Cared for by the world’s oldest living culture for more than 50,000 years, World Heritage-listed Kakadu and surrounds are a place of enormous biodiversity and cultural richness, where 2.5 billion year-old rocks have sculpted savannah woodlands, eucalypt and monsoon forests, rivers and billabongs, coastal beaches, mudflats and mangroves.

About one-quarter of Australia’s land mammals (more than 77 species) live in this rich environment with 271 birds (one-third of Australia’s bird species), 132 reptiles, 27 frogs, 246 fish, almost 1,600 plant species and thousands of insect species.

**EXPERIENCE A LIVING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

Indigenous traditional owners in Australia’s Timeless North have a deep spiritual attachment to the land dating back to the ancestral creation period known as the Dreamtime. One of the main Dreamtime ancestors in Australia’s Timeless North is known as Warramurrungundji (Mother of the Earth). Sending out spiritual children, she taught them which languages to speak and how to hunt and gather food. After creating river systems, billabongs and much of the wildlife in the region, she sat down and rested, changing into a large rock which marks her dreaming site. Cave paintings, rock caves and archaeological sites hidden throughout the rocky landscape document Dreamtime stories like these, creating one of the longest historical records of any group of people in the world.

The cultural obligations and responsibility for country handed down by the ancestors are still central to the lives of Indigenous traditional owners, and age old skills such as patch burning remain integral to modern day land management.

**FLOODPLAINS AND BILLABONGS**

Wet season rains create a shallow freshwater sea that stretches for hundreds of square kilometres. Kakadu’s extensive wetlands are recognised as Wetlands of International Importance and attract millions of waterbirds, including spectacular flocks of magpie geese.

Millions of birds come each year following the flooding that occurs in the wet season from as far a field as Russia, China and Japan. Brolgas silhouette the evening sky, white-bellied sea eagles circle looking for prey, jabirus search amongst the reeds for snakes and tiny jacanas (known as ‘jesus’ birds) tip-toe across the lily pads on their large spreading feet. As the floodplains start to dry, plants burst into flower and vast numbers of ducks, geese and wading birds flock to the rivers and billabongs.

**SALTWATER (ESTUARINE) CROCODILES – A CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY**

Crocodiles are a vital part of the food chain, helping to maintain the natural balance of wetland ecosystems. Between the 1940s and 1960s, when they were hunted for skins and sport, crocodiles came close to extinction. Populations have recovered since protection in 1971. This is ‘crocodile country’ – obey the crocodile warning signs!
STONE COUNTRY

With imposing sandstone walls up to 330 metres high, the Arnhem Plateau dominates the landscape for 500 kilometres. In the wet season, the plateau comes alive with cascading waterfalls as heavy rain tumbles through extensive networks of chasms and gorges. During the dry season, the plateau guards pockets of water in its crevices and cracks, keeping many plants and animals alive until the rains come again.

TIDAL FLATS AND COAST

The rain sweeps nutrient-rich soils down river to the expansive tidal mudflats and mangrove forests. Monitor lizards prey on flying foxes fallen from the trees, egrets and cormorants nest in the mangroves and gentle dugong (sea cows) feed on sea grass beds.

SOUTHERN HILLS AND RIDGES

The retreating Arnhem escarpment descends to hills and ridges in the south, exposing ancient volcanic rocks and a large variety of habitats. Here, the striking salmon gum sheds its white bark to reveal to glow a beautiful pink each year. Freshwater crocodiles live in the creeks and pools while the monsoon forests which line the cool, moist gorges are home to the brilliantly coloured hooded parrot, red goshawk, the endangered Gouldian finch, Calaby’s mouse and the Kakadu dunnart.

SAVANNAH WOODLANDS AND LOWLANDS

The lowlands and woodlands with their eucalypts and tall grasses contain a greater variety of plants and animals than any other habitat in Australia’s Timeless North. Dusk and dawn see the woodlands burst into a chorus of bird-song from red-collared lorikeets, red-winged parrots and sulphur-crested cockatoos. The evening brings the distinctive call of the barking owl, and small nocturnal mammals such as flying foxes, phascogales and bandicoots emerge to feed.

CONNECTING COUNTRY

Australia’s Timeless North landscape is part of a broad conservation effort in the Top End, connecting the Warrdeken and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas in the north through to the Arafura Sea. Nitmiluk National Park lies to the south of Kakadu National Park and the Jawoyn Indigenous Protected Area to the south-east. To the east, the Wongalara Sanctuary managed by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy supports populations of endangered species such as the Gouldian finch and the masked owl.

BE INVOLVED IN CONSERVING ONE OF THE WORLD’S MOST UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

Biodiversity is life – conserving our natural world means clean water, clean air and fertile soil for us all.

You make your own contribution to conserving our natural world when you visit Australia’s Timeless North National Landscape. Low-impact activities such as bushwalking, cycling and camping all provide fantastic opportunities to get off the beaten track and discover new worlds that are like nothing else on earth.

Managing visitor impacts is one of the most important conservation activities in Australia’s Timeless North. When visiting always take your rubbish with you, don’t feed the native animals and leave flowers, plants, rocks and sticks where they are as they provide important wildlife habitat.

Take the time to experience and be inspired by the beauty and spirituality of Australia’s Timeless North:

• Help monitor the life cycle of sea turtles to find out how we can best protect them or take part in the Arnhem Land marine debris project to rescue animals trapped by the debris and help keep our waters clean. www.conservationvolunteers.com.au
• Support populations of the Gouldian finch by donating to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy: www.australianwildlife.org

For more information on this Landscape or to learn about other naturally beautiful places which offer a different but uniquely Australian experience, visit www.australia.com/nl