

# DREAMTIME

*Immerse yourself in the spirit of our land, hear our stories and listen to our songlines...*

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

Aboriginal Australians explain their existence by telling stories about the land and animals around them long before the ancient Egyptians built the pyramids.

They are spiritually connected to the land and refer to the Dreamtime as ways to tell the story of the development of this ancient place. The Dreamtime is akin to a religious or spiritual belief system based in a form of animism which is completely unique to our indigenous communities. In the Dreamtime, the hills are giant marsupials, frozen in time, the rivers are tracks of the rainbow serpent, and the Milky Way is the river of the sky where, after the rainbow serpent has swallowed the sun, people fish for stingrays and turtles with the stars as their campfires.

According to Aboriginal belief, the spirit ancestors of the land and its people descended from the sky, emerged from the earth or sprang from waterways. These ancestral spirits possessed supernatural powers, enabling them during the Dreamtime of the world's creation to change into human, animal or other forms.

Ceremonial songs and dances commemorate legends of the Dreamtime creation era, celebrating in music and movement, the deeds and journeys of heroic spirit ancestors. Participants in traditional dance ceremonies are painted with the emblems and totems of their clans and their performances are designed to evoke the spiritual power of the spirit ancestor.

Many Aboriginal communities are willing to explain their heritage and show visitors around their ancestral homelands. Knowledge gained in this way will help you to understand Indigenous Australia, a living legacy of spiritual knowledge shared through rituals, dance, secret stories and journeys into the mysteries known as the Dreamtime. The stories created thousands of years ago are the same ones you'll hear today.

You too can go on a 50,000 year journey as you hear the chants and incantations and listen to the ancient stories of this land.

Hear the dreamtime stories of tribal elders and tour remote and sacred lands with Aboriginal custodians. You'll learn how Dreaming trails crisscross Australia, connecting important waterholes, food sources and landmarks. Aboriginal lore records the significance of trees, rocks, rivers, weather patterns and other natural phenomena, teaching humans how to survive, find water and live in harmony with nature.

All across Australia, traditional indigenous communities welcome visitors to their ancestral homelands and demonstrate aspects of their culture. Homelands are linked by dreaming trails, paths said to have been followed by spirit ancestors during the Dreamtime of the world's creation. Aboriginal people believe the landscape was flat and barren before the ancestors made epic journeys across it, creating mountains, animals, rivers – all geographical features and every living thing – on their way.

Knowledge of these dreaming trails is passed from one generation to the next as oral history. Today, you too can be part of that Dreaming as that history is passed on to all who want to learn and listen.

## Key Dreamtime facts

- The Aboriginal people are considered to represent the world's most ancient culture.
- Cave paintings of animals and spirits are at least as old as the earliest examples of European cave art. Their paintings and stories tell how the great spirits made the land animals, and plants.
- Aboriginal Dreamtime is a story telling regime that takes you further back in time than any other oral history.
- To the Aborigines however, the dreamtime is not simply an ancient past but a continuing present.
- Traditional Aboriginal law, religion and social relationships centre on the association formed with a specific stretch of country by a spirit ancestor in the Dreamtime.
- Descendant peoples are held to be responsible for caring for that same region, or homeland, maintaining its environmental and spiritual wellbeing.
- Family groups or individual Aborigines have their own Dreaming.
- Significant places where Dreamtime spirits lived or played out their destiny are marked by physical formations such as rocks, waterholes, trees, or sacred sites.
- The spiritual interconnectedness of all living things is very powerful for our indigenous communities.
- Unlike our law, Aboriginal law does not change; their laws were made by The Dreaming, so indigenous people cannot change it.





## Uniquely Australian

- **Listen to the legend of Namarrgon, the Lightning Man**, told at the ancient galleries of Nourlangie Rock, in Kakadu National Park in the Top End of Australia. Nourlangie Rock is a spectacular area featuring magnificent Aboriginal art sites along with walking tracks, billabongs and lookout areas. The area was formed when two Creation Ancestors in the form of short-eared rock wallabies travelled through from east to west. With lightening joining his head and feet, Lightening Man makes lightening by striking his Garramal against the clouds and ground. You will also see Namondjok, a dangerous spirit in the Aboriginal belief system, who turned into Ginah the great saltwater crocodile.
- The Anangu (traditional owners) of Uluru, operate tours including the Mala Walk and Kuniya Walk. The Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre, constructed from rammed earth, features a Pampulpai Wall or “touch wall” where you can actually touch and feel the history of Liru and Kuniya, two of the Anangu ancestors.
- **Hear about the dreamtime on the Liru Walk run by Anangu Tours.** Join an Aboriginal guide at the Cultural Centre for the famous Liru Walk, which retraces the path of the Liru Ancestors through the bushland near Uluru. Hear the tragic fate of Lungkata (Blue Tongue Lizard Man), who is still lying at the base of Uluru. See demonstrations of ancient bush skills such as making kiti (bush glue), making fire without matches and carving wooden tools with only a sharpened stone. Learn to hold and throw a spear.
- **Hear the story of the Snakes** on the Kuniya Sunset Tour. Hear first-hand of the cultural significance of Uluru (Ayers Rock). All tours are led by local Aboriginal people. They share their culture, explaining how they see the landscape of Uluru, and their “Tjukurpa” or Dreamtime.
- Discover the fascinating culture and history of Adnyamathanha, the Aboriginal people of the Flinders Ranges, at Iga Warta.
- **Discover Dreamtime Quinkans** in Cape York’s Laura region, famous for its giant Dreamtime figures known as Quinkans. Visit the Quinkan Regional Centre and discover more about the region’s dozens of Aboriginal art gallery sites, only a handful of which are accessible to tourists.
- To the Bidjera and Darumbal people, Central Queensland’s Carnarvon Gorge National Park is one of their most sacred places and figures strongly in Aboriginal folklore and Dreamtime stories. Listen to these stories while you explore the gorge’s spectacular Aboriginal stencil rock art, some dating back 18,000 years and accessed via 21km of walking tracks. In some caves there are stencil frescoes up to 137 metres long, plus at another site, a gigantic painting of the sacred Rainbow Serpent.
- **See The Tjapukai Dancers of the Rainforest** provide Dreamtime insights in tropical north Queensland. Presenting a theatrical interpretation of Aboriginal culture from the beginning into the future, Tjapukai’s version of world history conveys the vast timeframes of Aboriginal experience. Hi-tech visual effects, including lasers, are used alongside electrifying dance routines to recreate the Dreamtime story.
- **Learn about the Torres Strait Islander** unique beliefs, culture and traditional lifestyle at the Dreamtime Centre for Culture in Rockhampton. Operated by Aboriginals and built on ancient meeting grounds, the centre is Australia’s largest Aboriginal cultural centre, covering 12 hectares. Watch the Djarn Djarn dancers (a mens dance group) perform, or take a guided tour through exhibitions including a Torres Strait Islander village, boomerang and didgeridoo playing displays. Learn how Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders used plants for many uses.
- **Hear about the dreamtime** on a Dreamtime tour with Dreamtime Tours in Alice Springs.
- **On a Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime Walk** find out how the Kuku Yalanji believe that nature and culture cannot be separated as they are inextricably bound, and every single tree is a living spirit. The complex network of walking trails through Kuku Yalanji country is also a network of story places, sacred sites and Dreamtime legends. The Kuku Yalanji are the indigenous inhabitants of the land which stretches from around Cooktown in the north to Port Douglas in the south. Many now live in Mossman Gorge, a world heritage listed rainforest, and are the true rainforest people who live in harmony with the environment. They will teach you what they have learned from Elders about the plants of the rainforest. The Kuku Yalanji are happy to share it with you.
- **Immerse yourself in the dreaming** at a modern day Dreaming Festival, an indigenous arts and culture festival held in Woodford annually.
- **Explore the Aboriginal songline stories of the Creation ancestors** – an opportunity to gain insight into the law and culture of the Anangu people – with Desert Tracks, based in the Pitjantatjara Lands south west of Alice Springs.
- **Hear ancient stories from members of the Barkindji community** when you go on tour with Harry Nanya tours in Wentworth NSW.
- **Head out on a walking tour** around The Rock’s mighty feet, sharing stories of the Anangu ancestral culture and being introduced to the wildlife that is linked to the legends of Uluru. Uluru (Ayers Rock) has bewitched travellers from all over the world. What forces formed this solitary red rock and what secrets does it hide? The Anangu Aboriginal people, who respect this rock as a mother, know many of the answers, and their understanding and legends of this harsh and beautiful land will do much to open your eyes.

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