

# Australia

## Darwin & Around

(PDF Chapter)

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### COVERAGE INCLUDES:

- Darwin
- Mandorah
- Tiwi Islands
- Arnhem Highway
- Stuart Highway
- Mary River Region
- Litchfield National Park
- Adelaide River
- Katherine
- Kakadu National Park
- Arnhem Land



# Darwin & Around

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## Best Places to Eat

- Laneway Speciality Coffee (p823)
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## Best Places to Stay

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## Why Go?

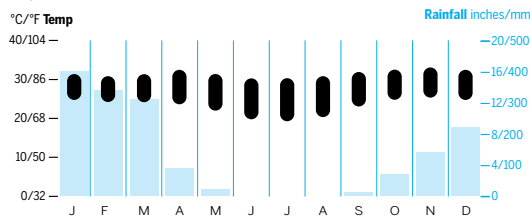
The Top End is frontier country. It feels wild out here; time spent exploring the region's outer reaches will calibrate your senses away from urban grit. The wildness comes in many forms – from remote Arnhem Land to backpackers letting loose on Darwin's Mitchell St.

You will find unparalleled opportunities to experience timeless Indigenous culture, and the legacy left behind from tens of thousands of years of occupation. Indigenous rock art has left an extraordinary mark on the landscape – an ancient diary of human existence, seemingly oblivious to years of climatic onslaught.

The cosmopolitan capital of Darwin is Australia's doorway to Asia and celebrates its multicultural mix with delicious fusion cuisine and a relaxed tropical vibe. Darwin feels more like a big town than a city, and the dreamy coastline around its outer reaches rakes at the heart when a blood red sun is dipping over the horizon.

## When to Go

### Darwin



**Apr-Aug** Peak season with lower humidity in the north.

**Jun & Jul** Darwin is alight with the sounds, sights and cultural blitz of the Fringe Festival.

**Sep-Mar** Barra-mundi fishing heats up as the Wet turns the Top End into a watery wonderland.



## Darwin & Around Highlights

- 1 Seeing glinting crocodile eyes peering from the watery wonderland of **Kakadu National Park** (p834).
- 2 Sampling a satay and other exotic fare at Darwin's

- Mindil Beach Sunset Market** (p825).
- 3 Plunging into a, crystal-clear rock pool at **Litchfield National Park** (p832).

- 4 Hooking up a barra on the **Daly or Mary rivers** (p830); some of Australia's best **barramundi fishing** (p811).



Crocodiles can inhabit all waterways in tropical areas. Swimming is not recommended.



**5** Touring remote and hypnotically beautiful **Arnhem Land** (p841) and experiencing some Indigenous culture.

**6** Experiencing the unique Indigenous culture of the **Tiwi Islands** (p828), and picking up some excellent local souvenirs.

**7** Marvelling at Australia's unique critters in the **Territory Wildlife Park** (p831).

## History

Early European attempts to settle the Top End were mainly due to British fears that the French or Dutch might get a foothold in Australia. The Brits established three forts between 1824 and 1838, but all were short-lived. Then the desire for more grazing land and trade routes spurred speculators from Queensland and South Australia (SA) to explore the vast untamed north. With an eye to development, SA governors annexed the Northern Territory (NT) in 1863 (it became self-governing only in 1978).

From the mid-1860s to 1895 hundreds of thousands of sheep, cattle and horses were overlanded to immense pastoral settlements. Dislocation and hardship were bedfellows of the industry, with Aboriginal Australians forced from their lands and pastoralists confronted by a swath of difficulties. Some Indigenous people took employment as stockmen or domestic servants on cattle stations, while others moved on in an attempt to maintain their traditional lifestyle.

In the early 1870s, during digging to establish the Overland Telegraph (from Adelaide to Darwin), gold was discovered. A minor rush ensued, with an influx of Chinese prospectors. Though the gold finds were relatively insignificant, the searches for it unearthed a wealth of natural resources that would lead to mining becoming a major economic presence.

WWII had a significant impact on the NT. Just weeks after the Japanese levelled Darwin, causing 243 deaths, the entire NT north of Alice Springs was placed under military control, with 32,000 soldiers stationed in the Top End.

On Christmas morning 1974, Darwin was flattened again by Cyclone Tracy, which killed 71 people.

## Indigenous Northern Territory

Aboriginal Australians have occupied parts of the NT for around 60,000 years, although the central regions were not inhabited until about 24,000 years ago. The first significant contact with outsiders occurred in the 17th century when Macassan traders from modern-day Sulawesi in Indonesia came to the Top End to collect trepang (sea cucumber).

While the process of white settlement in the NT was slower than elsewhere in Australia, it had an equally troubled and violent effect. By the early 20th century, most Aboriginal people were confined to government reserves or Christian missions. During the 1960s Aboriginal people began to demand more rights.

In 1966 a group of Aboriginal stockmen, led by Vincent Lingiari, went on strike on Wave Hill Station, to protest over the low wages and poor conditions that they received compared with white stockmen. The Wave Hill walk-off gave rise to the Aboriginal land-rights movement.

In 1976 the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* was passed in Canberra. It handed over all reserves and mission lands in the NT to Aboriginal people and allowed Aboriginal groups to claim vacant government land if they could prove continuous occupation – provided the land wasn't already leased, in a town or set aside for some other special purpose.

Today, Aboriginal people own about half of the land in the NT, including Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks, which are leased back to the federal government. Minerals on Aboriginal land are still government property, though the landowners' permission is usually required for exploration and mining, and landowners are remunerated.

Around 30% of the NT's 200,000 people are Aboriginal Australians. While non-Aboriginal Australia's awareness of the need for reconciliation with the Indigenous community has increased in recent years, there are still huge gulfs between the cultures. Entrenched disadvantage and substance abuse are causing enormous social problems within some Indigenous communities.

It's often difficult for short-term visitors to make meaningful contact with Indigenous people, as they generally prefer to be left to themselves. The impressions given by some Aboriginal people on the streets of Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin, where social problems and substance abuse among a few people can present an unpleasant picture, are not indicative of Aboriginal communities as a whole.

Tours to Aboriginal lands (most operated by the communities themselves) and visits to arts centres are gradually becoming more widely available, as communities feel more inclined to share their culture. Benefits are numerous: financial gain through self-determined endeavour, and educating non-Aboriginal people about traditional culture and customs, which helps to alleviate the problems caused by the ignorance and misunderstandings of the past.

## National Parks

Aside from Darwin, the Top End is all about its national parks; it has some of the largest



and most famous natural areas in Australia, including Kakadu and Litchfield. **Parks Australia** ([www.environment.gov.au/parks](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks)) manages Kakadu, while the Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory manages the other parks and produces fact sheets, available online or from its various offices.

## Activities

### Bushwalking

The Territory's national parks offer well-maintained tracks of different lengths and degrees of difficulty, which introduce walkers to various environments and wildlife habitats. Carry plenty of water, take rubbish out with you and stick to the tracks. Top bushwalks include the Barrk Sandstone Bushwalk in Kakadu National Park.

### Fishing

No permit is required to fish the Territory's waterways, though there are limits on the minimum size and number of fish per person. Travel NT publishes some info online ([www.travelnt.com](http://www.travelnt.com)). The Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory ([www.afant.com.au](http://www.afant.com.au)) also has online info.

The feisty barramundi lures most fisherfolk to the Top End, particularly to Borroloola (p854), Daly River (p833) and Mary River (p830). Increasingly, the recreational-fishing fraternity encourages catch and release to maintain sustainable fish levels. Loads of tours offer transport and gear and start at \$275 per person.

### Swimming

The cool waterfalls, waterholes and rejuvenating thermal pools throughout the Top End are perfect spots to soak. Litchfield National Park is particularly rewarding.

Saltwater crocodiles inhabit both salt and fresh waters in the Top End, though there are quite a few safe, natural swimming holes. Before taking the plunge, be sure to obey the signs and seek local advice. If in doubt, don't risk it.

Box jellyfish seasonally infest the sea around Darwin; swimming at the city's beaches is safest from May to September.

### Wildlife Watching

The best place for guaranteed wildlife sightings, from bilbies to emus, is at excellent Territory Wildlife Park (p831) outside Darwin.

If you prefer to see wildlife in the wild, there are few guarantees; many of the region's critters are nocturnal. One exception

is at Kakadu, where you'll certainly see crocodiles at Cahill's Crossing or Yellow Waters, and numerous species of bird at its wealth of wetlands.

## Information

### RESOURCES

**Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory** ([☎](tel) 08-8999 4555; [www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au](http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au)) Details on NT parks and reserves, including fact sheets.

**Road Report** ([☎](tel) 1800 246 199; [www.roadreport.nt.gov.au](http://www.roadreport.nt.gov.au)) NT road conditions.

**Tourism Top End** ([www.tourismtopend.com.au](http://www.tourismtopend.com.au)) Darwin-based tourism body.

**Travel NT** ([www.travelnt.com](http://www.travelnt.com)) Official tourism site.

### ABORIGINAL LAND PERMITS

Permits may be required to enter Aboriginal land, unless you are using recognised public roads that cross Aboriginal territory. Permits can take four to six weeks to be processed, although for the Injalak Arts Centre at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) they are generally issued on the spot in **Jabiru** ([☎](tel) 08-8938 3000; Flinders St, Jabiru; ☉ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri).

**Northern Land Council** ([www.nlc.org.au](http://www.nlc.org.au)) Responsible for land north of a line drawn between Kununurra (Western Australia) and Mt Isa (Queensland). Branch in **Katherine** (Map p848; [☎](tel) 08-8971 9802; 5 Katherine Tce).

**Tiwi Land Council** (Map p814; [☎](tel) 08-8970 9373; [www.tiwilandcouncil.com](http://www.tiwilandcouncil.com)) Permits for the Tiwi Islands.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

International and domestic flights arrive at and depart from **Darwin International Airport** (Map p814; [www.darwinairport.com.au](http://www.darwinairport.com.au); Henry Wrigley Dr, Marrara) There are also flights between Darwin, Alice Springs and Uluru.

**Airnorth** ([www.airnorth.com.au](http://www.airnorth.com.au)) To/from East Timor, and to Arnhem Land, Broome, Perth, Kununurra and the Gold Coast.

**Jetstar** ([www.jetstar.com.au](http://www.jetstar.com.au)) Services most major Australian cities and several Southeast Asian cities.

**Qantas** ([www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)) To/from Asia and Europe, and servicing all major Australian cities.

**Virgin Australia** ([www.virginaustralia.com](http://www.virginaustralia.com)) Direct flights between Darwin and Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

### BUS

**Greyhound Australia** ([www.greyhound.com.au](http://www.greyhound.com.au)) regularly services the main road routes throughout the NT, including side trips to Kakadu.

Alternatively, there are tour-bus companies such as AAT Kings, and backpacker buses that cover vast distances while savouring the sights along the way.

## CAR

To truly explore the Top End by car, you'll need a well-prepared 4WD vehicle and some outback nous. The **Automobile Association of the Northern Territory** (AANT; ☎ 08-8925 5901; www.aant.com.au; 2/14 Knuckey St, Darwin; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) can advise on preparation and additional resources; members of automobile associations in other Australian states have reciprocal rights.

Many roads are open to conventional cars and campervans, which can be hired in Darwin and Alice Springs, and can work out to be quite economical when split by a group.

Some driving conditions are particular to the NT. While traffic may be light and roads dead straight, distances between places are long. Watch out for the four great NT road hazards: speed (maximum speed on the open highway is 130km/h), driver fatigue, road trains and animals (driving at night is particularly dangerous). Note that some roads are regularly closed during the Wet due to flooding; head to www.ntlis.gov.au/roadreport/ for information.

## TRAIN

The famous interstate Ghan train is run by **Great Southern Rail** (www.gsr.com.au), grinding between Darwin and Adelaide via Katherine and Alice Springs. The Ghan is met in Port Augusta (SA) by the Indian Pacific, which travels between Sydney and Perth; and in Adelaide by the Overland, which travels to/from Melbourne.

The Ghan has three levels of sleeper berths plus a chair class.

## DARWIN

☎ 08 / POP 127,500

Australia's only tropical capital city, Darwin gazes out confidently across the Timor Sea. It's closer to Bali than Bondi and can certainly feel removed from the rest of the country.

Darwin has plenty to offer the traveller. Chairs and tables spill out of streetside restaurants and bars, innovative museums celebrate the city's past, and galleries showcase the region's rich Indigenous art. Darwin's cosmopolitan mix – more than 50 nationalities are seamlessly represented here – is typified by the wonderful markets held throughout the dry season.

Nature is well and truly part of Darwin's backyard; the famous national parks of Kakadu and Litchfield are only a few hours' drive away, and the unique Tiwi Islands are a boat ride away. For locals the perfect weekend is going fishing for barra in a tiny (small boat) with an esky full of cold beer.

## History

The Larrakia Aboriginal people lived for thousands of years in Darwin, hunting, fishing and foraging. In 1869 a permanent white settlement was established and the grid for a new town laid out. Originally called Palmerston, and renamed Darwin in 1911, the new town developed rapidly, transforming the physical and social landscape.

The discovery of gold at nearby Pine Creek brought an influx of Chinese, who soon settled into other industries. Asians and Islanders came to work in the pearling industry and on the railway line and wharf.

## DARWIN IN...

### Two Days

Start with breakfast at **Four Birds** (Map p816; ☎ 0408 729 708; 32 Smith St Mall, Shop 2, Star Village; items \$6-12; ☀ 7am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat) or **Roma Bar** (p822), flipping through the *Northern Territory News*. Take a stroll downtown and through **Bicentennial Park** (Map p816; www.darwin.nt.gov.au; ☀ 24hr). Don't miss the high-tide action at **Aquascene** (Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 7837; www.aquascene.com.au; 28 Doctors Gully Rd; adult/child \$15/10; ☀ high tide, check website) and as the day warms up, head down to the **waterfront precinct** (p813), stopping for lunch at **Curve** (p822) and a dip in the Wave Lagoon. As the sun sets, make your way to **Mindil Beach Sunset Market** (p825), packed with food outlets, buskers and souvenirs.

On day two, hire a bike and head out to the **Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory** (p814), then lunch at the adjacent **Cornucopia Cafe** (p823). Continue your coastal jaunt with visits to the **East Point Reserve** (p818) and the **Defence of Darwin Experience** (p815). At night, hit the bars along **Mitchell St** (p824), or find a quiet waterfront restaurant at Cullen Bay and catch a movie under the stars at the **Deckchair Cinema** (p824).

More recently, neighbouring East Timorese and Papuans have sought asylum in Darwin.

During WWII, Darwin was the frontline for the Allied action against the Japanese in the Pacific. It was the only Australian city ever bombed, and official reports of the time downplayed the damage – to buoy Australians' morale. Though the city wasn't destroyed by the attacks, the impact of full-scale military occupation on Darwin was enormous.

More physically damaging was Cyclone Tracy, which hit Darwin at around midnight on Christmas Eve 1974. By Christmas morning, Darwin effectively ceased to exist as a city, with only 400 of its 11,200 homes left standing and 71 people killed. The town was rebuilt to a new, stringent building code and has steadily expanded outwards and upwards.

## Sights

### Central Darwin

**★ Crocosaurus Cove** ZOO  
(Map p816; ☎08-8981 7522; [www.crocosauruscove.com](http://www.crocosauruscove.com); 58 Mitchell St; adult/child \$32/20; ☀9am-6pm, last admission 5pm) If the tourists won't go out to see the crocs, then bring the crocs to the tourists. Right in the middle of Mitchell St, Crocosaurus Cove is as close as you'll ever want to get to these amazing creatures. Six of the largest crocs in captivity can be seen in state-of-the-art aquariums and pools. Other aquariums feature barramundi, turtles and stingrays, plus there's an enormous reptile house (allegedly displaying the greatest variety of reptiles in the country).

You can be lowered right into a pool with the crocs in the transparent Cage of Death (one/two people \$160/240). If that's too scary, there's another pool where you can swim with a clear tank wall separating you from some mildly less menacing baby crocs.

**George Brown Botanic Gardens** GARDENS  
(Map p816; <http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/botanic>; Geranium St, Stuart Park; ☀7am-7pm, information centre 8am-4pm) **FREE** Named after the gardens' curator from 1971 to 1990, these 42-hectare gardens showcase plants from the Top End and around the world – monsoon vine forest, the mangroves and coastal plants habitat, boabs, and a magnificent collection of native and exotic palms and cycads.

The gardens are an easy 2km bicycle ride out from Darwin, along Gilruth Ave and Gardens Rd, or there's another entrance off Geranium St, which runs off the Stuart Hwy in Stuart Park. Alternatively, bus 7 from the

city stops near the Stuart Hwy/Geranium St corner.

Many of the plants here were traditionally used by the local Aboriginal people, and self-guiding Aboriginal plant-use trails have been set up; pick up a brochure at the gardens' information centre near the Geranium St entry. You'll also find birdwatching brochures and garden maps here.

**Myilly Point Heritage Precinct** HISTORIC SITE  
(Map p816) At the far northern end of Smith St is this small but important precinct of four houses built from 1930 to 1939 (which means they survived both the WWII bombings and Cyclone Tracy!). They're now managed by the National Trust. One of them, **Burnett House** (Map p816; [www.nationaltrustnt.org.au](http://www.nationaltrustnt.org.au); admission by donation; ☀10am-1pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-5pm Sun), operates as a museum. There's a tantalising **colonial high tea** (\$10) in the gardens on Sunday afternoon from 3pm between April and October.

### Darwin Waterfront Precinct

The bold redevelopment of the old **Darwin Waterfront Precinct** ([www.waterfront.nt.gov.au](http://www.waterfront.nt.gov.au)) has transformed the city. The multi-million-dollar redevelopment features a cruise-ship terminal, luxury hotels, boutique restaurants and shopping, the Sky Bridge, an elevated walkway and elevator at the south end of Smith St, and a Wave Lagoon.

**Wave & Recreation Lagoons** WATER PARK  
(Map p816; ☎08-8985 6588; [www.waterfront.nt.gov.au](http://www.waterfront.nt.gov.au); Wave Lagoon adult/child \$7/5; ☀Wave Lagoon 10am-6pm) The hugely popular **Wave Lagoon** is a hit with locals and travellers alike. There are 10 different wave patterns produced (20 minutes on with a 10-minute rest in between) and there are lifeguards, a kiosk and a strip of lawn to bask on. Adjacent is the **Recreation Lagoon** with a sandy beach, lifeguards and stinger-filtered seawater (although the nets and filters are not guaranteed to be 100% effective).

**WWII Oil-Storage Tunnels** TUNNEL  
(Map p816; ☎08-8985 6322; [www.darwintours.com.au/ww2tunnels](http://www.darwintours.com.au/ww2tunnels); self-guided tour per person \$7; ☀9am-4pm May-Sep, to 1pm Oct-Apr) You can escape from the heat of the day and relive your Hitchcockian fantasies by walking through the WWII oil-storage tunnels. They were built in 1942 to store the navy's oil supplies (but never used); now they exhibit wartime photos.



## Greater Darwin



### Indo-Pacific Marine Exhibition

**AQUARIUM**  
 (Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 1294; [www.indopacificmarine.com.au](http://www.indopacificmarine.com.au); 29 Stokes Hill Rd; adult/child \$24/10; ☀ 10am-4pm Apr-Oct, call Nov-Mar) This excellent marine aquarium at the Waterfront Precinct gives you a close encounter with the denizens at the bottom of Darwin Harbour. Each small tank is a complete ecosystem, with only the occasional extra fish introduced as food for some of the predators, such as stonefish or the bizarre angler fish.

Also recommended here is the **Coral Reef by Night** (Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 1294; [www.indopacificmarine.com.au](http://www.indopacificmarine.com.au); 29 Stokes Hill Rd; adult/child \$120/60; ☀ 6.30pm Wed, Fri & Sun), which con-

sists of a tour of the aquarium, seafood dinner (on biodegradable plates, no less!) and an impressive show of fluorescing animals.

### 👁 Fannie Bay

#### ★ Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

**MUSEUM**  
 (MAGNT; Map p814; ☎ 08-8999 8264; [www.magnt.net.au](http://www.magnt.net.au); 19 Conacher St, Fannie Bay; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** This superb museum and gallery boasts beautifully presented galleries of Top End-centric exhibits. The **Aboriginal art collection** is a highlight, with carvings from the Tiwi Islands, bark paintings from

## Greater Darwin

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory ..... A4

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Charles Darwin National Park ..... B4  
 3 Crocodylus Park ..... D3  
 4 East Point Reserve ..... A3  
 5 Fannie Bay Gaol Museum ..... A4  
 6 Northern Centre for Contemporary Art ..... B4

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 7 Darwin Sailing Club ..... A4

### 📍 Sleeping

- 8 Discovery Holiday Park – Darwin ..... C4

### 📍 Eating

- Cyclone Cafe ..... (see 14)

- 9 Darwin Ski Club ..... A4  
 Laneway Speciality Coffee ..... (see 6)  
 Parap Fine Foods ..... (see 14)  
 10 Pavonia Place ..... B2  
 11 Pee Wee's at the Point ..... A3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- Bogarts ..... (see 6)  
 Darwin Ski Club ..... (see 9)

### 📍 Entertainment

- 12 Darwin Railway Club ..... B4

### 📍 Shopping

- 13 Nightcliff Market ..... B2  
 14 Parap Village Market ..... B4  
 15 Rapid Creek Market ..... B3  
 Tiwi Art Network ..... (see 14)

Arnhem Land and dot paintings from the desert. An entire room is devoted to **Cyclone Tracy**, in a display that graphically illustrates life before and after the disaster. You can stand in a darkened room and listen to the whirring sound of Tracy at full throttle – a sound you won't forget in a hurry.

The cavernous **Maritime Gallery** houses an assortment of weird and wonderful crafts from the nearby islands and Indonesia, as well as a pearling lugger and a Vietnamese refugee boat.

Pride of place among the stuffed animals undoubtedly goes to Sweetheart: a 5m-long, 780kg saltwater crocodile. It became a Top End personality after attacking several fishing dinghies on the Finniss River, south of Darwin.

The museum has a good bookshop, and the Cornucopia Cafe (p823) is a great lunch spot with views over the sea.

### Fannie Bay Gaol Museum MUSEUM

(Map p814; ☎08-8999 8290; <http://artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/museums/moretosee/gaol/itage/visit/gaol>; cnr East Point Rd & Ross Smith Ave; admission by donation; ☀10am-3pm) This interesting (if slightly grim) museum represents almost 100 years of solitude. Serving as Darwin's main jail from 1883 to 1979, the solid cells contain information panels that provide a window into the region's unique social history. Lepers, refugees and juveniles were among the groups of people confined here. You can still see the old cells, and the gallows constructed for two hangings in 1952.

### Defence of Darwin Experience MUSEUM

(Map p814; ☎08-8981 9702; [www.defenceofdarwin.nt.gov.au](http://www.defenceofdarwin.nt.gov.au); adult/child/family \$14/5.50/35; ☀9.30am-5pm) At this innovative, multimedia experience, you can hear personal accounts of those affected by, or those who actively participated in, Australia's defence during WWII. Darwin and the Top End is the focus – the area was bombed 64 times, with 188 aircraft attacking the city on 19 February 1942. A small theatre runs a 20-minute show bringing it all to life. On East Point's northern side is a series of WWII gun emplacements and the **Darwin Military Museum**.

### Northern Centre for Contemporary Art GALLERY

(NCCA; Map p814; ☎08-8981 5368; <http://nccart.com.au>; Vimy Lane, Parap Shopping Village; ☀10am-4pm Wed-Fri, to 2pm Sat) **FREE** The NCCA is a really small space but has some changing and challenging exhibitions. It's worth checking out while doing the Parap Market.

## 📍 Outer East

### Crocodylus Park ZOO

(Map p814; [www.crocodyluspark.com.au](http://www.crocodyluspark.com.au); 815 McMillans Rd, Berrimah; adult/child \$40/20; ☀9am-5pm) Crocodylus Park showcases hundreds of crocs and a minizoo comprising lions, tigers and other big cats, spider monkeys, marmosets, cassowaries and large birds. Allow about two hours to look around the whole park, and you should time your visit with a **tour** (10am, noon, 2pm & 3.30pm), which includes a feeding demonstration. Croc-meat BBQ packs for sale!

## Central Darwin

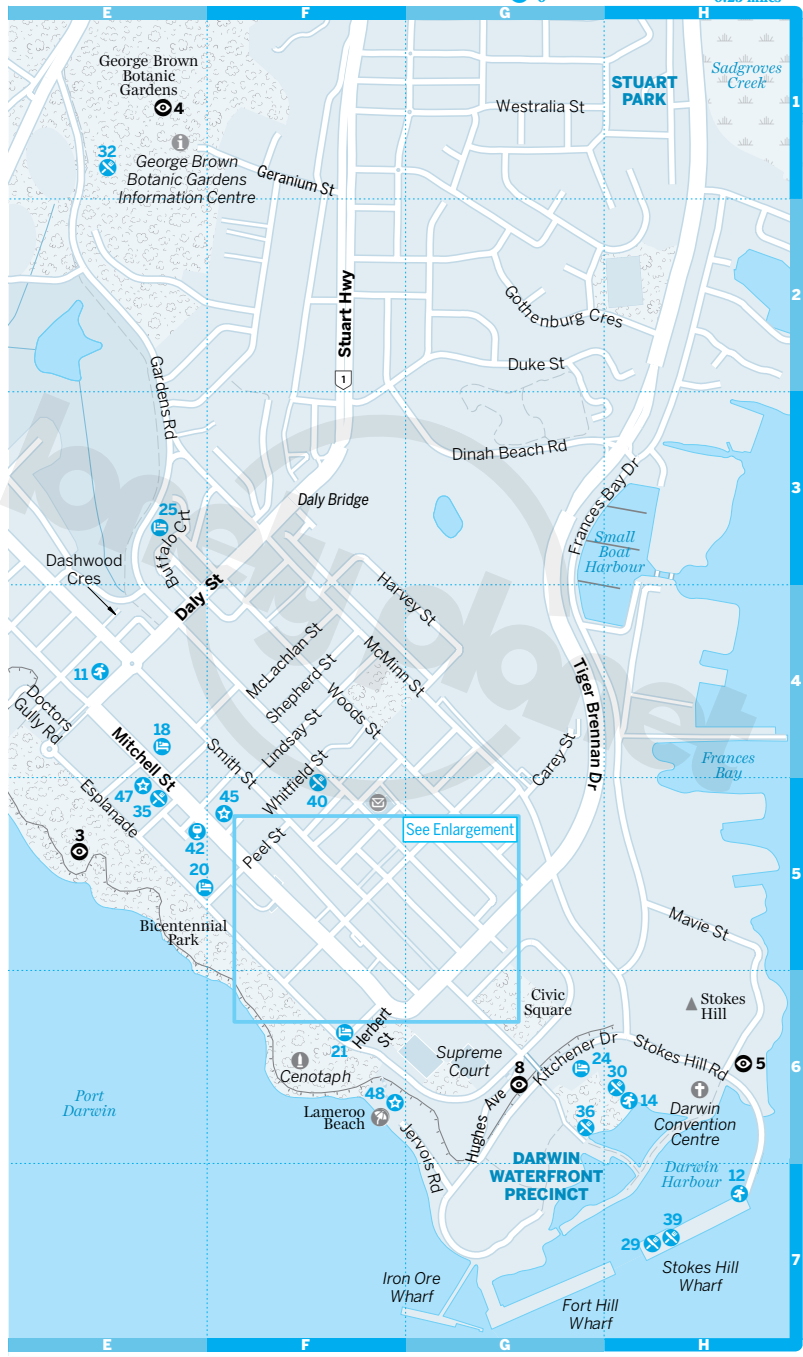


Crocodiles can inhabit all waterways in tropical areas. Swimming is not recommended.





DARWIN & AROUND



## Central Darwin

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Crocosaurus Cove ..... A6

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Aquascene ..... D4  
 3 Bicentennial Park ..... E5  
 Burnett House ..... (see 7)  
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 4 George Brown Botanic Gardens ..... E1  
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- 9 Anniki Pearl Lugger Cruises ..... B2  
 10 Darwin Day Tours ..... A6  
 11 Darwin Scooter Hire ..... E4  
 12 Sunset Sail ..... H7  
 13 Tiwi by Design ..... B3  
 14 Wave & Recreation Lagoons ..... H6

### 📍 Sleeping

- 15 Chilli's ..... A6  
 16 Cullen Bay Resorts ..... C2  
 17 Darwin Central Hotel ..... B6  
 18 Dingo Moon Lodge ..... E4  
 19 Elan Soho Suites ..... D5  
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 20 Novotel Atrium ..... E5  
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 23 Value Inn ..... B6  
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- 26 Youth Shack ..... A6

### 🍴 Eating

- 27 Char Restaurant ..... A7  
 28 Coles ..... B6  
 29 Crustaceans ..... H7  
 30 Curve ..... H6  
 31 Eat a Pizza ..... B2  
 32 Eva's Cafe ..... E1  
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 34 Four Birds ..... C6  
 35 Hanuman ..... E5  
 36 Hot Tamale ..... G6  
 37 Moorish Café ..... C5  
 38 Roma Bar ..... C6  
 39 Stokes Hill Wharf ..... H7  
 40 Woolworths ..... F5

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 41 Deck Bar ..... C7  
 42 Discovery & Lost Arc ..... E5  
 43 Tap on Mitchell ..... A6  
 44 Throb ..... B5

### 🎪 Entertainment

- 45 Birch Carroll & Coyle ..... F5  
 46 Brown's Mart ..... C7  
 47 Darwin Entertainment Centre ..... E5  
 48 Deckchair Cinema ..... F6  
 49 Happy Yess ..... C7

### 🛍️ Shopping

- 50 Aboriginal Fine Arts Gallery ..... B6  
 51 Mbantua Fine Art Gallery ..... C7  
 52 NT General Store ..... C5

The park is about 15km from the city centre. Take bus 5 from Darwin.



## Activities

### Beaches & Swimming

Darwin is no beach paradise – naturally enough the harbour has no surf – but along the convoluted coastline north of the city centre is a string of sandy beaches. The most popular are **Mindil** and **Vestey's** on Fannie Bay. Further north, a stretch of the 7km **Casuarina Beach** is an official nude beach. Darwin's swimming beaches tend to be far enough away from mangrove creeks to make the threat of meeting a crocodile very remote. A bigger problem is the deadly box jellyfish, which makes swimming decidedly unhealthy between October and March (and often before October and un-

til May). You can swim year-round without fear of stingers in the western part of **Lake Alexander**, an easy cycle from the centre at **East Point** (Map p814; ☀️ mangrove boardwalk 8am-6pm), and at the very popular Wave & Recreation Lagoons (p813), the centrepiece of the Darwin Wharf Precinct. At the Recreation Lagoon (p813), filtered seawater and nets provide a natural seawater swim.

### Sailing

#### Darwin Sailing Club

SAILING

(Map p814; ☎️ 08-89811700; www.dwnsail.com.au) A good place to meet local yachties, and an excellent place to watch the sunset over a beer. Although you can't charter boats here, there is a noticeboard advertising crewing needs and detailing the seasonal race program. Qualified instructors are available for sailing and windsurfing lessons.



## Cycling

Darwin is great for cycling (in winter!). Traffic is light and a series of **bike tracks** covers most of the city, with the main one running from the northern end of Cavenagh St to Fannie Bay, Coconut Grove, Nightcliff and Casuarina. At Fannie Bay, a side track heads out to the **East Point Reserve**. Consider heading for **Charles Darwin National Park** (Map p814; [www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/charlesdarwin#](http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/charlesdarwin#); ☀ 8am-7pm), 5km southeast of the city, with a few kilometres of path around the park's wetlands, woodlands and WWII bunkers. Some hostels hire out bicycles for \$15 to \$25 per day for a mountain bike, or try:

### Darwin Scooter Hire

CYCLING

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8941 2434; [www.thescootershop.com.au](http://www.thescootershop.com.au); 9 Daly St; ☀ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) Mountain bikes for \$20 a day (\$100 deposit required).

## Skydiving

### Top End Tandems

ADVENTURE SPORTS

(☎ 0417 190 140; [www.topendtandems.com.au](http://www.topendtandems.com.au); tandem jumps from \$380) Tandem skydives starting at Darwin Airport and landing at Lee Point Reserve.

## 👉 Tours

There are dozens of tours in and around Darwin, and lots of combinations covering Kakadu, Arnhem Land, Litchfield and further afield.

## Batji Indigenous Waterfront

### Walking Tour

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎ 0416 731 353; [www.batjigtours.com.au](http://www.batjigtours.com.au); adult/child \$70/free; ☀ 10am Wed & Fri) An excellent two-hour walking tour along the Esplanade run by the Larrakia people of Darwin. You will learn about the local wildlife, discover Lameroo beach and gain insight into places of cultural significance to the Larrakia people.

### Darwin Explorer

BUS TOUR

(☎ 0416 140 903; <http://theaustralianexplorer.com.au/darwin-explorer.html>; 24hr ticket adult/child \$35/20) Open-top bus tours that explore Darwin's major sights; hop on/hop off with either a 24-hour or 48-hour ticket. Departs every 30 minutes from the tourist information centre.

### Tour Tub

BUS TOUR

(☎ 08-8985 6322; [www.tourtub.com.au](http://www.tourtub.com.au); adult/child \$100/60) Offering five-hour guided, minibus tours around Darwin's big-ticket sights; price includes admission charges to attractions such as Defence of Darwin Experience.

## Sea Darwin

ECOTOUR

(☎ 1300 065 022; [www.seadarwin.com](http://www.seadarwin.com); tours adult/child from \$35/20) 🌿 One-, two-, or three-hour eco tours around the city and Darwin Harbour, checking out mangroves, a crocodile trap, a shipwreck and (if you're lucky) dugongs and dolphins.

### Darwin Day Tours

TOUR

(Map p816; ☎ 1300 721 365; [www.darwindaytours.com.au](http://www.darwindaytours.com.au); afternoon city tours adult/child \$75/38) Runs an afternoon city tour that takes in all the major attractions, including Stokes Hill Wharf, the Museum & Art Gallery and East Point Reserve. Can be linked with a 'sunset fish 'n' chips harbour cruise' (\$55/40).

### Tiwi Tours

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎ 1300 721 365; [www.aussieadventures.com.au](http://www.aussieadventures.com.au); adult/child inc flights \$550/410) Small-group cultural tours out to the nearby Tiwi Islands with Indigenous guides (adult/child including flights \$550/410). Kakadu and Litchfield tours also available through the company's other brands: Darwin Day Tours and Aussie Adventure.

## Northern Territory

### Indigenous Tours

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎ 1300 921 188; [www.ntitours.com.au](http://www.ntitours.com.au); adult/child \$249/124) Upmarket Indigenous tours to Litchfield National Park.

### Sacred Earth Safaris

OUTDOORS

(☎ 08-8555 3838; [www.sacredearthsafaris.com.au](http://www.sacredearthsafaris.com.au)) Multiday, small-group 4WD camping tours around Kakadu, Katherine and the Kimberley. Two-day Kakadu tour starts at \$850; the five-day Top End National Parks Safari is \$2600.

### Kakadu Dreams

TOUR

(☎ 1800 813 266; [www.kakadudreams.com.au](http://www.kakadudreams.com.au)) Backpacker day tours to Litchfield (\$119), and boisterous two-/three-day trips to Kakadu (\$400/535).

### Wallaroo Tours

TOUR

(☎ 08-8981 6670; [www.wallarootours.com](http://www.wallarootours.com); tours \$160) Small-group tours to Litchfield National Park.

## Harbour Cruises

Between April and October there are plenty of boats based at the Cullen Bay Marina and Stokes Hill Wharf to take you on a cruise of the harbour.

### Anniki Pearl Lugger Cruises

SAILING

(Map p816; ☎ 0428 414 000; [www.australianharbourcruises.com.au](http://www.australianharbourcruises.com.au); tours adult/child \$70/50)

Three-hour sunset cruises on this historical pearling lugger depart from Cullen Bay Marina and include sparkling wine and nibbles. You might recognise the ship from the film *Australia*.

### Sunset Sail

SAILING

(Map p816; ☎ 0408 795 567; www.sailnt.com.au; tours adult/child \$70/45) This three-hour afternoon cruise aboard the catamaran *Day-mirri 2* departs from Stokes Hill Wharf. Refreshments are included but BYO alcohol.

## ★ Festivals & Events

### WordStorm

LITERATURE

(www.wordstorm.org.au) The biannual NT Writers' Festival event in May (even-numbered years), includes song, storytelling, visual-art collaboration, theatre, performance poetry, history, biography, poetry and fiction.

### Darwin Blues Festival

MUSIC

In late June the Darwin Botanic Gardens charge up with electrifying live blues. Much beer and bending of guitar strings.

### Beer Can Regatta

CULTURAL

(www.beercanregatta.org.au) An utterly insane and typically Territorian festival that features races for boats made out of beer cans. It takes place at Mindil Beach in July and is a good, fun day.

### Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

ART

(www.darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au) Held at the Darwin Convention Centre, this three-day August festival showcases Indigenous art from communities throughout the Territory.

### Darwin Festival

ART

(www.darwinfestival.org.au) This mainly outdoor arts and culture festival celebrates music, theatre, visual art, dance and cabaret and runs for 18 days in August. Festivities are centred in the large park next to Civic Sq, off Harry Chan Ave.

## 🛏 Sleeping

Darwin has a good range of accommodation, most of it handy to the CBD, but finding a bed in the peak May to September period can be difficult at short notice – book ahead, at least for the first night. Accommodation prices vary greatly with the season and demand; expect big discounts between November and March, especially for midrange and top-end accommodation.

Backpacker hostels fluctuate the least, and prices differ little between places –

concentrated as they are in a small stretch of bar-heavy Mitchell St. If you want a quieter stay, choose somewhere a bit further out – they're usually still within walking distance of the action. Hostel facilities generally include communal kitchen, pool and laundry facilities, and they all have tour-booking desks. Some offer airport, bus or train-station pick-ups with advance bookings, and most give YHA/VIP discounts.

## 🏠 City Centre

### Melaleuca on Mitchell

HOSTEL \$

(Map p816; ☎ 1300 723 437; www.momdarwin.com.au; 52 Mitchell St; dm \$32, d with/without bathroom \$115/95; 🍷🍷🍷) If you stay here take note – 24-hour check-in and it's plonked right in the action on Mitchell Street. So, sleeping...maybe not. Partying? Oh yes! The highlight is the rooftop island bar and pool area overlooking Mitchell St – complete with waterfall spa and big-screen TV. Party heaven! This modern hostel is immaculate with great facilities and it's very secure. The 3rd floor is female only.

### Dingo Moon Lodge

HOSTEL \$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8941 3444; www.dingomoonlodge.com; 88 Mitchell St; incl breakfast dm \$32-38, d & tw \$105; 🍷🍷🍷) Howl at the moon at the Dingo. This fun, laid-back hostel is slightly removed from the party scene, although everything is still at your doorstep. It's a two-building affair with 65 beds – big enough to be sociable but not rowdy. Cleanliness and service tend to fluctuate. A highlight is the pool, sparkling underneath a massive frangipani tree.

### Chilli's

HOSTEL \$

(Map p816; ☎ 1800 351 313, 08-8980 5800; www.chillis.com.au; 69a Mitchell St; dm \$34, tw & d without bathroom \$100; 🍷🍷🍷) Friendly Chilli's is a funky place with a small sun deck and spa (use the pool next door). There's also a pool table and a breezy kitchen/meals terrace overlooking Mitchell St. Rooms are compact but clean. There are nice touches to this place, such as pots with scented herbs hanging from the roof of the balcony.

### Youth Shack

HOSTEL \$

(Map p816; ☎ 1300 793 302; www.youthshack.com.au; 69 Mitchell St; dm \$34, tw & d without bathroom \$90; 🍷) At one end of the Transit Centre, this popular hostel has a large open kitchen and meals area overlooking a pool big enough to actually swim in. The bar here is very popular and at times raucous. Rooms are a little

tired but clean, and the staff are consistently praised for being friendly and helpful. The tour desk here has a great reputation.

### Darwin Central Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8944 9000, 1300 364 263; [www.darwincentral.com.au](http://www.darwincentral.com.au); 21 Knuckey St; d from \$180; 4, 5, 8, 10) Right in the centre of town, this plush independent hotel oozes contemporary style and impeccable facilities. There are a range of stylish rooms with excellent accessibility for disabled travellers. Rack rates are steep, but internet, weekend and three-night-stay discounts make it great value. The excellent breakfast caps things off nicely.

### Value Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 4733; [www.valueinn.com.au](http://www.valueinn.com.au); 50 Mitchell St; d from \$140; ) A great option right in the thick of the Mitchell St action but (mostly) quiet and comfortable. Value Inn lives up to its name, especially out of season. En-suite rooms are small but sleep up to three and have fridge and TV.

### Palms City Resort

RESORT \$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 1800 829 211, 08-8982 9200; <http://palmscityresort.com>; 64 The Esplanade; d motel/villas \$230/280; ) Consistently receiving the thumbs up from travellers, this centrally located resort is fringed by palm-filled gardens. If you covet a microwave and have space cravings, the superior motel rooms are worth a bit extra, while the Asian-influenced, hexagonal villas with outdoor spas are utterly indulgent. Butterflies and dragonflies drift between bougainvillea in the knockout gardens.

### Vibe Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8982 9998; [www.tfehotels.com/brands/vibe-hotels/vibe-hotel-darwin-waterfront](http://www.tfehotels.com/brands/vibe-hotels/vibe-hotel-darwin-waterfront); 7 Kitchener Dr; r \$260-310; ) You're in for an upmarket stay at this professional set-up with friendly staff and a great location at the Darwin Waterfront Precinct. Room prices creep upwards with more bed space and water views. The Wave Lagoon is right next door if the shady swimming pool is too placid for you.

### Elan Soho Suites

HOTEL, APARTMENTS \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 0888; [www.elansohosuites.com](http://www.elansohosuites.com); 31 Woods St; r \$220, 1-2-bed apt \$270/310; ) This innovative newcomer was still in the midst of major renovations when we dropped in, but had just started to accept guests. Room prices (at least initially, while the place gets established) promise

to be great value. Views are stunning, facilities first-rate; you can even check-in online, and unlock your room door via your mobile phone. Its restaurant 'Seoul Food' brings Korean cooking to Darwin.

### Novotel Atrium

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8941 0755; [www.novotel.com](http://www.novotel.com); 100 The Esplanade; d from \$350, 2-bedroom apt from \$470; ) Yes, it's a chain hotel, but this one, with to-die-for ocean views, stands out from the crowd. Stylistic standards are above the norm: subtle lighting, fresh flowers and interesting Indigenous art. Breathe the sea air on your balcony or descend into the kidney-shaped swimming pool, one of the best-looking puddles in Darwin. Breakfasts are a highlight.

## City Fringe & Suburbs

### Discovery Holiday

#### Park – Darwin

CARAVAN PARK \$

(Map p814; ☎ 1800 662 253, 08-8984 3330; [www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/nt/darwin/darwin](http://www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/nt/darwin/darwin); cnr Farrell Cres & Stuart Hwy, Winnellie; camp sites \$34, cabins \$104-184; ) Caravan park with immaculate facilities, a camp kitchen, a licensed shop, a covered outdoor saltwater pool and friendly staff. Public bus 8 rolls into downtown Darwin from the corner of the street.

### FreeSpirit Resort Darwin

CARAVAN PARK \$

(Map p828; ☎ 08-8935 0888; [www.darwinfreespiritresort.com.au](http://www.darwinfreespiritresort.com.au); 901 Stuart Hwy, Berrimah; camp sites \$50, cabins & units \$140-300; ) An impressive highway-side park about a 10-minute drive from the city, with loads of facilities (including three pools). With a jumping cushion, a kidz corner, a bar and live music in the Dry, adults and kids are easily entertained.

### Vitina Studio Motel

MOTEL \$\$

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 1544; [www.vitinstudiomotel.com.au](http://www.vitinstudiomotel.com.au); 38 Gardens Rd; d/ste \$175/250; ) We like this place: value-for-money rooms, friendly and efficient service, and a convenient Darwin location. It's a deal. Contemporary motel rooms and larger studios with kitchenettes are on offer. It's right on the city fringe, convenient to the Gardens Park golf course, the Botanic Gardens and Mindil Beach. Keep an eye on its website for discounts.

### Steeles at Larrakeyah

B&amp;B \$\$

(Darwin City B&B; Map p816; ☎ 08-8941 3636; [www.darwinbnb.com.au](http://www.darwinbnb.com.au); 4 Zealandia Cres, Larrakeyah; d from \$225, 1 & 2-bedroom apts \$285-410; ) Some B&Bs are businesslike and others feel

like you're staying with friends; Steeles is one of the latter. There are three rooms in this pleasant Spanish Mission-style home, equipped with fridges, flat-screen TVs and private entrances. The owners also run apartments nearby which have excellent facilities and Indigenous art adorning the walls.

### Cullen Bay Resorts

APARTMENTS \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎1800 625 533, 08-8981 7999; www.cullenbayresortsdarwin.com.au; 26-32 Marina Blvd; 1-bed apt with standard/sea views \$310/330; 🍷🍷🍷) This pair of twin apartment towers boasts a million-dollar outlook over Cullen Bay marina and harbour. It's worth shelling out extra for the water views. There are restaurants a short stroll away, as is the ferry to Mandorah. You should get at least 10% off these rates if it's not busy.

## 🍴 Eating

Darwin is the glistening pearl in the Territory's dining scene. Eateries make the most of the tropical ambience with alfresco seating, and the quality and diversity of produce top anywhere else in the Territory.

## 🔪 City Centre

There are two large supermarkets in downtown Darwin: **Coles** (Map p816; 55-59 Mitchell St, Mitchell Centre; ☺24hr) and **Woolworths** (Map p816; cnr Cavenagh & Whitfield Sts; ☺6am-10pm).

### Roma Bar

CAFE \$

(Map p816; ☎8981 6729; www.romabar.com.au; 9-11 Cavenagh St; mains \$8-15; ☺7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat, 8am-1pm Sun; 🍷) Roma is a local institution and the most reliable place for quality coffee in Darwin. It's a meeting place for lefties, literati and travellers. It's well away from the craziness of Mitchell St, with free wi-fi and fresh juices, and you can get anything from muesli and eggs Benedict for breakfast to excellent toasted focaccia and even fish curry for lunch.

### Stokes Hill Wharf

SEAFOOD, FAST FOOD \$\$

(Map p816; Stokes Hill Wharf; mains \$10-20; ☺from 11am) Squatting on the end of Stokes Hill Wharf is a hectic food centre with a dozen food counters and outdoor tables lined up along the pier. It's a pumping place for some fish and chips, oysters, a stir-fry, a laksa or just a cold sunset beer.

### Crustaceans

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 8658; www.crustaceans.net.au; Stokes Hill Wharf; mains \$18-40; ☺from 5.30pm; 🍷) This casual, licensed restaurant

features fresh fish, bugs, lobster, oysters, even crocodile, as well as succulent steaks. It's all about the location, perched right at the end of Stokes Hill Wharf with sunset views over Francis Bay. The cold beer and a first-rate wine list seal the deal.

### Hot Tamale

MEXICAN \$\$

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 5471; www.hottamale.net.au; Bldg 3, 19 Kitchener Dr; mains \$20-25; ☺noon-9pm) With drink specials aplenty and a fun, laid-back attitude, this place is recommended as much for the atmosphere and brilliant waterfront location as for the delicious Mexican food. Tacos, burritos and nachos galore.

### Curve

CAFE \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎08-8982 9709; 7 Kitchener Dr; mains \$22-35; ☺6am-9pm; 🍷) Spacious and clean inside and with comfy seating out the front to catch the breeze, this all-rounder is good for a bite any time of the day. Lunch is a good deal: a burger or panini with a beer or glass of wine is \$18. In the evening tuck into pan-seared Cajun tuna. It's opposite the wave lagoon – handy for families needing extra shade or something to fuel up on.

### Moorish Café

MIDDLE EASTERN \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 0010; www.moorishcafe.com.au; 37 Knuckey St; tapas \$7-11, mains \$33; ☺9am-2.30pm & 6-10pm Tue-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat) Seductive aromas emanate from this divine terracotta-tiled cafe fusing North African, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern delights. The tapas can be a bit hit-and-miss but dishes such as the pork belly with chilli-chocolate sauce and Berber spiced kangaroo are tasty and reliable. It's a lovely dining experience, especially with a table overlooking the street.

### Hanuman

INDIAN, THAI \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎08-8941 3500; www.hanuman.com.au; 93 Mitchell St; mains \$19-38; ☺noon-2.30pm, dinner from 6pm; 🍷) Ask most locals about fine dining in Darwin and they'll usually mention Hanuman. It's sophisticated but not stuffy. Enticing aromas of innovative Indian and Thai Nonya dishes waft from the kitchen to the stylish open dining room and deck. The menu is broad, with exotic vegetarian choices and banquets also available.

### Char Restaurant

STEAK \$\$\$

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 4544; www.charrestaurant.com.au; cnr The Esplanade & Knuckey St; mains \$30-60; ☺noon-3pm Wed-Fri, 6-11pm daily) Housed in the grounds of the historic Admiralty House is Char, a carnivore's paradise. The speciality here is chargrilled steaks –

aged, grain-fed and cooked to perfection – but there's also a range of clever seafood creations such as banana prawn and crab tian, with avocado purée and *tobiko* caviar.

## City Fringe & Suburbs

**Laneway Speciality Coffee** CAFE \$  
(Map p814; ☎08-8941 4511; 4/1 Vickers St, Parap; mains \$12-18; ☀8am-3pm Mon-Sat) The pared-back, industrial interior, corner location and powerhouse coffee here have locals wondering if they could be in Melbourne. Getting rave reviews, this place is fast becoming popular. Its well-prepared dishes use local and organic ingredients; the almost artistic bacon and egg roll is worth the trip here alone. For lunch the Wagyu beef burger beckons.

**Cyclone Cafe** CAFE \$  
(Map p814; www.parapvillage.com.au; 8 Urquhart St, Parap; meals \$12-18; ☀7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) Cyclone's decor is all rusty corrugated iron, although it's surprisingly cosy inside, with local art on the walls, upbeat staff and strong, aromatic coffee (try the triple-shot 'Hypercino'). The menu is diverse-offering breakfast goodies such as Middle Eastern eggs, spinach, feta, lemon rind and dukkah on a muffin. Yummy. Lunch is salads, burgers and melts.

**Eva's Cafe** CAFE \$  
(Map p816; George Brown Botanic Gardens; mains \$8-14; ☀7am-3pm) Brought to Darwin by ship in 1897, this lovely Methodist church building provides an atmospheric respite in Darwin's botanic gardens. The outdoor areas, including shaded deck in the rear, means it's favoured by parents and kids. Breakfast is short and sweet – think muesli and toasties – while sandwiches and salads feature at lunchtime.

**★ Exotic North Indian Cuisine** INDIAN \$\$  
(Map p816; ☎08-8941 3396; http://exoticnorthindiancuisine.com.au; Cullen Bay Marina; mains \$15-20; ☀from 5pm; ♿) Offering outstanding value for quality Indian cuisine, this place has taken over the mantle of Darwin's best Indian restaurant. It's positioned right on the waterfront at Cullen Bay, making for extremely pleasant waterside dining in the evening. The service is attentive, there are high chairs for young 'uns and, unusually for Darwin, you can BYO wine.

**★ Darwin Ski Club** MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$  
(Map p814; ☎08-8981 6630; www.darwinskiclub.com.au; Conacher St, Fannie Bay; mains \$18-24; ☀1-9pm) This place just keeps getting better.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### PARAP VILLAGE MARKET

Parap Village is a foodie's heaven with several good restaurants, bars and cafes as well as the highly recommended deli **Parap Fine Foods** (Map p814; ☎08-8981 8597; www.parapfinefoods.com; 40 Parap Rd, Parap; ☀8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun). However, it's the Saturday morning **markets** (p825) that attract locals like bees to honey. It's got a relaxed vibe as breakfast merges into brunch and then lunch. Between visits to the takeaway food stalls (most serving spicy Southeast Asian snacks) shoppers stock up on tropical fruit and vegetables – all you need to make your own laksa or rendang. The produce is local so you know it's fresh.

Already Darwin's finest location for a sunset beer, it now does seriously good tucker too. The dishes are well prepared, and the menu is thoughtful and enticing. We had the pork belly and were astonished with the quality of the dish, while the chorizo and barramundi linguine also gets the thumbs up. Highly recommended by locals.

**Cornucopia Cafe** CAFE \$\$  
(Map p814; ☎08-8941 9009; Bullocky Point, Conacher St, Fannie Bay; mains \$20-30; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Sat & 5.30-8.30pm Wed-Sat) Appended to the museum and gallery, this cafe makes for a good stop while you're in the 'hood. The outdoor eating area is breezy and scenic, overlooking the water. The menu is varied and has great salads including Thai grilled beef or octopus. For something more filling, local barra and wagyu rump round out the options.

**Eat a Pizza** PIZZA \$\$  
(Map p816; ☎08-8941 0963; 1/57 Marina Blvd, Cullen Bay; large pizzas \$22, pasta \$18; ☀5-10pm Tue-Sun) A long-time family-owned business just across the road from the waterfront at Cullen Bay. The large, shaded, outdoor dining area is often buzzing with contented diners tucking into scrumptious homemade pizza and pasta dishes.

**Pavonia Place** MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$  
(Map p814; ☎08-8948 1515; www.pavoniaplace.com.au; 2 Pavonia Place, Nightcliff; mains \$26-36; ☀5.30pm-late Tue-Sat) A hidden gem in the backstreets of Nightcliff. Pavonia has a great take on modern Australian fusion cuisine; the oven-baked eggplant filled with



broccoli, creamy goat's cheese, garlic cloves, mushroom and cherry tomatoes goes down a treat. It uses fresh local ingredients and the dining area is spacious but also intimate.

**Pee Wee's at the Point** MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$  
(Map p814; ☎ 08-8981 6868; www.peewees.com.au; Alec Fong Lim Dr, East Point Reserve; mains \$40-50; ☺ from 6.30pm) With lobster tail kicking in at \$70 a serve, this is indeed a place for a treat. One of Darwin's finest restaurants, it is well worth shelling out for the experience. Enjoy your lemongrass, ginger and duck-stock-braised pork belly among tropical palms at East Point Reserve, right on the waterfront.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Drinking is big business in tropical Darwin (cold beer and humidity have a symbiotic relationship), and the city has dozens of pubs and terrace bars that make the most of balmy evenings. Virtually all bars double as restaurants, especially along Mitchell St – a frenzied row of booze rooms full of travellers, all within stumbling distance of one another.

### ★ Darwin Ski Club

PUB  
(Map p814; ☎ 080-8981 6630; www.darwinskiclub.com.au; Conacher St, Fannie Bay) Leave Mitchell St behind and head for a sublime sunset at this laid-back water-ski club on Vestey's Beach. The view through the palm trees from the beer garden is a winner, and there are often live bands. Hands down best venue for a sunset beer in Darwin.

### Bogarts

BAR  
(Map p814; ☎ 08-8981 3561; 52 Gregory St, Parap; ☺ 4pm-late Tue-Sat) Bogarts is one of Darwin's best bars and well worth the trek out into the suburbs. The decor is old movie posters, cane furniture and animal-print lounges in a mishmash that, strangely enough, works beautifully. It has a low-key ambience and is a local favourite for the over-30s crowd.

### Tap on Mitchell

BAR  
(Map p816; www.thetap.com.au; 51 Mitchell St) One of the busiest and best of the Mitchell St terrace bars, the Tap is always buzzing and there are inexpensive meals (nachos, burgers, calamari) to complement a great range of beer and wine.

### Beachfront Hotel

PUB  
(☎ 08-8985 3000; 342 Casuarina Dr, Rapid Creek) Close to the border of Nightcliff, this rollicking pub attracts a local crowd and often has bands. A spot out on the breezy front deck with a cold drink is ideal.

### Deck Bar

BAR  
(Map p816; www.thedeckbar.com.au; 22 Mitchell St) At the nonpartying parliamentary end of Mitchell St, the Deck Bar still manages to get lively with happy hours, pub trivia and regular live music. Blurring the line between indoors and outdoors brilliantly, the name-sake deck is perfect for people-watching.

### Discovery & Lost Arc

CLUB  
(Map p816; www.discoverydarwin.com.au; 89 Mitchell St) Discovery is Darwin's biggest nightclub and dance venue, with three levels featuring hip hop, techno and house, bars, private booths, karaoke, an elevated dance floor and plenty of partygoers. The Lost Arc is the classy chill-out bar opening on to Mitchell St, which starts to thaw after about 10pm.



## Entertainment

Darwin's balmy nights invite a bit of late-night exploration and while there are only a handful of nightclubs, you'll find something on every night of the week. There's also a thriving arts and entertainment scene: theatre, film and concerts.

*Off the Leash* (www.offtheleash.net.au) magazine lists events happening around town, as does **Darwin Community Arts** (www.darwincommunityarts.org.au). Keep an eye out for bills posted on noticeboards and telegraph poles that advertise dance and full-moon parties.

Just about every pub/bar in town puts on some form of live music, mostly on Friday and Saturday nights, and sometimes filling the midweek void with karaoke and DJs.

### Throb

CLUB  
(Map p816; 64 Smith St; ☺ 11pm-4am Fri & Sat) Darwin's premier gay- and lesbian-friendly nightclub and cocktail bar, Throb attracts partygoers of all genders and persuasions for its hot DJs and cool atmosphere. Hosts drag shows and touring live acts. Don't miss the Batman & Throbbin' show on Friday.

### ★ Deckchair Cinema

CINEMA  
(Map p816; ☎ 08-8981 0700; www.deckchaircinema.com; Jervois Rd, Waterfront Precinct; adult/child \$16/8; ☺ box office from 6.30pm Apr-Nov) During the Dry, the Darwin Film Society runs this fabulous outdoor cinema below the southern end of the Esplanade. Watch a movie under the stars while reclining in a deckchair. There's a licensed bar serving food or you can bring a picnic (no BYO alcohol). There are usually double features on Friday and Saturday nights (adult/child \$24/12).

**Birch Carroll & Coyle**

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 5999; www.eventcinemas.com.au; 76 Mitchell St; adult/child \$19/14.50) Darwin's mainstream cinema complex, screening latest-release films across five theatres. Head down on Tropical Tuesday for \$12.50 entry.

CINEMA

**Darwin Entertainment Centre**

(Map p816; ☎08-8980 3333; www.darwinentertainment.com.au; 93 Mitchell St; ☎box office 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri & 1hr prior to shows) Darwin's main community arts venue houses the Playhouse and Studio Theatres, and hosts events from fashion-award nights to plays, rock operas, comedies and concerts.

ARTS CENTRE

**Brown's Mart**

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 5522; www.brownsmart.com.au; 12 Smith St) This historic venue (a former mining exchange) features live theatre performances, music and short films.

PERFORMING ARTS

**Happy Yess**

(Map p816; happyyess.tumblr.com; 12 Smith St, Browns Mart) This venue is Darwin's leading place for live music. It's run by musicians so you won't hear cover bands in here. Original, sometimes weird, always fun.

LIVE MUSIC

**Darwin Railway Club**

(Map p814; ☎08-8981 4171; www.darwinrailwayclub.com; 17 Somerville Gardens, Parap) Big sup-

LIVE MUSIC

porters of Darwin's live-music scene, this place pulls in some class acts.

**Shopping**

You don't have to walk far along the Smith St Mall to find a souvenir shop selling lousy NT souvenirs: tea towels, T-shirts, stubbie holders and cane-toad coin purses (most of it made in China). Also in oversupply are outlets selling Aboriginal arts and crafts (be informed about reliable operators; see p826). Darwin's fabulous markets sell unique handcrafted items such as seed-pod hats, shell jewellery, kites, clothing and original photos.

**NT General Store**

(Map p816; ☎08-8981 8242; www.thentgeneralstore.com.au; 42 Cavenagh St; ☎8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, to 6pm Thu & Fri, to 1pm Sat) This casual, corrugated-iron warehouse has shelves piled high with camping and bush-walking gear, as well as a range of maps.

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

**Aboriginal Fine Arts Gallery**

(Map p816; www.aaia.com.au; 1st fl, cnr Mitchell & Knuckey Sts; ☎9am-5pm) Displays and sells art from Arnhem Land and the central desert region.

ARTS

**DARWIN'S MAGICAL MARKETS**

**Mindil Beach Sunset Market** (Map p816; www.mindil.com.au; off Gilruth Ave; ☎5-10pm Thu, 4-9pm Sun May-Oct) Food is the main attraction here – from Thai, Sri Lankan, Indian, Chinese and Malaysian to Brazilian, Greek, Portuguese and more – all at around \$6 to \$12 a serve. But that's only half the fun – arts and crafts stalls bulge with handmade jewellery, fabulous rainbow tie-dyed clothes, Aboriginal artefacts, and wares from Indonesia and Thailand. Mindil Beach is about 2km from Darwin's city centre; an easy walk or hop on buses 4 or 6 which go past the market area.

As the sun heads towards the horizon, half of Darwin descends on the market, with tables, chairs, rugs, grog and kids in tow. Peruse and promenade, stop for a pummelling massage or to listen to rhythmic live music. Don't miss a flaming satay stick from Bobby's brazier. Top it off with fresh fruit salad, decadent cakes or luscious crêpes.

Similar stalls (you'll recognise many of the stallholders) can be found at various suburban markets from Friday to Sunday.

**Parap Village Market** (Map p814; www.parapvillage.com.au; Parap Shopping Village, Parap Rd, Parap; ☎8am-2pm Sat) This compact, crowded food-focused market is a local favourite. There's the full gamut of Southeast Asian cuisine, as well as plenty of ingredients to cook up your own tropical storm.

**Rapid Creek Market** (Map p814; www.rapidcreekshoppingcentre.com.au; 48 Trower Rd, Rapid Creek; ☎6.30am-1.30pm Sun) Darwin's oldest market is an Asian marketplace, with a tremendous range of tropical fruit and vegetables mingled with a heady mixture of spices and swirling satay smoke.

**Nightcliff Market** (Map p814; www.nightcliffmarkets.com.au; Pavonia Way, Nightcliff; ☎6am-2pm Sun) A popular community market north of the city in the Nightcliff Shopping Centre. You'll find lots of secondhand goods and designer clothing.

## BUYING ABORIGINAL ART

Taking home a piece of Aboriginal art can create an enduring connection with Australia. For Aboriginal artists, painting is an important cultural and economic enterprise. To ensure you're not perpetuating non-Indigenous cash-in on Aboriginal art's popularity, avoid buying cheap imported fridge magnets, stubbie holders, boomerangs or didgeridoos. Make sure you're buying from an authentic dealer selling original art, and if the gallery doesn't pay their artists upfront, ask exactly how much of your money will make it back to the artist or community.

A good test is to request some biographical info on the artists – if the vendor can't produce it, keep walking. An authentic piece will come with a certificate indicating the artist's name, language group and community, and the work's title, its story and when it was made.

You may also check that the selling gallery is associated with a regulatory body, such as the **Australian Commercial Galleries Association** ([www.acga.com.au](http://www.acga.com.au)). Where possible, buy direct from Aboriginal arts centres or their city outlets (see [www.ankaaa.org.au](http://www.ankaaa.org.au) or [www.aboriginalart.org](http://www.aboriginalart.org)); this is generally cheaper and ensures authenticity. You also get to view the works in the context in which they were created.

### Mbantua Fine Art Gallery

ARTS

(Map p816; ☎ 08-8941 6611; [www.mbantua.com.au](http://www.mbantua.com.au); 2/30 Smith St Mall; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Vivid Utopian designs painted on everything from canvases to ceramics.

### Tiwi Art Network

ARTS

(Map p814; ☎ 08-8941 3593; [www.tiwiart.com](http://www.tiwiart.com); 3/3 Vickers St, Parap; ☀ 10am-5pm Wed-Fri, to 2pm Sat) ☕ The office and showroom for three arts communities on the Tiwi Islands.

## i Information

### EMERGENCY

**AANT Roadside Assistance** (☎ 13 11 11; [www.aant.com.au](http://www.aant.com.au)) Roadside assistance.

**Ambulance** (☎ 000) For emergencies.

**Fire** (☎ 000; [www.nt.gov.au/pfes](http://www.nt.gov.au/pfes))

**Poisons Information Centre** (☎ 13 11 26; ☀ 24hr) Advice on poisons, bites and stings.

**Police** (☎ 000; [www.nt.gov.au/pfes](http://www.nt.gov.au/pfes)) For local police service.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Most accommodation in Darwin provides some form of internet access, and there is free wi-fi available in Smith Street Mall.

**Northern Territory Library** (☎ 1800 019 155; [www.ntl.nt.gov.au](http://www.ntl.nt.gov.au); Parliament House, Mitchell St; ☀ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun; ☎) Book ahead for free access. Wi-fi also available.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Royal Darwin Hospital** (☎ 08-8920 6011; [www.health.nt.gov.au](http://www.health.nt.gov.au); Rocklands Dr, Tiwi; ☀ 24hr) Accident and emergency.

### MONEY

There are 24-hour ATMs dotted around the city centre, and exchange bureaux on Mitchell St.

### POST

**General Post Office** (Map p816; ☎ 13 13 18; [www.auspost.com.au](http://www.auspost.com.au); 48 Cavenagh St; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Efficient poste restante.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourism Top End** (Map p816; ☎ 1300 138 886, 08-8980 6000; [www.tourismtopend.com.au](http://www.tourismtopend.com.au); cnr Smith & Bennett Sts; ☀ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) is a helpful office with hundreds of brochures; books tours and accommodation.

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

Apart from the following major carriers arriving at Darwin International Airport (p811), smaller routes are flown by local operators; ask a travel agent.

**Airnorth** (☎ 1800 627 474; [www.airnorth.com.au](http://www.airnorth.com.au)) To/from East Timor, Broome, Perth, Kununurra and the Gold Coast.

**Jetstar** ([www.jetstar.com](http://www.jetstar.com)) Direct flights to the eastern coast capitals and major hubs, as well as several Southeast Asian cities.

**Qantas** ([www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)) Direct flights to Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Alice Springs and Cairns.

**Virgin Australia** ([www.virginaustralia.com](http://www.virginaustralia.com)) Direct flights between Darwin and Brisbane, Broome, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.

### BUS

**Greyhound Australia** (Map p816; [www.greyhound.com.au](http://www.greyhound.com.au)) operates long-distance bus services from the **Transit Centre** (Map p816; [www.enjoy-darwin.com/transit-bus.html](http://www.enjoy-darwin.com/transit-bus.html); 69 Mitchell St). There's at least one service per day up and down the Stuart Hwy, stopping at Pine Creek (three hours), Katherine (4½ hours),

Mataranka (seven hours), Tennant Creek (14½ hours) and Alice Springs (22 hours).

For Kakadu, there's a daily return service from Darwin to Jabiru (\$66, 3½ hours).

Backpacker buses can also get you to out-of-the-way places.

**Adventure Tours** (☎ 1300 654 604; www.adventuretours.com.au; 52 Mitchell St) Has a good reputation.

**Oz Experience** (www.ozexperience.com) Makes backpacking to Alice Springs easy.

## CAR & CAMPERVAN

For driving around Darwin, conventional vehicles are cheap enough, but most companies offer only 100km per day free, which won't get you very far out of town. Rates start at around \$40 per day for a small car with 100km per day.

There are also plenty of 4WD vehicles available in Darwin, but you usually have to book ahead and fees/deposits are higher than for 2WD vehicles. Larger companies offer one-way rentals plus better mileage deals for more-expensive vehicles. Campervans are a great option for touring around the Territory and you generally get unlimited kilometres even for short rentals. Prices start at around \$60 a day for a basic camper or \$100 to \$120 for a three-berth hi-top camper, to \$220-plus for the bigger mobile homes or 4WD bushcampers. Additional insurance cover or excess reduction costs extra.

Most rental companies are open every day and have agencies in the city centre. Avis, Budget, Hertz and Thrifty all have offices at the airport.

**Britz Australia** (www.britz.com.au; 17 Bombing Rd, Winnellie) Britz is a reliable outfit with a big range of campervans and motorhomes, including 4WD bushcampers.

**JJ's Car Hire** (www.jjscarhire.com.au; 7 Goyder Rd, Parap) Good local operator.

**Mighty Cars & Campervans** (www.mightycampers.com.au; 17 Bombing Rd, Winnellie) At the same depot as Britz, this is a budget outfit with small campers and hi-tops at reasonable rates.

**Travellers Autobarn** (www.travellers-autobarn.com.au; 13 Daly St) Campervan specialist.

## TRAIN

The legendary Ghan train, operated by **Great Southern Rail** (www.gsr.com.au), runs weekly (twice weekly May to July) between Adelaide and Darwin via Alice Springs. The Darwin terminus is on Berrimah Rd, 15km/20 minutes from the city centre. A taxi fare into the centre is about \$30, though there is a shuttle service to/from the Transit Centre.

## **i** Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Darwin International Airport (p811) is 12km north of the city centre, and handles both inter-

national and domestic flights. **Darwin Airport Shuttle** (☎ 08-8981 5066; www.darwinairportshuttle.com.au) will pick up or drop off almost anywhere in the centre for \$16. When leaving Darwin book a day before departure. A taxi fare into the centre is about \$35.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Darwinbus** (Map p816; www.nt.gov.au/transport) runs a comprehensive bus network that departs from the **Darwin Bus Terminus** (Map p816; Harry Chan Ave), opposite Brown's Mart.

A \$3 adult ticket gives unlimited travel on the bus network for three hours (validate your ticket when you first get on). Daily (\$7) and weekly (\$20) travel cards are also available from bus interchanges, newsagencies and the visitor information centre. Bus 4 (to Fannie Bay, Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Casuarina) and bus 6 (Fannie Bay, Parap and Stuart Park) are useful for getting to Aquascene, the Botanic Gardens, Mindil Beach, the Museum & Art Gallery, Fannie Bay Gaol Museum, East Point Reserve and the markets.

## SCOOTER

**Darwin Scooter Hire** (☎ 08-8941 2434; www.thescootershop.com.au; 9 Daly St) Rents out mountain bikes/50cc scooters/motorbikes for \$20/60/180 per day.

## TAXI

Taxis wait along Knuckey St, diagonally opposite the north end of Smith St Mall, and are usually easy to flag down. Call **Darwin Radio Taxis** (☎ 13 10 08; www.131008.com).

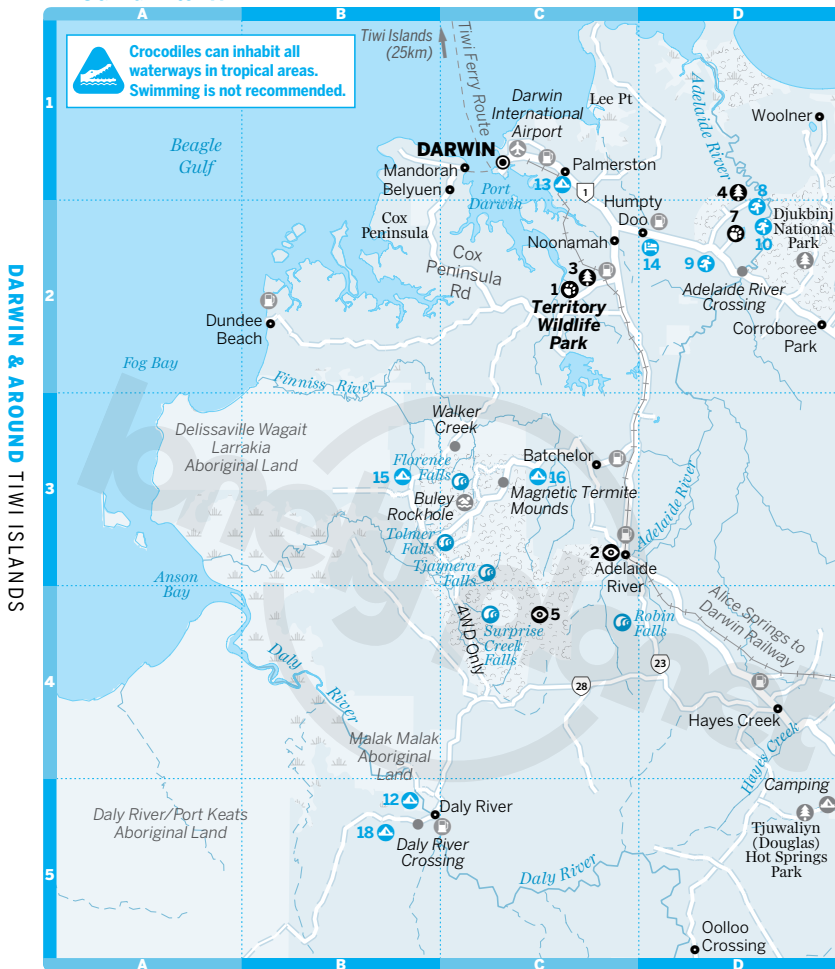
## AROUND DARWIN

### Mandorah

Mandorah is a low-key, relaxed residential **beach suburb** looking out across the harbour to Darwin. It sits on the tip of Cox Peninsula, 128km by road from Darwin but only 6km across the harbour by regular ferry. The main reason to visit is for the ferry ride across the harbour and to throw in a fishing line off the jetty here. The nearby Wagait Aboriginal community numbers around 400 residents. Sadly, the Mandorah Beach Hotel has now closed.

The **Mandorah Ferry** (Map p816; www.sealinknt.com.au; adult/child return \$25/12.50) operates about a dozen daily services (adult/child return \$25/12.50), with the first departure from the Cullen Bay Marina in Darwin at 5.45am and the last at 11pm (midnight on Friday and Saturday). The last ferry from Mandorah is at 11.20pm (12.20am Friday and Saturday). Bookings not required.

## Around Darwin



### Tiwi Islands

The Tiwi Islands – **Bathurst Island** and **Melville Island** – lie about 80km north of Darwin, and are home to the Tiwi Aboriginal people. The Tiwis ('We People') have a distinct culture and today are well known for producing vibrant art and the occasional champion Aussie Rules football player.

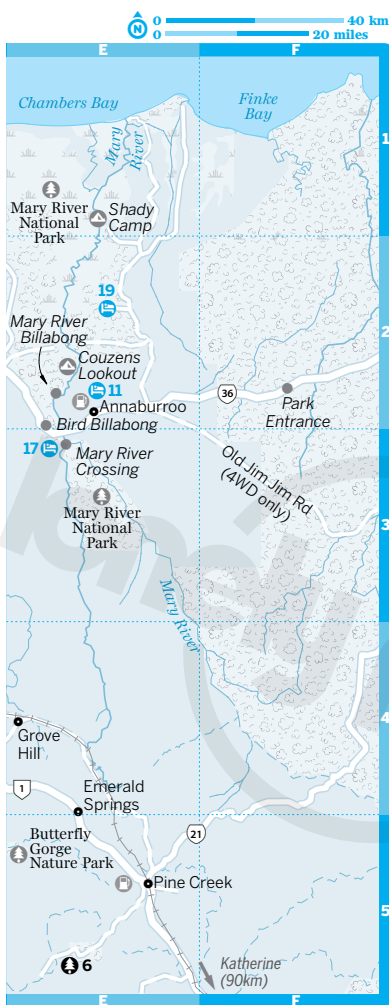
Tourism is restricted on the islands and for most tourists the only way to visit is on one of the daily organised tours from Darwin.

The Tiwis' island homes kept them fairly isolated from mainland developments until

the 20th century, and their culture has retained several unique features. Perhaps the best known are the pukumani (burial poles), carved and painted with symbolic and mythological figures, which are erected around graves. More recently the Tiwis have turned their hand to art for sale: carving, painting, textile screen-printing, batik and pottery using traditional designs and motifs. The Bima Wear textile factory was set up in 1969 to employ Tiwi women, and today makes many bright fabrics in distinctive designs.

The main settlement on the islands is **Nguiu** in the southeast of Bathurst Island, which was founded in 1911 as a Catholic mis-





sion. On Melville Island the settlements are **Pirlangimpi** and **Milikapiti**.

Most of the 2700 Tiwi Islanders live on Bathurst Island (there are about 900 people on Melville Island). Most follow a mainly nontraditional lifestyle, but they still hunt dugong and gather turtle eggs, and hunting and gathering usually supplements the mainland diet a couple of times a week. Tiwis also go back to their traditional lands on Melville Island for a few weeks each year to teach and to learn traditional culture. Descendants of the Japanese pearl divers who regularly visited here early last century also live on Melville Island.

## Around Darwin

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Territory Wildlife Park .....C2

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Adelaide River War Cemetery .....C3  
 3 Berry Springs Nature Park .....C2  
 4 Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve .....D1  
 5 Litchfield National Park .....C4  
 6 Umbrawarra Gorge Nature Park .....E5  
 7 Window on the Wetlands Visitor Centre .....D2

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 8 Adelaide River Cruises .....D2  
 9 Adelaide River Queen .....D2  
 10 Spectacular Jumping Crocodile Cruise .....D2

### 📍 Sleeping

- 11 Bark Hut Inn .....E2  
 12 Daly River Mango Farm .....B5  
 13 FreeSpirit Resort Darwin .....C1  
 14 Humpty Doo Hotel .....D2  
 15 Litchfield Safari Camp .....B3  
 16 Litchfield Tourist Park .....C3  
 17 Mary River Wilderness Retreat .....E3  
 18 Perry's .....B5  
 19 Wildman Wilderness Lodge .....E2

**Aussie Rules football** is a passion among the islanders and one of the biggest events of the year (and the only time it's possible to visit without a permit or on a tour) is the **Tiwi football grand-final** day in late March. Huge numbers of people come across from the mainland for the event – book your tour/ferry well in advance.

### 👉 Tours

There's no public transport on the islands, so the best way to see them is on a tour. You can catch the **Tiwi Ferry** over to Nguiu and have a look around the town without taking a tour or buying a permit, but if you want to explore further you'll need a permit from the Tiwi Land Council (p811).

### Tiwi Tours Aboriginal Cultural Experience

CULTURAL

☎ 1300 228 546; [www.aatkings.com/tours/tiwi-tours-aboriginal-cultural-experience](http://www.aatkings.com/tours/tiwi-tours-aboriginal-cultural-experience) Runs fascinating day trips to the Tiwis, although interaction with the local community tends to be limited to your guides and the local workshops and showrooms. The tour is available by ferry (adult/child \$250/125, two and a half hours each way Thursday and Friday) or air (adult/child \$275/138, 20 minutes each way, Monday to Wednesday)

The tour includes permit, welcome ceremony, craft workshops, and visits to the early Catholic-mission buildings, the Patakiyali Museum and a pukumani burial site.

### Tiwi by Design

CULTURAL TOUR

(Map p816; ☎1300 130 679; www.sealinknt.com.au; adult \$319) Leaving from Cullen Bay ferry terminal at 7.30am on Thursday and Friday, this tour includes permits, lunch and a welcome ceremony, as well as visits to a local museum, church and art workshop, where you get to create your own design. It's run by Sealink, the ferry operator.

Ferry only prices to get to the island are adult/child \$80/40.

## Arnhem Highway

The Arnhem Hwy (Rte 36) branches off towards Kakadu 34km southeast of Darwin. About 10km along the road, in the small agricultural hub of Humpty Doo, the self-proclaimed 'world famous' **Humpty Doo Hotel** (Map p828; ☎08-8988 1372; www.humptydoohotel.net; Arnhem Hwy; d/cabins \$130/150; 🍷🍷) is a brawling kinda roadhouse, serving big meals (mains \$20 to \$30, lunch and dinner). There are unremarkable motel rooms and cabins out the back.

About 15km beyond Humpty Doo is the turn-off to the fecund green carpet of **Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve** (Map p828; www.foggdamfriends.org). Bring your binoculars – there are ludicrous numbers of waterbirds living here. The dam walls are closed to walkers (crocs), but there are a couple of nature walks (2.2km and 3.6km) through the forest and woodlands. Bird numbers are highest between December and July.

Three kilometres past the Fogg Dam turn-off, is the dashing-looking **Window on the Wetlands Visitor Centre** (Map p828; www.nre.tas.nv.gov.au/national-parks-and-reserves/parks/windowwetlands; Arnhem Hwy; ☎8am-5.30pm) **FREE** full of displays (static and interactive) explaining the wetland ecosystem, as well as the history of the local Limilngan-Wulna Aboriginal people. There are great views over the Adelaide River floodplain from the observation deck, and binoculars for studying the waterbirds on Lake Beatrice.

A further 8km beyond the Window on the Wetlands Visitor Centre is **Adelaide River Crossing**. It's from the murky waters of this river that large crocs are tempted to jump for camera-wielding tourists.

## Mary River Region

Beyond the Adelaide River crossing, the Arnhem Hwy passes through the Mary River region with the wetlands and wildlife of the **Mary River National Park** extending to the north.

**Bird Billabong**, just off the highway a few kilometres before **Mary River Crossing**, is a back-flow billabong, filled by creeks flowing off Mt Bundy Hill during the Wet. It's 4km off the highway and accessible by 2WD year-round. The scenic **loop walk** (4.5km, two hours) passes through **tropical woodlands**, with a backdrop of Mt Bundy granite rocks.

About another 2km along the same road is the emerald green **Mary River Billabong** (Map p828), with a BBQ area (no camping). From here the 4WD-only Hardies Track leads deeper into the national park to **Corroboree Billabong** (25km) and **Couzens Lookout** (37km).

Further along and north of the Arnhem Hwy, the partly sealed Point Stuart Rd leads to a number of riverside viewing platforms and to **Shady Camp**. The causeway barrage here, which stops fresh water flowing into saltwater, creates the ideal feeding environment for barramundi, and the ideal **fishing** environment.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are basic public **camping grounds** (Map p828; adult/child/family \$3.30/1.65/7.70) at Couzens Lookout and Shady Camp, where there are grassy camp sites under banyan trees. Come prepared to ward off armies of mosquitoes.

### **Bark Hut Inn**

HOTEL \$

(Map p828; ☎08-8978 8988; www.barkhutinn.com.au; Arnhem Hwy; budget s/d \$50/65, d \$130, villas \$200) The Bark Hut is a big barn of a place with beefy bistro meals (mains \$15 to \$26) and some interesting buffalo-farming history on display. The art gallery is really an opportunity to flog souvenirs, but it's worth dropping in to see Franklin, the yellow-faced turtle.

### **Mary River Wilderness Retreat**

RESORT \$\$

(Map p828; ☎08-8978 8877; www.maryriverpark.com.au; Arnhem Hwy, Mary River Crossing; unpowered/powered sites \$24/33, cabins \$130-220; 🍷🍷🍷) Boasting 3km of Mary River frontage, this bush retreat has excellent poolside and bush cabins with decks surrounded by trees. Pool cabins are the pick of the bunch with high ceilings, walk-in showers and more space to knock around in; both sleep

up to three people. Camping on the grassy slopes here is delightful.

Go on a croc cruise (\$50), hire a fishing boat, or ask about fishing charters; bookings essential.

**Wildman Wilderness Lodge** RESORT \$\$\$  
(Map p828; ☎08-8978 8955; www.wildmanwildernesslodge.com.au; Point Stuart Rd; safari tents/cabins \$550/700; 🍷🍷) Wildman Wilderness Lodge is out-and-out an upmarket safari lodge with an exceptional program of optional tours and activities. There are just 10 air-conditioned stylish cabins and 15 fan-cooled luxury tents. The daily tariff includes a three-course dinner and breakfast.

## Stuart Highway to Litchfield National Park

### Territory Wildlife Park & Berry Springs Nature Park

The turn-off to the Territory Wildlife Park and Berry Springs is 48km down the Stuart Hwy from Darwin; it's then about 10km to the park.

### 👁 Sights & Activities

★ **Territory Wildlife Park** 200  
(Map p828; ☎08-8988 7200; www.territorywildlifepark.com.au; 960 Cox Peninsula Rd; adult/child/family \$26/13/45.50; ☀8.30am-6pm, last admission 4pm) This excellent park showcases the best of Aussie wildlife. Pride of place must go to the aquarium, where a clear walk-through tunnel puts you among giant barramundi, stingrays, sawfish and saratogas, while a separate tank holds a 3.8m salt-water crocodile. To see everything you can either walk around the 4km perimeter road, or hop on and off the shuttle trains that run every 15 to 30 minutes and stop at all the exhibits.

Highlights include the Flight Deck, where birds of prey display their dexterity (free-flying demonstrations at 11am and 2.30pm daily); the nocturnal house, where you can observe nocturnal fauna such as bilbies and bats; 11 different habitat aviaries; and a huge walk-through aviary, representing a monsoon rainforest.

**Berry Springs Nature Park** NATURE RESERVE  
(Map p828; www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/berrysprings; ☀8am-6.30pm) This wonderful waterhole is the closest to Darwin and

very popular with locals. It's a beautiful series of spring-fed swimming holes shaded by paperbarks and pandanus palms and serenaded by abundant birds. Facilities include a kiosk, a picnic area with BBQs, toilets, changing sheds and showers. And there are large grassed areas to lounge around on in between swims.

The turn-off to Berry Springs is 48km down the Stuart Hwy from Darwin; it's then about 10km to the park.

### Batchelor

POP 538

The government once gave Batchelor's blocks of land away to encourage settlement in the little town. That was before uranium was discovered and the nearby **Rum Jungle mine** developed (it closed in 1971 after operating for almost 20 years). These days, Batchelor exists as a gateway and service centre for neighbouring Litchfield National Park (p832).

### 🍴 Sleeping & Eating

**Litchfield Tourist Park** CARAVAN PARK \$  
(Map p828; ☎08-8976 0070; www.litchfieldtouristpark.com.au; 2916 Litchfield Park Rd; camp sites \$35, bunkhouse \$75, ensuite cabins \$150-240; 🍷🍷🍷) Just 4km from Litchfield, there's a great range of accommodation here and it's the closest option to the park. There's also a breezy, open-sided bar/restaurant (all-day food \$10 to \$18, open breakfast and dinner) where you can get a beer, a burger or a real coffee.

**Pandanus** AUSTRALIAN \$  
(☎08-8976 0242; www.pandanuslitchfield.com.au; 275 Litchfield Park Rd; budget r \$50, cabin \$115, mains \$10-15) This handy little place has some great value accommodation but the real reason to stay, or at least stop in, is the food. The restaurant here specialises in Australian indigenous ingredients and puts an Aussie twist on most dishes. Wattleseed damper anyone? The menu uses the language of the local Koongurrukun people. It's a real gem and great value too. Pandanus is 2.5km past the Litchfield Park Road turn-off.

**Batchelor Butterfly Farm** RESORT \$\$  
(☎08-8976 0199; 8 Meneling Rd; d \$120-170; 🍷🍷🍷) This compact retreat divides itself between a low-key tourist attraction and friendly tropical-style resort. The kids will love the butterfly farm (adult/child \$10/5) and mini zoo, which is free for staying guests. There are ensuite cabins, a large homestay

and a busy all-day cafe/restaurant (mains \$20 to \$30) featuring Asian-inspired dishes. It's all a bit Zen with Buddha statues, chill music and wicker chairs on the shaded deck.

## Litchfield National Park

It may not be as well known as Kakadu, but many Territory locals rate Litchfield even higher. In fact, there's a local saying that goes: 'Litchfield-do, Kaka-don't. We don't entirely agree – we think Kaka-do-too – but this is certainly one of the best places in the Top End for **bushwalking**, **camping** and especially **swimming**, with waterfalls plunging into gorgeous, safe swimming holes.

The 1500-sq-km national park encloses much of the spectacular Tabletop Range, a wide sandstone plateau mostly surrounded by cliffs. The **waterfalls** that pour off the edge of this plateau are a highlight of the park, feeding crystal-clear cascades and croc-free plunge pools.

The two routes to Litchfield (115km south of Darwin) from the Stuart Hwy join up and loop through the park. The southern access road via Batchelor is all sealed, while the northern access route, off the Cox Peninsula Rd, is partly unsealed, corrugated and often closed in the Wet.

About 17km after entering the park from Batchelor you come to what look like tombstones. But only the very tip of these **magnetic termite mounds** is used to bury the

dead; at the bottom are the king and queen, with workers in between. They're perfectly aligned to regulate temperature, catching the morning sun, then allowing the residents to dodge the midday heat. Nearby are some giant mounds made by the aptly named cathedral termites.

Another 6km further along is the turn-off to **Buley Rockhole** (2km), where water cascades through a series of rock pools big enough to lodge your bod in. This turn-off also takes you to **Florence Falls** (5km), accessed by a 15-minute, 135-step descent to a deep, beautiful pool surrounded by monsoon forest. Alternatively, you can see the falls from a lookout, 120m from the car park. There's a walking track (1.7km, 45 minutes) between the two places that follows Florence Creek.

About 18km beyond the turn-off to Florence Falls is the turn-off to the spectacular **Tolmer Falls**, which are for looking at only. A 1.6km loop track (45 minutes) offers beautiful views of the valley.

It's a further 7km along the main road to the turn-off for Litchfield's big-ticket attraction, **Wangi Falls** (pronounced *Wong-guy*), 1.6km up a side road. The falls flow year-round, spilling either side of a huge orange-rock outcrop and filling an enormous swimming hole bordered by rainforest. Bring swimming goggles to spot local fish. It's immensely popular during the Dry (when there's a portable refreshment kiosk here; and, in a Territory first, free public

## JUMPING CROCS

Few people seem to be able to resist the sight of a 3m-long saltwater crocodile launching itself out of the water towards a hunk of meat. Like a well-trained circus act, these wild crocs know where to get a free feed – and down on the Adelaide River, a croc-jumping show is guaranteed.

Jumping out of the water to grab prey is actually natural behaviour for crocs, usually to take surprised birds or animals from overhanging branches. They use their powerful tails to propel themselves up from a stationary start just below the surface, from where they can see their prey.

There are three operators at different locations along the Adelaide River.

**Adelaide River Cruises** (Map p828; ☎ 08-8983 3224; [www.adelaiderivercruises.com.au](http://www.adelaiderivercruises.com.au); tours adult/child \$35/20; ☀ 9am, 11am, 1pm & 3pm May-Oct) See the jumping crocodiles on a private stretch of river past the Fogg Dam turn-off. Also runs small-group full-day wildlife cruises.

**Adelaide River Queen** (Map p828; ☎ 08-8988 8144; [www.jumpingcrocodilecruises.com.au](http://www.jumpingcrocodilecruises.com.au); tours adult/child \$35/25; ☀ 9am, 11am, 1pm & 3pm Mar-Oct, for times Nov-Feb see website) Well-established jumping-crocodile operator on the highway just before Adelaide River Crossing.

**Spectacular Jumping Crocodile Cruise** (Map p828; ☎ 08-8978 9077; [www.jumpingcrocodile.com.au](http://www.jumpingcrocodile.com.au); tours adult/child \$35/20; ☀ 9am, 11am, 1pm & 3pm) Along the Window on the Wetlands access road, this outfit runs one-hour tours. Ask about trips ex-Darwin.

wi-fi), but water levels in the Wet can make it unsafe; look for signposted warnings.

The park offers plenty of bushwalking, including the **Tabletop Track** (39km), a circuit of the park that takes three to five days to complete depending on how many side tracks you follow. You can access the track at Florence Falls, Wangi Falls and Walker Creek. You must carry a topographic map of the area, available from tourist and retail outlets in Batchelor. The track is closed late September to March.

## Sleeping

There is excellent public **camping** (adult/child \$6.60/3.30) within the park. Grounds with toilets and fireplaces are located at Florence Falls, Florence Creek, Buley Rockhole, Wangi Falls (better for vans than tents) and Tjaynera Falls (Sandy Creek; 4WD required). There are more-basic camp sites at Surprise Creek Falls (4WD required) and Walker Creek. Walker Creek has its own swimming hole, and camping here involves bushwalking to a series of sublime, isolated riverside sites.

**Litchfield Safari Camp** CAMPGROUND \$  
(Map p828; ☎08-8978 2185; www.litchfieldsafari.com.au; Litchfield Park Rd; unpowered/power sites \$25/35, dm \$30, d safari tents \$150, extra person \$10; ☎) Shady grassed sites make this a good alternative to Litchfield's bush camping sites, especially if you want power. The safari tents are great value as they comfortably sleep up to four folks. There's also a ramshackle camp kitchen, a kiosk and a pint-sized pool.

## Adelaide River to Katherine

### Adelaide River

POP 238

Blink and you'll miss this tiny highway town, 111km south of Darwin. The **Adelaide River War Cemetery** (Map p828; Memorial Tce) is an important legacy: a sea of little brass plaques commemorating those killed in the 1942–43 air raids on northern Australia.

### Daly River

POP 512

The Daly River is considered some of the best **barramundi fishing** country in the Territory and the hub is this small community

117km southwest of Hayes Creek, reached by a narrow sealed road off the Dorat Rd (Old Stuart Hwy; Rte 23). There's a shop and fuel here and visitors are welcome without a permit, but note that this is a dry community (no alcohol).

Other than fishing, the main attraction here is **Merrepen Arts** (☎08-8978 2533; www.merrepenarts.com.au; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Fri, Sat Jun-Sep) **FREE**, a gallery displaying locally made arts and crafts including etchings, screen prints, acrylic paintings, carvings, weaving and textiles.

The **Merrepen Arts Festival** (www.merrepfestival.com.au; adult/child \$20/10) celebrates arts and music from communities around the district, including Nauiyu, Wad-eye and Peppimenarti, with displays, art auctions, workshops and dancing. The festival is held in Nauiyu, about 5km northwest of Daly River.

The camping ground at **Daly River Mango Farm** (Map p828; ☎08-8978 2464; www.mango-farm.com.au; unpowered/power sites \$30/35, d \$130-200; ☎) is shaded by a magnificent grove of near-century-old mango trees. Other accommodation includes budget and self-contained cabins. Guided fishing trips and boat hire available.

**Perry's** (Map p828; ☎08-8978 2452; www.dalyriver.com; Mayo Park; unpowered/power sites \$28/38, fisherman's hut \$95; ☎) is a very peaceful campground with 2km of river frontage and gardens where orphaned wallabies bound around. Dick Perry, a well-known fishing expert, operates guided trips, and boat hire is available. The fisherman's hut has no air-con and is pretty basic with queen bed and bunk. Note, the boat ramp was not operating at the time of writing so you can't launch your own boat.

### Pine Creek

POP 381

A short detour off the Stuart Hwy, Pine Creek is a small, dusty settlement which was once the scene of a frantic gold rush. The Kakadu Hwy (Rte 21) branches off the Stuart Hwy here, connecting it to Cooina and Jabiru, making Pine Creek a useful base for exploring the region.

## Sights & Activities

**Railway Museum & Steam Train** MUSEUM  
(Railway Tce; ☎10am-2pm Mon-Fri May-Sep) **FREE**  
Dating from 1889, the Railway Museum



has a display on the Darwin-to-Pine Creek railway which ran from 1889 to 1976. The lovingly restored steam engine, built in Manchester in 1877, sits in its own enclosure next to the museum.

### Umbrawarra Gorge Nature Park

NATURE RESERVE

(Map p828; [www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/umbrawarragorge](http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/umbrawarragorge)) About 3km south of Pine Creek on the Stuart Hwy is the turn-off to pretty Umbrawarra Gorge, with a safe swimming hole, a little beach and a basic **campground** (campground adult/child \$3.30/1.65). It's 22km southwest on a rugged dirt road (just OK for 2WDs in the Dry; often impassable in the Wet). Bring plenty of water and mozzie repellent.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Lazy Lizard Caravan Park & Tavern

CAMPGROUND \$

(☎08-8976 1019; [www.lazylizardpinecreek.com.au](http://www.lazylizardpinecreek.com.au); 299 Millar Tce; unpowered/powerd sites \$17/30; 🚰) The small, well-grassed camping area at the Lazy Lizard is really only secondary to the pulsing pub next door. The open-sided bar supported by carved ironwood pillars is a busy local watering hole with a pool table and old saddles slung across the rafters. The kitchen serves top-notch pub food (mains \$18 to \$35, open lunch and dinner), featuring big steaks and barra dishes.

#### Pine Creek Railway Resort

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(☎08-8976 1001; [www.pinecreekrailwayresort.com.au](http://www.pinecreekrailwayresort.com.au); s/d \$90/130, cabins \$150-170; 🚰🚰) This charming hotel uses raw iron, steel and wood in its stylish and modern rooms with options for singles, doubles and families. The dining area has been designed with romantic rail journeys of yore in mind; it's a scene-stealer with pressed-tin ceilings and elaborate chandeliers. The menu (mains \$22 to \$30) is, however, modern, with steaks, pasta, ribs and risotto on offer.

## KAKADU & ARNHEM LAND

Kakadu and neighbouring Arnhem Land epitomise the remarkable landscape and cultural heritage of the Top End. Each is a treasure house of natural history and Aboriginal art, and both are significant homelands of contemporary Indigenous culture.

## Kakadu National Park

Kakadu is a whole lot more than a national park. It's also a vibrant, living acknowledgement of the elemental link between the Aboriginal custodians and the country they have nurtured, endured and respected for thousands of generations. Encompassing almost 20,000 sq km (about 200km north-south and 100km east-west), it holds a spectacular ecosystem and a mind-blowing concentration of ancient **rock art**. The landscape is an ever-changing tapestry – periodically scorched and flooded, apparently desolate or obviously abundant depending on the season.

In just a few days you can cruise on bilabongs bursting with **wildlife**, examine 25,000-year-old rock paintings with the help of an Indigenous guide, swim in pools at the foot of tumbling **waterfalls** and hike through ancient sandstone escarpment country.

If Kakadu has a downside it's that it's very popular – in the Dry at least. Resorts, camping grounds and rock-art sites can be very crowded, but this is a vast park and with a little adventurous spirit you can easily get off the beaten track and be alone with nature.

The Arnhem and Kakadu Hwys traverse the park; both are sealed and accessible year-round. The 4WD-only Old Jim Jim Rd is an alternative access from the Arnhem Hwy, joining the Kakadu Hwy 7km south of Cooina.

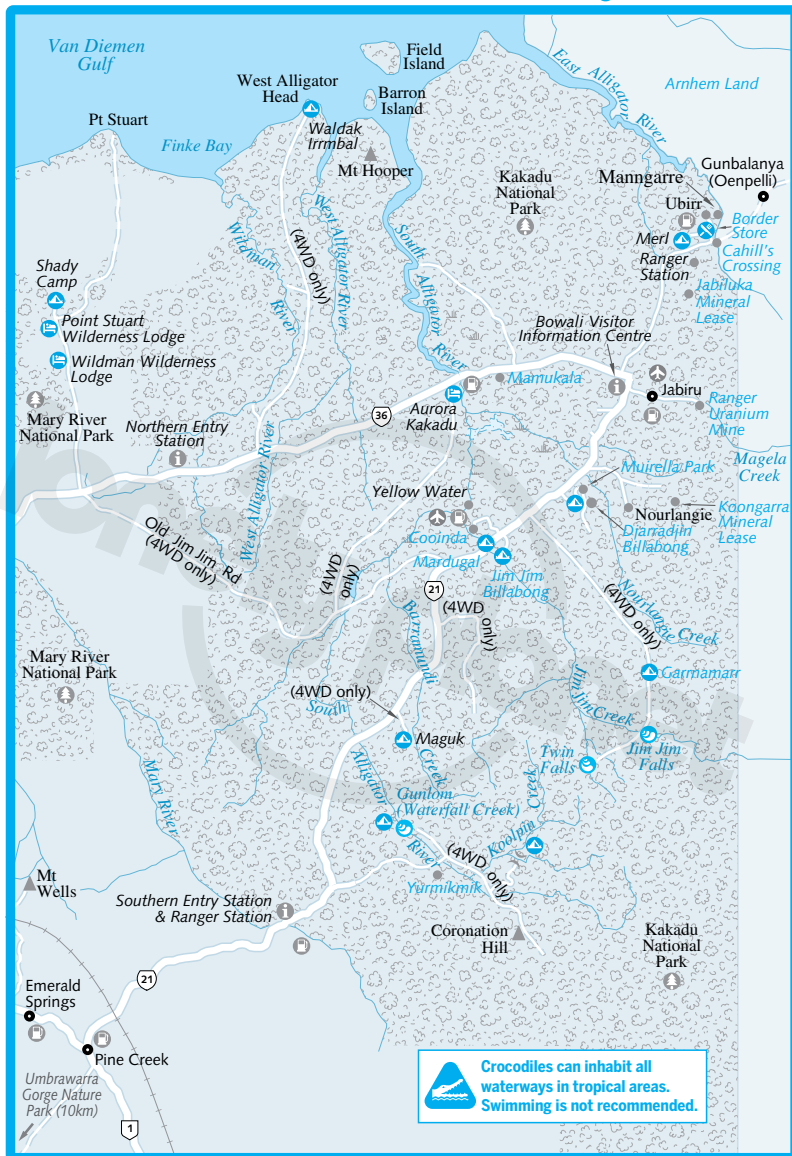
### Geography

The circuitous Arnhem Land escarpment, a dramatic 30m- to 200m-high sandstone cliff line, forms the natural boundary between Kakadu and Arnhem Land and winds 500km through eastern and southeastern Kakadu.

Creeks cut across the rocky plateau and, in the wet season, tumble off it as thundering waterfalls. They then flow across the lowlands to swamp Kakadu's vast northern flood plains. From west to east, the rivers are the Wildman, West Alligator, South Alligator and East Alligator (the latter forming the eastern boundary of the park). The coastal zone has long stretches of mangrove swamp, important for halting erosion and as a breeding ground for bird and marine life. The southern part of the park is dry lowlands with open grassland and eucalyptuses. Pockets of monsoon rainforest crop up throughout the park.

More than 80% of Kakadu is savannah woodland. It has more than 1000 plant species, many still used by Aboriginal people for food and medicinal purposes.

# Kakadu National Park



## Climate

The average maximum temperature in Kakadu is 34°C, year-round. The Dry is roughly April to September, and the Wet, when most of Kakadu's average rainfall of 1500mm falls, is from October to March. As wetlands and waterfalls swell, unsealed

roads become impassable, cutting off some highlights such as Jim Jim Falls.

Local Aboriginal people recognise six seasons in the annual cycle:

**Gunumeleng** (October to December) The build-up to the Wet. Humidity increases, the temperature rises to 35°C or more and

## URANIUM MINING

It's no small irony that some of the world's biggest deposits of uranium lie within one of Australia's most beautiful national parks. In 1953 uranium was discovered in the Kakadu region. Twelve small deposits in the southern reaches of the park were worked in the 1960s, but were abandoned following the declaration of Woolwonga Wildlife Sanctuary.

In 1970 three huge deposits – Ranger, Nabarlek and Koongarra – were found, followed by Jabiluka in 1971. The Nabarlek deposit (in Arnhem Land) was mined in the late 1970s, and the Ranger Uranium Mine started producing ore in 1981.

While all mining in the park has been controversial, it was Jabiluka that brought international attention to Kakadu and pitted conservationists and Indigenous owners against the government and mining companies. After uranium was discovered at Jabiluka in 1971, an agreement to mine was negotiated with the local Aboriginal peoples. The Jabiluka mine became the scene of sit-in demonstrations during 1998 that resulted in large-scale arrests. In 2003 stockpiled ore was returned into the mine and the decline tunnel leading into the deposit was backfilled as the mining company moved into dialogue with the traditional landowners, the Mirrar people. In February 2005 the current owners of the Jabiluka mining lease, Energy Resources of Australia (ERA), signed an agreement that gave the Mirrar the deciding vote on any resumption of this controversial mining project. Under the deal ERA is allowed to continue to explore the lease, subject to Mirrar consent.

In 2011 the traditional owners of the Koongarra lease, near Nourlangie, rejected the promise of millions of dollars from French nuclear-power conglomerate Areva and requested the land be integrated into the national park, which was completed in early 2013.

Meanwhile, the Ranger mine – which is officially not part of the national park but is surrounded by it – was mired in controversy in 2014 after safety concerns that included a toxic leak and collapsed ventilation shaft. There are plans for an underground expansion of the mine, although given recent events this is not guaranteed. Under current legislation it is due to close in 2021, with rehabilitation complete by 2026.

mosquitoes reach near-plague proportions. By November the thunderstorms have started, billabongs are replenished, and waterbirds and fish disperse.

**Gudjewg** (January to March) The Wet proper continues, with violent thunderstorms, and flora and fauna thriving in the hot, moist conditions.

**Banggerreng** (April) Storms (known as 'knock 'em down' storms) flatten the spear grass, which during the course of the Wet has shot up to 2m high.

**Yegge** (May to June) The season of mists, when the air starts to dry out. The wetlands and waterfalls still have a lot of water and most of the tracks are open. The first firing of the countryside begins.

**Wurrngeng** (June to mid-August) The most comfortable time, weatherwise, is the late Dry, beginning in July. This is when animals, especially birds, gather in large numbers around shrinking billabongs, and when most tourists visit.

**Gurrung** (mid-August to September) The end of the Dry and the beginning of another cycle.

## Wildlife

Kakadu has more than 60 species of mammal, more than 280 bird species, 120 recorded species of reptile, 25 species of frog, 55 freshwater fish species and at least 10,000 kinds of insect. Most visitors see only a fraction of these creatures (except the insects), since many are shy, nocturnal or scarce.

## Birds

Abundant waterbirds and their beautiful wetland homes are a highlight of Kakadu. This is one of the chief refuges in Australia for several species, including the magpie goose, green pygmy goose and Burdekin duck. Other fine waterbirds include pelicans, brolgas and the jabiru (or more correctly black-necked stork), Australia's only stork, with distinctive red legs and long beak. Herons, egrets, cormorants, wedge-tailed eagles, whistling kites and black kites are common. The open woodlands harbour rainbow bee-eaters, kingfishers and the endangered bustard. Majestic white-breasted sea eagles are seen near inland waterways. At night, you might hear barking owls calling – they sound just like dogs – or the plaintive wail of the bush stone curlew. The raucous call of the spectacular

red-tailed black cockatoo is often considered the signature sound of Kakadu.

At **Mamukala**, 8km east of the South Alligator River on the Arnhem Hwy, is a wonderful observation building, plus bird-watching hides and a 3km walking track.

### Fish

You can't miss the silver barramundi, which creates a distinctive swirl near the water's surface. A renowned sportfish, it can grow to more than 1m in length and changes sex from male to female at the age of five or six years.

### Mammals

Several types of kangaroo and wallaby inhabit the park; the shy black wallaroo is unique to Kakadu and Arnhem Land; look for them at Nourlangie Rock, where individuals rest under rocky overhangs. At Ubirr, short-eared rock wallabies can be spotted in the early morning. You may see a sugar glider or a shy dingo in wooded areas in the daytime. Kakadu has 26 bat species, four of them endangered.

### Reptiles

Twin Falls and Jim Jim Falls have freshwater crocodiles, which have narrow snouts and rarely exceed 3m, while the dangerous salt-water variety is found throughout the park.

Kakadu's other reptiles include the frilled lizard, 11 species of goanna, and five freshwater turtle species, of which the most common is the northern snake-necked turtle. Kakadu has many snakes, though most are nocturnal and rarely encountered. The striking Oepelli python was first recorded by non-Aboriginal people in 1976. The odd-looking file snake lives in billabongs and is much sought after as bush tucker. They have square heads, tiny eyes and saggy skin covered in tiny rough scales (hence 'file'). They move very slowly (and not at all on land), eating only once a month and breeding once every decade.

### Rock Art

Kakadu is one of Australia's richest, most accessible repositories of rock art. There are more than 5000 sites, which date from 20,000 years to 10 years ago. The vast majority of these sites are off limits or inaccessible, but two of the finest collections are the easily visited galleries at Ubirr and Nourlangie.

Rock paintings have been classified into three roughly defined periods: Pre-estuarine, which is from the earliest paintings up to around 6000 years ago; Estuarine, which covers the period from 6000 to around 2000 years ago, when rising sea levels brought the

coast to its present level; and Freshwater, from 2000 years ago until the present day.

For local Aboriginal people, these rock-art sites are a major source of traditional knowledge and represent their archives. Aboriginal people rarely paint on rocks anymore, as they no longer live in rock shelters and there are fewer people with the requisite knowledge. Some older paintings are believed by many Aboriginal people to have been painted by mimi spirits, connecting people with creation legends and the development of lore.

As the paintings are all rendered with natural, water-soluble ochres, they are very susceptible to water damage. Drip lines of clear silicon rubber have been laid on the rocks above the paintings to divert rain. As the most accessible sites receive up to 4000 visitors a week, boardwalks have been erected to keep the dust down and to keep people at a suitable distance from the paintings.

### Tours

There are dozens of Kakadu tours on offer; book at least a day ahead if possible. There are plenty of tours departing Darwin. Operators generally collect you from your accommodation. Keep an eye out for excellent, short ranger-led tours and activities throughout the park.

#### Kakadu Animal Tracks

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎0409 350 842; [www.animaltracks.com.au](http://www.animaltracks.com.au); adult/child \$205/135) 🌿 Based at Cooinda, this outfit runs seven-hour tours with an Indigenous guide combining a wildlife safari and Aboriginal cultural tour. You'll see thousands of birds, get to hunt, gather, prepare and consume bush tucker; and crunch on some green ants.

#### Arnhemlander Cultural & Heritage Tour

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎08-8979 2548; [www.kakadutours.com.au](http://www.kakadutours.com.au); adult/child \$258/205) 🌿 Aboriginal-owned and -operated tour into northern Kakadu and Arnhem Land. See ancient rock art, learn bush skills and meet local artists at Injalak Arts Centre in Oepelli.

#### Top End Explorer Tours

OUTDOORS

(☎08-8979 3615; [www.kakadutours.net.au](http://www.kakadutours.net.au); adult/child \$230/170) Small-group 4WD tours to Jim Jim and Twin Falls from Jabiru and Cooinda.

#### Ayal Aboriginal Tours

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎0429 470 384; [www.ayalkakadu.com.au](http://www.ayalkakadu.com.au); adult/child \$220/99) 🌿 Full-day Indigenous-run tours around Kakadu, with former ranger and local Victor Cooper, shining a light on art, culture and wildlife.

## Kakadu Air

SCENIC FLIGHTS  
(☎1800 089 113, 08-8941 9611; www.kakaduar.com.au) Offers 30-minute/one-hour fixed-wing flights for \$150/250 per adult. Helicopter tours, though more expensive, give a more dynamic aerial perspective. They cost from \$230 (20 minutes) to \$650 (one hour) per person. Note that flights are only available over Jim Jim Falls in the wet season – traditional owners request that the 'skies are rested' in the Dry.

## Yellow Water Cruises

CRUISE  
(☎1800 500 401; www.gagudju-dreaming.com) Cruise the South Alligator River and Yellow Water Billabong spotting wildlife. Purchase tickets from Gagudju Lodge, Cooinda; a shuttle bus will take you from here to the tour's departure point. Two-hour cruises (\$99/70 per adult/child) depart at 6.45am, 9am and 4.30pm; 1½-hour cruises (\$72/50) leave at 11.30am, 1.15pm and 2.45pm.

## Guluyambi Cultural Cruise

CULTURAL TOUR  
(www.aptouring.com.au/KCT; adult/child \$72/48; ☉9am, 11am, 1pm & 3pm May-Nov) 🍃 Launch into an Aboriginal-led river cruise from the upstream boat ramp on the East Alligator River near Cahill's Crossing. Highly recommended by Darwin locals.

## Information

About 200,000 people visit Kakadu between April and October, so expect some tour-bus action at sites such as Ubirr and Yellow Water. Consider spending some time bushwalking and camping in the south of the park – it's less visited but inimitably impressive.

Admission to the park is via a 14-day Park Pass (adult \$25, child free). Pick up a pass, along with the excellent *Visitor Guide* booklet, from Bowali Visitor Information Centre, Tourism Top End (p826) in Darwin, Gagudju Lodge Cooinda (p840) or Katherine Visitor Information Centre (p847). Carry it with you at all times, as rangers conduct spot checks – penalties apply for nonpayment. Fuel is available at Kakadu Resort, Cooinda and Jabiru.

Accommodation prices in Kakadu vary tremendously depending on the season – resort rates can drop by as much as 50% during the Wet.

The excellent **Bowali Visitor Information Centre** (☎08-8938 1121; www.kakadunationalparkaustralia.com/bowali\_visitors\_center.htm; Kakadu Hwy, Jabiru; ☉8am-5pm) has walk-through displays that sweep you across the land, explaining Kakadu's ecology from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives. The centre is about 2.5km south of the Arnhem Hwy intersection; a 1km walking track connects it with Jabiru.

A great online site is **Kakadu National Park** (www.kakadu.au), which has a visitors guide, what's on listings and suggested itineraries to download.

The Northern Land Council (p811) issues permits (adult/child \$18/free) to visit Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), across the East Alligator River.

## Getting There & Around

Many people choose to access Kakadu on a tour, which shuffles them around the major sights with the minimum of hassle. But it's just as easy with your own wheels, if you know what kinds of road conditions your trusty steed can handle (Jim Jim and Twin Falls, for example, are 4WD-access only).

**Greyhound Australia** (www.greyhound.com.au) runs a return coach service from Darwin to Jabiru (\$66, 3½ hours).

## Ubirr & Around

It'll take a lot more than the busloads of visitors to disturb the inherent majesty and grace of **Ubirr** (☉8.30am-sunset Apr-Nov, from 2pm Dec-Mar). Layers of **rock-art paintings**, in various styles and from various centuries, command a mesmerising stillness. Part of the main gallery reads like a menu, with images of kangaroos, tortoises and fish painted in x-ray, which became the dominant style about 8000 years ago. Predating these are the paintings of mini spirits: cheeky, dynamic figures who, it's believed, were the first of the Creation Ancestors to paint on rock (...given the lack of cherry pickers in 6000 BC, you have to wonder who else but a spirit could have painted at that height and angle). Look out for the yam-head figures, where the head is depicted as a yam on the body of a human or animal; these date back around 15,000 years.

The magnificent **Nardab Lookout** is a 250m scramble from the main gallery. Surveying the billiard-table-green floodplain and watching the sun set and the moon rise, like they're on an invisible set of scales, is glorious, to say the least. Ubirr is 39km north of the Arnhem Hwy via a sealed road.

On the way you'll pass the turn-off to **Merli** (adult/child \$10/free) camping ground, which is only open in the Dry and has an amenities block and BBQs, and the **Border Store** (☎08-8979 2474; mains \$20-28; ☉8.30am-8pm Apr-Nov), selling groceries, real coffee, and delicious Thai food (no fuel).

## Activities

### Bardedjilidji Sandstone Walk

WALKING

Starting from the upstream picnic-area car park, this walk (2.5km, 90 minutes, easy) takes in wetland areas of the East Alligator



River and some eroded sandstone outliers of the Arnhem Land escarpment. Informative track notes point out features on the walk.

### Manngarre Monsoon Forest Walk WALKING

Mainly sticking to a boardwalk, this walk (1.5km return, 30 minutes, easy) starts by the boat ramp near the Border Store and winds through shaded vegetation, palms and vines.

### Sandstone & River Rock Holes WALKING

This extension (6.5km, three hours, medium) of the Bardedjildji Walk features sandstone outcrops, paperbark swamps and riverbanks. Closed in the Wet.

## Jabiru

POP 1129

It may seem surprising to find a town of Jabiru's size and structure in the midst of a wilderness national park, but it exists solely because of the nearby Ranger uranium mine. It's Kakadu's major service centre, with a bank, newsagent, medical centre, supermarket, bakery and service station. You can even play a round of golf here.

## ★ Festivals & Events

### Mahbilil Festival

CULTURAL

(mahbililfestival.com) A one-day celebration in early September of Indigenous culture in Jabiru. There are exhibitions showcasing local art as well as craft demonstrations, including weaving and painting. Also on offer are competitions in spear throwing, didgeridoo blowing and magpie goose cooking. In the evening the focus is on Indigenous music and dance.

## 🍴 Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Anbinik (Lakeview) Resort

CABINS \$\$

(☎ 08-8979 3144; www.lakeviewkakadu.com.au; 27 Lakeside Dr; ensuite powered sites \$40, bungalows/d/cabins \$130/140/245; 🍷 🍷) This Aboriginal-owned park is one of Kakadu's best with a range of tropical-design bungalows set in lush gardens. The doubles share a communal kitchen, bathroom and lounge, and also come equipped with their own TV and fridge. The 'bush bungalows' are stylish, elevated safari designs (no air-con) with private external bathroom. Bungalows sleep up to four. By far the best value in Jabiru.

### Aurora Kakadu Lodge & Caravan Park

RESORT \$\$

(☎ 08-8979 2422, 1800 811 154; www.auroraresorts.com.au; Jabiru Dr; unpowered/powerd sites \$28/40, cabins from \$250; 🍷 @ 🍷) One of the best plac-

es to camp in town with lots of grass, trees and natural barriers between camping areas, creating a sense of privacy. This impeccable resort/caravan park also has a lagoon-style swimming pool. Self-contained cabins sleep up to five people. The restaurant is a lovely outdoor place for meals overlooking the pool. The menu is limited but dishes such as buffalo sausages are well prepared.

### Mercure Kakadu (Crocodile Hotel) HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 08-8979 9000; www.accorhotels.com; 1 Flinders St; d from \$310; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Known locally as 'the Croc', this hotel is designed in the shape of a crocodile, which, of course, is only obvious when viewed from the air or Google Earth. The rooms are clean and comfortable if a little pedestrian for the price (check its website for great deals). Try for one on the ground floor opening out to the central pool.

### Kakadu Bakery

BAKERY \$

(Gregory Pl; meals \$6-15; ☎ 6am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3.30pm Sat, 8am-4pm Sun) Superb made-to-order sandwiches on home-baked bread. There are also mean burgers, slices, breakfast fry-ups, pizzas, cakes and basic salads.

### Jabiru Sports & Social Club

PUB FOOD \$\$

(☎ 08-8979 2326; Lakeside Dr; mains \$16-35; ☎ noon-2pm Thu-Sun, 6-8.30pm Tue-Sat) Along with the golf club, this low-slung hangar is the place to meet locals over a beer or glass of wine. The bistro meals, such as steak, chicken parma or fish and chips, are honest, and there's an outdoor deck overlooking the lake, a kids playground, and sport on TV.

## Nourlangie

The sight of this looming outlier of the Arnhem Land escarpment makes it easy to understand its ancient importance to Aboriginal people. Its long red-sandstone bulk, striped in places with orange, white and black, slopes up from surrounding woodland to fall away at one end in stepped cliffs. Below is Kakadu's best-known collection of **rock art**.

The name Nourlangie is a corruption of *nawulandja*, an Aboriginal word that refers to an area bigger than the rock itself. The 2km looped walking track (open 8am to sunset) takes you first to the **Anbangbang Shelter**, used for 20,000 years as a refuge and canvas. Next is the **Anbangbang Gallery**, featuring Dreaming characters repainted in the 1960s. Look for Nambulwinjbulwinj, a dangerous spirit who likes to eat females after banging them on the head with a yam. From here it's a short



walk to **Gunwarddehwarde Lookout**, with views of the Arnhem Land escarpment.

Nourlangie is at the end of a 12km sealed road that turns east off Kakadu Hwy. About 7km south is the turn-off to **Muirella Park** (adult/child \$10/free) camping ground at **Djarradjin Billabong**, with BBQs, excellent amenities and the 5km-return **Bubba Wetland Walk**.



## Activities

### Nawurlandja Lookout

WALKING

This is a short walk (600m return, 30 minutes, medium) up a gradual slope, but it gives excellent views of the Nourlangie rock area and is a good place to catch the sunset.

### Anbangbang Billabong Walk

WALKING

This picturesque billabong lies close to Nourlangie, and the picnic tables dotted around its edge make it a popular lunch spot. The track (2.5km loop, 45 minutes, easy) circles the billabong and passes through paperbark swamp.

### Barrk Walk

WALKING

This long day walk (12km loop, five to six hours, difficult) will take you away from the crowds on a circuit of the Nourlangie area. Barrk is the male black wallaroo and you might see this elusive marsupial if you set out early. Pick up a brochure from the Bowali Visitor Information Centre.

Starting at the Nourlangie car park, this demanding walk passes through the Anbangbang galleries before a steep climb to the top of Nourlangie Rock. Cross the flat top of the rock weaving through sandstone pillars before descending along a wet-season watercourse. The track then follows the rock's base past the Nanguluwur Gallery and western cliffs before re-emerging at the car park.

### Nanguluwur Gallery

WALKING

This outstanding rock-art gallery sees far fewer visitors than Nourlangie simply because it's further to walk (3.5km return, 1½ hours, easy) and has a gravel access road. Here the paintings cover most of the styles found in the park, including very early dynamic style work, x-ray work and a good example of 'contact art', a painting of a two-masted sailing ship towing a dinghy.

## Jim Jim Falls & Twin Falls

Remote and spectacular, these two falls epitomise the rugged Top End. **Jim Jim Falls**, a sheer 215m drop, is awesome after rain (when it can only be seen from the air), but

its waters shrink to a trickle by about June. **Twin Falls** flows year-round (no swimming), but half the fun is getting here, involving a little **boat trip** (adult/child \$12.50/free, running 7.30am to 5pm, last boat 4pm) and an over-the-water boardwalk.

These two waterfalls are reached via a 4WD track that turns south off the Kakadu Hwy between the Nourlangie and Cooinda turn-offs. Jim Jim Falls is about 56km from the turn-off (the last 1km on foot), and it's a further five corrugated kilometres to Twin Falls. The track is open in the Dry only and can still be closed into late May; it's off limits to most rental vehicles (check the fine print). A couple of tour companies make trips here in the Dry and there's a camping area, **Garrnamarr** (adult/child \$10/free) near Jim Jim Falls.

## Cooinda & Yellow Water

Cooinda is best known for the cruises (p838) on the wetland area known as Yellow Water, and has developed into a slick resort. About 1km from the resort, the **Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre** ([www.gagudju-dreaming.com](http://www.gagudju-dreaming.com); Yellow Water Area; ☉9am-5pm) depicts Creation stories and has a great permanent exhibition that includes clap sticks, sugar-bag holders and rock-art samples. You'll be introduced to the moiety system (the law of interpersonal relationships), languages and skin names, and there's a minitheatre with a huge selection of films to choose from. A mesmerising soundtrack of chants and didgeridoos plays in the background.

### Gagudju Lodge & Camping Cooinda

(☎1800 500 401; [www.gagudju-dreaming.com](http://www.gagudju-dreaming.com); Cooinda; unpowered/powered sites \$38/50, budget/lodge r from \$75/310; ☎☎☎) is the most popular accommodation resort in the park. It's a modern oasis but, even with 380 camp sites, facilities can get very stretched. The budget air-con units share camping-ground facilities and are compact and comfy enough. The lodge rooms are spacious and more comfortable, sleeping up to four people. There's also a grocery shop, tour desk, fuel pump and the excellent open-air **Barra Bar & Bistro** (☎1800 500 401; [www.gagudju-dreaming.com](http://www.gagudju-dreaming.com); Cooinda; mains \$15-36; ☎☎☎ all day) here.

The turn-off to the Cooinda accommodation complex and Yellow Water wetlands is 47km down the Kakadu Hwy from the Arnhem Hwy intersection. Just off the Kakadu Hwy, 2km south of the Cooinda turn-off, is the scrubby **Mardugal camping ground** (adult/child \$10/free), an excellent year-round camping area with shower and toilets.

## Cooinda to Pine Creek

This southern section of the park sees far fewer tour buses. Though it's unlikely you'll have dreamy **Maguk** (Barramundi Gorge; 45km south of Cooinda and 10km along a corrugated 4WD track) to yourself, you might time it right to have the glorious natural pool and falls between just a few of you. Forty-odd kilometres further south is the turn-off to **Gunlom** (Waterfall Creek), another superb escarpment waterfall, plunge pool and camping area. It's located 37km along an unsealed road, again 4WD recommended. Take the steep Waterfall Walk (1km, one hour) here, which affords incredible views.

## Arnhem Land

Arnhem Land is a vast, overwhelming and mysterious corner of the Northern Territory. About the size of the state of Victoria and with a population of only around 17,000, mostly Yolngu people, this Aboriginal reserve is one of Australia's last great untouched wilderness areas. Most people live on outstations, combining traditional practices with modern Western ones, so they might go out for a hunt and be back in time to watch the 6pm news. Outside commercial interests and visits are highly regulated through a permit system, designed to protect the environment, the rock art and ceremonial grounds. **Balanda** (white people) are unaware of the locations of burial grounds and ceremonial lands. Basically, you need a specific purpose for entering, usually to visit an arts centre, in order to be granted a permit. If you're travelling far enough to warrant an overnight stay, you'll need to organise accommodation (which is in short supply). It's easy to visit Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) and its arts centre, just over the border, either on a tour or independently. Elsewhere, it's best to travel with a tour, which will include the necessary permit(s) to enter Aboriginal lands.

### Tours

#### Arnhemlander Cultural & Heritage Tour

**TOUR**  
(☎) 1800 665 220; [www.aptouring.com.au/KCT](http://www.aptouring.com.au/KCT); adult/child \$258/205) Four-wheel-drive tours to ancient rock-art sites, Inkiyu Billabong and Injalak art centre at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli).

#### Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris

**TOUR**  
(☎) 08-8979 0413; [www.arnhemland-safaris.com](http://www.arnhemland-safaris.com)) Experienced operator taking tours to Mt Borradaile, north of Oenpelli. Meals, guided tours,

fishing and safari-camp accommodation are included in the daily price (from \$750); transfers from Darwin can be arranged.

#### Venture North Australia

**TOUR**  
(☎) 08-8927 5500; [venturenorth.com.au](http://venturenorth.com.au); 4-/5-day tours \$2590/2890) Four-wheel drive tours to remote areas; features expert guidance on rock art. Also has a safari camp near Smith Point on the Cobourg Peninsula.

#### Lord's Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris

**TOUR**  
(☎) 08-8948 2200; [www.lords-safaris.com](http://www.lords-safaris.com); adult/child \$225/180) One-day trip into Arnhem Land (Gunbalanya) from Jabiru (or Darwin adult/child \$255/195), visiting Oenpelli with an Aboriginal-guided walk around Injalak Hill rock-art site.

#### Nomad Tours

**TOUR**  
(☎) 08-8987 8085; [www.banubanu.com](http://www.banubanu.com); half-/full-day per person \$250/380) Luxury small-group tours including fishing charters, 4WD and cultural tours. Transfers and guided activities are available for an extra fee.

#### Gove Diving & Fishing Charters

**FISHING**  
(☎) 08-8987 3445; [www.govefish.com.au](http://www.govefish.com.au)) Variety of fishing, diving and snorkelling, and wilderness trips from Nhulunbuy. Half-/full-day fishing trips cost \$225/325.

## Gunbalanya (Oenpelli)

POP 1121

Gunbalanya is a small Aboriginal community 17km into Arnhem Land across the East Alligator River from the Border Store in Kakadu. The drive in itself is worth the trip, with brilliant green wetlands and spectacular escarpments all around. Road access is only possible between May and October: check the tides at Cahill's Crossing on the East Alligator River before setting out so you don't get stuck on the other side.

A permit is required to visit the town, usually issued for visits to the **Injalak Arts & Crafts Centre** (☎) 08-8979 0190; [www.injalak.com](http://www.injalak.com); ☺ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat). At this centre, artists and craftspeople display traditional paintings on bark and paper, plus didgeridoos, pandanus weavings and baskets, and screen-printed fabrics. Artworks are produced either at the arts centre itself or on remote outstations throughout Arnhem Land.

As you walk around the verandah of the arts centre to see the artists at work (morning only), peer out over the wetland at the rear to the escarpment and **Injalak Hill** (Long Tom Dreaming). Knowledgeable local guides lead tours to see the fine rock-art galleries here.

The three-hour tours cost \$110/33 per adult/child. Although it may be possible to join a tour as a walk-in, it's generally best to book a tour from Jabiru or Darwin.

The **Stone Country Festival** is an open day and cultural festival held in August. It has traditional music, dancing, and arts and crafts demonstrations, and is the only day you can visit Gunbalanya without a permit. Camping allowed; no alcohol. Check dates online.

The **Northern Land Council** (☎1800 645 299, 08-8938 3000; www.nlc.org.au; 3 Government Bldg, Flinders St, Jabiru; ☀8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) issues permits (adult/child \$16.50/free) to visit Injalak, usually on the spot. It also provides tide times for the East Alligator River, which is impassable at high tide.

## Cobourg Peninsula

The entire wilderness of this remote peninsula forms the **Garig Gunak Barlu National Park** (www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/gariggunak), which includes the surrounding sea. In the turquoise water you'll likely see dolphins and turtles, and – what most people come for – a threadfin salmon thrashing on the end of your line. On the shores of **Port Essington** are the stone ruins and headstones of Victoria settlement – Britain's 1838 attempt to establish a military outpost here.

At **Algarlarlgarl** (Black Point) there's a **ranger station** (☎08-8979 0244) with a visitor information and cultural centre, and the **Garig Store** (☎08-8979 0455; ☀4-6pm Mon-Sat), which sells basic provisions, ice and camping gas.

Two permits are required to visit the Cobourg Peninsula: for a transit pass (\$12.10 per vehicle) to drive through Aboriginal land contact the Northern Land Council (p811); for permission to stay overnight in the national park contact the **Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary & Marine Park Board** (☎08-8999 4814; www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/gariggunak). The overnight fee is \$232.10 per vehicle, which covers up to five people for seven days and includes a camping and transit pass.

There are two camping grounds in the park with shower, toilet, BBQs and limited bore water; generators are allowed in one area. Camping fees (per person per day \$16.50) are covered by your vehicle permit, but if you fly in you'll have to pay them. Other accommodation is available in pricey fishing resorts.

## Getting There & Away

The quickest route here is by private charter flight, which can be arranged by accommoda-

tion providers. The track to Cobourg starts at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) and is accessible by 4WD vehicles only from May to October. The 270km drive to Black Point from the East Alligator River takes about four hours.

## Eastern Arnhem Land

The wildly beautiful coast and country of **Eastern Arnhem Land** (www.ealta.org) is really off the beaten track. About 4000 people live in the region's main settlement, Nhulunbuy, built to service the bauxite mine here. The 1963 plans to establish a manganese mine were hotly protested by the traditional owners, the Yolngu people; though mining proceeded, the case became an important step in establishing land rights. Some of the country's most respected art comes out of this region too, including bark paintings, carved mimi figures, *yidaki* (didgeridoos), woven baskets and mats, and jewellery.

**Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre & Museum** (www.yirrkala.com; Yirrkala; admission by donation; ☀8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat), 20km southeast of Nhulunbuy in Yirrkala, is one of Arnhem Land's best. No permit is required to visit from Nhulunbuy or Gove airport.

In August, the **Garma Festival** (www.yyf.com.au) is a four-day celebration in north-eastern Arnhem Land. It's one of the most significant regional festivals, a celebration of Yolngu culture that includes ceremonial performances, bushcraft lessons, a *yidaki* (didgeridoo) master class and an academic forum. Serious planning is required to attend, so start early.

Overland travel through Arnhem Land from Katherine requires a permit (free) from the Northern Land Council (p811). The **Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation** (☎08-8987 3992; www.dhimurru.com.au; Arnhem Rd, Nhulunbuy) issues recreation permits (\$35/45 for seven days/two months) for visits to particular recreational areas in Eastern Arnhem Land.

## Getting There & Away

**Airnorth** (☎1800 627 474; www.airnorth.com.au) and Qantaslink (p826) fly from Darwin to Gove Airport (for Nhulunbuy) daily from \$355 one way. Overland, it's a 10-hour 4WD trip and only possible in the Dry. The Central Arnhem Hwy to Gove leaves the Stuart Hwy (Rte 87) 52km south of Katherine. At the time of writing **Sea Swift** (☎08-8935 2400, 1800 424 422; www.seaswift.com.au) was launching a cruise service aboard a working cargo boat from Darwin to Gove.



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