

5 INCREDIBLE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES IN TNQ

05 Feb, 16 by [Fiona Harper](#)

Tropical North Queensland has a rich cultural history and is represented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have different and distinct languages, histories and cultures. Visitors to the region are encouraged to learn, participate in and experience the indigenous culture and luckily enough, there are some great tours that'll take you deep into the culture and traditions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Tropical North Queensland. Here's our pick of some of the best!

A NIGHT & DAY EXPERIENCE AT TJAPUKAI ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PARK

Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park is a celebration of Australia's ancient Aboriginal culture. Located in the northern suburbs of Cairns (next door to Skyrail Rainforest Cableway), you will watch Indigenous performers bring the world's oldest living culture to life through traditional dance, art and interactive demonstrations.

Tjapukai by Day is a hands-on opportunity to gain an authentic insight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Witness the ancient dreamtime story of the Tjapukai people, gain an understanding of the impacts of the stolen generation, participate in cooking of bush foods and learn about the medicinal values of native plants before practicing your spear throwing and learning first hand about traditional hunting methods and tribal law.

Visit after dark for a Nightfire corroboree incorporating music, dance and story-telling accompanied by the gentle flicker of flames beneath a star-filled sky. Either way, you'll be mesmerised.



EXPLORE WATERFALLS & RAINFOREST TRAILS WITH INGAN TOURS

Experience the rich culture of the Janbanbarra Jirrbal rainforest people with the Grant Family who own and operate Ingan Tours, a 100% Aboriginal owned tour company located near Tully.

The Janbanbarra Jirrbal rainforest people, who hail from the Davidson Valley (about 45 mins southwest of Mission Beach), have a deep connection with the land. Their ancestors walked the rainforest, across mountains, creeks and rivers via Aboriginal trading routes to hunt and gather for ceremonial rituals and marriages with neighboring tribal communities.

Experience a traditional welcome ceremony to Jirrbal country, walk deep into the rainforest along traditional trails while enjoying Aboriginal stories along the way to Echo Creek Falls. Cool off in crystal clear water while absorbing ancestral spirits of the forest.



HUNTING & GATHERING AT COOYA BEACH WITH THE WALKER BROTHERS

Cooya Beach is a beautiful, coastal community a little north of Port Douglas. A stunning spot where many Cairns locals have been retreating to for years, Cooya Beach is also rich in cultural history and is the traditional fishing grounds of the Kuku Yalanji people.

This unique coastal area has three diverse ecosystems – beach, mangroves and coastal reef – that are connected to each other by the ever changing mudflats and tidal lagoons. There's no one who knows it better than the Kubirri Warra brothers, Linc and Brandon Walker.

A cultural smoking ceremony is performed before an introduction to traditional Aboriginal fishing and gathering techniques with Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tours. Learn how fish the traditional way as you wander beautiful Cooya Beach, through coastal mudflats and mangroves teeming with mud crabs, mussels and small fish. The best part? You get to cook your catch & enjoy it for lunch!



DREAMTIME WALKS THROUGH THE WET TROPICS RAINFOREST IN MOSSMAN GORGE

Mossman Gorge is the best place to cool down on a warm, tropical day and each year thousands of people are lured to the gorge by its lush, rainforest setting and crystal clear waters.

Get to know the Wet Tropics Rainforest in this area by joining a Ngadiku Dreamtime Walk at Mossman Gorge with one of the welcoming Kuku Yalanji guides from the Mossman Gorge Gateway Centre. Ngadiku (Nar-di-gul) means stories and legends from a long time ago in the traditional language. Be welcomed into the area at a traditional smoking ceremony that cleanses and wards off bad spirits before “taking a walk” with your guide.

The walks (of various lengths), meander through the rainforest, visiting special places and culturally significant sites, past traditional shelters and over rainforest streams peppered with granite boulders. Be sure to listen carefully as your guide stops to share stories and help you understand the traditional way of life of the indigenous people of the area. It’s a stunning environment – linger a while and soak it all in.



ADMIRE ROCK ART GALLERIES NEAR COOKTOWN ON THE GUURRBI TOUR

Willie Gordon is famous in these parts for his ability to help visitors connect with the land. On a Guurrbi Tour, the Nugal-Warra elder will help you gain an understanding of the spiritual meanings and stories behind the paintings, and along the way teach you some of the survival techniques of the Nugal-Warra people.

These magical, award winning tours include visiting some of the most culturally significant rock art galleries in Australia where Willie interprets the rock art, sharing stories of what it depicts while explaining to his visitors how it impacts the history, identity, and creates a sense of belonging to the people. There is also the Rainbow Serpent tour which visits six rock art sites, including the Rainbow Serpent cave and an ancestral Birth Site where Willie's father and grandfather were born.

Based in Cairns but don't have the time for the 4 hour drive to Cooktown? Well kick things up a notch and try the fly in, fly out tour option!



Fiona Harper is Cairns based travel writer. Widely travelled, highly acclaimed and much published, Fiona's articles & images are published across the globe. When she's not writing about TNQ she's probably running a marathon or exploring the world by foot, bike, kayak, camel or boat: whatever mode of transport she can get her hands on!