

ART AND HISTORY

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au) is the state's pre-eminent cultural institution. Spend a couple of hours here for a fascinating history lesson and to enjoy art from indigenous Northern Territory artists. The annual exhibition of the prestigious Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award is held here – this year's will be from August 8 to October 26. Permanent exhibitions include one on Cyclone Tracy, which ravaged Darwin in 1974.

Also worth a visit for historical insights is the Darwin Military Museum (darwinmilitarymuseum.com.au) at East Point. The Defence of Darwin Experience recalls the city's involvement in WWII through objects from that time, first-hand accounts and multimedia presentations.



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The Essential Quick Guide For Discerning Travellers

MUST-DOS DARWIN

BY FIONA HARPER

NATURE'S THRILLS

Crocosaurus Cove (crocosauruscove.com) is not for the faint-hearted, nor for anyone susceptible to herpetophobia (fear of reptiles). Visitors can dip into a clear Perspex cylinder in a watery enclosure, where only 40mm of acrylic separate them from saltwater crocodiles up to 5m long. For added excitement, go at feeding time when the crocs are a little bit feisty.

Less heart stopping but no less spectacular is a safari in Kakadu National Park (parksaustralia.gov.au), a three-hour drive from Darwin. You'll spot crocodiles along with wallabies, kangaroos, lizards and a host of birds. Take a free guided walk to learn about the traditional Aboriginal way of life.

LIFE'S A BEACH

Given Darwin's humid climate, it makes sense that many activities are centred on keeping cool. At the Waterfront Precinct (waterfront.nt.gov.au), the man-made 4,000 sq m Wave Lagoon churns out waves up to 1.7m for boogie board riders and body surfers. Toddlers and others who don't surf can wade safely in the shallows.

For swimming or canoeing, head to the Waterfront's Recreation Lagoon for calm waters which have been pumped from sea. Filter nets help to keep stingrays from getting into the lagoon. If water activities are not your thing, slap on some sunscreen and spend a whole day relaxing in the shady gardens instead.



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A Reptile viewing at Crocosaurus Cove.

B The Wave Lagoon promises wet, wild fun.

C A natural history exhibit at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

D The Deckchair Cinema offers open-air flicks.

E Local crafts at Mindil Beach Sunset Market.

TROPICAL NIGHTS

In May the city emerges from "the wet" or the monsoon season. One of the best places to enjoy balmy evenings is at the Mindil Beach Sunset Market (www.mindil.com.au). Held every Thursday and Sunday during the dry season, buskers entertain while visitors pick up tropical fruit or feast at iconic stalls like the Roadkill Cafe ("You kill it, we'll grill it" is their motto).

Around 20km south-east of Darwin, the Friday Palmerston Markets (palmerstonmarkets.org.au), which kick off this year on May 2, offer live entertainment and stalls selling everything from locally made crafts to fresh fruit.

The dry season is also when Deckchair Cinema (deckchaircinema.com.au) takes centre stage on the waterfront beside Darwin Harbour. Beneath starry skies seven nights a week, movies are screened in a convivial setting, with beer, wine and snacks.



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WAKE UP AND CHILL OUT

Stay in the luxurious Skycity Darwin hotel and casino complex (skycitydarwin.com.au) for a five-star experience. Book one of its superior lagoon rooms to enjoy swims from your own private deck. These spacious rooms are part of a new wing of the 31-year-old hotel, that opened in 2012. It features a lush man-made

lagoon, swim-up bar and waterside restaurant.

For a beachfront stay that's just a 10-minute walk to the CBD – plus access to a range of good food – you can't go wrong with Vibe Hotel Darwin Waterfront (tfehotels.com). It's surrounded by landscaped promenades, boutiques and some of Darwin's most exciting dining options.



PHOTOS IMAGINE / COURTESY TOURISM NT

Fast Facts

CURRENCY
Australian Dollar
US\$1 = 1.08 AUD

VISA
Requirements vary. Visit immi.gov.au/visawizard for more information.

BEST TIME TO VISIT
During the dry season from May to October, daytime temperatures average in the low 30°C. The wet season from November to April is hot and humid with frequent storms, rain and possible cyclones.

HOW TO GET THERE
Singapore Airlines' regional wing SilkAir flies 4 times weekly from Singapore to Darwin.

MORE INFORMATION
tourismntopend.com.au