

# Fact Sheet



## Darwin

The Northern Territory is home to the sacred wonders of Kakadu National Park, Uluru and Arnhem Land. In the beauty of the rocks and landscapes, it holds the 40,000-year-old story of our Aboriginal people.

From the deserts of Central Australia to the tropics of the Top End, this is a land of contrast. With 20% of our land mass, the Territory has only 1% of our population.

Australia's only tropical capital, Darwin is a modern city nestled on a harbour more than twice the size of Sydney's. Feel the tropical breeze in your hair as you cruise the balmy waters of Australia's Top End at sunset. Truly multicultural, more than 50 nationalities make up Darwin's 100,000 population, including the area's traditional landowners, the Larrakia Aboriginal people. Darwin is a fascinating blend of cultures, with an amazing mix of festivals, beachside night markets, museums and nightlife. This city is closer to Jakarta than to Canberra and is a gateway for many Asian destinations.

Dramatic landscapes from coastlines, savannah woodlands and rugged escarpments to deep gorges, waterfalls and billabongs are all within reach.

## Attractions

You can reel in a barramundi on a fully equipped guided fishing boat and watch crocodiles in the wild by day. At night, enjoy either barra or croc for dinner from the barbecue while you sit outdoors under the stars and sample Darwin's buzzing society in any of the city's many pubs or clubs.

Whether you're interested in discovering more about the natural environment, Aboriginal culture or the pioneering history of Darwin, you can see it all at the various attractions and national parks scattered throughout the region.

### Walks

Darwin is a great walking city. The Darwin Visitor Information Centre has a free heritage map that details 17 places of interest. Walk around Fannie Bay to the East Point Military Museum (five kilometres) or visit the Darwin Botanic Gardens and stroll among palms, orchids, every species of baobab in the world, and mangroves.

### Mindil Beach Sunset Markets

Mindil Beach Sunset Markets are a Darwin institution. Be one of the thousands who throng around the 200 stalls on Thursday and Sunday evenings from April to October. There is a dazzling array of market food, arts, and crafts to purchase while performers create a treat for our senses. With nearly 60 food stalls from more than 30 different countries, the hardest part about eating at the Markets is making a choice. Crowds flock to the beach to watch our famous sunset as it dips, fiery red, into Darwin Harbour. [www.mindil.com.au](http://www.mindil.com.au)

### **Territory Wildlife Park**

Wonderfully re-created natural habitats house Northern Territory wildlife at the Territory Wildlife Park. With monsoon rainforest boardwalks, lagoons with bird hides, a walk-through aviary, an aquarium with stingrays and sawfish, and a nocturnal house with marsupials such as the bilby you will meet many of our local animals here.

[www.territorywildlifepark.com.au](http://www.territorywildlifepark.com.au)

### **Crocodylus Park**

Large estuarine crocodiles leap high out of the water to catch their food in the main pond of Crocodylus Park. Only 15-minutes drive from town, Crocodylus Park is a privately funded wildlife research and breeding facility that is open to the public. The Park specialises in wildlife conservation, management and sustainable use. There is an educational museum dedicated to crocodiles. You can meet other local and exotic wildlife here too. [www.crocodyluspark.com](http://www.crocodyluspark.com)

### **Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory**

Aboriginal art and material culture, visual arts, craft, South-east Asian and oceanic art and maritime archaeology, Northern Territory history and natural sciences are among the collections here. There are five major permanent galleries, a touring gallery, educational facilities for school groups, a theatre and the Cornucopia Museum Cafe with harbour views. [www.magnt.nt.gov.au](http://www.magnt.nt.gov.au)

### **East Point Military Museum**

Uncover Darwin's wartime history at the East Point Military Museum. During World War II, Darwin was bombed 64 times and 12 ships were sunk in the harbour. East Point Reserve, just a few minutes' drive from the city centre, is a favourite spot for sunset picnics and home to a colony of agile wallabies. [www.epmm.com.au](http://www.epmm.com.au)

### **Australian Aviation Heritage Centre**

The Australian Aviation Heritage Centre houses an impressive collection of the Territory's aviation history and reminds us of Darwin's frontier role in World War II. A B-52 bomber on loan from the United States is the prized exhibit at the Centre, which is 10 minutes out of Darwin. Also on display is a B-25 Mitchell bomber, Mirage and Sabre jet fighters and rare Japanese Zero fighter wreckage. [www.darwinsairwar.com.au](http://www.darwinsairwar.com.au)

### **Australian Pearling Exhibition**

The Australian Pearling Exhibition at the Wharf Precinct in Darwin tells the story of our pearling history, from the days of the lugger and hard hat diving, to modern farming and pearl culturing techniques. The exhibition, a time capsule of facts and stories from Australia's Pearl Coast, reveals an industry steeped in mystery, danger and romance.

## **Shopping**

In Darwin's city centre, the Smith Street Mall has a range of specialty shops linked by arcades to surrounding streets. There are numerous Aboriginal art galleries, unique jewellery stores featuring Territory gems, Australian gold and beautiful saltwater pearls, high-end fashion boutiques and trinket shops to be explored.

### **Markets**

Darwin has a variety of weekend markets – each with its own specialties. As well as the Mindil Markets, a Saturday morning laksa and coffee at the Parap Market is a ritual for locals. Treat yourself to organic vegetables at Coolalinga Market. Sunday mornings lend themselves to fresh-picked tropical fruits and Asian vegetables at Rapid Creek Market, or hand-made clothing at Nightcliff Market.

## Entertainment & Dining

A multitude of fresh herbs, vegetables, tropical fruits and local seafood are transformed into culinary masterpieces in the city's restaurants, al fresco pubs and restaurant-equipped pearl luggers. The city's nightlife reaches its peak along Mitchell Street or at the sea-side yacht and sailing clubs. Take your pick, dancing and neon or ocean and stars.

### Mitchell Street

Mitchell Street is where the action is. Irish pubs, nightclubs, Aussie bars, a cinema, the theatre and al fresco dining options line the streets. During the day, do your shopping here, book your tour at the tourist information centre and make your calls home at the Internet cafe. In the evening, catch up with mates, enjoy a cabaret performance and dance the night away.

### Cullen Bay

A short drive from the CBD is Cullen Bay, where ocean breezes and water views will draw you into the local restaurants. There's everything from Greek-inspired oysters to French-influenced barramundi, with Thai squid and beer-battered prawns thrown in for good measure. Featuring mainly seafood options, the restaurants can cater for all appetites. Sit back and relax at a picnic table on the wharf, or sit inside with an ocean view, either way, the dress is casual.

### Fannie Bay

Best known for its views and pricey real estate, the restaurants at Fannie Bay are a must-visit. You can drink a glass of sparkling with breakfast at Cornucopia, but be sure to book, it's always busy. Across the road is the Ski Club. The food here is pub style, and a wood-fired pizza oven cart arrives on Friday night. After a bike ride around East Point, try the Cool Spot for a trendy hangout and big breakfast.

## Sport

Sport is a big part of life in Darwin, and we are into everything from football and lifesaving to golf, motor sports and martial arts. Team sports, including the four codes of football, cricket, basketball, baseball, hockey and netball are very popular.

At the Arafura Games you can see the champions of the future from across the Asia Pacific region. More than 3000 athletes from over 30 nations come to Darwin every two years to compete in more than 30 sports, from athletics to sepak takraw, the Malaysian game of kick volleyball. The Arafura Games are held at venues across Darwin and are open to the public.

Darwin is also host to the annual Heineken Hottest 7s in the World, which sees some of the world's best seven a side international, interstate and local rugby union teams battle it out over two days for the title and large prize money.

The latest solar-powered cars depart Darwin and cross the Central Australian desert on the 3000 kilometres to Adelaide in the name of friendly competition, science and the environment in the biennial Panasonic World Solar Challenge.

## Getting Around Darwin and the Top End

Darwin International and Domestic Airport is only a short drive (12.5 kilometres) north-east from the town centre. You can take a shuttle-bus or taxi from the airport. Rental cars are also available.

Darwin Bus Service operates in the city and surrounding suburbs. Greyhound Australia operates daily services from Darwin to Kakadu, Broome, Perth and Alice Springs.

## Climate

The Top End lies between the tropic of Capricorn and the equator, creating the same warm tropical climate as Bali. In the dry season (April-October), the skies are clear, the days are warm and plunge pools are filled with travellers seeking relaxation. The build-up to the Tropical Summer season begins in October, bringing sporadic dazzling electrical storms, the first afternoon showers and the sound of frogs croaking in the evenings. At the height of Tropical Summer (December-March) are the monsoonal rains. This means that the waterfalls are flowing and the expansive Kakadu floodplains are full of life. If you visit during this time, be sure to schedule a scenic flight to enjoy all of the region's beauty.

## Beyond Darwin

### Litchfield National Park

Drive an hour and a half from Darwin, and you enter the haven of Litchfield National Park. The Park is home to cascading waterfalls and inviting plunge pools amid lush rainforest and exquisite scenery.

Defining the Park's landscape is the Tabletop Range with its wide sandstone plateau surrounded by cliffs. Litchfield's main attractions are the permanent spring-fed waterfalls of Florence and Wangi Falls and the cascades at Buley Rockhole, but the Tabletop Walk is a must-do bushwalk for any short-stay trekker.

At the turn-off to Litchfield from the Stuart Highway is the small township of Batchelor. Bungalow and bed and breakfast accommodation here makes this a comfortable base for your days of exploring.

### Barramundi Fishing

Go wild with a multi-day fishing safari that you can customise. With experienced guides by your side you will be chasing barramundi in the best fishing spots. Tours usually include accommodation, meals, light refreshments and all tackle. You can hire a houseboat and fish in the local hot spot, Corroboree Billabong, in the Mary River system.

### Kakadu National Park

Kakadu National Park is a tapestry of contrasts: dramatic gorges and luxuriant rainforest pockets, thundering waterfalls, tranquil pools, ancient Aboriginal rock art and showy waterlilies. Covering almost two million hectares, Kakadu is Australia's most significant national park. It was World Heritage-listed in 1984 and has achieved global recognition as a cultural and ecological treasure.

### **Four-wheel drive camping in Kakadu**

Discover the secrets of Kakadu National Park on a four-wheel drive camping safari of two to five days. Many tours are available and usually include a crocodile-spotting guided boat cruise. A visit to Kakadu's Aboriginal rock-art sites and mighty waterfalls is a truly humbling experience.

### **Katherine**

Katherine is a bustling outback town rich in history, bordering spectacular local landmarks. Take a cruise on the majestic Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park or canoe down the pandanas-lined Katherine River. While you're in the Park, take in ancient Aboriginal rock art high on the cliffs. In town, visit Katherine School of the Air and the Mimi Art Centre, featuring artists from the region. South of town, stop in at the limestone caves of Cutta Cutta Nature Park or spend the day at the Aboriginal community of Manyallaluk.

### **Touring Katherine Gorge**

Reserve your canoe for a half-day self-guided trip or a three-day guided adventure tour. There's time to swim and go for walks during the longer tours to get the most of this impressive Park. Board a boat and cruise through some of the 13 gorges or get a bird's eye view from a helicopter.

### **Palmerston**

Palmerston is a satellite city 15 minutes south-east of Darwin's. On Friday nights during the dry season, Palmerston's markets come alive in the City Centre. Young families sprawl out on the giant lawn, enjoying a selection of satays, curry and wood-fired pizza, and listening to live music. There is entertainment for the kids too, they can bounce around in the jumping castle, or search through the library for a good book.

### **Tiwi Islands**

Melville and Bathurst Islands, known as the Tiwi Islands, lie 80 kilometres north of Darwin. The Tiwi people have lived on the islands for thousands of years among dense rainforest, sandy beaches and rock pools. Many Islanders are prolific artists creating distinctive and valuable art, pottery, sculptures and wooden carvings. The Tiwi Islands are best visited on an organised tour, so that your permits are taken care of, or during the Tiwi Island Football Grand Final and Art Sale in March each year.

## **Useful Links**

[www.australiasoutback.com](http://www.australiasoutback.com)

[www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)

[www.travelnt.com](http://www.travelnt.com)