

WORLD HERITAGE

Australia's natural and ancient wonders are waiting for you...

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

We have more than our fair share of world heritage sites, but only two of them weren't made by the hand of Mother Nature. You're not going to find many of them in cities, towns, or even in the form of ancient building ruins. Australia's world heritage sites have been sitting around for eons – literally – and you'll have to strap on your walking boots to find many of them.

The world's largest island continent, Australia has a disproportionately large number of the world's natural wonders – treasures such as the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Park. Others, such as the Australian Fossil Mammal sites and Purnululu National Park are lesser known but also available to visit. When our island continent split apart from the mainland it launched a time capsule that was preserved for generations by its Aboriginal inhabitants but is only now being rediscovered and recorded by white man.

We are custodians of 17 unique World Heritage areas³, some of the oldest rainforests on Earth and a massive one-third of the world's protected marine areas. You can visit all of these except two – McDonald and Heard Islands. However, many of our national parks are open to the public to visit and we'll even provide you educational and interpretative material and assistance at each site.

Though many are in remote areas by international standards, they are well served and easily accessible by road, plane or on foot. So, get out of your comfort zone and adventure out and about into our unique nature and wilderness areas.

Some of our world heritage areas can only be accessed by 4WD or air but most can be reached by self-drive. Generally, you'll find a wide range of accommodation on the fringe of these areas – everything from camping grounds, and tented accommodation to luxury stays in spa, nature and wilderness retreats.

Immerse yourself in our national wonders; they're there to be enjoyed – whether it's walking with aboriginal elders around the monolith of Uluru, snorkelling the Great Barrier Reef or trekking through the Tasmanian Wilderness. Australia's natural wonders, its protected rainforests, glorious reefs, spectacular ranges and wilderness are waiting for you.

World Heritage areas listed by UNESCO:

Heard and McDonald Islands, Macquarie and Lord Howe Islands, located off our coastline; The Tasmanian Wilderness; Fossil mammal sites at Naracoorte (South Australia) and Riversleigh (Queensland);

Central Eastern Rainforests (NSW and Queensland), Willandra Lakes and the Greater Blue Mountains Area (NSW); Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and Kakadu National Park (Northern Territory); Fraser Island, the Wet Tropics and The Great Barrier Reef (Queensland); Shark Bay and Purnululu National Park (Western Australia); Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens (Victoria); and the Sydney Opera House (NSW).

Some world heritage facts

- Two of our World Heritage sites are buildings – the **Royal Exhibition Building** and associated gardens in Melbourne, Victoria and the Sydney Opera House in NSW. The rest are natural, not man-made.²
- Australia sits at number 14 on a list of countries with the most listed world heritage sites.
- Few places in the world meet all four World Heritage natural criteria, but we have four that do – **Queensland's Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics, Tasmania's Wilderness, and Western Australia's Shark Bay.**
- The **Great Barrier Reef** is the largest marine park in the world. A maze of 2,900 reefs and islands it stretches from Cape York (Cooktown) south to Bundaberg along the north-east coast of Australia.
- The Opera House, designed by Jorn Utzon and officially opened in October 1973, is the youngest building to be included on the World Heritage List and only the second by a living architect.
- Prehistoric man occupied the **Lake Mungo** area 40,000 years ago. The 26,000 year-old grave of an Aboriginal woman is believed to be the world's earliest cremation site. The 17 dry lakes (they dried up 14,000 years ago) which comprise the Willandra Lakes area cover nearly 30,000 hectares and are an extraordinarily rich source of fossils and information about the last ice age on earth.³
- **The Daintree Rainforest** is the oldest in the world – 135 million years old. It supports over 3000 plant species, 13 mammal species found nowhere else in the world and nearly half of Australia's birds.
- **Kakadu** covers almost 20,000 sq km – the same size as many small countries such as Israel.
- The amazing **Bungle Bungle Ranges** and its ringed beehive-like domes are located within one of our newest listings, the Purnululu National Park. They were virtually unknown to White Australia until 1982 when a stock pilot flew over them with a couple of filmmakers.⁴
- The traditional owners of the area prefer visitors to respect their culture and not climb "The Rock" (Ayers Rock, or **Uluru**, as it is now





known). This giant red sandstone monolith, 9.4 km in circumference, has been the focus of Aboriginal “Dreaming” for thousands of years.

- Stretching more than 120km, **Fraser Island**, off the southern Queensland coast, is the largest sand island in the world.⁵
- Some of the world’s oldest ferns from the Carboniferous period can be found in the rainforest reserves of the Eastern coast, along with outstanding examples of other relict vertebrate and invertebrate fauna from the time of the break up of the ancient southern landmass Gwondana.
- The semi-arid **Willandra Lakes** region in the Murray region of south-west NSW, is a system of Pleistocene lakes, formed over the last two million years.
- The **Blue Mountains** are blue because of the fine droplets of oil released into the air by the 90 species of eucalypts there.
- The exact location of the recently discovered Wollemi Pine, a living fossil dating back to the age of the dinosaurs, is being kept secret to protect them from destruction. But one thing we can tell you is that they’re located in the Blue Mountains.
- Some of the world’s oldest trees, such as Huon Pines which can grow for 2000 years, grow in the **Tasmanian Wilderness**.
- **Shark Bay**, Western Australia, is home to the remarkable Hamelin Pool stromatolites – the oldest and largest living fossils in the world. The mystery surrounding their origin has attracted scientists from across the globe, who have compared the find to that of a zoologist discovering a living dinosaur.
- Visits to remote **Heard, McDonald and Macquarie Islands** are strictly controlled and usually restricted to scientific visits only. Macquarie is a rare above water section of the ancient ocean floor and Heard is known as the wildest place on earth.
- And, we’ve only just scratched the surface. Attention was recently drawn to one of Australia’s best-kept secrets, a national treasure to equal Uluru and Kakadu. A vast and magical ancient art gallery in the outback on Western Australia’s **Burrup Peninsula**, in the remote far northwest of the continent, is being hailed as the world’s greatest, most significant, collection of rock art.⁶

Uniquely Australian

- Trek through the magnificent gorges of the **Bungle Bungles**, then return to the luxury of a hot shower in a tented camp.
- **See the mighty Kakadu** from the water as you get away from the mainstream on a Katherine River safari. Canoe by day, spotting birds and crocodiles, and camp at night; this is the best way to see the area as the rivers of the Katherine region continue to run even through the long dry season.
- **Watch a sunset across the vast wetlands** from the natural lookout of Ubirr. Take a helicopter ride over Arnhem Land and Jim Jim Falls or stand on what feels like the edge of the world at Gumlon Falls.
- Camp in relative luxury on the Aboriginal lands of Hawk Dreaming , the Djabulukgu Association’s permanent camp in **Kakadu**.
- Instead of a day trip or cruise to the **Great Barrier Reef**, why not

actually stay on it? Heron Island, a five-star resort with an eco-focus, is located right on the reef so you can wade out to swim amongst fish or baby turtles. Alternatively, much simpler cabin-style accommodation is available on Lady Elliot Island. Dive, snorkel, fish or learn about the reef from a marine biologist.

- Lose yourself in a timewarp in the cool crisp air of the **rainforest reserves of Queensland and NSW**. Graded tracks lead through ancient damp rainforests with crystal clear waterfalls and glass rivers, to pristine white beaches.
- **Wilpena Pound**, an impressive natural amphitheatre in the Flinders Ranges National Park is a beautiful place to discover Australian flora and fauna, and is perfect for hiking.
- **At Naracoorte Cave World Heritage Fossil Site**, plunge underground to tour stunning limestone caves and watch flights of bats come out of their caves at dusk.
- Take a World Heritage Cruise on the *MV Discovery* , a small luxury vessel expedition cruise up the Gordon River into the heart of **Tasmania’s World Heritage rainforest**.
- Hire a seat in a chopper for a bird’s eye view of the amazing domed landscape, gorges, chasms and waterfalls of **Purnululu National Park**, famous for the banded beehive rock structures, sandstone cliffs and towers of the Bungle Bungle Range; despite being made of soft sandstone, they have survived for around 20 million years.
- See the world-renowned affable dolphins of **Monkey Mia**. The turquoise waters of **Shark Bay** are so clear that docile dugongs, manta rays and marine turtles are easy to spot.
- Go 4WD adventuring on **Fraser Island** along deserted Seventy Mile Beach or up and down the sand dunes and cliffs. You can take a 4WD across to the island on a vehicular barge.
- Stay in a mountain lodge at Cradle Mountain and go bushwalking or camp out in the **Tasmanian wilderness**.
- See the wild, lunar landscape at **Willandra**. A network of dry lakes contains remarkable fossil remains and evidence of human habitation dating back 40,000 years.

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1 www.unesco.org

2 http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/world_heritage.html

3 www.deh.gov.au www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/parks.nsf

4 <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/worldheritage/sites/purnululu/values.html>

5 www.deh.gov.au/heritage/worldheritage/

6 www.burrup.org