

GUURRBI TOURS



One of Queensland's Top Ten Must-Dos 2009
Gnunkai Indigenous Tour Guide Award 2007
One of Australia's Ultimate Must-Do Experiences 2006

ABOUT THE REGION

Guurrbi Tours operates out of Cooktown in S.E. Cape York, part of Queensland's Tropical North, and home to Australia's highest proportion of Indigenous Australians and its greatest diversity of Indigenous cultures. This was the last of Australia's regions to be explored, settled or developed, and until a little over 100 years ago, a unique paradise known only to its Indigenous inhabitants.

Today, this vast, remote region remains one of great beauty, defying the onslaught of civilisation. The landscape is one of contrasts and surprises: of rainforest, outback and stunning mountain ranges; of wide open plains and hilltop Savannah; of wetlands, spectacular dune formations and tropical islands. The Cape alone includes no less than five World Heritage listed areas, and its east coast is Australia's closest to the Great Barrier Reef.

Aboriginal history on the Cape dates back tens of thousands of years and, at the time of European invasion, the region consisted of forty-three tribal nations, each with its own language and traditional practices. Although many of the languages have now been lost, Traditional Owners still exist for the whole of the Cape, and an estimated ten languages and possibly hundreds of dialects continue to be spoken. The tribes are made up of family groups, each with their own clan estates, and their distinct culture, bush foods, medicines and history. These are the traditional custodians of the land, who know its resources, its stories and its sacred places.

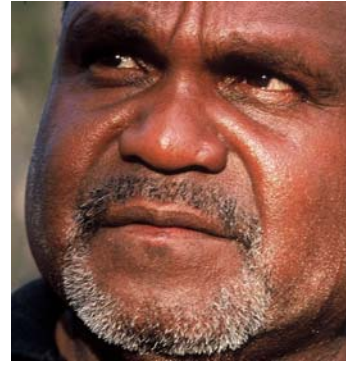
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Guurrbi Tours is run by traditional custodian Wilfred (Willie) Gordon, whose lands stretch between Cooktown and Hope Vale, about 340 kms north of Cairns. In 2007 Willie won the **Gnunkai Indigenous Tour Guide Award**, and his *Rainbow Serpent Tour*, operating since May 2003, has been listed as **One of Australia's Ultimate Must-Do Experiences** by American Express (2006), Australian Traveller magazine (2009), and was voted **One of Queensland's Top Ten Must-Dos** in 2009. Guests describe the tour as being powerful, inspirational, and deeply moving. Even hardened journalists and tour operators are touched, and people come back for a second and third time with other members of their family and friends. On this magical tour Willie takes guests to his ancestral rock art sites, set in stunning countryside high in the hills outside Cooktown. The sites are not open to the general public, and cannot be visited unaccompanied.

Willie explains what his tour is about....

Willie Gordon

"My name is Willie Gordon. I am a Nugal-warra Elder and Guugu Yimithirr speaker from the community of Hope Vale, near Cooktown in Far North Queensland. And I would like to welcome you to my land.



"For many years it was my dream to invite people to see the rock art sites in my country, and to share the stories behind the art. These are stories passed on to me by my father, Tulo Gordon, who also taught me about hunting, the land, its bush tucker and bush medicines. Because these stories were passed on to me, I am now the elected story-keeper of the Nugal-warra people, and it is my responsibility to pass them on and keep our culture alive. The stories, which have been passed down for thousands of years, from generation to generation, are stories which tell of the essence of life and the lores of our people. They teach us how we can become strong in spirit, and about the ancient Aboriginal philosophy of how to engage the environment in order to better understand ourselves.



"In the past, these stories would only have been passed on to other family members, but now I want to make these stories open for everyone – so everyone who comes on my tour can become a story-teller as well. If we don't do this, then they will just become a Dreaming. I encourage my guests to take as many photographs as they like, because

when they get home and see the photos of the rock art, then it will help them to remember what we talked about.

"On my tour we walk on tracks used by the Nugal people for centuries, and you will visit the Rainbow Serpent Cave and an ancestral birthing site, and other rock art sites which tell of the lore and laws of this country. We talk about the spirit. And we talk about survival. And we talk about the third 's' – which is the \$. We talk about practical things and relate them to spiritual things. All of us have cultural values – it's just that in a society like ours we often forget what is important. So this is a tour when you can learn about my culture and my land, and at the same time learn about yourself.



"I call my company *Guurrbi*. *Guurrbi* is a special place, a sanctuary made sacred by *Yirmbal*, or the Rainbow Serpent. It is also the word used to describe the reflective time spent before *bora* when important decisions were made. Because *Guurrbi* is sacred it should not be entered without due acknowledgement of Aboriginal lore and laws. The rock art sites are my *Guurrbi*, so on my tours I invite you to join me in my own, very special, place."

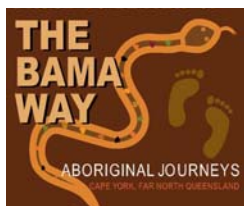
Tour Information

Guurrbi Tours runs tours daily, Monday to Saturday, either from Cooktown or self-drive. Bookings are essential as numbers are restricted, both to maintain the integrity of the tour and to protect the rock art sites themselves.



For more information on Guurrbi Tours:
Phone Judy Bennett on +61 (0) 7 4069 6043
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Website: www.guurrbitours.com

Drive, Fly and Fly-Drive packages from Cairns and Port Douglas are also available through The Bama Way operated by Adventure North Australia.



For more information on packages from Cairns & Port Douglas
Phone Adventure North Australia on +61 (0) 7 4040 7500
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