



Bloomfield Track Experience Guide

welcome

The Traditional Owners of the Daintree the Yalanji people welcome you in their language...

"Kadayda yurra bama Yalanji mumbu bubungu"

meaning welcome to the traditional homelands of the Kuku Yalanji people.

The Bloomfield Track passes through their country, a living cultural landscape of sacred stories and sites. It is an important traditional custom for visitors to be welcomed to country, which can also involve smoking and dancing ceremonies. The Kuku Yalanji people ask that you respect their land and culture as you pass through this special place.

How to use this eBook

Start in Cape Tribulation township if traveling south to north or Wujal Wujal Falls carpark if traveling north to south. Set your odometer trip meter to zero.

The Bloomfield Track E-book has a commentary for 11 stops and 4 drives as part of the 33 km Bloomfield track. These commentaries can be read or heard using your smart phone or tablet either Andriod or Apple devices.

Look for road markers with corresponding numbers and odometer reading to find the commentary for your location.

You can touch the numbers on the proceeding map to be sent to the commentary in the e-book.

Key to Symbols



WARNING



NARRATION



STOP



CONTINUE
DRIVING



STORY



DID YOU KNOW?



AUDIO



SAFETY

Leave No Trace &
Safety Principles...

1. Drive To Prevailing Conditions.
2. Slow Down In Wet Conditions.
3. Use Low Gears When Driving Down Steep Hills
4. If It's Flooded Forget It
5. Plan Ahead and Prepare
6. Walk and Camp on Durable Surfaces
7. Dispose of Waste Properly
8. Leave What You Find
9. Minimise the Impact of Fires
10. Respect Wildlife
11. Be Considerate of Your Hosts and Other Visitors

Key to Symbols



WARNING



NARRATION



STOP



CONTINUE
DRIVING



STORY

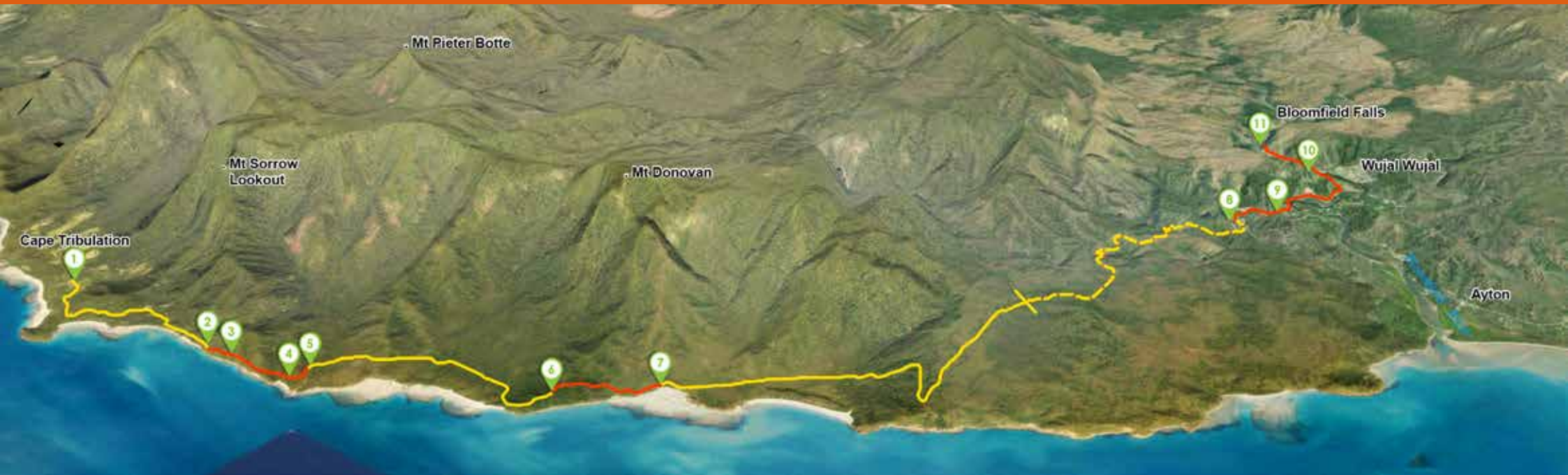


DID YOU
KNOW?

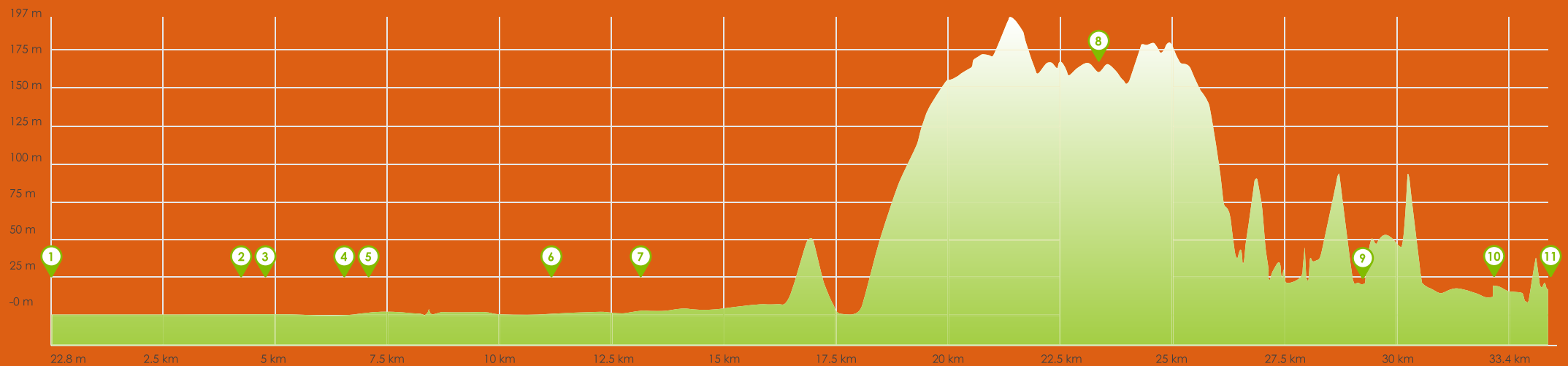


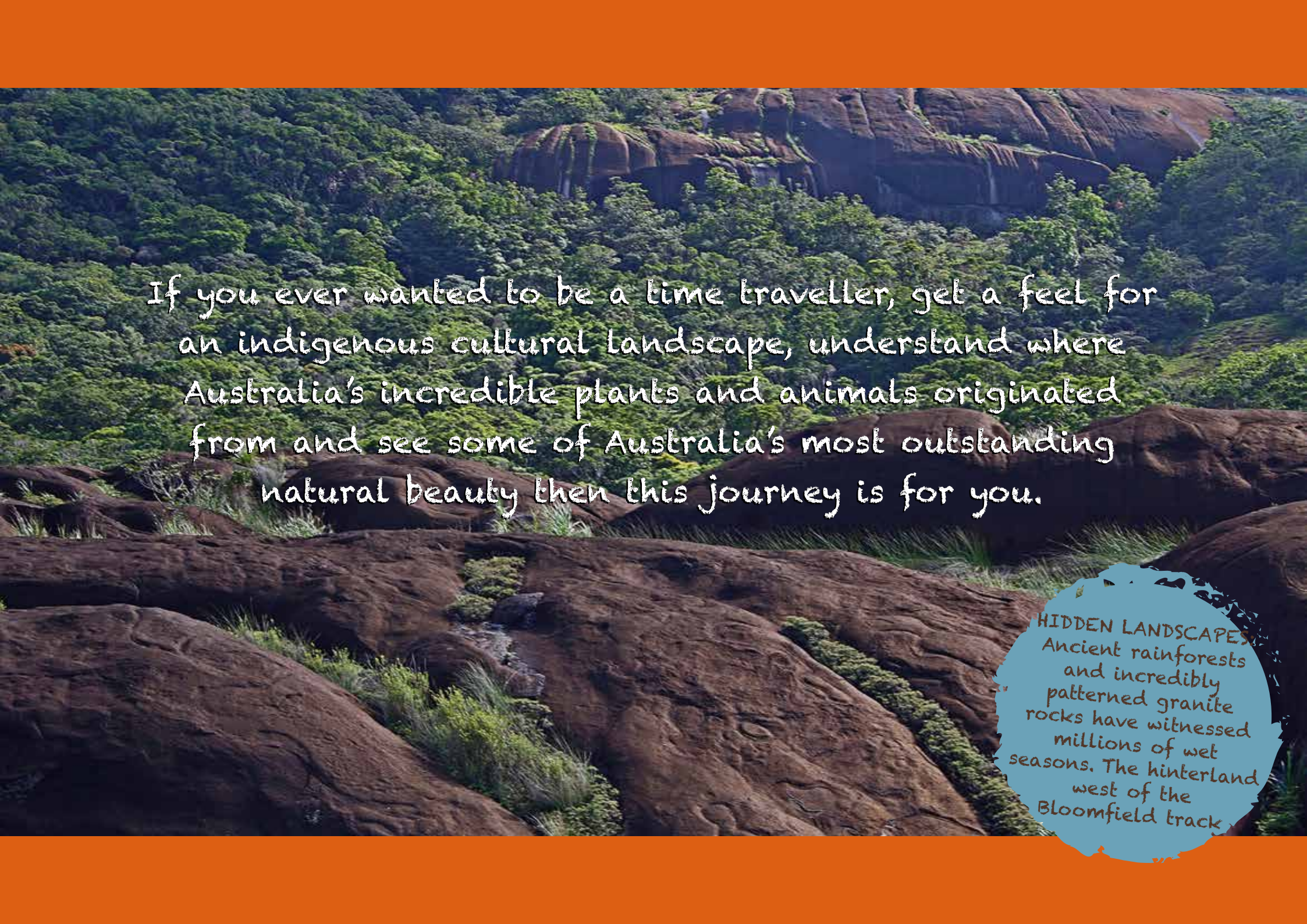
AUDIO

Birdseyeye view of your journey



Elevation Profile of Bloomfield Track





If you ever wanted to be a time traveller, get a feel for an indigenous cultural landscape, understand where Australia's incredible plants and animals originated from and see some of Australia's most outstanding natural beauty then this journey is for you.

HIDDEN LANDSCAPES
Ancient rainforests and incredibly patterned granite rocks have witnessed millions of wet seasons. The hinterland west of the Bloomfield track

Living Cultural Landscapes

NEED IMAGE HERE

TEXT???

CHAPTER ONE

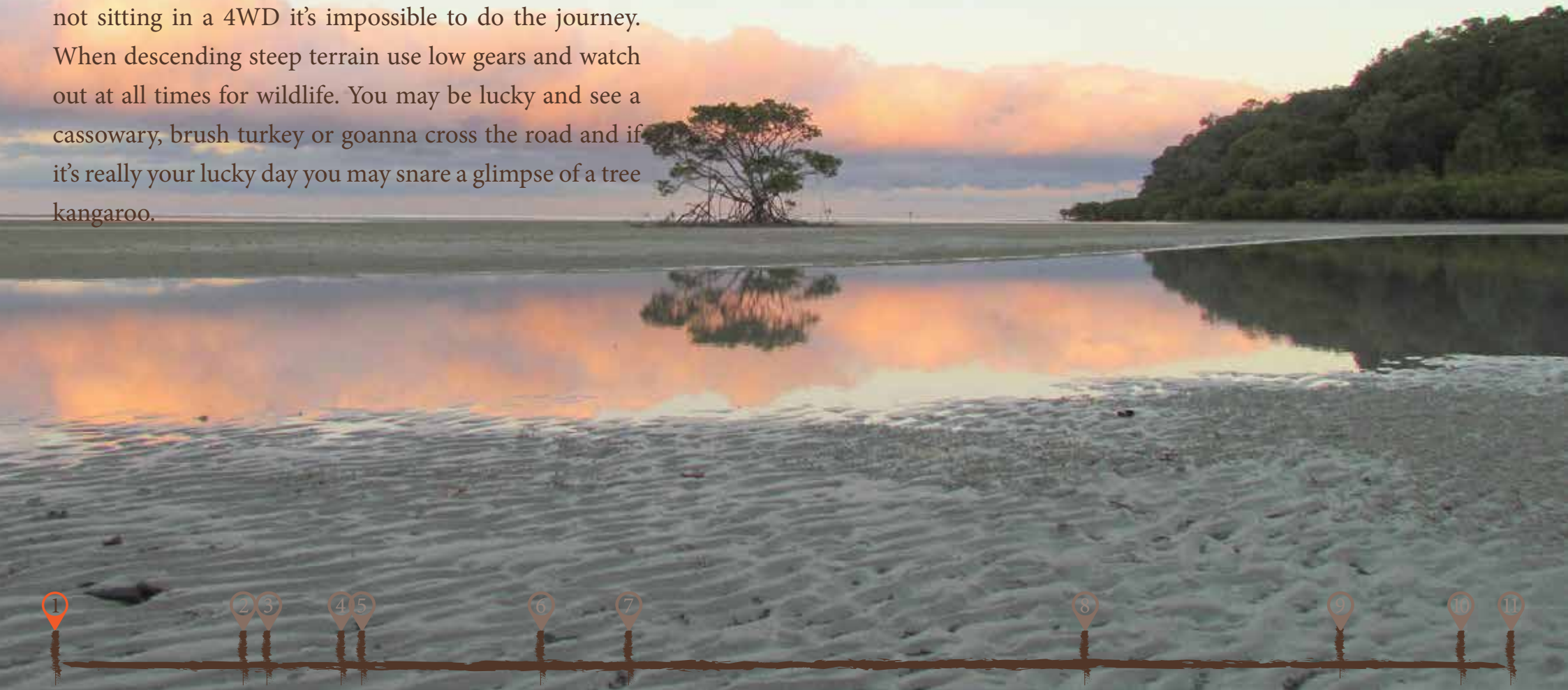
Journey Begins : Scenic Natural Beauty

STOP 1 : CAPE TRIBULATION

Odometer 0.0



This is the start of your Bloomfield Track adventure, so set your odometer to zero at Cape Tribulation CBD and buckle up. Remember to drive to the local prevailing conditions, therefore if it's wet, slow down, if the creeks are flooded "forget it". There is no rush so take your time, the track is 33.7 km long and if you're not sitting in a 4WD it's impossible to do the journey. When descending steep terrain use low gears and watch out at all times for wildlife. You may be lucky and see a cassowary, brush turkey or goanna cross the road and if it's really your lucky day you may snare a glimpse of a tree kangaroo.



1

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11

Living Cultural Landscape

CAPE TRIBULATION - CAPE TRIBULATION LOOKOUT

DRIVE 1
Odometer 0.0 - 4.4km

As you are driving the Bloomfield Track today, apart from the animal and plant life you see the landscape is 'alive' in another way. This is the only place in Australia where Aboriginal people have permanently inhabited a tropical rainforest environment. It is estimated that this unique relationship between Aboriginal people and the Wet Tropics rainforest environment has been continuous for at least 5000 years, incredibly stretching back to the same time as the very start of the ancient Egyptian empire.

This ancient landscape of mountains and clear water and the adjacent sea is interwoven with Yalanji culture where the Kuku Yalanji people follow the seasonal cycles of rainforest and sea foods. The Kuku Yalanji have a complex and respectful relationship with the rainforest which is seen as a respected Elder or madja.

During the millennia, the 'Bama' (Aboriginal rainforest people) developed a very distinctive cultural heritage characterised by their dreamtime and creation stories and their traditional food gathering, processing and land management techniques. Reliance on their traditions helped them survive in tough times.

The distinctiveness of the traditions and technical innovation, the expertise needed to process and prepare toxic plants, and their seasonal reliance on toxic food has occurred nowhere else in the world at the levels used by Kuku Yalanji people. One of the favourite toxic seasonal foods is the fruit of the Queensland cycad or marra. The seed is crushed, soaked and baked in such a way as to remove its toxins.

Fire management is also crucial to the Kuku Yalanji people and is still used today to create mosaics around rainforest boundaries to promote and attract certain plants and animals.

In 2012 the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area's indigenous heritage values were formally recognised and placed on the National Heritage List. The listing recognises Rainforest Aboriginal heritage to be of national significance. Traditional Owners are now considering to have these values recognised globally through world heritage listing.



Exeptional Natural Beauty

STOP 2 : CAPE TRIBULATION LOOKOUT

DRIVE 1

Odometer 4.4km



This small lookout gives you a classic view of where the 'rainforest meets the reef' at Cape Tribulation. Extensive mountain rainforest ridges plunge down from their very summits, merging with the beautiful sandy beaches and fringing reefs of the Great Barrier Reef.

These stunning coastal views are world class. The area is rare in being one of very few sites where two World Heritage areas adjoin side by side: the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef. It is of such universal values that it's' conservation is of worldwide concern.

On our journey today we are going to discover a little more in depth about the reasons this landscape is so special, remember beauty is more than skin deep. For example; all of Australia's unique marsupials and most of its other animals originated in rainforest ecosystems, with their closest surviving relatives occurring in the Wet Tropics. These living relicts of the ancient world and expansion across the country provide unique insights to the process of how life on earth adapted to ever changing environments.



European History

STOP 3 : PIONEERS TRACK PLAQUE : This stone block plaque commemorates the original 1968 pioneers track.

DRIVE 1

Odometer 4.9km

The original track from Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield (known as the missing link) was cleared by the Baileys Creek Cape Tribulation Development League in 1968. The “track” was soon drawn into controversy when the original land owner Mr Ryker allowed the road to be built up to his own property and then denied access for completion of the construction.

The surface was rough, but it provided the residents of Cape Tribulation and Wujal Wujal, as well as Helensvale and Rossville, quicker access to the south. It was used by 4WD vehicles, trial bikes and hikers, however it became impassable very quickly in the wet season. It also became quite popular as a long distant walking track.

In 1983, bulldozers arrived to finalise road construction but the move prompted demonstrations by locals as the road was to cut through the recently declared Cape Tribulation National Park. When southern protestors arrived to bolster the local numbers the police moved in. Two weeks later the wet season started and construction was halted. Protesters argued that the Bloomfield and greater Daintree area was a fragile and special place with inadequate protection.

The Local and State Governments of the day supported the road construction and in 1984 the road was eventually built. Though the

battle over the “Track” was lost, environmentalists say they won the war. In December 1988, the Wet Tropics of Queensland, a huge swath of land of over 900,000 hectares was declared as a World Heritage Area.

Today’s track takes much the same path as the original, with some changes to its route. In its original form, the track started at Cape Tribulation Beach, from which point it climbed up a steep stretch to the existing road. It then diverged from this track, taking a different route over the Cowie Range, heading north over a ridgeline to Thompsons Creek; avoiding the dangerous waters of Woobadda Creek which you will cross today over a well-constructed bridge.

It’s now fully protected with the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) working with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Kuku Yalanji to manage the region.



A lush tropical rainforest scene with a mossy stream flowing over large rocks. The forest is dense with various green plants, including ferns and palm trees. The stream is small and clear, with water flowing over large, moss-covered rocks. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Living Museum... Ancient Landscapes

Wet Tropics rainforests are surviving fragments of the primordial ancient Gondwanan forest and are among the oldest tropical rainforests on Earth.

The Daintree area contains one of the most complete and diverse living records of the major stages in the evolution of land plants, from the very first land plants to higher plants, as well as one of the most important living records of the history of marsupials and songbirds.

GONDWANA

Rainforest Ecology

STOP 4 : EMMAGEN FIG & BEACH

DRIVE 1

Odometer 6.1km

[There is a lot to see here so park in the car park on the left.]

The giant strangler fig is a tree that grows from the top down. Over 400 years ago, a bird or flying fox accidentally deposited some seeds in their dropping into a crevice high up in a host tree which is now barely discernible. This provided a germination spot for the seedling fig. Sunlight and high rainfall did the rest.

As branches grew up and out, multiple roots grew down, twisting, merging, and becoming anchored into the ground. These earthbound roots provided extra nutrients so its growth accelerated. Plants that use other plants for support but don't feed from them are called epiphytes. Over time most host trees die slowly and rot away.

Look how the strangler and other trees have surface roots that stretch out for metres in every direction, forming a locking matrix which gives great mutual strength in cyclones. Above-ground buttresses on two nearby trees, a rosewood mahogany and a pencil cedar, do much the same.

An ancient continent like Australia has poor soil. With over four metres of rain annually, the water table is high and most of the naturally occurring nutrients tend to be washed away. So, these plants rely on roots close to the surface to extract nutrients from rotting and decomposing organic matter. Unbelievably, these tropical rainforests produce 10 tonnes of organic waste per hectare per year; for any keen gardeners you can appreciate that amount of mulch.

Emmagen is a lovely little beach with wonderful birdlife. Visitors often report a brahminy kite or white bellied sea eagle flying or perched after a fishing trip. In season, rainbow bee-eaters, crested terns, Australian darters and cormorants also hang out regularly. From March through October, you'll likely see rainbow bee-eaters dive bombing for insects at the southern end of the beach.

Most local creek mouths are sandy; Emmagen's mouth is unique in that both banks are lined with water rounded rocks reaching out to the sea. Shells, floating seeds from rainforest, coastal and mangrove plants, worm-ridden driftwood, volcanic pumice and assorted flotsam are jumbled together along the high tide line.



Ancient Landscape

STOP 5 : EMMAGEN CREEK CROSSING

DRIVE 1

Odometer 6.6km

As soon as you get out of the car you will find yourself in an exceptional location... it feels unique, there is something about it... you can't quite put your finger on it... You have just stepped inside a real time machine.

You may have heard that the Daintree area is a very special place. It's special for many reasons but one of the most incredible stories the countryside tells us is that you are looking at a landscape that has survived due to some of the most consistent climatic conditions over the last 110 million years, allowing plants and animals from very ancient lineages to survive here to this very day.

The overwhelming evidence is the **Daintree area contains one of the most complete and diverse living records of the major stages in the evolution of land plants, from the very first land plants to higher plants, as well as one of the most important living records of the history of marsupials and songbirds.**

The emergence of the flowering plants, which are called angiosperms, some 200 million years after the first appearance of seed bearing plants, pines and cycads, marked the beginning of one of the most fundamental changes in biological diversity on this planet. Your life would be unimaginable without flowering plants or angiosperms. If there were no flowering plants, the only plant derived product available to you today in a supermarket would be pine nuts! No vegetables, fruit or nuts, no flour, no bread, rice or pasta, no vegetable oils, no cotton. To us today life without flowering plants would be science fiction.

Wet Tropics rainforests are surviving fragments of the primordial

ancient Gondwanan forest and are among the oldest tropical rainforests on Earth, however there has been significant immigration of northern hemisphere plant lineages over the past 15 million years.



Habitat for Threatened Species

EMMEGAN CREEK TO DONOVAN LOOKOUT

DRIVE 1

Odometer 6.6-11.1km

If you have ever wanted to see a dinosaur in real life, well today may be your lucky day. It is universally agreed that Cassowaries are the closest living animal possessing features resembling meat eating or theropod dinosaurs.

Cassowaries are large birds restricted, in Australia, to Wet Tropics rainforests and small areas of rainforest in Cape York Peninsula. Recent research has suggested the numbers in the Wet Tropics are around the 4000 mark. Cassowaries are of great cultural significance to many Rainforest Aboriginal People, and are a tourism icon in Far North Queensland. They are a keystone species, which means that they play an integral part in the maintenance of the forest ecosystem. Being a prehistoric bird living in an ancient rainforest would hint at the birds having a very important relationship with the rainforest; and they certainly have.

The cassowary's most significant contribution to the ecology of the forest is as a disperser of rainforest seeds. Cassowaries eat up to 228 different fruit species. Their simple digestive system massages the flesh off the fruit exposing the seed, which is pooped out intact in their own mini compost heap, sometimes a long way from the parent tree. It is estimated that 70 to 100 plant species are heavily dependent on the cassowary to disperse their large seeds.

Running around the rainforest floor in the middle of the day is the world's smallest kangaroo, the musky rat kangaroo also known as Hypsi, a shortening of its scientific name. This animal has so many interesting features it's mind blowing.

Firstly, it is active in the day, a very rare trait for a small marsupial. It is

considered the ancestor of all wallabies and kangaroos so therefore it has primitive traits inherited from its possible possum ancestry. These include a thumb like toe on its back foot and a prehensile tail, meaning a tail that can grab things. It can also regularly have multiple births, usually two but four has been recorded. It also has a bounding gait rather than a hopping gait, travelling on all fours; much like the rabbit. All of these features are mostly unknown in any other kangaroos or wallabies.

Related to the Hypsi is Bennett's Tree Kangaroo, restricted entirely between Daintree and the Annan River near Cooktown. They grow between 11 and 14 kg making Australia's largest tree living animal. Remarkably there is one near you right now but unfortunately they are the world's best 'hide and seek' players. Even scientists that study them for years on end have trouble spotting them.

Bennett's tree kangaroos are leaf eaters and have a preference for certain tree species. They have evolved adaptations for life in the trees such as having relatively broad short feet, large forearms, hooklike front claws, an extremely large pendulous tail which acts as a counterbalance and a special ability within their ankles to allow the feet to turn into the tree trunk so they can climb like a human coconut climber. They also can walk moving their feet independently. No other kangaroo or wallaby can do this.



Habitat for Threatened Wildlife

STOP 6 : SIGNIFICANT ONGOING ECOLOGICAL & BIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

DRIVE 1

Odometer 11.1km

Donovan Lookout

Remarkably if you were standing here approximately 20 000 years ago you may not have been able to view the Coral Sea — as the shore was a further 50 kilometres due east. The earth was at the peak of its most recent Ice Age, with sea levels in the region of 130 metres below current levels. The continental shelf is about 50 kilometres due east and the existing sea floor between the current coastline and the continental shelf is only between 50-80 metres deep.

Therefore there was a massive exposed coastal plain where reef boats now sail over to get to the reef. Amazingly in the past rivers flowed over this large coastal plain and eventually plunged over the faraway continental shelf into the Coral Sea.

At this time there were land bridges present between New Guinea and Tasmania. It is suggested that Indigenous Australians lived, hunted and fished in forests, mangroves, rivers and alluvial plains that are now inundated. Unfortunately archaeologists will probably never be able to delve into this submerged ancient human landscape.

Looking west to your right you can see Mt Donovan at 814m; just inside the ceiling for cloud formation. If it's not in cloud today you're lucky to see it, as it is in cloud for many months of the year. At these high altitudes, plants can actually strip moisture from the passing clouds.

The mist settles onto the leaves, forming small beads of moisture;

these will flow down the stems, branches and trunks and funnelled to the base of the tree; OR some moisture will drop off and be used by other plants or become a part of the groundwater that flows into the creeks and streams then out into the Coral Sea. Much of this life giving water is not measurable in the rain gauges, but it's able to be used by the plants.

Cloud forests in the Wet Tropics provide special habitats for unique species of insects, frogs, reptiles, and plants found nowhere else on the planet.

Mountain tops have become refuges for many species of plants and animals found in the Wet Tropics today; they can be described as 'island in the sky'; locations with special moist, cool, consistent weather conditions in a sea of warmer drier environments. For this reason many species are found in the Wet Tropics and nowhere else on earth for example of the 3,000 vascular plant species, 576 are only found in the Wet Tropics. Of the 107 mammal species 11 are only found in the Wet Tropics, of the 51 frog species nearly half, 22 are only found here.



Exceptional Natural Beauty

STOP 7 : COWIE BEACH

DRIVE 1

Odometer 0.0 - 4.4km

The first part of the short walk to the beach is past picturesque coconut palms, that typical tropical postcard scenery... but this one has a twist. When you find a coconut on the ground don't be put off by the alien-like implosion in the coconut. To a casual observer it can look like some animal has chewed its way out of the coconut to escape, the truth is stranger than fiction.

In fact a giant white tailed rat has chewed its way in to eat the coconut flesh, an absolute testament to the animal's size and the strength of its teeth. Try opening a coconut with your teeth!

On a clear day stunning blue skies merge into even bluer water; a line of brown fringing coral reef out to sea at low tide; red mangroves with their weird downwards-hanging roots stand like lone sentries; grey mangroves with drinking straw roots are dotted here and there closer to shore.

The Wet Tropics hosts approximately half of the world's 69 mangrove species. Mangrove is a collective word used to describe a usually unrelated group of plants that have all adapted in their own way to living in or near saltwater.

The mangroves have a number of different systems to handle all this salt, some use filters in their roots that can prevent salt absorption by sieving it out, while others concentrate the salt in older leaves that eventually fall off, taking their accumulated salt with them. The more highly advanced species have salt glands which actually excrete the salt onto the surface of the leaves where it is washed away by the rain.

Whatever the strategy mangroves are true survivors in this tough environment, but also the mangroves themselves help create and support one of the most important locations for young fish and crustaceans to develop by providing a safe nursery and feeding environment. They also help to stabilize and trap sediment that is washed out of creeks, rivers and streams; protecting the coral on the Great Barrier Reef from certain death from sedimentation.

If you're lucky and manage your visit between the second half of the incoming tide, you might see thousands of crabs marching and feeding or retreating as you get closer. Some of them may be digging spiral "foxholes", or milling and clicking in a circular defensive posture to fool potential predators.



STOP 7 : COWIE BEACH



Theatre of Life.. Biodiversity

Biodiversity refers to the number of living things within an eco-system. It can refer to the genetic variation within a species or the variety within an ecosystem or the different numbers of species.

The area you have now entered ticks all the boxes, it achieves a high mark in all these indicators. lets talk about what you may see.

CHAPTER 12

Shared Cultural Landscape

COWIE BEACH - EKY FREEHOLD LAND

DRIVE 1

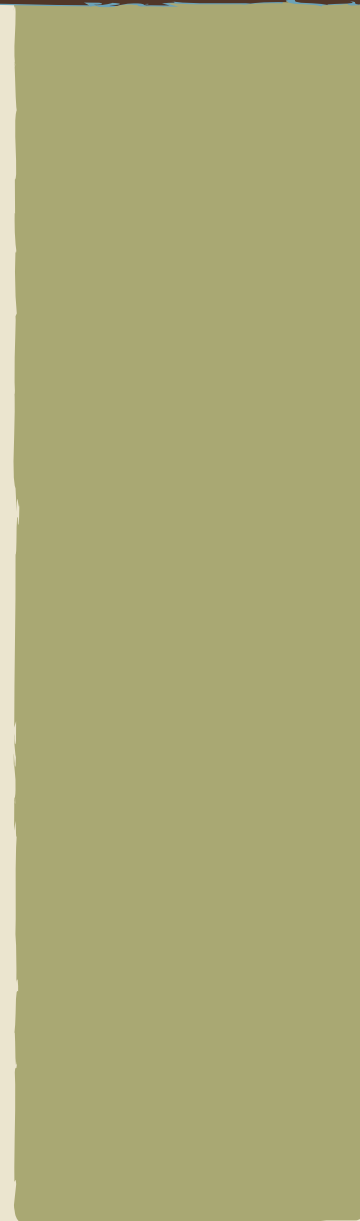
Odometer 13.1km

Mr D Donovan was a Crown Lands Ranger who in 1890 reported that the Donovan/Cowie region “abounded ... with scrub turkeys, scrub hens and a most gorgeous variety of pigeons, and a great variety of nuts, tubers and wild fruits in luxuriant profusion... its waters swarm with a miscellaneous class of fine edible fish”.

Incredibly it was Kuku Yalanji people who shaped the landscape into this paradise. Elders remember their ancestors living along Cowie Beach. Surveyor James Cobon reported in 1891 of an area at Cowie Beach that had dense scrub near the coast and along the creeks, with well timbered but open forest behind this, leading to grassy eucalyptus forest along the ridges with Indigenous camp clearings spread throughout.

These alternate patches or pockets of grassland and rainforest attracted kangaroo and wallabies to the freshly sprouted grass after burning; this technique brought the prey to the hunter, making life just that little bit easier.

Inevitably James Cobon was one of the first Europeans to record, in north Queensland for all times sake; how the Kuku Yalanji people modified the landscape to suit their needs. They created mosaic patterns in the vegetation by using fire as a tool to create optimum growing conditions for the wild plants and animals they harvested for food. As you're leaving Cowie Beach you can see the change in vegetation, evidence of Indigenous habitation and burning, with the land now gradually returning to rainforest.



Living Cultural Landscape

EKY FREEHOLD LAND TO WOODABBA CREEK

DRIVE 1

Odometer 13.1-20km

The eastern Kuku Yalanji (gu-gu u-alan-gee) peoples' land and sea country runs north from the Mowbray River near Port Douglas to Black Mountain near Cooktown. As part of their 2007 Native Title Determination they were acknowledged as Traditional Owners of some 230,000 ha along this coast line. Some 63,000 ha was formally handed back as Aboriginal Freehold to be held in trust by Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation. Some of this Aboriginal Freehold is protected as a nature refuge while other areas Yalanji hope to develop. Their vision for their country is "Healthy Mob, Healthy Land, Healthy Sea"

The eastern Kuku Yalanji lore comes from their country and their ancestors. They follow their Dreaming, which sets rules for respecting their country and each other. Removing any rocks or plants from Country is strictly forbidden and can cause a lot of suffering – both to people and Country. So it is important when visiting Country to be respectful of the Kuku Yalanji wishes. Don't leave any rubbish, don't take anything, stay on formed tracks and roads and if in doubt ask.

The Kuku Yalanji language is central to maintaining their lore and custom, and it is still, alive and well. Without their language Yalanji Bama can't talk to their ancestors or connect to their sacred sites. Speaking language on Country is important to the health of the Bama and the health of the Country. Elders passing on their knowledge is critical to maintaining all these values.

Their madja or rainforest is the oldest surviving tropical rainforest on earth and contain more than half the world's primitive flowering

plant families. These plants and animals are not just pretty things to look at but traditionally were the groceries, hardware and medicines of their living supermarkets, hardware stores and pharmacists.

An important part of Yalanji traditional knowledge involves the harvesting and cooking of bush foods, according to their seasonal calendar; usually when the foods are at their most nutritious or when it's appropriate to take animals outside of their breeding cycles. Traditional knowledge also enables the processing and eating of poisonous foods like marra or the cycad nut.

Cultural activities are vitally important to the health of Kuku Yalanji Bama and their land and sea country. These include smoking ceremonies, dances for the deceased, for storms, for hunting and to respect their plant and animal totems.



Biodiversity

STOP 8 : WOOBADDA CREEK

DRIVE 1
Odometer 23km

It's time to jump out; bring your towel, as you can finally have a swim as Woobadda Creek, a popular swimming spot. At 160 metres above sea level, it's croc free. But please remember no diving and watch out for underwater rocks and trees.

This relatively new bridge that crosses Woobadda Creek has a rock facade to make it blend into the environment; previously locals had to battle boulders in the creek bed and flash floods to get through. The new bridge offers residents of Wujal Wujal access to the south in a safe, reliable and comfortable way.

Lots of interesting trees line the creek—Lilly Pillys, Quandongs, Native Nutmegs, Muellers Silky Oak and a Silver Maple. At any time of year there will be at least one or two species fruiting or flowering. Elkhorn and ribbon ferns nestle in the trees and rattan (wait-a-while) vines dangle bunches of beige fruits.

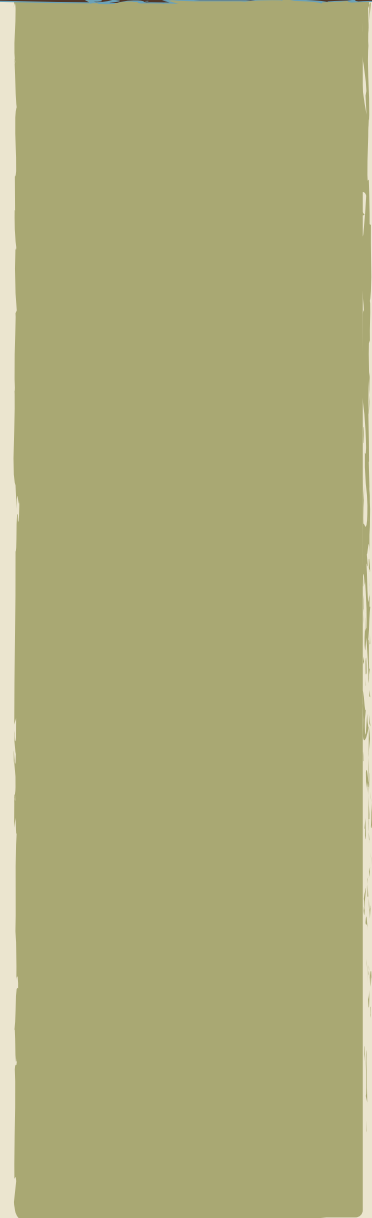
Long-clawed freshwater prawns called “cherabin” are common in the creek partly because the creek has few large fish. During the green season, water cascades down from the little creek into the main creek. At times, a myriad of rainforest images are reflected on the creek's black mirrored waters.

If you are arriving here early or late in the day keep your eyes out for azure kingfishers frequenting the creek. They'll give a shrill squeak as they dart along the creek just above the water level trying different fishing perches.

Between October and April, Pied Imperial Pigeons and flocks of chattering metallic starlings swallow nutmegs and other fruit,

dropping the seeds below. A nearby tree houses clumps of starling nests.

In the remaining months, dive-bombing rainbow bee-eaters feed on dragonfly, mayflies, wasps and bees while wompoo pigeons and superb fruit doves consume the fruit of many rainforest tree species.



STOP 8 : WOOBALDA CREEK





Shared Cultural Heritage

The cultural landscape is fashioned out of
the natural landscape by a culture group.

Culture is the agent...

The natural area is the medium...

The cultural landscape is the result!

CHAPTER FOUR

Shared Cultural Landscape

STOP 9 : BLOOMFIELD RIVER LOOKOUT

DRIVE 1

Odometer 29.3km

Below is the majestic sweep of the Bloomfield River, with a little peninsular opposite and mangrove islands to the right. It's a wide tidal river with low tides expose shallows and sandbanks. In fact, the "shallows" was the first cattle, horse and even vehicle crossing, strictly at low tide of course.

George Elphinstone Dalrymple, an early explorer, named Bloomfield after a pastoralist from Miriamvale; a small town located between Brisbane and Rockhampton. Wujal Wujal, the nearby Aboriginal community, is home to many Yalanji Bama and means place of many falls.

There's often an estuarine crocodile resting on the sandy banks or shallows opposite and in many spots along the river, which can be observed on the drive to Cooktown. You might see the slowly waving tail and triangular solar panels of a croc gliding beneath the river surface. It may be the best croc-spotting river drive in Queensland.

From the lookout, you'll notice a range of vegetation—thick rainforest behind and to the left, more open country with eucalyptus trees and grassland, some re-growth, and burnt grassy patches on the sides of the hills.

The Kuku Yalanji people have always known when to burn and when not to burn. Fire was used to create fresh grassland, nurture food plant production, make prey animals easier to harvest, allow snakes to be easily seen and to open up walking tracks.

The area was settled by Europeans in 1879 and coffee, cotton,

tobacco, timber and sugar cane were produced. Cedar getters and gold and tin miners were also in the area. Just to your right is a ghost town called Degarra which was used as a port for the tin mining areas of China Camp and Scrub Camp in the hinterland behind you; up in the catchment of the Bloomfield River. A few large mango trees are all that remain of Degarra today. In 1882 the Bloomfield area was opened up for agricultural selection which created an influx of European arrivals.

A few large mango trees are nearly all that remain of Degarra today. This area was also used by the Bama as their main camp after the failed attempt of establishing a mission in the 1880's and before the successful attempt in 1957.

Some Elders living today have very fond memories of living in the bush camp before 1957; hunting and foraging in the local area living on traditional foods and not wanting to go and live in the mission.



Contemporary Indigenous Culture

STOP 10 : BLOOMFIELD RIVER BRIDGE & WUJAL WUJAL TOWNSHIP

DRIVE 1

Odometer 31.1km

This wonderful new bridge over the Bloomfield River provides cultural connectivity between the existing Traditional Owners of the north with their kin in the southern communities of Cape Tribulation, Daintree and Mossman. This link also provides quicker access to educational and employment opportunities developed by the recently opened Mossman Gorge Visitor Centre. As you are crossing the bridge look down to the left to see what's left of the old crossing. Obviously in the wet season and during high tides this road was unpassable.

The present community of Wujal Wujal has existed on the site for many hundreds of years and is set around the highly sacred waterfalls of Wujal Wujal meaning 'many falls' in the local language.

Wuja Wujal is an Aboriginal Shire Council, originally known as Bloomfield, later known as Bloomfield River Mission. It was founded in 1886 by Lutheran missionaries; however, due to difficulties of isolation, the area was abandoned.

It was reopened in 1957 and administered by the Hopevale Mission Board, a branch of the Lutheran Church of Australia. In 1979 it became known as Wujal Wujal, and in the following year the Aboriginal Council was formed. It has now become known as the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council. Today approximately 480 people reside in Wujal Wujal.

The art centre is on the Bloomfield Falls road, left as you reach the other side of the Bloomfield bridge. Get out and have a look, there

is some excellent genuine and affordable art for sale. Pick up a great souvenir of your journey.

The Bana Yirriji Art and Cultural Centre is located on the banks of the Bloomfield River just below the Wujal Wujal Waterfall. Artists are inspired from the land that surrounds them, rainforests, waterfalls, mountains, rivers and the sea. A lot of the paintings are inspired from cultural stories passed down to them from families and Traditional Elders.

The communities' vision is to keep and hold their culture safe and sacred and to keep the community strong in mind and spirit. All of the artworks are handcrafted and painted in the community at the center by local artists.



Scenic Natural Beauty - Endemic Wildlife

STOP 11 : BLOOMFIELD FALLS - WUJAL WUJAL FALLS

DRIVE 1

Odometer 33.7km

Head up to the falls from the art gallery, passing the beautiful milky pine tree beside the toilet block. Milky pines are not pine trees but produce an abundant white milky sap and have soft workable timber – like pine trees. It was also an important plant for the Bama who used it as a medicine tree, timber for tool making and as a fish poison.

Between January and April, when the Bloomfield River catchment receives 75 % of its four meter annual rainfall and with daily rainfall events potentially being as much as 300 mm and over, Wujal Wujal Falls become a raging torrent, a huge mass of brown boiling fury, tossing huge logs and rocks around, gauging out sand and creating new landscapes. Even the crocs are forced downstream to find warmer water. That's powerful! As you walk up to the falls you will notice a landscape that has been gouged, churned and flattened by these events.

The catchment area starts west of Cape Tribulation, and the waters move north through the Roaring Meg Creek and Falls. Above the Bloomfield Falls the waters flow through a narrow gorge over the surrounding hard granite rock, and cascade over 40 metres to the bottom of the falls, eventually spilling out along the Bloomfield River to Weary Bay.

Even in September through November, the driest time of the year, the falls still flow. For these few months the landscape puts on its dry season hues with browning grasses, the blooming of white and red trees that grow beside the river and traditional burning of the grasses among eucalyptus forests, giving haunting black and white

images on the drive into the falls. In the late afternoon, the light at the falls provides spectacular colours for unforgettable photos.

Then the green season takes over again in December and January, and the annual transformation is complete.

A very rare plant called the Bloomfield penda (*Xanthostemon verticillatus*), with a wispy yellowy white flower and unusual leaves arranged in whorls or spirals can be found literally growing out of the rocks up near the falls. This plant only grows in the upper reaches of the Daintree and Bloomfield rivers and is found nowhere else on earth.

A common fish seen near the falls is the beautiful jungle perch with their small checked pattern colouring. Less obvious is the Bloomfield River Cod - this rare cod only grows in the Bloomfield River, nowhere else!



conclusion

We hope you have enjoyed your adventure, you have seen some spectacular and natural beauty, and have the photos to prove it.

Isn't it fascinating how the plants and animals that live here have survived extreme natural climate change over millions of years because of topography, continental drift and consistent local climate patterns, creating refuges which have protected the world's oldest surviving tropical rainforests to this very day.

The plants and wildlife hitching a ride within this rainforest show us how evolutionary changes have occurred over the long term and most of the marsupials that survive in Australia today, even the desert dwelling ones, started out living in rainforests millions of years ago.

This is a land that has also been shaped by its original custodians the Kuku Yalanji Aboriginal people. They keep their culture alive and well by remaining connected to their land (bubu) and sea (jalun) by living in communities like Wujal Wujal. Many Yalanji Bama however, continue to dream about moving back more permanently to earlier rainforest and sea country camps. We watch in awe at their abilities to connect to Country in a real and meaningful way, lacking somewhat today in our modern societies.

