

Broome

TIME IN THE WEST

BROOME IS SHRUGGING OFF ITS TROPICAL TORPOR AND SPRUCING ITSELF UP WHILE MAINTAINING ITS EASYGOING COASTAL AMBIENCE.

IN 1904 THE *Dampier Despatch* declared: “Broome is getting civilized with jetty... roads and footpaths”.

The quote, etched on an arty contemporary map, could describe Broome’s recent multi-million-dollar makeover.

Established in the 1880s as a pearling port, the historic streets of Chinatown are now (pardon the pun) looking pearlier with generous footpaths, tropical foliage and shady public furniture.

Town Beach has a new jetty, terraced parklands and a history-rich foreshore walk linking to Chinatown’s Streeters Jetty.

Known as Rubibi to the Yawuru people, Broome is a town of two halves, built on a peninsula and divided by the airfield.

It’s also a town of two tides, a quick-change artist whose massive 10m tidal range whisks its watery aquamarine skirt out a kilometre, exposing bisque-coloured biodiverse mudflats.

Town Beach and Chinatown overlook mangrove-fringed Roebuck Bay, where the ‘staircase to the moon’ phenomena occurs between April and October as the rising full moon is reflected on the rippled tidal flats like steps.

Across the peninsula, the curve of Cable Beach, lapped by the Indian Ocean, sees a fireball sun slink beneath the sea in spectacular sunsets.

Rent a beach umbrella and chair for a few hours, or take an iconic camel ride with Red Sun Camels, watching your shadow lengthen on the sand.

Laid-back Cable Beach is getting a foreshore facelift too, with the surf lifesaving club undergoing renovations.

Moving between the two sides of town is as easy as jumping on the family-owned Explorer Bus.

ACROSS THE PENINSULA, THE CURVE OF CABLE BEACH, LAPPED BY THE INDIAN OCEAN, SEES A FIREBALL SUN SLINK BENEATH THE SEA IN SPECTACULAR SUNSETS.

Get your bearings on the Jetty to Jetty walk, starting at Town Beach and the Broome Historical Museum.

Its concise displays on dinosaur tracks, Aboriginal history, World War II bombings and the pearling industry lay the foundation for further exploration.

Pearling still defines Broome, which moved from hard-hat diving for *Pinctada maxima* shells, used for mother-of-pearl buttons pre-plastic, to today’s cultured

pearls.

Original luggers rest beside Willie Creek Pearls in Dampier Terrace, where statues commemorate industry founders and boutiques specialise in local pearl jewellery.

The procedure of seeding, cultivating and harvesting pearls is fascinating, so take a tour to a pearl farm or join Broome Cruises for their barefoot-luxury Sunset, Seafood & Pearling Cruise.

Free-flowing Margaret River wines accompany a relaxed seven-course degustation-style seafood celebration, including pearl meat ceviche, a pearling demonstration, and sometimes a side of whale watching.

Yawuru man Bart Pigram, of Narlijia Experiences, shares an Aboriginal perspective of Broome on his mangrove tour at low tide.

Roebuck Bay’s intertidal zone, covered by the Ramsar Convention protecting internationally significant wetlands, is one of the most biodiverse in the world, attracting thousands of migratory shorebirds.

The Broome Bird Observatory dubs it the shorebird capital of Australia.

Following channels cut through the trees by pioneering pearlers, Bart points out the different mangrove species, mud whelks and worms, sea stars and stingray holes, as sacred kingfishers and red-headed



Coffin Bay oysters on the Sunset Seafood & Pearling Cruise. Photo Briar Jensen

honeyeaters dart between the trees.

There are 120-million-year-old dinosaur tracks here too, imprinted in Broome sandstone.

The diversity – 150 prints from 21 species, including the world’s largest sauropod print – makes it unparalleled.

Finding and identifying them isn’t easy, so join dynamic duo Bec and Miles from Broome Dinosaur Adventures in their purpose-built flat-bottomed boat.

With permission to land at a sacred Yawuru site, where pindan cliffs meet milky turquoise waters, Miles points out enormous sauropod and smaller theropod tracks on a beach walk before



Aerial view of Horizontal Falls, Talbot Bay. Photo Tourism WA

cruising up Dampier Creek to spot snubfin dolphins, turtles, egrets and sea eagles as Bec serves platters and sparkling wine.

If beer’s your beverage, then Matso’s your brewery, with tasting paddles including ginger beer, chilli beer and Pearler’s pale ale. At the new micro-distillery Moontide, their sample board of gins and spirits features local native botanicals like Kakadu plum, white berry bush, and pearl mantle.

Or combine history and mystery on a small bar walking tour with Chris and Robyn from Salty Plum Social.

Enjoy popcorn and a movie at

Camels on Cable Beach. Photos Tourism WA

atmospheric Sun Pictures, claimed to be the world’s oldest operating outdoor picture garden.

Meet local artisans at the dry season markets (Thursday nights and weekends) or visit galleries like Short St, Black Stump, Sobrane, Yane and Nagula Jarndu (Saltwater Woman).

Broome is the western gateway to the Kimberley and a day tour with Horizontal Falls Seaplanes swoops over pindan plains and myriad islands of the Buccaneer Archipelago before circling Horizontal Falls – created by the massive tide being squeezed through twin slits in the parallel ridges of the McLarty Ranges.

After landing at Talbot Bay and transferring to an inflatable boat, you experience the full force of the falls swirling, surging, and sucking through the pinched gaps.

Flying on to Cape Leveque, a visit to Ardyaloon trochus shell hatchery is followed by lunch and a tour of the oldest Australian-owned pearl farm, Cygnet Bay.

It’s a quintessential colours-of-the-Kimberley experience. ■

For more on Broome, visit australiansouthwest.com and westernaustralia.com.

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