

# Sharing Aboriginal Culture in Western Australia

Western Australia has a rich and diverse range of Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences on offer which provides the unique opportunity for Indigenous operators to share their knowledge and culture with the rest of the world. Tourism, through song-lines, outback tracks and traditional practices and ceremonies going back many thousands of years, brings visitors to Western Australia the opportunity to celebrate the diversity of Australia's Aboriginal culture.



Aboriginal tourism is the freshest thing to come on to the Australian tourism landscape in the past 20 years proving to be a win-win situation where both tourists and communities are benefitting. WAITOC (Western Australia Indigenous Tourism Operator Committee) was established in 2002 by a collective group of Aboriginal tourism operators wishing to promote their business and culture to the world as well as form a supportive network for their peers. The organization is unique and it is the first of its kind in Australia providing a one-stop-shop for Aboriginal Western Australia.

One of those wonderful experiences is offered by Darren 'Capes' Capewell, owner-operator of Wula Guda Nyinda Aboriginal Eco Ventures and long standing WAITOC Board member. Based on the most westerly point of the Australian continent, Capes, a descendant of the Nhandu and Malgana people – the traditional owners of WA's World Heritage Shark Bay area – gives visitors an intimate insight into his community's harmonious connections with the land.

"Our tours invite guests to use their natural senses to understand different ways that country 'talks' to you." Capes continues: "Once you know how you'll always be able to find food, water and traditional medicines when you need them. We look at the differences between the red sand and the white sand country, map of tribal boundaries and lands, local Aboriginal history, how the land has gotten sick through the introduction of non-native animals, and how we get sick when the country gets sick."



Going to the most southern edge of Western Australia, Esperance, Kepa Kurl guide Doc Reynolds, as

descendant of the eastern group of Nyoongar People, takes people out to sites of significance, ones that have a high cultural value for their people. “We’re talking about evolving cultural landscapes from colonization to today. By doing the tours, people gain a greater appreciation and understanding of culture that’s vibrant, and has been for thousands and thousands of years.”

The Western Australian landscape is a cultural canvas where visitors can experience anything from an hour long bushwalk, to tasting traditional foods called “bushtucker”, meeting Aboriginal artists as they paint their stories on canvas to travelling through the spectacular Kimberleys on a safari type tour.

Experiences where you are able to engage yourself with local wisdom of the tradition and stories of ancient rock art, corroborees and campfires. Swim in the pristine gorges of the Kimberley and engage with the local community. Selected operators such as Wundargoodie Aboriginal Safaris will take you to places you’d imagine only in your dreams. You will venture into secret and sacred locations only available with the privileged access of the safaris.



“The most authentic way to immerse yourself into the ancient culture and wild, untouched regions of Western Australia is to join an adventure tour with Aboriginal people.” The Chairman of WAITOC, Neville Poelina runs his own business called Uptuyu Aboriginal Adventures. As a member of the Nyikina family group, Neville grew up in the region around Broome. He is a real gold mine of cultural information and a strong, passionate advocate for his country and people. His 4wd tours will take you into some remote regions and sites which you could never access on your own.

Angelique Fransen, CEO of WAITOC explained that there is a real demand for authentic Aboriginal experiences among international visitors. “Although it is not the core reason for visitors coming to Australia, an Aboriginal experience as a part of your visit to Western Australia makes it a unique holiday. Feedback received from overseas visitors listed the Aboriginal experience as being the highlight of their holiday experience.”

For those that are considering a visit to Western Australia, an authentic Aboriginal tourism experience is a must to do activity while you’re here. Experience the oldest living culture in the world!

For more information on Aboriginal tourism experiences visit [www.waitoc.com](http://www.waitoc.com).

For more information on Western Australia visit [www.westernaustralia.com](http://www.westernaustralia.com).

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