



DAMPIER PENINSULA

Borrgoron Coast To Creek Cultural Tour

Terry Hunter is the owner/operator of Borrgoron, and his tours operate at the north-eastern end of the Dampier Peninsula at Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm. We joined his Coast to Creek Cultural Tour, as we were eager to learn about his ancestral heritage and about his life growing up on the pearl farm. Before joining Terry's tour, we knew the Hunter name is synonymous with the Dampier Peninsula's pearling industry. As it turns out, the name goes as far back as to when the first pearl lugging boats were made during the 1800s.

Terry's walking tour is centred around the local coastline which is fundamentally his big backyard. It was low tide as our tour group walked down to the beach and along the water's edge. We hadn't gone far when Terry explained how fresh water could be found at the beach amongst the rocks. Naturally, we were all very keen to learn more. Leading us to an area where the rocks looked identical to our non-trained eyes, Terry bent down and began digging a hole next to a rock in what essentially was just beach sand. In just a few short seconds, he'd made a small dam to retain some water. Seriously?



A natural spring provides fresh water that can only be accessed at low tide.

COUNTRY Connection

BY GRANT & LINDA HANAN

Living by the mantra that you're never too old to learn, Grant and Linda mix travelling and learning together. They first experienced a cultural tour in Western Australia some years ago and have been on many more since then. Here they share their cultural tour experiences from a recent Kimberley trip.

One by one, our group got to taste what can only be described as pure, sweet, and fresh spring water, as it bubbled up from underground. Now that was an eye opener, considering we were standing on a beach surrounded by a rocky coastline with massive 11 metre tides.

Walking further along the beach, Terry shared a range of stories including one about how he attended school at the pearl farm. Pointing to an old nearby building, he told us that used to be his school classroom. When Terry's backyard is the stunning pearl farm coastline, there's little wonder hearing he was daydreaming about swimming and hunting during school time! As we reached another rocky outcrop, Terry stopped to point out an abundance of oysters on the rocks. Better still, he flashed a smile and said it's time to taste test. But rather than simply prising the oysters from the rocks to eat naturally, Terry used another technique. With a couple of handfuls of flammable spinifex grass, we stood back as he strategically placed the spinifex under the rocks and lit it up. After the flames and smoke subsided, many oysters had opened from the intense heat and were smoked naturally. Very clever. We found these small, but fresh morsels were packed full of flavour and needed little effort for prising them from the rocks. This was far from our typical morning tea, but one we could get used to!



Life's good when you can have freshly smoked oysters straight off the rocks.



Terry explained shells like these were originally used as a trading commodity as well as being used to cover a male's nether region.

Our walking tour continued through some mangroves and along other areas of the beach to learn about bush tucker and which plants are useful as bush medicines. Terry finished the tour back at the pearl farm reception after providing some details of Aboriginal trade within Australia. He explained local pearl shell was an important commodity for the local groups and traded as far as the eastern states. As a storyteller, Terry oozes warmth and passion about his culture and personal connection with the land and sea. We found this tour extremely rewarding and felt like we were leaving an old friend when the tour ended.

BROOME

Narliija Experiences Life of Guwan Tour

Bart Pigram from Narliija Cultural Tours is a local Yawuru man who runs cultural tours around the Broome area. His Life of Guwan tour is a walking tour that focuses around the centre of Broome. Having visited here on a number of occasions in the past, we had a little knowledge of its pearling history prior to heading out with



Bart has researched a lot of Broome's history which he shares during his tour.

Bart. But we were also very interested to learn about Bart's indigenous and pearling connections, plus anything else he was able to share about Broome's interesting history.

We met Bart close to Broome's iconic Mangrove Hotel which overlooks the very spectacular Roebuck Bay. Not far from here, massive shell midden heaps lay above the high tide mark. Ironically, we've driven past this location so many times in the past yet never given the actual sand dunes a second glance. Perhaps that's not quite true, when the distant views over the bay are so beautiful. But we were fascinated to learn how important this site was to locals from a cultural perspective given it's also heritage listed.

Sitting ourselves down in the sand surrounded by the shell middens, Bart shared stories about this landmark and happily answered the myriad of questions we threw at him. But we found there was lots more to learn about Broome as well. Bart's research had allowed him to piece together some very interesting findings about the town's origins and the actual spot where Europeans first landed. He came armed with a folder that was jam packed with information that he talked about and happily shared. Flicking through the folder, we found many old newspaper extracts, some government

records about the town's history, and Bart's own notes from speaking with Broome's older generation.

During our tour, Bart described Broome's melting pot of nationalities and explains his large family is no different. He tells us his ancestral heritage is a mix of Aboriginal, European and Filipino, and he also has strong family ties to the town's pearling industry. As our walk towards town continued, Bart had us frequently stopping to look at a variety of historical artifacts. Items such as chipped glass spearheads that were made for trading decades ago lay where they were discarded, and other artifacts that aren't easily visible to an untrained eye were tucked within the thick mangroves.



This glass spear tip was found some years ago by Bart.



Plenty of gatherings here in the past.



Bart combines European and indigenous history into his tours.

Continuing on towards Broome's retail pearling precinct, our last stop was the Cygnet Bay pearl retail shop. Thanks Bart! But there was another reason the tour was ending here. The shop has an inside wall which depicts a very informative timeline of events with some photos about the region's pearling history. It turned out to be the perfect place to connect some key bits of historical information together that Bart had shared during the tour. There's no doubt Bart's a natural storyteller who's passionate teaching visitors about Broome's colourful past and his own family's influence on the town. Even as seasoned visitors, we still found we learnt so much about Broome on this tour.

DAMPIER PENINSULA

Oolin Sunday Island Cultural Tour

It was obvious from the moment we met Rosanna Angus from Oolin Sunday Island Cultural Tours that she loves sharing her knowledge. This tour was a little different to others we'd joined, as Sunday Island is one of many islands located off the mainland. It's also the traditional country of the Jawi people.

Our tour left from Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm and is tide dependent due to the Kimberley's incredibly large tides. As we



Rosanna provides a lot of information about Sunday Island's history which including her family's connection to the mission.

climbed aboard an amphibian (a boat with wheels), it was a unique and fun-filled ride driving down to the beach. The amphibian's wheels continued to take us along the sand and into the water, until we reached a point that was deep enough for our skipper to flick the switch for the boat motor to kick in. There was an awaiting boat less than one kilometre ahead of us where we all transferred into, and the tour continued. The ride to Sunday Island took about 90 minutes and there was plenty of time to chat along the way. During this part of the tour, Rosanna provided history including how a mission was initially established on the island in 1899. Her family was one of those that lived on the island and did so until the mission was closed in 1962.

Our boat pulled up by some Sunday Island mangroves, and the low tide allowed us to walk straight off the boat onto dry land. This spot had the original old concrete staircase which led to the mission and other buildings. At the top, Rosanna first told us how the mission site was originally laid out. Mother Nature and time has reclaimed much of what was here, but not everything. There's still evidence of where the main mission building used to be and other residences. While here, Rosanna also pointed out the remnants of a banana plantation that was part of the mission's fruit and vegetable garden.



Sunday Island relics and remnants of the old banana plantation.

Once back on the boat, our next stop was further around to the north of the island where the boat pulled into a small cove. At this location, Rosanna pointed out a significant rock wall at the water's edge which we learnt was the old mooring point for visiting supply boats. Further around the island, we stopped at a place known as Goodngaragoon. It's a postcard perfect setting with a white sandy beach that's dwarfed with towering cliffs that glowed a rich red in the afternoon. Rosanna explained that Goodngaragoon is a place of cultural importance to the Jawi people, and showed us where fresh water can be found inland. Our stop here

included a beach swim for those inclined, and Rosanna's supplied afternoon tea/ coffee and her delicious homemade damper was something no one wanted to miss.

As the tide started to turn, it was all aboard as we returned to Cygnet Bay. If you're a bit of a thrill seeker, that part of the trip gave us a firsthand experience of the turbulent Kimberley waters. We all had a bit of fun as our boat powered through some large whirlpools that came in from all directions. By the time the tour came to an end back on land, the sun started to glow a deep yellow as it dipped to the west. It was a perfect way to finish.



Visiting Sunday Island all comes down to tidal movements and it doesn't stay calm like this for long.



Rosanna finds some wild passionfruit to try - it was delicious!

KUNUNURRA

Kingfisher Tours Waterfall Wanderings

Just a short walk from our Kununurra accommodation is where we were picked up by our guide "LT" from Kingfisher Tours. The business has been around in Kununurra for a few decades or more and offers a broad range of adventure style land and air-based tours. But they also create bespoke tours for visitors, and our 4WD tour was customised to suit our interests. Heading out of town, our vehicle was full of conversation as LT started by telling us a bit about himself and some of Kununurra's background. After getting off the black top and turning onto the "falls" road, the first part of our tour was the picturesque Mayiba (Middle Spring). As LT led us along a track to the top of the flowing falls, he stopped and highlighted some plants and their uses along the way. We sat above the falls while he pointed out various landmarks and shared information about the surrounding country. We also listened to LT as he told stories of his childhood and beyond. Leaving Middle Spring after morning tea, we continued along the dirt to Secret Springs. We knew the region had received



There was plenty to learn about local plants.

late wet season rains and the drive in was a wet one as expected. LT negotiated a number of water crossings along the way with some crossings deep enough that water lapped at our fourby doors. Around 40 minutes later, we arrived at the springs. As we walked towards the water, LT stopped to point out some of the area's features and highlighted different medicinal plants and bush foods. The spring itself is a series of beautiful pools with crystal clear cascading water spilling off the range. In other words, it was the perfect place to cool off.

Heading back onto the bitumen, LT turned us onto a track that we followed until reaching a distant range. Leaving the vehicle, we walked a short distance where he showed how to get water from a boab root when water's not around. Further along, we walked towards a large overhang that lay ahead of us. It quickly



Learning about the surrounding country from LT.



LT explains how to get water from a boab's root.

became apparent that this location had a gallery of art that spanned a phenomenal 20 metres, if not longer. We found a range of subjects depicted here, but we were in awe of a painted barramundi that was at least a metre high.

LT is an extremely knowledgeable guide, who was only too happy to share his

knowledge with us. With his casual and personable approach plus his fabulous sense of humour, it was fun and memorable day.

We recommend anyone visiting the Kimberley to seek out Aboriginal tours and experiences to discover what you can about this ancient culture.



The tree was overloaded with fruit, but not quite ready for eating.

INFORMATION BAY

The Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) offers more than 150 types of indigenous experiences all around Western Australia, including those that are listed here.

All the tours we joined were unique in their offerings, providing plenty of information about the cultural connection to country. And that's exactly what we were looking for.

For more info about tours, experiences, and locations, visit waitoc.com



A fabulous example of rock art.