

DARWIN... TOPS AT ANY TIME OF THE YEAR



Destroyed and rebuilt twice last century, **Darwin**, Australia's smallest capital, has retained its laid back lifestyle while developing into a sophisticated holiday destination.

Contrary to popular belief, it doesn't always rain in Darwin's wet season. Sure, it's so hot you could develop an obsessive-compulsive gratitude for air conditioning, but the wet season also showcases the Top End in all its lush, tropical finery. Waterfalls are raging and waterholes are overflowing – and these outdoor splendours need only be shared with the 130,000 locals and a few intrepid visitors not bothered by the weather patterns.

With at least 50 nationalities represented in the community, the eclectic mix of cultures that has transformed Darwin into a multicultural hub feels a world away from the rest of Australia. Temperatures are balmy all year, but with saltwater crocodiles and marine stingers it's definitely not a beach holiday destination. However, Darwin, doesn't need this selling point: instead it's got crocs (in secured areas), World Heritage listed National Parks, a strong Indigenous cultural presence, more World War II heritage relics than a war buff can handle and, most importantly of all, its own unique identity.

Sightsee on Two Wheels

The generally flat terrain and minimal traffic on the roads makes Darwin the ideal cycling city. There are about 70 kilometres of shared cycle/walking paths meandering through the city that you'll rarely share with anyone. My favourite route takes you along the Esplanade and out to East Point Reserve, along a combination of paths and roads.

This is a great route because you can make stops at George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens, a lush tropical footprint on the Darwin landscape. Just past Mindil Beach where the famous markets are held (Thursdays and Sundays in the dry season) you'll find the Museum and Art Gallery. It's only small, but has an extensive Aboriginal art collection, and the Cyclone

