

# UNIQUE AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

*Marvel at the fascinating creatures that inhabit our ancient land...*

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

Nature was inspired when it created Australia – animals you'll see nowhere else and plants that will amaze you. Australia is one of the most diverse countries on the planet, home to more than one million species of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else in the world, and less than half of which have been described scientifically.

Australia's animals are a breed apart. So strange are the creatures that hop, burrow and slither across its countryside that until the last century it was believed that our animals had a different evolutionary starting point from the rest of the earth's species; a separate creation.

We have more mammals than anywhere else on earth and plenty of marsupials too, most of which aren't found anywhere else in the world – kangaroos and koalas, wombats, bilbies, quolls, bandicoots, sugar gliders and ring-tailed possums – just to name a few. You can see them in our wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, but you'll also stumble across them walking in the country, through the bush or even along coastal paths running beside our beaches.

You might even be lucky enough to see them on the beach or while you're playing golf.

Australia's third largest island, Kangaroo Island, teems with the sights and sounds of wild Australia - seals, sea eagles, koalas, kangaroos, wombats and wallabies - all within easy reach of Adelaide.

Australia's tropical Top End is also a wildlife paradise - crocodiles, astonishing bird life, reptiles and wallabies - concentrated around wetlands that shrink to ponds as the dry season progresses, while The Daintree in far north Queensland is a spectacular Garden of Eden, providing a habitat for crocodiles, snakes and cassowaries.

## Key wildlife facts

- The kangaroo is unique to Australia and one of our most easily recognised mammals. It is also a marsupial and a macropod. They number around 40 million.<sup>1</sup>
- More than 80 per cent of Australia's flowering plants, mammals, reptiles and frogs are unique to Australia, along with most of the fish and almost half the birds.<sup>2</sup>
- Australia has more than 140 species of marsupials, including koalas, wombats and the Tasmanian devil, now found only in the Tasmanian wilderness.<sup>3</sup>
- Australia hosts another unique animal group, the monotremes – egg-laying mammals, often referred to as 'living fossils'. The most distinctive is the platypus, a river-dwelling animal with a duck's bill, a furry body and webbed feet.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 750 species of birds have been recorded in Australia, 350 of which are found nowhere else in the world. Among them are the kookaburra, the rainbow lorikeet and fairy penguins.<sup>5</sup>

- Australia supports at least 25,000 species of plants, while Europe only supports 17,500.<sup>6</sup>
- Every snake in Tasmania is venomous.
- The koala's closest relative is the wombat.
- All the termites in Australia would outweigh all the cattle and kangaroos put together
- There are 461 species of flies in Australia.
- The platypus and echidna are the only two egg-laying mammals in the world.
- Although a member of the dog family, dingoes do not bark.
- Australian camels are exported to Saudi Arabia.
- Australian rabbits are not native but bred from an original 24 imported for shooting practice in 1859. They now number more than 300 million and are considered a pest.

## Uniquely Australian

- **Share the beach with kangaroos.** There's every chance you'll see kangaroos on the beach in the early morning or late afternoon wherever the bush meets the beach. However, the best known places are at Pebbly Beach near Batemans Bay on the NSW South Coast, at Lucky Bay Esperance on our West Coast, or at stunning Cape Hillsborough, near Mackay in Queensland. Don't forget your camera for this close encounter with Australian wildlife.
- **Play golf with the kangaroos.** They wander on to any course set in or near bushland – an experience you can only have in Australia. At Federal Golf Course, a short drive from Parliament House in our national capital Canberra, a large group of kangaroos live freely on the golf course; you might even be lucky enough to spot a mother and baby.
- **Go bushwalking to see our native wildlife.** Even in national parks in and around our cities you'll hear and see native birds and animals and even a goanna or two rustling through the undergrowth.
- **Visit one of our zoos** to see our native animals. See koalas at Taronga Zoo on Sydney's harbour foreshore, at Melbourne. Perth or Adelaide Zoo, or at the Western Plains Central Zoo in Outback Dubbo. In Sydney, see all manner of wildlife at the newly opened Wildlife World in the heart of the city's spectacular Darling Harbour.
- **Visit one of our wildlife sanctuaries or parks.** In Victoria there's the country wildlife retreat of Healesville Sanctuary; just outside Adelaide Cleland Wildlife Park and Warrawong Earth Sanctuary, a protected habitat for endangered species; and, in Alice Springs, Desert Park. Or hand feed kangaroos and see and touch reptiles at the Australian Reptile Park just outside Sydney.
- **See native animals and birds in their natural habitat** at one of our many nature reserves around the country. At Tidbinbilla Nature





Reserve in the Australian Capital Territory, explore the wetlands area to see native birdlife and possibly even a platypus or two. Learn about the unique breeding program for endangered brush tail rock wallabies and look out for kangaroos, wallabies and emus throughout the Reserve.

- **See examples of some 99,000 Australian plants** from across the country in the Australian National Botanic Gardens.
- **Fly to Lord Howe Island, a biological ark** off the NSW coast. This tiny Pacific island is a breeding ground and stopover for 170 exotic species of sea birds in their migratory journeys which can take them as far as Japan or Siberia.
- **See the breathtaking flight of hundreds of species of tropical birds**, as well as saltwater crocs on a dusk boat ride in Cape Tribulation.
- **Become a wildlife warrior:** Visit the Australia Zoo, the wildlife conservation park known worldwide thanks to the legend of Steve Irwin. Pop in to the Australian Wildlife Hospital while you're there and see how they're helping sick animals.
- **In Cairns go on a Jungle Tour**, visit the Rainforestation Nature Park in Kuranda, or lunch with the lorikeets in the new Rainforest Habitat. There's also the Australian Butterfly Sanctuary near Kuranda and the Wildlife Dome in Cairns on top of the Sofitel Reef Casino. Or, go rafting the Tully River on a two to five day expedition that will get you out amongst nature.
- **Jump on a Big Bend By Night Ecotour** on the Murray River. See southern hairy-nosed wombats in the spotlight. Other native animals are also plentiful right along the river. See short-beaked echidnas, pygmy possums, dunnarts, kangaroos and lizards at the Ngarkat group of conservation parks.
- **Find wildlife around every bend on the Murray River.** Watch emus and kangaroos racing through the Coorong National Park.
- **Bird lovers should head to the Murray Mallee**, home to six threatened species, while the renowned wetlands of the Coorong National Park are a summer refuge for migratory birds. Watch darters, herons and egrets feeding along the river's muddy edges. By day, look out for yellow-billed spoonbills, grey teal ducks, cormorants and pelicans, and at night sit tight for feathered gliders, possums and fat-tailed dunnarts.
- **Hike through the Flinders Ranges** to see the fossils and wildlife in its two national parks. Around Wilpena Pound, see euros (small wallaby-like marsupials) and 97 different types of bird, flitting over sprays of bright yellow wattle flowers and the brilliant reds and pinks of Sturt's desert pea.<sup>7</sup>
- **Dodge the wildlife** as you hike through bushland on Kangaroo Island: A third of the island is protected wilderness where you'll find sea lions basking on the beach, koalas napping in the gum trees and echidnas foraging among the leaf litter. Kangaroo Island is Australia's third largest island with over 32% of the island conserved in National or Conservation Parks. The island was joined to mainland Australia during the Ice Age. However since then the many native plants and animals which inhabit the island have been isolated making them clearly different from their relatives on the mainland.
- **See koalas and fur seals** at Admiralty Arch and Remarkable Rocks on a Kangaroo Island Wildlife experience.
- **Enjoy night time feeding of wild Tasmanian devils** at the world's only 'Devils' Restaurant' on the wild West Coast of Tasmania.
- **Observe the area's seals, penguins, bottlenose dolphins and many species of sea birds** from the excellent vantage point on the sheer

cliffs of the wild and craggy Tasman Peninsula.

- **Take a gourmet Wilderness and Wildlife tour** in Tasmania with Pepperbush Adventures. Many of the creatures that disappeared long ago from the mainland can still be found in Tasmania. Species that you may encounter are bandicoot, wallaby, eastern quoll, kangaroo, wombats, possums, echidna, spotted tail quoll, devils, platypus and an abundance of Tasmanian birdlife.
- **Head out to Phillip Island to see Australian wildlife in its natural habitat.** See Australia's largest colony of fur seals; many koalas; a large population of mutton birds and migratory waterbirds. See the Penguin Parade when tiny fairy penguins waddle ashore each night on the Sunset March.
- **Spot crocodiles and reptiles** in north-western Australia in the Kimberley region. Contrary to common belief, not all crocodiles are man-eaters. Freshwater crocodiles ('freshies') are common in the Kimberley, where they bask in and around rivers, lakes and pools in gorges. While they may look ferocious, they are relatively harmless. Spot them in Lake Argyle, along the Ord River, and in Geikie Gorge and Tunnel Creek.
- **See the afternoon feeding frenzy** at Broome Crocodile Park, home to dangerous salt water crocodiles as well as Australian fresh water crocodiles. Owned and operated by famous Australian Malcolm Douglas, everything from small babies to massive 5 metre crocodiles can be seen.
- **Take a ferry ride to Rottne Island**, and be captivated by its 10,000 locals –quokkas, that is. These endearing furry, kangaroo-like marsupials are indigenous to the island, though they have been detected in the southern pockets of Western Australia's mainland. You'll be enthralled as they scurry through the scrubby coastal vegetation, and mischievously peep out from behind island bushes. However don't feed them; you'll make them sick.
- **Stay at Mornington Wilderness Camp** in the heart of the Kimberley, off the Gibb River Road. Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary covers more than 3,000 sq km of spectacular gorges and tropical savannah dominated by the Fitzroy River and King Leopold Ranges. A naturalist's paradise, it provides refuge for over 170 species of birds and a diverse range of other wildlife.
- **See water birds** on the mudflats on the shores of Western Australia's Roebuck Bay near Broome, a habitat for 800,000 migratory water birds, some of which migrate from the Arctic tundra.

#### For further information please contact:

Tourism Australia  
International Media Relations  
GPO Box 2721  
Sydney NSW 1006  
Phone: +61 2 9360 1111  
Email: [internationalmedia@tourism.australia.com](mailto:internationalmedia@tourism.australia.com)  
[www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)



1 [http://www.australia.com/about\\_australia/facts\\_and\\_figures/off\\_beat\\_facts/Facts1\\_ALL.aust?L=en&C=AU](http://www.australia.com/about_australia/facts_and_figures/off_beat_facts/Facts1_ALL.aust?L=en&C=AU)  
2 <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aib/environment.html>  
3 ibid  
4 ibid  
5 ibid  
6 Ibid.  
7 [www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)