Hire a canoe from [Nitmiluk Tours](#), or join a dinner cruise along the first gorge. Then complement either activity with the two-kilometre return trek to Baruwai Lookout for a bird's-eye view of this Top End haven.

When night beckons, bed down at Aboriginal-run Cicada Lodge for a touch of luxury (and a dip in its pretty, gum tree-flanked pool) or book in at a cabin set beside the main campsite – all options are housed within tranquil bushland.

Day 5: Katherine and Litchfield

End your trip the way you started it – being dazzled by Aboriginal art. This time it's alfresco, dates back millennia, and lines the rust-hued sandstone cliffs of Nitmiluk Gorge. Seeing the gorge at sunrise is a totally different experience to sunset: [Nitmiluk Tours](#) can pack you breakfast before you set out to gaze at the Aboriginal art that abounds.

Stop in for the best coffee in Katherine at [The Finch Café](#) (its staff make scrumptious toasties and salads, too), then glide on towards Darwin / Garramilla – leaving ample time for a late afternoon side-trip into Litchfield National Park.

If you enjoy just one swim here, make it at Wangi Falls – a jaw-droppingly beautiful waterhole where twin falls plunge into an emerald-toned pool and small natural 'spa' below the cliff face, which once served as a fertility site for the park's Aboriginal ancestors. Spiritually recharged and mentally refreshed, you're ready to make the return drive to Darwin / Garramilla, and again greet the city lights.

TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND



Experience the land and sea Country of Tropical North Queensland

Tropical Far North Queensland is about more than the Great Barrier Reef. It's a place for diving deep into Aboriginal cultures.

Tropical North Queensland is a stunning region and one of the few places in the world where two natural World Heritage sites meet: the renowned Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics. Both the rainforest and reef are striking features on their own – but both also offer incredible opportunities to immerse yourself in the Aboriginal cultures of northern Queensland.

The Daintree Rainforest is part of the Wet Tropics, and is one of the oldest rainforests on Earth, with one of the planet's most diverse ecosystems. It's also home to a fascinating Aboriginal culture – the Kuku Yalanji people have lived here for more than 40,000 years. On a Daintree Dreaming day tour, join local brothers Linc and Brandon Walker on their daily hunt for mud crabs, fish and mussels at Cooya Beach, just north of Port Douglas. After a smoking ceremony and lunch, you will head into the forest for a guided walk that will help you interpret the Daintree through the eyes of the people who have known it the longest. It's one of a range of small-group tours from [Down Under Tours - Daintree Dreaming](#).

Discover the Great Barrier Reef from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective on a [Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel](#) tour from Cairns / Gimuy, with on-board First Nations cultural guides who work to conserve both their culture and the reef. As well as spending a generous five hours at outer reefs – where you can snorkel, scuba dive or admire all that underwater beauty from a glass-bottomed boat – you will hear reef Creation stories, experience traditional dances and didgeridoo playing, and get to know not just the underwater world, but the people who call this their Sea Country.

Cultural experiences with Indigenous owned and operated [Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours](#) also depart Cairns Marina, beginning with a guided river cruise across the serene Trinity Inlet to the Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area. Here you'll experience Mandingalbay Yidinji traditions passed down through generations, which could include everything from discovering the many uses for local resources to feasting on seasonal local delights.

The [Flames of the Forest](#) Aboriginal Cultural Experience is a remarkable evening, less than 10 minutes outside Port Douglas, or a one-hour drive from Cairns. The rainforest setting is magical: you're seated beneath a black, silk-lined marquee illuminated by handmade crystal chandeliers.



Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia -
Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, Queensland

The banquet itself is similarly exceptional: a seven-course progression of modern, mostly locally sourced, Australian flavours with an Indigenous ("bush tucker") twist. And the Kuku Yalanji are the perfect hosts, offering a blend of intimate storytelling, didgeridoo and song, as well as inviting guests to enjoy soaking up the sounds of the rainforest.

Deaf Kuku Yalanji man Brian "Binna" Swindley established [Janbal Gallery](#) at Mossman, an hour north of Cairns, in 2008. Rainforest art has its own unique meanings – dots represent raindrops, for example – and Binna (so-called because of his hearing impairment; it means "ear" in Kuku Yalanji) draws inspiration from the forest, beach and reef, as he blends tradition with his own style. "It's about what you see when you look around," he says. "What you feel. What you eat and what you taste." Shop for art and artefacts, and join a 90-minute workshop, in which Binna will teach you how to paint a boomerang or canvas.

The backdrop to stunning [Mossman Gorge](#) in the Daintree Rainforest, is Manjal Dimbi, or "mountain holding back". According to Kuku Yalanji beliefs, this is the rock form of Kubirri, who is holding back the evil spirit, Wurrumbu. While the rock is standing, the Kuku Yalanji will live in peace. You can explore the gorge – and Kuku Yalanji cultural beliefs – on a Dreamtime Walk in the rainforest from the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre, which is managed by [Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia](#). The 90-minute walk, with an Aboriginal guide, includes demonstrations of traditions such as ochre-paint making, as well as a smoking ceremony, and tea and damper (simple "bush" bread). The centre also has an art gallery, gift shop and café.

The Magnificent Gallery is well named. About 450 images adorn the underside of a rock shelter on the Cape York Peninsula, a 5.5-hour drive north-west of Cairns. Despite being up to 20,000 years old, they are incredibly well preserved thanks to their sheltered location. And despite the fact that the Magnificent Gallery is part of the world-renowned Quinkan rock art collection, the only way to see it is with Kuku Yalanji man Johnny Murison. "These are my ancestors," says Johnny. "This was my family camp."

Owner-operator of [Jarramali Rock Art Tours](#) Johnny takes guests on two-day, one-night 4WD adventures that are unforgettable cultural experiences, and include a stay at an outback campsite.

It started back in 1987 with Aboriginal man Jimmy Edwards throwing boomerangs with his dog Sammy while people waited to board an amphibious World War II Army Duck for a tour of the rainforest. Over time, that evolved into the [Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience at Rainforestation Nature Park](#), a 30-minute drive north of Cairns. It's an hour of dance performance in a rainforest amphitheatre and a Dreamtime walk involving didgeridoos, boomerangs and some impressive spear throwing (a couple of the guides are world-record holders). The nature park also offers a Pamagirri Rainforest Walkabout, Army Duck tours and the Koala & Wildlife Park.

Kuku Yalanji man Juan Walker set up [Walkabout Cultural Adventures](#) in a bid to share his culture and country. Through his small-group, personalised day tours of the Daintree Rainforest, Juan and his fellow Aboriginal guides help visitors catch mud crabs and collect shellfish, throw boomerangs and spears, discover bush tucker foods and medicine, and gain a deeper understanding of Kuku Yalanji customs and beliefs. For Juan, and other Kuku Yalanji people, the Daintree is more than just a remarkable World Heritage landscape – it is family, culture and identity all rolled into one.

PERTH / BOORLOO AND THE MARGARET RIVER REGION, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Explore urban Aboriginal experiences in Perth / Boorloo and surrounds

In Perth / Boorloo, the flourishing capital of Western Australia, discover urban experiences that resonate with Aboriginal history.

Before there were skyscrapers, cities and towns throughout Australia, the country's Traditional Owners inhabited the wide, expansive land. More than 200 years after colonisation, descendants of those communities are still practising their culture, and not just in the outback. They also move between concrete and glass, remembering the wetlands, springs and bush that lay beneath modern urban settings. Despite the hum of traffic and buzz of the metropolis, Aboriginal culture and teachings can still be accessed in an authentic way.

Sitting pretty in the heart of Perth / Boorloo, Kings Park is the largest inner-city park in the world. It's a staggeringly beautiful place – the kind that will slow your pulse. It's also spiritual to the Noongar Traditional Owners, who camped and gave birth here, making the most of the abundant supply of native flora and fauna for food and medicine. These are some of the insights you'll discover on an [In Culture Tours](#) walk through the park – your guide also offers an experience decoding nearby Fremantle as well as Cape Peron, about an hour away.

Near Perth / Boorloo, [Dale Tilbrook Experiences](#) introduces guests to Aboriginal culture, art and stories with an emphasis on Australian bush tucker and its medicinal qualities.

Noongar Elder (and company namesake) Dale Tilbrook makes use of all the senses during her hands-on experiences. Visitors are invited to smell and taste native produce like intensely tangy lemon myrtle or piquant pepperberry, as well as rub ointments such as emu oil onto the skin, while hearing about Indigenous farming methods and how full of resources the bush is. She's rightly proud of what the earth has long offered up to Aboriginal peoples; the nutritional value of many bush foods, particularly the quandong and Kakadu plum, is quite astonishing. These experiences take place at Mandoon Estate Winery in the Swan Valley or Dale can meet guests at their location of choice in Perth.

South-west of Perth / Boorloo, the lauded Margaret River wine region also has Aboriginal energy pulsing through it. Josh Whiteland of [Koomal Dreaming](#) likes to team culture and place with his enlightening experiences – he plays didgeridoo inside the spectacular Ngilgi Cave amphitheatre; he walks through bush in search of medicinal plants; he demonstrates traditional fire making and he guides walks around Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse. Traditional foods such as kangaroo, emu, quandong, emu plum and saltbush can be tasted during a gourmet lunch option. He also explains how and why the Noongar people recognise six, not four, seasons in the year, and shares why so many of the area's town names end in “up”. It's a fascinatingly different way to experience a region best known for its exceptional wine.



Dale Tilbrook Experiences, Western Australia

BROOME / RUBIBI & THE KIMBERLEY REGION, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Discover mangroves and Dreamtime stories on Australia's north-west coast

Broome / Rubibi and the Dampier Peninsula, on the Kimberley coastline of Western Australia, combine stunning natural beauty and fascinating Aboriginal history.

Often, people associate Aboriginal communities with Australia's desert heart. In fact, Indigenous groups live all over this vast country, including along some of its most stunning coastline.

Western Australia's Kimberley region regularly tops travellers' wish lists. It combines endless beaches with rugged cliffs, gorges fed by waterfalls, tropical bush and thousands upon thousands of uninhabited islands. Its remote, isolated and sparsely populated location – combined with the numerous Aboriginal communities that live here – offer ideal conditions for alluring and authentic travel experiences.

In the outback holiday beach town of Broome, known for its mesmerising Cable Beach sunsets, Yawuru man Bart Pigram escorts people along Broome's coastal peninsula, and through mangrove forests and mudflats with [Narljia Experiences Broome](#), sharing tales of its Aboriginal and pearling past. Learn the Aboriginal names of the critters that inhabit this significant ecosystem, and perhaps even taste some of them along the way.

A 2.5-hour drive north of Broome on the stunning Dampier Peninsula, Bardi man Terry Hunter of [Borrboron Coast to Creek Tours](#) leads a captivating walking tour through the mangrove-rich landscape surrounding Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm. The two-hour tour combines stories of Terry's childhood exploring the remote bay, the teachings of Aboriginal culture and bush knowledge, and reveals how his family history is tied to the pioneering beginnings of the region's pearl trade. You'll also learn an ingenious way to sample oysters, passed down by Terry's ancestors over generations.

Also on the Dampier Peninsula, [Southern Cross Cultural Tours at Lullumb](#) is like a lesson living on the land. You not only learn survival skills like how to build shelter, but also forage for your lunch, collecting mud crabs, oysters, clams

and bush potatoes to cook up over an open fire for an epic feast.

[Kingfisher Tours](#) also offers an opportunity to explore beyond Broome by whisking you from the coastal hub to some of the Kimberley region's top sights by small plane. Day trips from Broome (and Darwin) may include an Aboriginal-guided visit to Purnululu National Park – home of the magnificent beehive-shaped Bungle Bungle Range – and a tour of the iconic four-tiered Punamii-Uunpuu (Mitchell Falls), with overnight and bespoke tour options also available. You could also customise your tour to include a visit to [Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours](#) in Kununurra, which hosts a range of immersive Aboriginal-led experiences.

[El Questro](#) Wilderness Park sits at the very top of Western Australia, covering a staggering 283,000 hectares. The property has a number of accommodation options on offer, from luxury to camping. As well as immersive experiences including the Injiid Marlabu Calls Us tour, to reveal the Aboriginal heritage of the Traditional Owners of this land. Listen to Dreamtime stories, learn about Ngarinyin culture and language, and partake in a burning and cleansing ceremony that is important to Ngarinyin cultural and spiritual life, awakening the senses to the call of Marlabu and inviting guests to listen, breathe, speak, see and immerse themselves in the culture and Country of El Questro through the perspective of its Traditional Owners.



Kingfisher Tours, Western Australia

MELBOURNE / NARRM AND SURROUNDS, VICTORIA

How to immerse yourself in the stories of south-east Australia's First Peoples in and around Melbourne / Narrm.

In a city as cosmopolitan and industrialised as Melbourne / Narrm, it may surprise you to learn that you don't have to travel far to experience Aboriginal cultures. Woven into the multicultural fabric of the city are insightful tours, workshops and exhibitions, promising a taste of Aboriginal history and cultures in a contemporary setting.

In bustling Federation Square, the [Koorie Heritage Trust](#) is dedicated to promoting and supporting the living cultures of south-east Australia's First Peoples. Visit the centre to see the latest Indigenous art exhibition on display, the huge permanent exhibition of photography, oral history and artefacts, or, if time allows, embark on a one-hour guided [Aboriginal Walking Tour](#), taking in the iconic Yarra River that threads through Melbourne / Narrm and sites of cultural significance along the way.

In the green oasis that is the [Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne](#) – said to be one of the world's leading botanic gardens – you can tour the ancestral lands of the eastern Kulin nation, led by an Indigenous guide on the [Aboriginal Heritage Walk](#). Deepen your understanding of Aboriginal customs by learning about traditional uses of plants for food, tools and medicine.

For a great day-trip out of the city, visit [Tower Hill](#), an inactive volcano that became Victoria's first national park in 1892. Situated in the heart of the Great Ocean Road region near the iconic Twelve Apostles – about a three-hour drive from Melbourne / Narrm – this unique landscape is also geologically significant, carved out by a volcanic eruption some 30,000 years ago. Today, in its place, you'll find a vast crater stretching four kilometres wide, home to an impressive lake, an abundance of native wildlife and rich Aboriginal cultures.



The best way to explore the reserve and dive deeper into its history is on a guided nature walk with [Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill](#), a local Aboriginal cooperative. The two-hour tour takes you through some of the reserve's most beautiful scenery, while your guide provides insight into the native plants Aboriginal peoples used for food and medicine.

Another great day trip is driving the legendary Great Ocean Road. And at its very western point you'll find a World Heritage Site listed for its immense Aboriginal significance. The [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape](#) bears evidence of one of the world's oldest and most extensive aquaculture systems, dating back over 6,600 years. The Gunditjmara people ingeniously constructed an intricate network of channels, weirs and dams to capture and harvest kooyang (eels), showcasing their remarkable engineering prowess. From the Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre, visitors embark on cultural tours led by Gunditjmara guides, discovering ancient lava flows, fish traps, eel smoking trees and remnants of Aboriginal stone huts.



Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism, Victoria



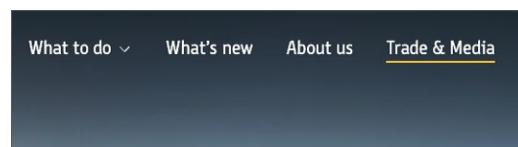
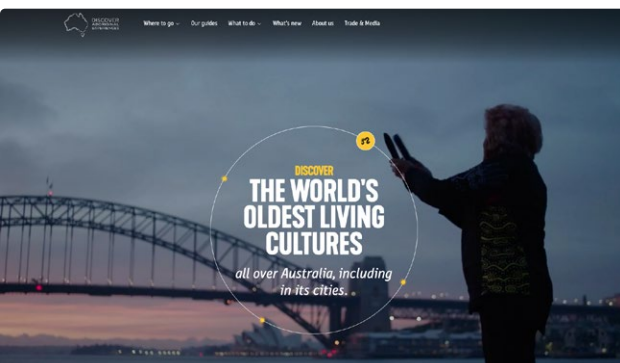
Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill, Victoria



FIND OUT MORE

HOW TO ACCESS THE TRADE AND MEDIA PAGE ON THE DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES WEBSITE

WWW.DISCOVERABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES.COM



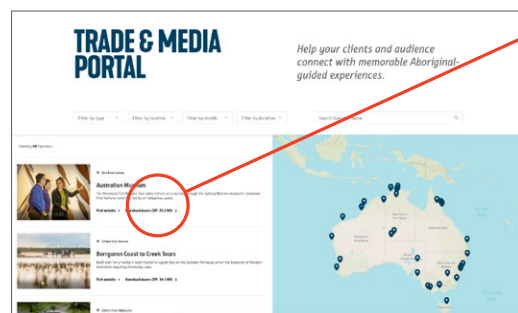
The Discover Aboriginal Experiences website showcases the rich diversity and depth of Aboriginal experiences offered by the Discover Aboriginal Experiences member operators. Experiences can be searched by location or experience type.

Access the website [here](http://www.discoveraboriginal-experiences.com).

Trade and media can access information on each operator in the collective as well as images and logos from the Trade and Media section of the website.

The Trade and Media section can be accessed from the right-hand side of the menu bar.

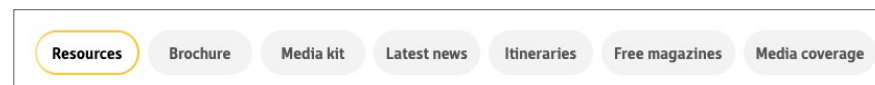
Alternatively, you can access the Trade and Media Portal directly [here](http://www.discoveraboriginal-experiences.com).



Download Assets for operators by clicking on the Download Assets zip.

Or access the operators' websites by clicking on Visit website.

Other Downloads are also available under the Resources section on the Trade and Media page.

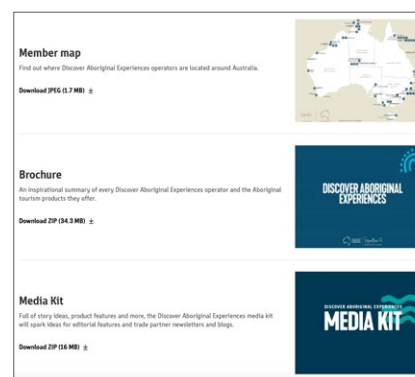


QUICK LINKS

The following items are available from the quick link buttons

- Resources
- Brochure
- Media Kit
- Latest news (media releases and media newsletters)
- Itineraries
- Free magazines - DAE's Connect to Country digital magazines
- Media coverage - articles featuring DAE members and the program.

RESOURCES



The following items are available in the Resources section:

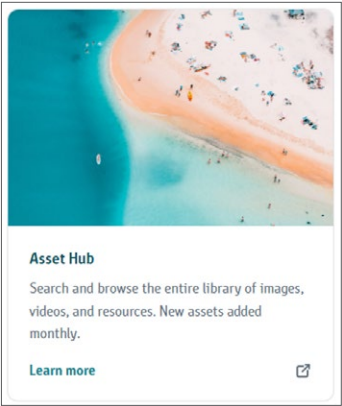
- Member map
- Brochure
- Media Kit (pdf and word versions)
- Past issues of the Trade and Media newsletters
- Storytellers
- Flyers
- Aussie Specialist Program website
- Itineraries
- Asset hub link
- Latest news
- Business Events Flyer
- DAE YouTube playlist
- Signature Experiences of Australia Flyer
- Signature Experiences of Australia website
- Australia.com
- Aussie Specialist Training webinar on Discover Aboriginal Experiences

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The Trade and Media Portal page will also take you to the sign up page to receive trade and media updates or you can access the page by clicking [here](http://www.discoveraboriginal-experiences.com).

HOW TO SEARCH FOR DAE IMAGES AND VIDEO ON TOURISM AUSTRALIA'S ASSET HUB



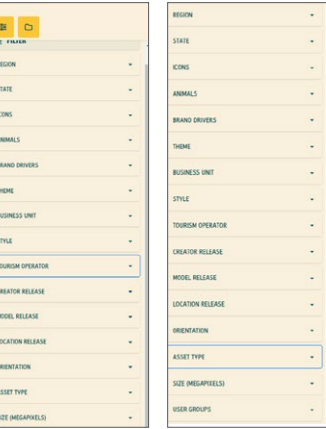
Take advantage of the free [asset library](#) to help you promote Discover Aboriginal Experiences. You will need to register to use the library.



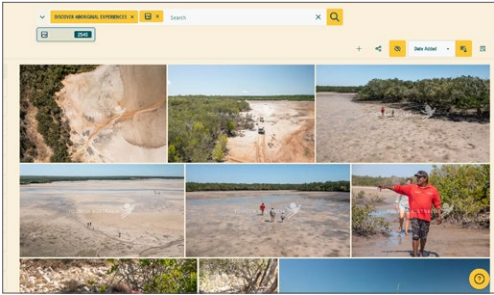
Click on the resource section



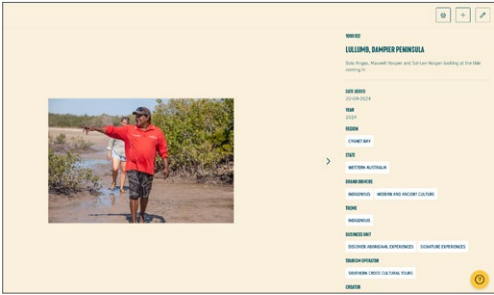
Put Discover Aboriginal Experiences into the Search box.



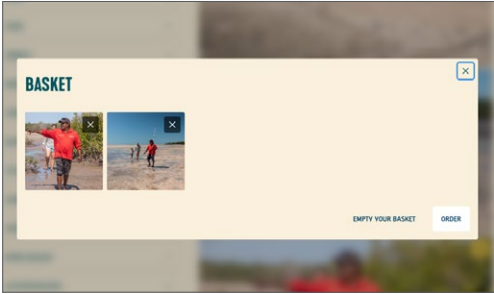
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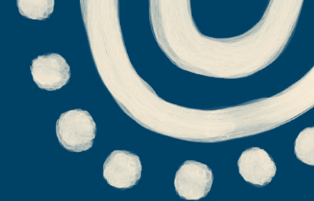
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A teambox of DAE hero shots for members is also available [here](#).
A teambox of 30s, 60s, 90s, 180s Discover Aboriginal Experiences showreels is available [here](#).



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Pamagirri Aboriginal
Experience at Rainforestation
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