



NORTHERN TERRITORY

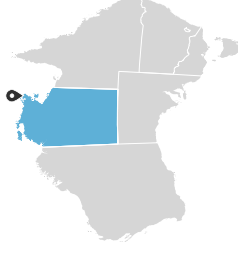
BREMER ISLAND BANUBANU BEACH RETREAT ARNHEM LAND

OVERVIEW

Bremer Island, in Yolŋu 'sea country' – home to pristine beaches, scores of sea turtles and flocks of colourful birds – is truly one of Australia's most remote and untouched wilderness areas. Called Dhambaliya in local language, the island is five kilometres offshore from the Arnhem Land town of Nhulunbuy, which boasts its own airport.

Banubanu Beach Retreat was created in partnership between your affable hosts Helen and Trevor and the Yolŋu people of North-East Arnhem Land. As well as traditional hunting and cultural tours, the retreat offers the ultimate base for exploring and relaxing on Bremer Island. And you'll want to do lots of the latter. This truly is the place to unwind and reconnect with nature; and owing to the lack of jellyfish and sharks here, swimming is a happy part of the equation.

Simplicity is another main drawcard of Banubanu. The retreat is designed around an appreciation of the therapeutic and uplifting benefits of stepping away from the hustle. Only 12 guests stay at any given time, creating an especially peaceful and intimate experience for visitors who can select from a handful of guided experiences showcasing local marine life, fishing and cultural experiences.



DETAILS

Stays at Banubanu include all meals and your choice of a Beachfront Bungalow or the Penthouse with sweeping panoramic ocean views overlooking the Arafura Sea, complete with ceiling fans and a private deck.

After waking up on paradise's doorstep, deepen your experience with one of Banubanu's tour offerings. These include chartered fishing voyages in seas teeming with mackerel, red emperor, jewfish and coral trout, and cultural encounters including a day tour of the Nhulunbuy region with a Yolŋu guide and a Yolŋu Healing Ceremony.



+61 8 8987 8085
Bremer Island, NT
enquiries@banubanu.com
banubanu.com



DAVIDSON'S ARNHEMLAND SAFARIS ARNHEM LAND

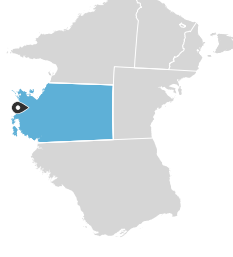
OVERVIEW

In 1986, Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris began leasing a private swathe of jaw-droppingly beautiful Aboriginal land east of Darwin – a 700-square-kilometre profusion of rugged ranges, idyllic billabongs and monsoonal rainforests.

Based at Mount Borradaile, this now-iconic eco lodge and its accompanying suite of activities is sanctioned by the area's Traditional Owners, whose link to Arnhem Land dates back 50,000 years. Their vision for the land includes visits to this magical site by small groups under the stewardship of the Davidson's team. One of the most special aspects of this partnership is access to a myriad of sacred rock art displays, which regularly wow guests with their spiritual potency. A 50-minute flight from Darwin, the lodge – decorated in a litany of eco-tourism awards – serves fine-dining fare in a relaxed communal space fringed by a serene pool. Simultaneously, tailored tours capitalise on the immense splendour and tranquility of this pocket of Arnhem Land, especially its water-filled features such as the billabong beneath Mount Borradaile and nearby wetlands alive with crocodiles and long-legged water birds.



+61 8 8979 0413
 Mt Borradaile, Arnhem Land, NT
 info@arnhemland-safaris.com
 arnhemland-safaris.com



DETAILS

Unpack and breathe in your silent surrounds, dotted with wallabies, paperbark trees and an abundance of birdlife including jabirus, magpie geese and blue-winged kookaburras. With no internet access to tempt you, stepping into a slower, more mindful way of life will come easily here; there is little need to escape mentally when reality is this idyllic.

As your base, choose from a Cabin with Ensuite or a Deluxe Cabin with Ensuite. Complete with premium furnishings and fittings, both styles of accommodation feature outdoor decks and ceiling fans. Your stay includes all meals, tours and activities, as well as permit fees (this land cannot be accessed publicly, so all visitors must have a permit). Davidson's organises charter flight transfers from either Darwin or Jabiru, the major township in Kakadu National Park. Alternately guests can drive to the lodge.

KAKADU CULTURAL TOURS

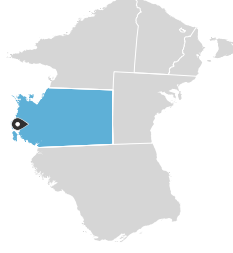
KAKADU NATIONAL PARK AND WESTERN ARNHEM LAND

OVERVIEW

Ubirr is one of the most sacred and stunning sites at Kakadu National Park: a collection of mostly 2000-year-old shaded Aboriginal rock art galleries and soaring cliff escarpments overlooks Western Arnhem Land, offering the perfect spot to soak up the natural light shows taking place each sunset and sunrise.

Kakadu Cultural Tours specialises in the broader Ubirr region, and in the company of predominantly Aboriginal guides, you'll travel beyond these main 'galleries' to restricted-access billabongs, secret art sites and living floodplains – or those after a longer, richer experience can stay at Hawk Dreaming Wilderness Lodge, a secluded safari cabin set amidst a private hamlet of the national park, or the Anbinik Kakadu Resort, offering architecturally-designed accommodation within the township of Jabiru.

Owned by Djabulukgu Association (representing the Traditional Owners of Northern Kakadu and parts of Western Arnhem Land), Kakadu Cultural Tours delivers three main touring experiences: a cultural cruise along Alligator River; a one-day 4WD culture and heritage tour of Arnhem Land and Northern Kakadu; and a two- or three-day stay at Hawk Dreaming or Anbinik Kakadu Resort paired with meals and cultural cruise.

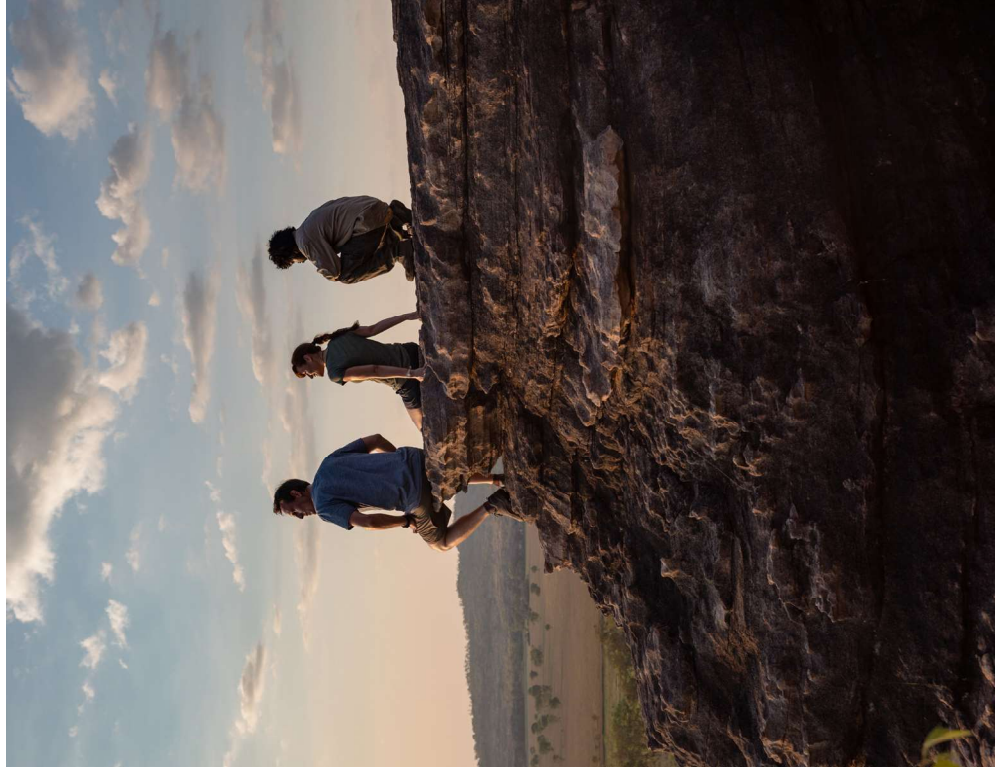


DETAILS

All Kakadu Cultural Tours experiences take place during the Top End dry season, which runs from May until October or November. Cruises, in particular, are dependent on water levels, and one of the company's most popular offerings is its almost two-hour Guluymambi cruise along East Alligator River with an Aboriginal guide – here you're almost certain to spot drifting crocodiles and an array of colourful birdlife. Special focus rests on the Aboriginal connection to the river's food chain, as well as the medicinal uses of surrounding plants.

Alternatively, the day-long Arnhemlander 4WD tour weaves through private ancient rock art sites and drops in at Injalak Arts Centre, where you'll meet Aboriginal artists and become acquainted with bush tucker preparation and cooking.

Guests staying at Hawk Dreaming Wilderness Lodge bed down in heavenly calm at one of 12 tent-cabins, whilst those staying at Anbinik Kakadu Resort stay in an Anbinik suite with beautiful indoor-outdoor bathrooms.



+61 8 8938 3202

East Alligator River, Kakadu National Park, NT

kctres@kakadu.net.au

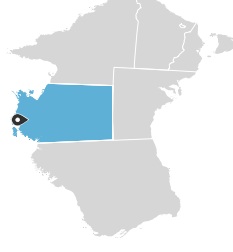
kakadu.net.au





KAKADU TOURISM

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK



OVERVIEW

Brimming with thunderous waterfalls, verdant wetlands and ochre-toned escarpments, Kakadu is the world's largest terrestrial national park, equal in size to the nation of Switzerland. Amplifying the power of Kakadu's natural beauty is its Aboriginal culture and traditions, as nurtured by Traditional Owners.

Tap into these twin elements of the park with Kakadu Tourism, a collective of accommodation and tour offerings that aims to connect visitors with the region's lively spiritual history. This outfit offers two excellently positioned stays, the four-star Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel in Jabiru at the northern entry point to the park (it's shaped like a crocodile – you can't miss it) and Cooinda Lodge and campground, set roughly in the middle of the park alongside Yellow Waters Billabong, fringed by paperbark trees.

Choose from a variety of tour options (much of the time these feature Aboriginal guides): a 4WD-tour to extraordinary, less accessible parts of the park, a southern Kakadu tour visiting stunning rock pools, plus the Warradjian Cultural Centre which explores the heritage and experiences of the Bininj people. Alternatively, take a cruise or fishing expedition along the arresting, yet overwhelmingly peaceful Yellow Waters Billabong – here, crocodiles bask on mud plains, sea eagles nest in trees and elegant jabirus drift across the skyline.

DETAILS

Travel to Kakadu – often considered the crowning jewel of the Top End – along the Arnhem Highway and book into the Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel, one of the most premium stays within the park's boundaries. With an exterior fashioned into a giant crocodile, the Mercure features air-conditioned rooms with private balconies and courtyards; a swimming pool, bar and restaurant; and an Aboriginal art gallery, often populated with artists in the midst of creating work. The next day, take a Spirit of Kakadu Adventure Tour via 4WD to an array of tucked-away, remote sites within the park, as well as to the cultural centre. Alternatively, join a Footprints of Kakadu tour and view the spectacular rockpools of the southern part of Kakadu National Park.

Travel south to Cooinda Lodge and campground, set within leafy gardens – the perfect location to explore Yellow Waters Billabong, either via a cruise or fishing tour. The former is a must-do within Kakadu. Led by Bininj guides, this cruise puts you face-to-face with the magnificent wetlands, home to 60 species of birds and a plethora of buffaloes and crocodiles.



+61 8 8979 1500

Jabiru township and Kakadu Highway, NT

reservations@yellowwater.com.au | reservations@crocodilehotel.com.au

kakadutourism.com



KARRKE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EXPERIENCE & TOURS

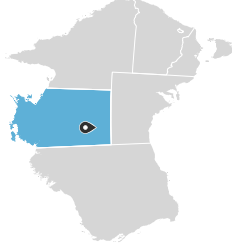
WATARRKA NATIONAL PARK (KINGS CANYON)

OVERVIEW

Soaking up the views from the top of Kings Canyon is the main reason most people visit Watarrka National Park. But visitors can also get an eye-opening view of a different kind, with insight into local lore and knowledge through a one-hour Karrike Aboriginal Cultural Tour.

Christine Breaden and Peter Abbott, of the Wanmarra Aboriginal Community, have been running the tour for the past four years in a bid to preserve and share their Luritja and Pertame (Southern Arrernte) language and culture.

You'll learn about the significance of dot painting, tools, weapons, bush tucker and medicinal plants in a fascinating experience. The experience is very hands-on, with the chance to touch and experience plants and artefacts for yourself, as well as ask as many questions as you like about how people have thrived for tens of thousands of years in this extreme but often bountiful Central Australian landscape.

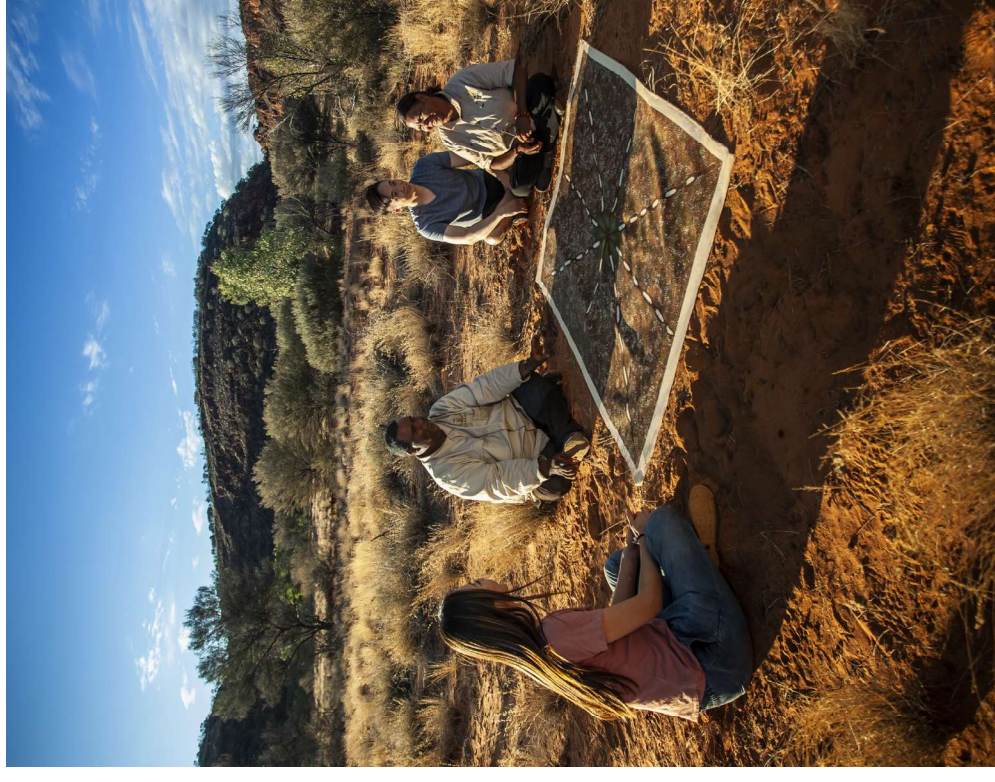


DETAILS

Christine and Peter manage to pack a lot into an hour. You'll be introduced to native foods such as bush tomato, bush plum, wild fig, bush bananas, wild onions and native bush peach (quandong), as well as honey ants and witchetty grubs.

Learn how Aboriginal people look at acacia roots to judge whether witchetty grubs are present, and how a grinding rock and grinding stone are important tools for turning plants such as rock fuchsia and emu bush into bush medicine.

Discover the significance of dot painting, and why it is still such an important medium through which Central Australian desert people tell their stories. And see how mulga wood is shaped into weapons such as spears and hunting clubs, and artefacts such as the multipurpose No.7 boomerang. Don't expect to throw it and see it come back – like all boomerangs in this region, it's the non-returning type. But it does have numerous uses, and is invaluable not just as a hunting weapon, but as a ceremonial clapstick and as a tool to tend campsite fires.



+61 8 8956 7620

Next to Kings Creek Station, Luritja Road, Watarrka National Park, NT

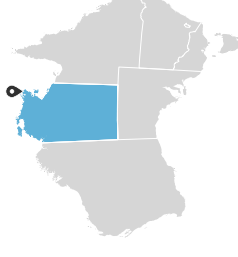
peter.abbott@karrke.com.au

karrke.com.au



LIRRWI TOURISM

ARNHEM LAND



OVERVIEW

Arnhem Land is home to the Yolngu people – custodians of one of the world’s oldest, most intact and complex living cultures. Most Australians have had little experience of the Yolngu homelands. For one, it can be difficult to reach this remote part of the Northern Territory, where a deeper, more mystical layer overlays the pristine coastal and bush landscapes. Cultural priorities can also up-end plans – here, age-old ceremonies take precedence over tourism.

Creating reliable experiences for visitors – while allowing the Yolngu people to practise their culture unfettered – requires a delicate balancing act. It’s a challenge that Lirrwi Tourism has embraced. Its blueprint for immersive tourism in this fascinating area involves a homelands rotation system that takes the Yolngu calendar into consideration while ensuring travellers still get a taste of authentic culture.

Make the trip and you’ll drop into a wondrous parallel world – one where the calendar is divided into six seasons, and Songlines, or Dreaming tracks, run through the landscape. Ancestral spirits followed these paths as they created the animals, land and lore.

DETAILS

Guests usually fly into Nhulunbuy, on the Gove Peninsula, from Darwin or Cairns. One-day tours range from visiting several coastal locations in East Arnhem Land to heading out on a 4WD adventure that includes spear-fishing and crab-hunting. Art enthusiasts can visit Yirrkala’s Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, a showcase for the region’s world-renowned artists, drawn from the surrounding 25 homelands. These artists specialise in larrakitj (memorial poles), bark painting, pandanus weaving and making yidaki (didjeridus).

To immerse yourself further into the life and rhythms of the communities, consider a multi-day itinerary. The five-day, women-only tour might include experiences such as gathering oysters, dancing, weaving, bush medicine and a crying ceremony. “The women’s tours especially are a bonding thing,” says Anji Kemp of Cooe Traveller, which manages Lirrwi Tourism. “Guests bond with their Aboriginal hosts and with each other as well.”



+61 8 8987 2828

Yirrkala, NT

info@lirrwi-tourism.com.au

lirrwi-tourism.com.au



LORDS KAKADU & ARNHEMLAND SAFARIS

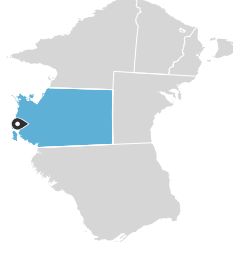
KAKADU NATIONAL PARK AND ARNHEM LAND

OVERVIEW

Swim in clear pools serenaded by waterfalls, trek through ancient rock art galleries, and uncover Aboriginal cultural stories of the Top End alongside one of the Northern Territory's most lauded and experienced guides, Sab Lord. Raised in the region, Sab oversees Lords Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris, bringing over 25 years of experience to an ambitious and wide-ranging series of luxury safaris. Among many other sites, these take in Arnhem Land, gems within Kakadu including the lesser-known Koolpin Gorge, and indulgent retreats such as Bamurru Plains, Davidson's Arnhemland Safari Camp and the 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned and operated Cicada Lodge in Nitmiluk National Park.

Lords also incorporates its own accommodation into trips with an exclusive 'bush camp' for 12 guests set within Kakadu. It's furnished with comfortable beds and a fire pit for night-time meals and tale-telling.

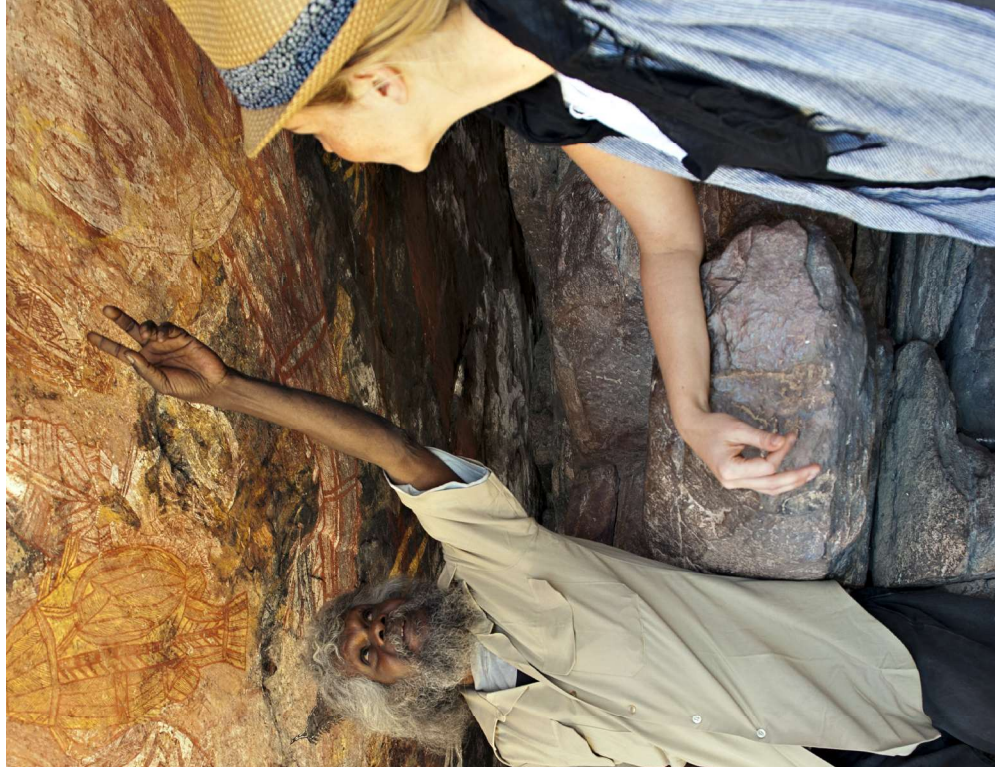
As well as employing a host of Aboriginal support staff, the company enjoys deep, long-term relationships with local Aboriginal groups, providing introductions to fascinating personalities for guests, as well as special permits to enter off-the-beaten-track zones of the Northern Territory, inaccessible to other tour companies.



DETAILS

Three-, four- or six-day safaris run from April through to October. On Lords' three-day 'Peek' trip, travel inside a luxury 4WD and take in the cornucopia of birdlife at Fogg Dam Nature Reserve, before embarking on an adrenalin-raising Jumping Crocodile Cruise on Adelaide River; lunching at a traditional Australian roadhouse; and bedding down at Cooinda Lodge, set beside Kakadu's Yellow Waters Billabong. The following day, tour Arnhem Land with an Aboriginal guide, explore Gunbalanya Aboriginal community and marvel at art from the revered Injalak Arts centre. On the final day, dive into one of Kakadu's most breathtaking waterholes at Maguk.

Longer trips incorporate stays at the chic Bamurru, a retreat based on a working buffalo farm; the remote Davidson's Safari Camp at Mount Borradaile; and the award-winning Cicada Lodge – plus natural beauty Edith Falls in Nitmiluk National Park, and the rarely seen Koolpin Gorge in South Kakadu.

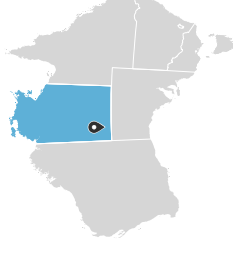


61 438 808 545
Winnellie, Darwin, NT
lordssafaris@bigpond.com
lords-safaris.com



MARUKU ARTS

ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK, CENTRAL AUSTRALIA



OVERVIEW

Maruku means “belonging to black”, which goes part way in explaining the pride inherent in this Uluru-based art collective, which runs painting workshops and gallery spaces amid one of the most iconic Australian landscapes.

Maruku’s story begins in 1981 when a band of Aboriginal artists filled trucks and cars with their artwork and set up a tent exhibition from which to share and sell their work. The tent gradually grew into something with more structural permanency, and the group expanded to comprise around 900 talented artists from the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands of Central Australia – an area the size of Sweden, with Uluru at its centre.

Today the organisation offers cultural lessons via its dot-painting and punu-making workshops (punu is a woodcarving practice, involving decoration with lines created through a burn technique). It also performs ‘inma’ – meaning ceremonial dance and song.

Participate in one of Maruku’s creative workshops, run by established, knowledgeable and warm Aboriginal artists. Next, view its impressive array of art and wooden sculpture in either the Maruku Arts Gallery inside the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Cultural Centre, or at its market stall inside Yulara Village, the main accommodation and restaurant hub for travellers to Uluru.

DETAILS

With a paintbrush in hand, sit down and create your own artwork at a 1.5-hour Maruku Arts dot-painting workshop. Your Aboriginal artist guide, aided by an interpreter, will lead you through the beliefs guiding his or her art practice, including the origins and meanings of recurring symbols (the logo for Maruku Arts, for instance, denotes sand dunes). During the workshop, you’ll also discover a suite of art-making tools, learn a handful of words in the artist’s Aboriginal language and be invited to represent something of personal significance within your own artwork – while you paint alongside your host.

Workshops run all year round and take place in the green and serene outdoor surrounds of Yulara Village. These sessions are suited to all ages, especially to kids and curious adults.

Maruku also invites visitors to book tailored tours or programs, made up of offerings such as dance ceremonies, bush medicine and woodcarving workshops.



MARUKU@ULURU

+61 499 829 635

Cultural Centre, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, NT

dotpainting@maruku.com.au

maruku.com.au



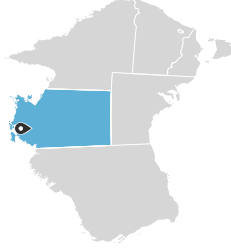
NITMILUK TOURS

NITMILUK NATIONAL PARK, KATHERINE

OVERVIEW

Three hours southeast of Darwin lies a network of 13 gorges, through which snakes the Katherine River flanked by sheer, towering cliffs. This is Nitmiluk National Park: home to the Jawoyn people and a riot of rugged beauty. Here, rainbow bee-eaters dip between trees, black cockatoos call from the air, and lacewing butterflies float beside shaded rocks. Nitmiluk Tours, a 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned company, lets you enjoy the best of Jawoyn country and culture via its smorgasbord of cruises, hikes, cave tours, swims, canoeing trips and scenic helicopter flights – not to mention its accommodation offerings, which include everything from a camping ground and cabins, through to luxury lodge Cicada.

As with its more famous cousin Kakadu, Nitmiluk National Park also features a swathe of Aboriginal rock art sites, some of which you can view on a gorge cruise, while others lie in more tucked-away locations, such as at the end of the 'Southern Walks' circuit – where scenery is so dramatic. Explore these art sites and more on a multi-day walk; a sequence of campsites dotted along the trail will see you sleeping above cavernous gorges and beside pristine waterholes.



DETAILS

Travelling en route to Nitmiluk, you'll know you're almost there when the surrounding landscape starts to rise, and the bush – littered with ochre-coloured boulders and termite mounds – morphs into lofty escarpments.

Settle into the campground, a one- or two-bedroom cabin, a safari tent (both close to a well-kept pool and deli-style eating area), or a room at Cicada Lodge with all-inclusive fine-dining meals, welcome drinks and evening canapés.

Your choice of activities is even more abundant. Standouts include cultural cruises that focus on Jawoyn customs, beliefs, and rock art sites, as well as the helicopter flight, dinner cruise and canoe trips. Also be sure to walk to the first gorge lookout point for sunset or sunrise – or, if you find yourself closer to Katherine, Nitmiluk Tours also conducts guided walks through the fascinating Cutta Cutta Caves.

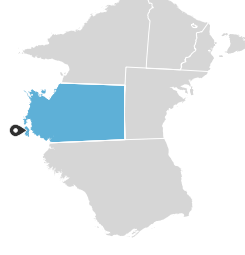


+61 8 8971 0877
25 Katherine Terrace, Katherine, NT
reservations@nitmiluktours.com.au
nitmiluktours.com.au



SEALINK NT – TIWI ISLANDS

DARWIN TO TIWI ISLANDS



OVERVIEW

Famous for their art, sense of humour, and obsession with Australian Rules football, the people of the Tiwi Islands provide a warm welcome to their remarkable home in the Arafura Sea.

A day trip to the main island, Bathurst, on a Tiwi By Design Tour with Sealink NT, is an unforgettable way to get to know this unique Polynesian-influenced Aboriginal culture.

After a ferry ride on a high-speed catamaran, your Tiwi guides will take you on an easy walking tour on which you'll meet artists, make your own screen-printed textile, visit a museum and a church with a difference, and discover what makes the Tiwi Islands so special.

After a two-and-a-half-hour ride aboard a large, comfortable, high-speed ferry (with air-conditioning, indoor and outdoor seating and a café), disembark on the beach at Bathurst Island and meet your Tiwi guides.

DETAILS

A few minutes' walk away from disembarking is the Tiwi Design art centre, and a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony. Totem dancers representing the islands' different skin groups will greet you, and a smoking ceremony will drive away any bad spirits.

After a demonstration of the famous Tiwi Island screen-printing techniques, tea and damper is served over a chat with the artists. Then it's off to the modest but remarkable Patakitjivali Museum, established by Sister Anne Gardiner, who has lived on Bathurst Island since 1953. It features everything from canoes to an AFL Hall of Fame, dedicated to the Tiwi Islanders who have gone on to have footy careers on the mainland (like most Tiwi residents, Sister Anne is a huge Aussie Rules fan).

A visit to a church is next. Inside, behind its white timber exterior, the church is brilliantly decorated with Tiwi art; your guides will help you understand how Catholicism and Tiwi culture somehow manage to work together. Back at the arts centre, after lunch, the artists will guide you in making your own screen-printed textile.

SEALINK
Northern Territory

+61 8 8981 2878

5/57 Marina Boulevard, Cullen Bay, NT

salesnt@sealink.com.au

sealinknt.com.au

SEIT OUTBACK AUSTRALIA

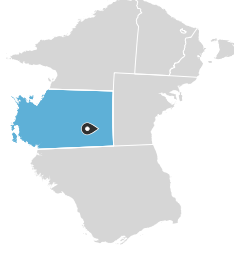
CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

OVERVIEW

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and its neighbouring lands hum with unsurpassed splendour and spiritual energy – the latter owing to its multi-layered relationship with Traditional Owners, the Anangu, whose ancestors have called the park home for 60,000 years. Run by locals Kathy and Brett Graham, SEIT specialises in small group tours that enable travellers to gain comprehensive knowledge about the land's Aboriginal heritage via off-the-beaten-path experiences.

SEIT's powerful Patji tour takes you beyond the main park's boundaries to the homelands of Uluru's traditional family. Here, over afternoon tea, you'll sit with Aboriginal people to hear stories of their epic fight for land rights in Central Australia, plus other intimate accounts of Aboriginal life in the region.

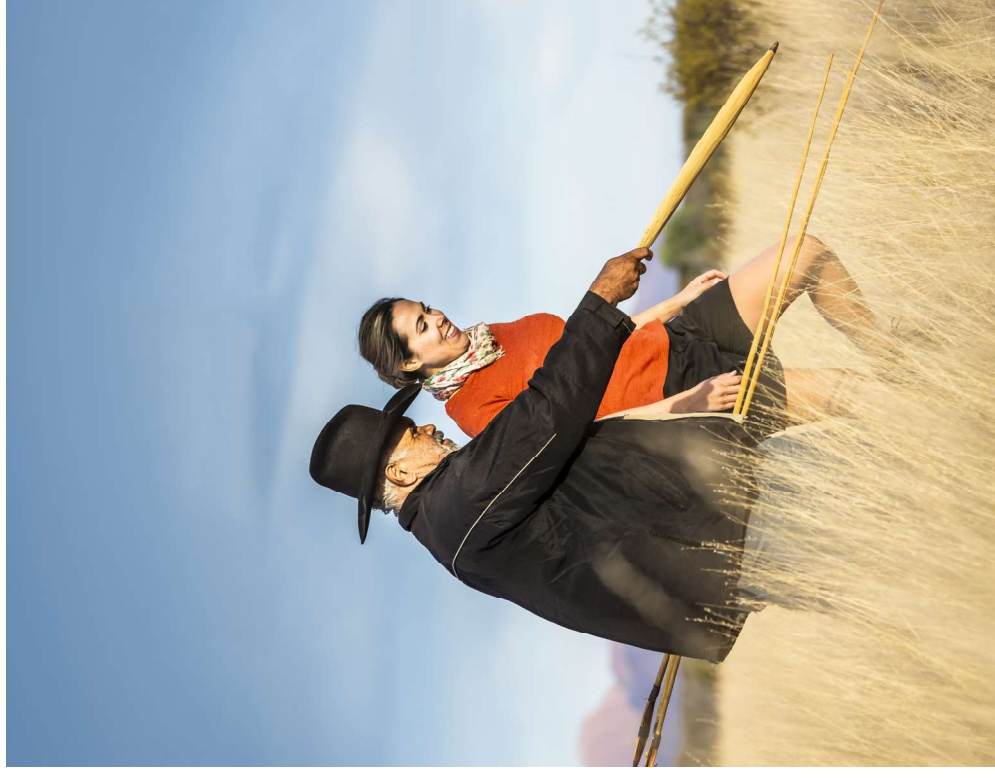
SEIT stands for Spirit, Emotion, Intellect and Task, outlining Kathy and Graham's aim of revealing to visitors – in a hands-on way – the outback's spiritual heart, the emotion of the desert, and the intellectual stimulation you'll derive from in-depth learning about this magical environment and its people.



DETAILS

Take a 4WD journey deep into the flourishing desert with an Aboriginal guide on the seven-hour Patji tour, where you will accompany Traditional Owners to their homelands south of the Rock. Over afternoon tea, hear stories detailing Paddy Uluru's fight for Aboriginal recognition in the park, as well as an overview of centuries-old bush survival techniques. From atop a private sand dune, complete your day with an Uluru 'must': the witnessing of an exquisite, multi-coloured sunset.

Tours can be taken in French, Spanish, German and Italian, with recorded audio guides available in these four languages, as well as in Russian and Mandarin.



+61 8 8956 3156
Yulara Village, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, NT
bookings@seitoutbackaustralia.com.au
seitoutbackaustralia.com.au



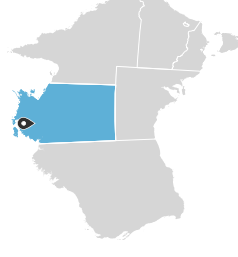
TOP DIDJ CULTURAL EXPERIENCE & ART GALLERY

KATHERINE

OVERVIEW

Beyond its extraordinary natural surrounds – think gorges, sweeping waterfalls and azure-toned hot springs – the town of Katherine, three hours south of Darwin, boasts one of the richest and diverse Aboriginal heritages of the Top End. The region is home to both the Jawoyn and Dagoman people, and ten years ago, local residents Alex and Petrena Ariston noticed a dearth of hands-on ways for travellers to access these groups' enchanting cultures. Their solution was to establish Top Didj Cultural Experience & Art Gallery, the latter of which showcases outstanding Jawoyn and Dagoman work, as well as that from Arnhem Land, the Kimberley and the Central Western Desert.

The popular Top Didj cultural experience, ideal for families and fun-seeking travellers, is a 2.5-hour session led by charismatic Aboriginal artist, Manuel Pamkal. Enrich your practical understanding of local customs, hunting practices and art-making over the course of this uplifting morning or afternoon – and return home having painted your own work of art. Top Didj Cultural Experience & Art Gallery is also a signatory of the Indigenous Art Code, an ethical certification that defends Aboriginal artists' right to negotiate fair terms for their work.



DETAILS

Take in the plentiful art, didgeridoos, artefacts, gifts and books in the Top Didj Art Gallery, before joining a morning or afternoon Aboriginal artist-led cultural experience. These begin at 9:30am and 2:30pm over the dry season months from May to October. Learn 'bush knowledge' skills such as spear throwing and fire-lighting (using sticks). Immerse yourself in Aboriginal song, meet the gallery's resident kangaroos, and listen to your guide's origin story – including tales about growing up in the bush surrounding Katherine. Finally, create your own artwork using Aboriginal symbolism, illustration and story-telling techniques.



Top Didj
Cultural Experience
& Art Gallery

+ 61 414 888 786

Corner of Gorge and Jaensch Road, Katherine, NT

sales@topdidj.com

topdidj.com

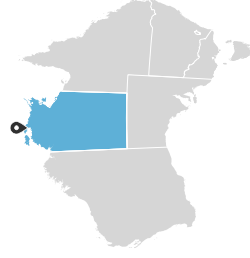
VENTURE NORTH SAFARIS

TOP END

OVERVIEW

With a passion for the Top End's most remote and undisturbed parks, as well as Aboriginal culture and small groups, Venture North is run by nature-loving brothers Hugh and Aaron Gange and a swathe of exuberant guides. Showered in national tourism awards, this safari outfit travels to Arnhem Land, Kakadu and the Cobourge Peninsula in Garig Gunak Barlu National Park. The latter is virtually uninhabited and features a rippling sequence of beaches with deeply cut cliffs, a profusion of marine life and a profound connection to the area's Aboriginal descendants. Importantly, Cobourge also hosts Venture North's exclusive bush bungalow campsite with views across the clear-water sea, plus rustic, comfortable rooms dotted among native foliage.

Design a private trip, or join a four- or five-day safari in luxury 4WD vehicles. The shorter journey whisks you to Arnhem Land for a visit to the art-mad Aboriginal community of Gunbalanya, where you'll embark on a moving rock art tour with an Aboriginal guide. Next, choose a hammock at the Cobourge campsite and explore the nearby marine park, before returning to Kakadu to traverse its stone country and wetlands. The longer five-day journey lets you linger longer in Kakadu, allowing time for a plunge into fantasy-like waterholes in the southern part of the park.



DETAILS

All year round, travel with Venture North on a private safari – a popular choice with couples and families. Alternately, over dry season from May to November, join a small group (between two and six people) for a four- or five-day safari from Darwin to unspoiled regions within Kakadu, Arnhem Land and the Cobourge Peninsula (which few tourists see, owing to Cobourge's remoteness and need for special permits from Aboriginal Traditional Owners). Travel along the Arnhem Highway to either Arnhem Land or Kakadu first, depending on the length of your trip. In the former location, an Aboriginal guide welcomes you to a secluded art site and shares with you Yolpu culture; while in the second, you'll discover Ubirr, Barramundi Falls and Maguk, the latter two of which are far-flung, water-filled jewels of Kakadu. Arguably, however, Cobourge is the most standout offering on a Venture North safari. Here, time melts away, leaving you to simply enjoy your private tranquil oasis, complete with gourmet meals.



+61 8 8927 5500
Nightcliff, Darwin, NT
info@venturenorth.com.au
venturenorth.com.au



VOYAGES
INDIGENOUS TOURISM
AUSTRALIA

+61 2 8296 8010

Yulara Village, MacDonnell Region, NT

reservations@voyages.com.au

ayersrockresort.com.au

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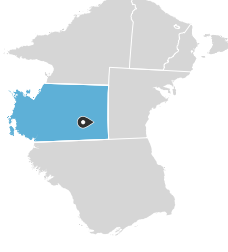
ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK, CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

OVERVIEW

Tucked behind sand dunes just beyond Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park – the geographic and spiritual heart of Australia – rests Ayers Rock Resort. This accommodation and cultural experience collective comprises five different stays and more than 65 tours. The resort aims to provide you a restful base from which to explore this awe-inspiring park and its famous monoliths (the 860-metre high Uluru and the lofty domes of Kata Tjuta), as well as to connect you more fervently with the rich Aboriginal culture and landscape of the Red Centre – the dreaming site of Uluru's Traditional Owners, the Anangu people.

Sink into luxury comfort at five-star stay Sails in the Desert, or wander native gardens and enjoy views of the Rock at the 4.5-star Desert Gardens Hotel. Emu Walk Apartments offer self-contained accommodation splashed with Aboriginal art. The Lost Camel delivers modern comfort in a boutique hotel setting, while the Outback Pioneer Hotel and the resort's campground deliver rustic, bush-bound budget stays.

Once inside the park, choose from one of the resort's enticing adventures. Take a camel ride into the sunset; meander through the lush greenery at Uluru's base – viewing rock art illustrating the site's Creation stories as you walk; or dine under a canopy of stars at a Sounds of Silence dinner, an atmosphere-laden evening of food, culture and astronomy, held amid sand dunes and silent surrounds. Alternatively, book a Tali Wiru experience to enjoy fine dining on a private dune under the Southern Desert sky with magnificent views of Uluru and the distant domes of Kata Tjuta.



DETAILS

Complete with a neighbouring airport, Ayers Rock resort is based at Yulara, the park's accommodation village – a 30-minute drive from the Uluru massif, and 50 minutes from sister attraction Kata Tjuta. Inside Yulara, you'll find a supermarket, a post office, a village square, as well as a cluster of tempting eateries, including a noodle bar, cafe and pizza restaurant.

After settling into your Voyages accommodation, dive deep into the park's fascinating Aboriginal culture with a Bush Yarn, an Aboriginal storytelling session; a Guided Garden Walk that will introduce you to traditional foods and the medicinal uses of native plants; or a Bush Tucker Experience that shares with you local ingredients and cooking techniques. Alternatively, let traditional music stream through your stay with a didgeridoo workshop, or chase a culture-meets-nature fix on an Anangu land conservation and ecology tour.

Owned by the Indigenous Land Corporation, Voyages directs all its profits towards supporting Aboriginal training and employment across Australia.

