

Welcome to country

Respecting Indigenous culture
for travellers in Australia

areas it may not be clear whose traditional lands you are visiting or travelling through. Checking with local tourism agencies, local governments, land and community councils, parks and wildlife agencies or local Aboriginal organisations may provide you with this information. This simple act of inquiring about whose traditional lands you are visiting, is itself, a mark of respect.

There may also be opportunities for you to personally acknowledge the privilege of visiting a group's country or special places.

"Country got ears and country knows its people"

Nyaparu Tarran 2004

Being a responsible traveller

The choices you make when travelling can and do make a difference. Respecting Indigenous culture and country is a matter of travelling thoughtfully. Use the following points as a guide.

Respecting people's privacy

- Many Aboriginal communities or lands require permits to enter – this helps ensure people's privacy. You may need to organise permits with land or community councils well in advance.
- If you are visiting an Aboriginal community, wait until you are invited to approach homes or groups of people.
- Funerals and cultural ceremonies are times of special privacy – use extra sensitivity in communities at these times.

Respecting restrictions

- There may be places that are closed to visitors because of their cultural significance – heed advice if you are asked not to enter an area.
- In some places it is culturally inappropriate to swim or fish in waterways, waterholes and/or sea country.
- Some places can only be visited by men or women – please respect these protocols where they apply to non-Indigenous people.
- When in doubt about where you can or cannot go, it is good practice to 'ask first'.
- The possession or consumption of alcohol is restricted in some Indigenous communities – these restrictions also apply to visitors.

Talking to Indigenous people

- If you are talking to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, recognise that they may communicate differently to non-Indigenous people – English may be a second or third language.
- Access to specific cultural knowledge or stories may not be open to everyone – it is best to avoid direct questions about matters that could be sensitive, unless invited to do so.
- Dress etiquette applies when visiting some Indigenous communities – if in doubt avoid wearing short skirts, short shorts or other revealing clothes.

Taking photographs and filming

- Always ask before filming or taking photos of a person, a group of people or cultural activities.
- Photographing and filming some places and objects is restricted for cultural reasons – please respect this important request from traditional owners.
- If you intend to use your photographs in a publication or for other commercial purposes, you will need to seek copyright permission from the people featured in the photo.

Taking home a memento

- Locally produced Aboriginal art and crafts make an excellent memory of your visit to a place – if possible choose items designed and made by Aboriginal people. Look and ask for items that have a label of cultural authenticity.
- Purchasing items from Aboriginal people through respected outlets helps to create economic support for people in communities where there may be limited opportunities for employment.
- Please do not remove rocks or other objects from Aboriginal land or waters without the permission of traditional owners. Disturbing cultural sites is also prohibited by Australian law.