Luxury Lodges of Australia BUSINESS WITH PURPOSE

# Business with Purpose: True North Adventures

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| True luxury is experiencing wild frontiers | The remote Kimberley region of Western Australia is the size of California and twice the size of Victoria, with 13,000 kilometres of complex coastline but with less than 40,000 permanent residents. It’s one of the world’s last true, undisturbed wilderness areas, and one of the most ecologically diverse and pristine places on the planet.  The True North and True North II are purpose-built small expedition ships, with shallow drafts (no longer than 2.5 metres), and equipped with several expedition tenders and an onboard helicopter - and needs no shore-based infrastructure while on adventure. [True North Adventure Cruises](https://luxurylodgesofaustralia.com.au/lodges/truenorth/) can access places bigger ships can’t – and goes where few, humans have ventured before.  Exploring one of the most remote wilderness areas on the Australian continent aboard True North’s signature Kimberley Wilderness Adventures is the only way to reach many of the region’s most inaccessible and spectacular sites. The True North carries a maximum of 36 pampered but adventurous guests, guided by a crew of 22. The True North II is a more intimate experience with a maximum of 22 guests and a crew of 16.  It is a light footprint that makes an adventure cruise on board the True North one of the most environmentally sensitive and memorable ways of experiencing a very privileged access to a precious wilderness area. |
| A portal to  preserving wilderness | While the True North is renowned for comfort and style, the focus and true luxury of a True North adventure is in the wilderness experience.  “The True North is our adventure platform, our guests’ portal to the heart of wilderness. We venture way beyond the beaten track to where there are no tracks at all, and no other way to get there,” explained True North Founder and CEO, Craig Howson, who pioneered coastal adventures in The Kimberley more than 30 years ago.  It’s in that experience of pure wilderness that guests begin to gain an understanding of the jaw-dropping majesty, the cultural significance and mind-boggling age of the landscape.  “Our experiences are designed to ignite our guests’ sense of wonder – and that in turn inspires an appreciation of the importance of preserving wilderness,” said Craig Howson.  True North’s flexible, activity-based itineraries offer guests a daily choice of experiences including wildlife and bird watching, hiking, fishing, sightseeing in the expedition vessels, picnics and sundowners on the beach, and exhilarating helicopter rides.  This approach defines all the True North itineraries, whether exploring The Kimberley, the offshore islands or south coast of Western Australia, the beautiful but seldom-visited coast of remote South Australia, and even Sydney Harbour and the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales. |
| Promise of enlightenment | “We believe that information and education are critical if people are to share responsibility for conserving wilderness and culture. Our guests don’t necessarily want to be lectured to, but they do want to be enlightened and inspired,” explained Craig Howsan.  The True North journeys generally includes a naturalist or guest lecturer who, in addition to the highly trained crew and guides, provides relaxed, informative and entertaining commentary and interpretation of the culture, landscape and history of the places visited.  The True North’s lounge features large presentation screens and there is an onboard library. The small group size and high crew-to-guest ratio ensure constant access to knowledgeable guides. |
| Indigenous art access | In addition to its extraordinary natural attractions, The Kimberley is renowned for its countless galleries of rock art. Featuring Wandjina and Gwion Gwion spirit figure paintings and drawings dating back 17,000 years, the remote galleries are recognised as possibly the world’s oldest art sites.  The True North’s guests have the opportunity to fly by helicopter or hike with guides (some with specialist knowledge of Aboriginal culture) to galleries of perfectly preserved paintings that may have seen few non-Indigenous visitors.  “These activities are conducted on Traditional lands. We show our respect for the Traditional Owners through direct liaison and consultation with the communities whose lands we visit, and through acknowledgement of Country,” said Craig Howson.  “With all the lands we visit on our adventures, we visit only when welcome and we aim to leave only goodwill.” |
| Engaging with  local communities | ‘Leaving goodwill’ and supporting remote communities are fundamental tenets of the company ethos.  On the Southern Safari itinerary, this includes working with family-owned tour operators on Kangaroo Island and at Victor Harbor, as well as visiting local vineyards and restaurants in the Barossa Valley. On the Adventure South West itinerary, guests can visit Albany’s historic sites, while in Sydney there are interpretive experiences with Traditional Owners and tours of the Broken Bay pearling facility, as well as many other interactive experiences.  The True North’s cabins and common areas feature landscape paintings by Australian artists including Ingrid Windram, Jacinda Bayne and Andrew Tischler. True North has also developed a partnership with revered landscape painter, Larry Mitchell. As ‘artist in residence’, Mitchell’s works chronicle traditional village life and highlight issues of rising sea levels and climate change at exhibitions around the world. |
| An apppreciation for  nature’s bounty | Local suppliers also feature on the destination-inspired menu, championing locally sourced, sustainable, organic and uniquely Australian producers.  With strict ‘catch and release except for immediate consumption’, True North guests have the opportunity to be involved at every stage of the ‘ocean to plate’ journey.  They might contribute to the evening’s meal by landing the catch of the day – perhaps a barramundi or King George whiting – or by accompanying the ship’s chef to pry black-lipped oysters from the rocks, or to go mud-crabbing. They can then watch the preparation – and enjoy the results.  “Apart from being great fun, these experiences give guests a greater understanding of sustainable harvesting and mankind’s connection to the ocean,” said Craig Howson. |
| Giving back | “We, as well as our guests, want our experiences to be not only sustainable but beneficial to others.”  True North Adventure Cruises maintains an active and diverse range of philanthropic and environmental projects. Guests and crew are encouraged to deliver donations of clothing, school materials and sporting equipment to remote and underprivileged communities in areas included on the various itineraries.  “We see the very best of nature, culture and community on our adventures. We are constantly aware of the luxury and privilege that is afforded to guests and crew alike, and we aim to do all we can, through our redemption programs, to give back to the land and people we visit.” |
| Other sustainability initiatives (Our mandatories) | * The True North + True North II adhere to requirements under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), an international agreement designed to minimise and eventually eliminate pollution of the sea. * The company contributes to national park and marine reserve programs via license and access fees and provides monitoring and feedback to inform conservation management. The company also collects access fees on behalf of Traditional Owners. * When visiting wilderness areas, the crew are careful to ensure they leave no trace: that guests do not disturb the flora or fauna or sites of cultural significance, and that no one leaves behind more than their footprints. * True North Adventure Cruises supports programs that target combatting plastic in the ocean. On board, waste is either processed via the onboard treatment plant, retained for recycling or retained for disposal in an approved waste management site on shore. * Beyond Australia, the True North has been visiting Sepik River communities for almost a decade and, during this time, has donated more than 2,000 mosquito nets, medical supplies, school supplies, reading materials, clothing and equipment for mending clothes, footwear and fishing gear. |
| Sound bites | Our guests are quite often left humbled by the nature of our itineraries and the respect afforded to our destinations.  The ship carries a maximum of 36 pampered but adventurous guests – who have the benefit of knowing that their visit won’t leave any trace on the landscape. It’s this light footprint that makes an adventure on the True North one of the most environmentally sensitive ways of accessing wilderness.  “The True North is our adventure platform, our guests’ portal to the heart of wilderness. We venture way beyond the beaten track to where there are no tracks at all, and no other way to get there.” – Craig Howson, True North Founder and CEO.  While The True North is renowned for superior comfort and style, the focus of a True North adventure is not onboard life. The true luxury is in the wilderness experience.  We believe that information and education are critical if people are to share responsibility for conserving wilderness and culture. Our guests don’t necessarily want to be lectured to, but they do want to be enlightened.  “We see the very best of nature, culture and community during our adventures. We are constantly aware of the luxury and privilege that is afforded through travel to guests and crew alike.” – Craig Howson, True North Founder and CEO.  “Massive waterfalls gush then parch each year with the coming and going of the wet and dry seasons. Only the merest traces of humankind – ancient rock paintings and midden heaps of prehistoric nomadic peoples – can be found sprinkled in hidden corners of this wilderness. In short, this is where even Australians come to see the quote-unquote real Australia.” – Travel + Leisure.  “With low passenger numbers, activities are flexible. Snorkelling tours are deferred for whale watching and scuba diving is delayed by opportunistic snorkelling with a manta ray.” – Luxury Escapes, The Australian.  “The True North was built with a shallow 2.3-metre draft in order to access areas that other boats cannot, and on this first morning I see this design element in action. Entry to the calm lagoon is via a 15-meter-wide channel through the reef, and captain Gavin Graham uses his 15 years’ experience onboard to shimmy the 50-meter boat through the shallow channel without scraping the precious coral.” – Travel + Leisure, Asia.  “As wonderful as the boat is, the real luxury here is the unlimited access to a rare ocean wilderness.” – Travel and Leisure, Asia.  “As comfortable as it is, it’s not about the boat. It’s about the experiences. The destination.” – Craig Howson, True North Founder and CEO  “Our experiences are designed to ignite our guests’ sense of wonder – and that in turn inspires an appreciation of the importance of preserving wilderness.” – Craig Howson, True North Founder and CEO.  “Take the bucking, turbulent ride through the incredible horizontal waterfalls in Talbot Bay fed by the raging 10 metre tides; navigate among the eddies and whirlpools around Montgomery Reef as it appears to rise from the depths like a returning Atlantis, or hike to the eye-popping Wandjina rock art gallery at Raft Point for a glimpse of life long before the first Europeans and you’ll just start, mind you, to get a feel for this prehistoric wonderland.” – Roderick Eime, Vacations & Travel.  “Exploring all of Australia’s Kimberley, a region twice the size of Victoria, cannot be completed in a single visit. One trip, however, will be enough to sow the seed of wonderment that will bring you back to gradually reveal the many layers of this magical and mystical land.” – Roderick Eime, Vacations & Travel.  “Luxury is no longer simply about spending money on beautiful things but instead an experience can now define luxury. This is what an adventure with True North is all about.” – Luxuo.  “Every day, we are exposed to new experiences and rich local history that give our family a renewed appreciation for the beauty of our home country.”  – Signature Luxury Travel.  “This isn’t the kind of travel that deposits you at the epicentre of your comfort zone. The philosophy here is to place you on the outer rim of comfort; to push boundaries, and feel proud you did. Espresso-drinking urbanites find themselves fishing, mud crabbing, rock climbing, hiking, learning to paddleboard. There’s an itinerary but, as captain Gavin Graham explains from the hi-tech bridge, it’s subject to change as winds, tides and unexpected opportunities dictate.”  – Luxury Travel.  “Suddenly this landscape, which had seemed fiercely beautiful but also strangely inhuman, felt different to me, and much richer. The Kimberley was not empty or uninhabitable, I realized, but rather haunted by the presence of an ancient people, the original Australians who had for thousands of years found a way to flourish.” – Travel + Leisure. |