



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REFERENCE GUIDE 2021

A practical reference guide for all staff to enhance Indigenous cultural competency across Tourism Australia's work in Australia and overseas

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INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are one of the most distinct, unique and diverse aspects of the Australian story, as well as one of our most internationally recognised features. From red-desert and saltwater country, to traditional ceremonial practices and world-class contemporary arts, the story of the First Australians resonates the world over.

In sharing this narrative with the world it is paramount that Tourism Australia works collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to portray an accurate, inclusive and authentic representation of Indigenous Australia.

Tourism Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Guide aims to provide staff with an easily accessible and informative resource for learning and writing about Australia's Indigenous cultures and tourism experiences. It is not intended to be a definitive source of information but will serve as a quick reference guide on Indigenous content and how to refer to Australia's Indigenous cultures.

Image: Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventures, Shark Bay, WA

A UNIQUE WORLDVIEW

Aboriginal cultures are the oldest continuing cultures on Earth. Their nations are as separate as the nations of Europe and Africa. Every plant and every animal are their family; they are their ancestors. Such an interconnected perspective is radically different to the West where the landscape is seen as separate, or literally outside of the human experience as we know it. In Aboriginal cultures, people and the land merge; they are part of each other, and this is exactly why travelling with an Aboriginal guide can be transformational and reshape how you connect with the world. Whether it's through feeling the light strip of ochre across the forehead or walking along the beach with an Aboriginal Elder who can read the tides by how the birds call, travelling with an Aboriginal guide opens a door to a view that makes a place many times more meaningful than if you were to explore it on your own. Birds give them messages, the wind is the breath of the Ancestors, the Rainbow Serpent travels in the clouds and His presence brings on the rains. You can see the Seven Sisters being chased across the night sky. A rainforest isn't a complex wall of green but a medicine chest, a toolbox, a hardware store, a supermarket...

“Aboriginal culture is sometimes portrayed as very serious and spiritual. Although it does have this meaningful side to it, Aboriginal people are pretty down to earth. It's the mix of the practical with the humorous that makes the experience meaningful.” Dr Aden Ridgeway

Image: Lirrwi Tourism, Nyinyikay Yolju Homeland, East Arnhem Land, NT





Multi-faceted and imbued with ancient wisdom, Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are warm, welcoming, fun and extremely generous of spirit; getting to know their approach to life and hearing their incredible stories may well be one of the richest travel experiences available.

Image: Lirrwi Tourism, Bawaka Yolŋu Homeland, East Arnhem Land, NT

KEY DEFINITIONS



KEY DEFINITIONS

Aboriginal (with capital A): Indigenous inhabitants of the mainland of Australia, including Tasmania. The term “aboriginal” without capitalisation is a generic term referring to native peoples of a particular area.

Acknowledgement of Country (with capitals): an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. It can be given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, though often a statement may take the following form. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the (people) of the (nation) and pay my respects to Elders past and present. Similar to a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country is conducted at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion.

Aunty and Uncle: the terms “Aunty” and “Uncle” are also a mark of respect and affection. As these terms imply close relationships, Tourism Australia should not use them unless invited to do so or until permission is sought.

Contemporary and Traditional: care should be taken with the use of the terms “contemporary” and “traditional” when referring to Indigenous groups and practices. While the majority of Indigenous peoples reside in urban areas, traditional practices, customs and values continue in contemporary environments. It is generally accepted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identify strongly with their traditional group and employ a diversity of cultural practices, even when living away from their community.

Country (with capital C): a word that conveniently abbreviates all the Indigenous values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with a particular area. Aboriginal nations are as separate as the nations of Europe or Africa and Aboriginal nations are as diverse as the travel experiences they offer. Every part of Australia is considered Aboriginal land and Aboriginal people are bound to a particular territory of land through spiritual links and obligations of care and custodianship to family, community, lore and country. Similarly, Torres Strait Islanders have their own connection to their island home.

Dreaming (with capital D): is the Aboriginal concept of spirituality and an embodiment of Aboriginal creation beliefs. It is an anglicised translation of a uniquely Aboriginal concept that has different meanings and different names for different Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal spirituality gives meaning to every aspect of existence and establishes the rules governing relationships and philosophical systems of thought in relation to people and Country. The Dreaming refers to the past, present and future of Aboriginal cultures. Note: Torres Strait Islander peoples do not use the term Dreaming.

Dreamtime (with capital D): is an anglicised translation referring to the creation period by Ancestral Beings in both human and non-human form. It is fundamental to a very complex belief system. These Creation Forces are constantly present. *Note: Torres Strait Islander peoples do not use the term Dreaming.*

Elder (with capital E): refers to an individual who has gained respect and recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore and who has permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs.

First Australians and First Nations Peoples (with capitals): First Australians recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. First Nations Peoples recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the sovereign people of this land. It goes further than 'First Australians' as it recognises various language groups as separate and unique sovereign nations. It is widely used to describe the First Peoples in Canada and other countries across the globe.

Indigenous (with capital I): an umbrella term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This term may be used to collectively refer to Australia's Indigenous populations but does not reflect the distinct differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their respective nations or language groups.

Kinship: is the Indigenous conception of the wider family group and associated obligations. It is an important part of Indigenous cultures and values and defines a person's relationships to both the community and Country.

KEY DEFINITIONS CONTINUED...

Languages: During the early period of colonisation, from 1788, known as the period of “First Contact”, there were between 250 and 750 distinct Australian social groupings, and a similar number of languages. The map on this page represents the richness of the language, tribal and nation groups of the First Peoples of Australia. The impact of colonisation still continues, however. Many of the languages once spoken are now endangered, and despite many language revival programs across Australia, Aboriginal people still feel a great sense of loss. Yet their resilience and optimism shine through, and with it, a strong desire to share their stories and culture with national and international visitors.

First Languages Australia has developed an interactive map to display and promote the diversity of Australia’s Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages. The map is called [Gambay](#), which means ‘together’ in the Butchulla language of the Hervey Bay region in Queensland.

Lore: the difference between ‘law’ and ‘lore’ can be simply defined as follows: Law means a rule or a collection of rules (as in western understanding); Lore is knowledge or tradition passed from generation to generation. Sometimes the two words do become a little confused but the key difference is that western law can be changed (at will) and Aboriginal lore remains intact and unchanged but within it carries rules, obligations, cultural understandings, etc.

Men’s Business: Indigenous ceremonial practices exclusive to men and boys.



AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia* © Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2017
Note: To request permission to use the map you will need to contact [AIATSIS](#) and submit a [permission request form](#).

*The above map attempts to represent the language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia. It shows only the general locations of larger groupings of people which may include clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. It used published resources from 1988-1994 and is not intended to be exact, nor the boundaries fixed. It is not suitable for native title or other land claims. David R Horton (creator), © Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, 1996. No reproduction without permission. To purchase a print version visit: [www.aiatsis.ashop.com.au](#)

KEY DEFINITIONS

CONTINUED...

Moiety: the first level of Indigenous kinship. Moiety describes the separation of Indigenous nation groups into two separate divisions and governs community relations, marriage laws and obligations. Marriage within a single moiety is forbidden. Moieties are often named and associated with special emblems or Totems and are commonly used as convenient labels of address or as a means of social identification. There are three kinds of moiety; patrilineal (children belong to the moiety of their father), matrilineal (children belong to the moiety of their mother) and generational (alternate generations belong to the same moiety).

Nation/Language Groups: the broad traditional groupings of Indigenous Australians defined by predefined borders, a common language and communal practices. Nation groups are seen in a similar light as today's notions of citizenship to a particular Country.

Skin Names: the third level of kinship. Similar to a surname, a Skin Name indicates a person's blood line and conveys information about how generations are linked and should interact. Spouses don't share the same Skin Name and children don't share their parents' Skin Name. Skin Names are sequential in order and are based on the preceding Skin Name and its level in the naming cycle. There are generally 16-32 sets of names in each cycle. As an example visit: australianstogether.org.au/discover/indigenous-culture/kinship

Songlines (with capital S): song cycles are an integral part of how information about Dreaming Tracks are transmitted. These songs often describe different places in the journey of the Ancestor and thus they are a map. It is the last concept that has led to the term 'Songline'. Most of the information about specific details of Songlines and Dreaming Tracks are not for public dissemination and are part of the secret sacred lore of Aboriginal cultures.

Sorry Business: a term used by Indigenous Australians to refer to the death of a family or community member and the mourning process. *NB: Further information on this subject is under the 'Visiting Indigenous Communities' section of this Toolkit.*

Tagai (with capital T): in the Torres Strait, there is no specific word for "Dreamtime/Dreaming" and Torres Strait Islander creation stories are most commonly referenced as Tagai, who is often represented as a great fisherman and hero, and also shown as a constellation of stars.

Torres Strait Islander (with capitals): the Indigenous inhabitants of the Torres Strait region of Australia.

Totem (with capital T): the second level of kinship. A Totem is a natural object, plant or animal that is inherited by members of a clan or family as their spiritual emblem. Totems define peoples' roles and responsibilities, and their relationships with each other and creation. Totems are believed to be the descendants of the Dreamtime heroes, or totemic beings.

Traditional Owners (with capitals): the English umbrella term for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Custodians of a territory. The definition of Traditional Owners can vary quite significantly depending on the legislative context but was first recorded in the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth) as meaning, "a local Aboriginal descent group who have common spiritual affiliations to a site on the land, being affiliations that place the group under a primary spiritual responsibility for that site and for the land; and are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to forage as of right over that land".

Welcome to Country (with capitals): a traditional cultural protocol where an Elder or representative from a particular nation group welcomes visitors onto their Country, usually through speech, song, dance, smoking ceremony or a combination of all. *Note: A Welcome to Country can only be performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elders or Traditional Owners who have been given permission to welcome visitors onto their traditional land.*

Women's Business: Indigenous ceremonial practices exclusive to women and girls.



In *Nourishing Terrains*, Deborah Bird Rose says: "*Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about Country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to Country, sing to Country, visit Country, worry about Country, feel sorry for Country, and long for Country. People say that Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country' or 'going up the country'. Rather, Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, Country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease*".

Image: Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris, West Arnhem Land, NT

PREFERENCES IN TERMINOLOGY

When referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

It is important that Tourism Australia correctly refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and customs. Using the correct terminology supports the development of professional relationships and trust and acknowledges the differences and nuances between Australia's Indigenous groups.

It is important to be aware of the heterogeneity of identity and culture regarding these terms. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders think of themselves in the context of their Nation/ Language Groups. When referring to individual Indigenous Australians in content, the preference is to name their language group e.g. Dr Aden Ridgeway, Gumbaynggirr man or Dale Tilbrook a Wardandi Bibbulmun Elder.

Preferences in terminology will vary across Australia for individuals, communities and agencies. Furthermore, these preferences can change over time. For Tourism Australia's Consumer Marketing purposes, the following terminology should be used:

Aboriginal refers to the Aboriginal peoples of mainland Australia and many of its islands such as Tasmania, Groote Eylandt, and Hinchinbrook Island. If only Aboriginal peoples are being referred to in content, then no reference needs to be made to Torres Strait Islander peoples. Note: the term 'Aborigine' is likely to cause offence to Aboriginal peoples. Additionally, 'Aboriginal' should be used as an adjective, not a noun i.e. Aboriginal person, not an Aboriginal or Aborigines.

Torres Strait Islander refers to the peoples of the Torres Strait Islands located between Australia and Papua New Guinea. Torres Strait Islander peoples are of Melanesian origin. They have five traditional island clusters in the Torres Strait. The Islands are part of Queensland but they are administered by the Torres Strait Regional Authority, a statutory authority of the Australian federal government. More than half of the Torres Strait Islander peoples live on mainland Australia with large populations residing in towns such as Cairns and Townsville. When referring to Queensland's Indigenous tourism experiences, unless the business identifies as Aboriginal, then use the terminology "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" or "Indigenous". Note: the terms Aboriginal, TSI and Islander(s) should not be used to describe Torres Strait Islander peoples and topics.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples/ Cultures is the most correct reference for Australian Indigenous cultures and peoples. This term recognises the distinct cultural differences between the two broader groups while also recognising their unity as Australia's First Peoples. The term illustrates that there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups within Australia i.e. they are not one homogenous group but a diverse group of hundreds of nations (or cultural groups) and clans within those nations.

Indigenous, First Australians, Australia's First Peoples are also appropriate terms and may be used in order to prevent repetition, especially if the word count is limited, however preference should be given to using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Note: Indigenous can be used in internal corporate Tourism Australia communications.

"This land is sacred; it can feel you when you walk through it. All living things can feel you. There was a time when the Ancestors walked through the land and Aboriginal people still feel the Ancestors watching them. The Ancestors still exist and walk the land and never die. Every corner that the wind blows tells a story. It's the breath of the Ancestors."

Timmy 'Djawa' Burarrwanga from Bawaka Homeland, East Arnhem Land

Image: Lirrwi Tourism, Bawaka Yolŋu Homeland, East Arnhem Land, NT

INDIGENOUS HISTORY AND IDENTITY

INDIGENOUS HISTORY AND IDENTITY

INDIGENOUS HISTORY

Regarded by many as the oldest continuing cultures on Earth today, Australia's Aboriginal history dates back more than 60,000 years, while the history of Torres Strait Islander cultures has been linked to the isolation of the Torres Strait Islands from Papua New Guinea over 8,000 years ago.

Throughout history, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have lived in harmony with their natural environment. Before colonisation, Indigenous Australians hunted, fished and harvested food from their surroundings and were self-sufficient. Many nation groups were seasonally nomadic, moving within pre-defined territories depending on seasonal weather and wildlife patterns, and often shared resources with neighbouring groups through established trade practices.

Rock-art dated to the 1700s depicts Indigenous Australian engagement with Makassan Indonesians, evidencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups had established trade practices with peoples in southern Papua New Guinea and Indonesia well before European settlement. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders also developed rich and complex cultural practices, language, customs, spirituality and notions of lore that had developed both from geographical isolation as well as contact with Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Pacific.

The arrival of Captain Cook in 1770, and the British First Fleet in 1788, marked the beginning of colonisation for Australia and an upheaval of traditional Indigenous existence. Indigenous

Australians "were not passive actors in the colonisation of Australia. Resistance to the invasion began almost immediately, using small-scale guerrilla tactics against the heavily armed British."

Colonisation, and years of conflict between Indigenous Australians and European Settlers decimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations while disease, violence and successive government policies created a social divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The social, cultural and economic effect of invasion continues to affect Indigenous Australians today.

While many parts of Australia's reverberating history is dark, there is a current of hope, progress and cultural pride among Indigenous Australians. As a nation, Australia is committed to achieving reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and recognising their history and value. *NB: refer to Tourism Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for information on Tourism Australia's commitment to reconciliation.*

Momentum towards reconciliation, stemming from the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples and the acceptance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples continues today as Australia continues to grapple with our national identity and the value and respect given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Furthermore, The Australian Government continues to facilitate a national discussion around the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian Constitution.

ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

Australian Aboriginal people originate from the mainland of Australia, as well as Tasmania. Cultural practices, protocols and traditions vary significantly among Aboriginal nation groups; however the unifying element consistent across Aboriginal culture is a shared connection to Country and community.

Aboriginal identity and sense of community is derived from the belief that the earth is sacred and living. Country is respected and provides all that is required for survival: water, food, shelter and connection to a greater sense of the world around them. Unlike the non-Indigenous interpretation of land ownership, Aboriginal people believe they are instead owned by the land and have a duty to care for it.

Ceremonies form a pivotal part of Aboriginal existence, with predefined practices surrounding marriage, funerals, coming-of-age and initiation practices. History, culture and heritage are passed on to the next generation through storytelling, and lore governs the management of hunting lines, sacred places and ceremonial grounds. Individuals in a community have defined roles and Men's Business is kept separate from Women's Business.

INDIGENOUS HISTORY AND IDENTITY

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TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER IDENTITY

Torres Strait Islander people originate from the Torres Strait Islands to the north of Cape York in Queensland, and have more than 8000 years of documented history. The Torres Strait Islands consist of more than 100 islands clustered into several island groups (17 of which are inhabited) and 18 community groups.

Torres Strait Islander culture derives from strong Pacific Island influences. Torres Strait Islander culture and identity centralise around the sea, which was relied on for providing food, shelter and cultural wellbeing. Trade in these natural resources created strong cultural ties with other Pacific Island nations, such as Papua New Guinea, and these relationships remain today.

Fishing, hunting and traditional lore are central to Torres Strait Island culture and are reflected through ceremony, song, dance and spirituality. Knowledge around seafaring, navigation and hunting is passed on through story-telling and traditional ceremonies such as funeral rites, tombstone unveilings and initiation.

The Torres Strait is divided into two language groups: Mirriam Mer is the dominant language in the eastern Torres Strait and originates from Papua New Guinean influence. Kala Lagaw Ya is dominant in the central and western parts of the region and originates from Aboriginal and Melanesian influences. English and Creole are also widely spoken in the Torres Strait region, although generally as a second language.

[The Torres Strait Regional Authority](#) contains more information on the Torres Strait region.

“Everyone is different. What I teach you in the Daintree rainforest is one teaching. You go out into the desert, the people out there will teach you a whole new aspect, a whole new way of looking at the world because their Country is different. So it’s really important to understand that diversity is a major part of Aboriginal Australia.”

Juan Walker from Walkabout Cultural Adventures

LANGUAGE



LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE GROUPS

Australia's Aboriginal population is made up of more than 250 nation/language groupings (AIATSIS). When referring to Aboriginal peoples, the preference is to name their language group. For example, when talking about different Aboriginal Countries within Australia below are examples of how this could be done in sentences:

- the Arrernte people believe Tjoritja (the MacDonnell Ranges) were created by great mounds of caterpillar carcasses;
- Juan Walker is a Kuku Yalanji man from the Mossman/Daintree World Heritage-listed area in Tropical North Queensland and founder of Walkabout Cultural Adventures;
- Follow the Songlines across the Savannah Way to Burketown where the night skies come alive with the stories of ancestors from the Gangalidda-Garawa people on Yagurli Tours;
- a Ngunnawal Elder from Canberra.

LANGUAGE AND PLACE NAMES

Ensure correct glyphs/accents are used for Indigenous language groups and place names e.g. Anangu, Uluru, Kata Tjuta. Ensure Indigenous place names are listed first followed by their English name in brackets unless the Indigenous word is globally recognised e.g. Ayers Rock should not be included alongside Uluru.

Also, if referring to Uluru as 'the rock', some context must be given as to where 'the rock' is and its cultural significance as Uluru is sacred to Anangu (Anangu are referred to as Anangu, not the Anangu). "For Anangu, it isn't just a rock, it's a living place as Tjukurpa and the marks of the Creation Beings are everywhere".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' incredibly diverse cultures result in an exciting array of experiences for adventure seekers, cultural enthusiasts, foodies and nature lovers in locations both urban and remote. Experiences could include anything from exploring labyrinths of ancient and contemporary rock art, quad biking, kayaking, whale watching, fishing, mud crabbing, hiking, a walking tour in a city centre or staying in a lodge on over 500 square kilometres of lily-laden flood plains teeming with wildlife. Indigenous guides add incredible value to these experiences bringing Country to life, where past, present and future meet.

SPIRITUALITY

Indigenous spirituality underpins the very core values and beliefs of Indigenous society.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality derives from the philosophy that everyone and everything is interconnected. The land, people, creatures, animate and inanimate objects, the past, present and future all intertwine, creating a complex system of responsibilities, obligations and connectedness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality centres around creationism and as a general rule, is demonstrated through creation stories that describe the shaping and development of the world by Indigenous Ancestor Spirits. These Ancestor Spirits are believed to have created life and established the protocols and practices by which all things should live. They established both order and communal obligations, or Lore, which sets the standards by which every living creature should live and establishes the central connectedness between kin, Country, and a continuing relationship with the Ancestor Spirits themselves.

ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY - DREAMTIME/DREAMING

The Dreamtime and Dreaming are literal attempts to translate a distinctly Aboriginal perspective and belief. The Dreamtime, as opposed to the Dreaming, specifically refers to the time of creation, when Dreaming Tracks/Songlines were created. Aboriginal Lore that covers rules for living including lore related to marriage, kinship, crime and land management was created during this period. The Dreaming is a living, continuing cycle of birth, life and death and connects all people to their Ancestors, the world around them and the spiritual world. Neither of these anglicised words capture the true meaning or nuanced sophistication of the Aboriginal conception of spirituality and creation. Different Aboriginal groups will have their own word, in their language, to describe this time of creation and their particular creation stories that link to this period. So, in Yawuru language in Broome, Bugarrigarra is the word for the Dreamtime or Dreaming; in central Australia, Tjukurpa is the Anangu word referring to the creation period. As the terms Dreamtime and Dreaming are globally known, where suitable refer to the Aboriginal word for the Dreamtime. *“Ngijakura is our preferred term for creation, the beginning, when everything came to be. Once we were created (these) stories were passed on to where we are now... They give us everything.”* Juan Walker, Walkabout Cultural Tours.

Creation stories are told through painting, song, dancing or ceremony - all of which are therefore necessarily inextricably linked and are passed on as living traditions through the generations.

Traditions and practices also merge with economic and ecological responsibilities for 'looking after Country'.

The creation stories, Songlines and ceremonial practices also help define the territories of each group and custodianship of the land. The travels and adventures of the Ancestral Heroes are sometimes told in a sequence of ceremonies, performed by individual clan groups across a large geographical area. Individual clan groups have knowledge of the different stories, which make up the Songline.

STORIES NOT MYTHS

Dreamtime and Dreaming refer to living stories and creation forces that are constantly present. These stories are much more than *'dreams'*, *'myths'* or *'legends'*. They direct social life and form the basis for Aboriginal lore and care of Country. Do not use the terms myth or legend as these words do not accurately convey what the Aboriginal belief system is about, use the word 'stories'.

MEANING OF THE TERM, 'WALKABOUT'

'Walkabout' is another anglicised word to describe a coming-of-age ceremony, a physical rite of passage where the young Indigenous man undertaking it must live a temporarily nomadic lifestyle to survive alone. It is also a spiritual journey. Care needs to be taken when using Indigenous concepts in marketing to ensure that the original anglicised translation of a uniquely Aboriginal concept is not disrespected or distorted.

SPIRITUALITY

CONTINUED...

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SPIRITUALITY - THE TAGAI

Torres Strait Islander people maintain separate and unique belief systems from their Aboriginal counterparts and The Dreaming is not an applicable term for Torres Strait Islander spirituality. Torres Strait Islander creation stories are most commonly referenced as the Tagai.

The Tagai refers to the stories passed on through generations of Torres Strait Islander people about an Ancestor Spirit named Tagai. These stories are used to describe their connections to the islands, sea and stars, and guide their way of living.

In Torres Strait Islander culture, Tagai is often represented as a great fisherman and hero and is also shown as a constellation of stars. The story of Tagai tells of a Torres Strait Islander Ancestor Spirit who voyaged across the skies with a crew of 12 men. Unable to catch any fish, Tagai is said to have left the canoe and his crew to search for fish on a nearby reef.

As the day passed the crew became hot and frustrated and were said to have drunk water belonging to Tagai. Upon his return, Tagai bundled together his crew and threw them into sky and placed them in two groups. Today, these two groups are represented as constellations: the Pleiades star cluster and Orion, and Tagai can be seen standing in a canoe in the Milky Way. His left hand, holding a spear, is represented as being the Southern Cross, his right hand, holding a fruit called Eugina, is represented in the constellation Corvus and his body, standing on his canoe, is formed by the stars of Scorpius.

Astronomy is integral in Torres Strait Islander culture and spirituality. The stars, including Tagai's constellation, and the stories about them, guide Torres Strait Islander peoples' hunting practices, land management and indicate the start and end of the seasons.

The monotheistic beliefs of Torres Strait Islander peoples also contributed to the ready acceptance of Christianity at the time of colonisation. Through contact with Anglican ministry and missionaries, Torres Strait Islander people have embraced Christian beliefs and woven it into traditional spirituality - celebrated on 1 July each year in the Coming of the Light celebrations. While traditional customs, particularly around coming of age remain prevalent in the region, Christianity is the dominant religion and permeates Torres Strait Islander culture and spirituality.

Practical Guidance

Although it is appropriate to enquire as to correct terminology for describing Indigenous spirituality or significant places, care should be taken not to inquire too deeply into details of sacred sites and spiritual practices. This knowledge is often passed only to initiated adults and in some cases is highly sensitive. Staff must also be aware of the stark difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of spirituality, and the differences that come with geographic location, engagement with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and between generations. Like any population, it is inherently a personal choice as to how an individual identifies and engages with spirituality. While there are common connectors among groups, it is important not to homogenise Indigenous belief systems.

The background of the page is a photograph showing the silhouettes of several people and a large tree with spiky leaves against a sunset sky. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon. The people are in various poses, some sitting and some standing, creating a sense of a community or gathering. The tree on the left is a prominent feature, its branches reaching across the top of the frame.

CREATION STORY

Mowarra's Datiwuy Clan from East Arnhem Land lives the lore. The Matamata outstation site was not chosen for its seductive seaside outlook or its abundance of bush food. It was chosen because it's near a major sacred site where a momentous event occurred in the "Wangarr", the magical creation time "before the first morning". The place was fashioned by Mana, the shark, the Ancestral Being that forms the essence of Mowarra's identity and defines his place in the world. Mana is at the centre of Mowarra's ceremony, his songs and his traditional dance. "That Mana, he is me and I am him," states Mowarra through his daughter Merrki who is acting as an interpreter. "Look into my eyes and you will see him." Mowarra's family still talks about a ceremony held recently near Yirkkala when, in a moment of pure magic, Mowarra became the shark. As the old man danced and sang the song of Mana, he stripped a feather band from his hair and tossed it high into the air. With that, Mowarra leaped off the ground, snatching the hairband in his snarling teeth in mid-air, shaking it like a shark thrashes his kill. As all the other dancers stopped in stunned disbelief, the old man landed back on earth, sprinting off into the night with his kill still clenched between his teeth.

Quote supplied by Robyn Heras.

VISITING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

(FAMILS, FILM &
PHOTO SHOTS)

Permission is required to travel to certain Indigenous communities and sacred sites.

Before travelling to any Indigenous community, and in particular those located in rural and regional areas, permission may be required for entry in to Indigenous-controlled land and a permit sought from Indigenous Affairs, Local Land Councils, Indigenous communities or Indigenous service organisations. If travelling with a tour operator, check they have secured the appropriate permissions/permits. Note: When required, permits may take several weeks to obtain and are required in advance of travel. Also, before travelling to national parks with tour operators, check if entry and film/stills permits are required.

Permission is required to record or photograph people and places. Always ask for permission prior to recording any interaction by photograph, film, audio or note taking. Advise why this information is being recorded and what will be done with the information. If the recordings are used later for any other purpose secure permission first. Stories should not be retold, published or paraphrased by people who are not the Traditional Owners of a story without permission from the owners. The right of Indigenous peoples to keep their cultural knowledge secret and sacred should be respected.

Meeting with an Indigenous community for the first time. Determine who are the appropriate individual/s to meet with. Do not assume that one person speaks for all. It is courteous to introduce yourself and give the background for your meeting before starting. As English could be the second, third or fourth language spoken determine if an interpreter is required. In most cases Indigenous people do not like to rush business.

REPRODUCTION OF IMAGES AND VIDEOS

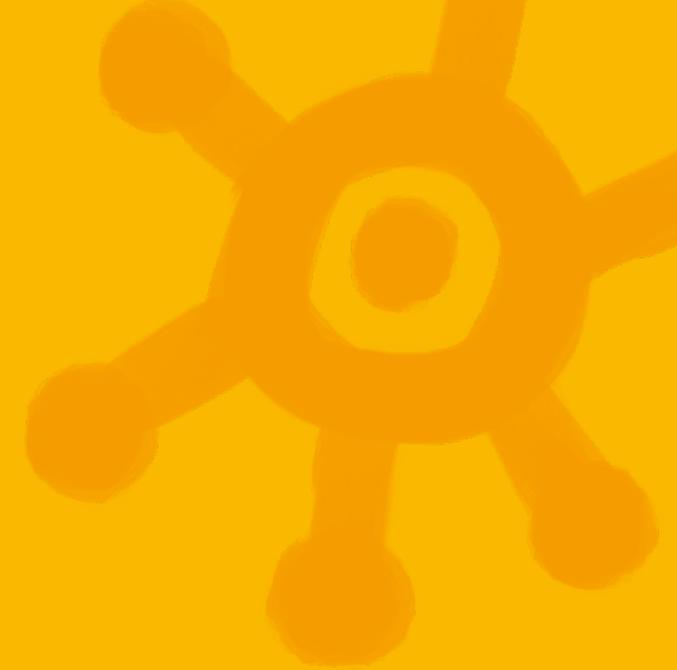
Secret/Sacred Objects/Sites. The reproduction of secret/sacred images in films, television and social media may not be permitted. Secret and sacred refers to information, sites and objects that, under customary laws, is only made available to those who have been initiated or who have been allowed to receive the information. Often, it can only be seen by men or women or a particular people within the culture. The right of Indigenous peoples to keep secret and sacred their cultural knowledge should be respected at all times. For example, Parks Australia have strict guidelines around filming and photographing Uluru. A sacred site is visited while travelling with Davidsons Arnhemland Safaris and no film or stills footage can be taken of it.

There are strict customs and protocols surrounding deceased Indigenous persons. In some Indigenous cultures, to hear the voice, record the name or see an image of someone who has passed away is distressing and can cause grief. It may also contravene kinship laws to hear or view this material. Sorry Business (as defined in the Key Definitions section) often prohibits people from hearing or viewing this material to ensure that the spirit of family members who have passed away can go on safely to the afterlife. Images, videos or texts referring to Indigenous persons should always be checked with Indigenous people and once cleared, be preceded by a warning prior to their use in any format along the following lines:

1. “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.” (OXFAM)
2. “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are advised that this website may contain images and voices of people who have died.” (ABC)
3. “WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that the following program may contain images and voices of deceased persons.” (ABC)

All Indigenous images and videos on the Tourism Australia galleries have been pre-approved to use. Refer to page 25 for further details.

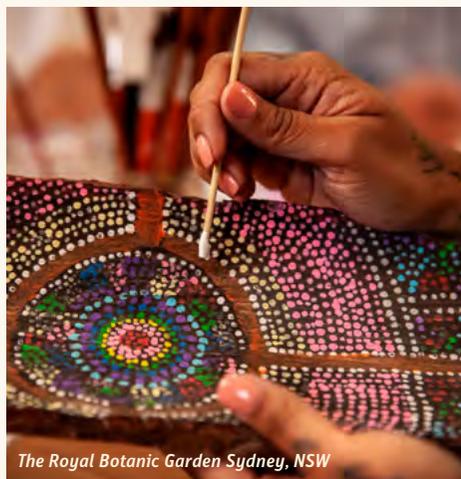
ART



ART

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts are the oldest ongoing tradition of arts in the world. They extend far beyond stereotypes of dot painting and traditional dance. While Indigenous arts vary in both medium and style, they reflect a unifying theme of Country, spirituality, heritage, identity and the passing on of cultural heritage as well as political commentary. Art has always been an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander existence connecting past and present, the people and the land, and the spiritual with the physical.

Artistic expression, whether painting, dance, song or story, is integrally connected to cultural knowledge and relationships with a person's Country, be it land or sea. Often contemporary artistic expression draws upon traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expression as well as the diversity of intercultural experiences at a national level and artistic disciplines arising from many other world cultures.



The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, NSW

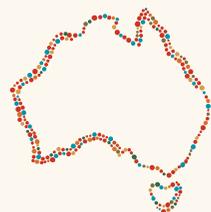


Janbal Gallery, Mossman, QLD

Promoting authentic Indigenous art. To mediate provenance risks (record of ownership of a work of art), promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated art centres, including commercial galleries that represent these art centres, or Australian national collecting institutions. These institutions adhere to strict codes of conduct when purchasing, exhibiting and lending Indigenous works and have clear, demonstrable provenance. For example, to support genuine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, Tourism Australia should recommend that consumers only buy pieces from members of the [Aboriginal Art Association of Australia](#) or the [Indigenous Art Code](#). Key umbrella art organisations include [Desart](#), the [Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists](#) (ANKA), and [The Indigenous Art Centre Alliance](#) (IACA).

Legal ways of using Indigenous arts including literature, performance, visual arts, music, customary practice and ceremony. The Australia Council for the Arts has published [protocol guides](#) for working with Indigenous Australian artists including for Indigenous Australian music, writing, visual arts, media and performing arts. The protocols provide useful advice on appropriate ways of using Indigenous cultural material from a legal, ethical and moral perspective and engaging with Indigenous artists and communities. For example, Tourism Australia should procure Indigenous musicians to create music for Tourism Australia via a licensing agreement so it has Indigenous music on hand for campaigns, videos, events etc. If Tourism Australia includes Indigenous artwork in internal and external documents it could acknowledge the artist at the beginning of the document (possibly under Acknowledgement of Country content).

WHAT IS THE DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES COLLECTIVE?



DISCOVER ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES

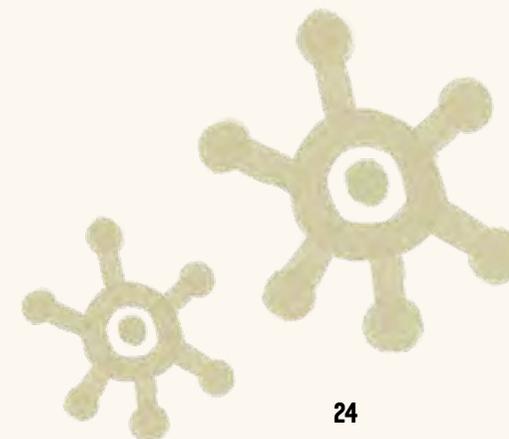
Discover Aboriginal Experiences (DAE) is a Tourism Australia collective of quality, authentic Aboriginal guided tourism offerings. The members have met the membership guidelines that ensure they can meet the needs and expectations of trade and the international market.

DAE's key messaging is:

- Australia has the world's oldest living culture, dating back over 60,000 years
- Flagship suite of extraordinary Aboriginal guided experiences
- Gain cultural insight through storytelling and connection on a personal level
- Authentic engaging and quality experiences with great diversity (over 170 experiences)
- Located across Australia in both urban and regional locations, including exclusive access.
- Flavour your itinerary with an Aboriginal experience to bring the Australian landscape to life and make a great itinerary awesome and memorable
- Trade ready businesses

For further details on DAE visit www.tourism.australia.com/aboriginal

or contact **Nicole Mitchell**
nmitchell@tourism.australia.com



TOURISM AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS CONSUMER MARKETING EXPERIENCES

Indigenous Tourism experiences are a key focus for the Consumer Marketing team. Indigenous experiences are integrated across all marketing activities including:

- Social posts and stories on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube
- Content integrated across Australia.com including a [focused section](#)
- Inclusion in PR activities including media famils, events and media pitch packs
- Inclusion in marketing campaigns across TV, print, radio and social channels
- Indigenous Australians inclusion in our Friends of Australia program

As well as the DAE collective, Tourism Australia also promotes non DAE Indigenous tourism businesses that meet its Indigenous Consumer Marketing guidelines.



Warwick Thornton, acclaimed Aboriginal filmmaker

IMAGE AND VIDEO GALLERY

Tourism Australia's incredibly popular Indigenous image and video collections

To view these stunning collections please log in to Tourism Australia's Image and Video Galleries: images.australia.com and video.australia.com and go to either the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Experiences' or 'Signature Experiences - Discover Aboriginal Experiences' collections.

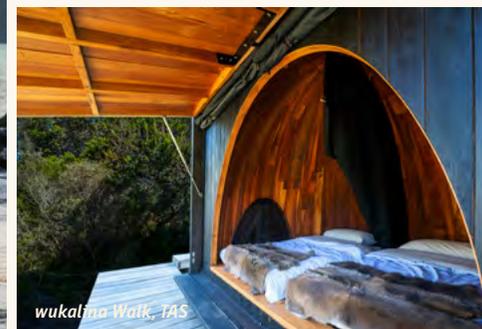
Tourism Australia has, in perpetuity, worldwide usage of these images and talent release forms have been signed. These images are at no cost but must only be used to promote the Indigenous operator credited with the image. Reasons for usage will be asked when requesting images.



Walkabout Cultural Adventures, Cairns, QLD



SeaLink NT - Tiwi Islands



wukalina Walk, TAS



Sand Dune Adventures, Port Stephens Area, NSW



Kakadu Cultural Tours, Kakadu National Park, NT



Go Cultural Aboriginal Tours and Experiences, Perth, WA



Dreamtime Southern X Pty Ltd, Sydney NSW



Wilpena Pound Resort, Flinders Ranges, SA



Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Cairns, QLD



Narljija Experiences Broome, WA



Charcoal Lane, Melbourne, VIC