Visitor centres

Warradjan Cultural Centre and Bowali Visitor Centre.

The Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre shares the culture of Kakadu’s people, while the Bowali Visitor Centre tells visitors about the landscapes and wildlife of Kakadu.

The Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre and the Bowali Visitor Centre have galleries with local arts and crafts for sale. The fittings in the Warradjan Gallery were inspired by the weathered and sculptured ironwood trees of the Northern Territory.
Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre

Ngurrirm-rei nguddi-nan dja nguddi bekgan ngaddberreh gun-bolk dja culture

Come, look and feel our culture.
We tell you stories that have been told to us by our old people. They go on and on. The passing down of stories is our Bininj book.

Traditional owner, Murumburr clan

THE CONCEPT

It came from Aboriginal people. The Bininj/Mungguy traditional owners of Kakadu National Park wanted to tell their story for a long time.

People from Murumburr, Mirrar Gundjeihmi, Badmardi, Bunitj, Wurrkbarbar, Mardin, Bolmo, Girrimbitjba, Manilagarr, Worgol and other clans contributed to the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre project.

The Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre lies within the Murumburr clan estate where the Gun-djeihmi language is spoken. Gun-djeihmi is the main language used in the Centre, although Jawoyn and Gagudju also appear.

Through the displays and exhibits you can gain an understanding of the relationship Bininj/Mungguy have with their families and their land. Bininj/Mungguy and their country are inseparable.

It is hoped you find visiting the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre an exciting and memorable experience.

SITTING IN CIRCLES

In the early stages of the cultural centre project, Bininj/Mungguy came together to discuss the building design, its role and its facilities.

At most Bininj/Mungguy gatherings, people sit in circles. During an early meeting Bininj/Mungguy decided that a circular building would reflect this way of communication. It was decided that the cultural centre needed to be round like people sitting together.

At later meetings Bininj/Mungguy saw the round shape as being like a warradjan (pig-nosed turtle). So the building design developed into the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

Discussions about the design started in 1989, with specific planning beginning in 1992. The architects were Australian Constructions Services of Darwin, with display and gallery designed by David Lancashire Design. After comprehensive consultation and research involving traditional owners, Parks Australia staff and authorities such as George Chaloupka, the display was completed in 1995.

THE DISPLAY

Bininj/Mungguy, park staff and the designers, worked closely together to determine exactly what Bininj/Mungguy wanted to say and how they wanted to display their story.

During the process Mandy Muir made a key statement “Our land is our life”. This became the theme of the display. It all began to take shape after many drawings, plans, models and drafts of the text were considered.

In the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre Bininj/Mungguy have displayed many of their important stories, especially those from the creation era when the Nayuhuyungi (first people) created the land, plants and animals and gave people laws to live by.

Visitors are invited to move through the display as a rainbow serpent creation ancestor moves through the country travelling first through the lowlands during the dry season, then into the stone country during the wet.

All the artefacts that you see were made by Bininj/Mungguy. Great care has been taken collecting and constructing display features such as the goose hunting platform, dilly bags, pandanus baskets and paintings.

Gamuk, ngurrdi-nang ngardberre culture.
Wanjih ngardberre gun-bold ngarrdinahna.

It’s good you looked and felt our culture. Look after our country.
At Bowali visitors are invited to journey through Kakadu’s habitats as the South Alligator River meanders through the landscape from source to sea.

Bowali Visitor Centre presents two views of Kakadu, the Gukbaru-lari (Aboriginal) and Guhbele (non-Aboriginal) views. It is hoped that visitors will leave the display understanding more about the park and realising that we all have a responsibility to look after this country.

Bowali lies within the Mirrar Gundjeihmi clan estate.

THE BUILDING

The architects, builders and display designers worked closely with traditional owners and Parks Australia staff to create our visitor centre. Two years were spent on consultation, planning and design. It then took one year to build.

We’re very sympathetic to one another. One idea is another person’s idea. is my idea. is their idea.

Glen Murcutt, Glen Murcutt Pty Ltd, talking about the joint project with Troppo Architects

Rammed earth walls, ironwood floors and natural stone features help blend the 168 m long Bowali Visitor Centre into Kakadu’s landscape. A formalised billabong and creek bed are incorporated in the Centre to catch and drain the monsoonal rains.

Wide verandahs offer a close relationship with the bush setting and generous shade. The roofline and alignment encourage air flow.

It’s a building that prompts you to move through and around. Along the way there’s a bit of water to accompany you. It’s like Kakadu.

Phil Harris, Troppo Architects

The building is constructed from local materials sourced by the Djabulukgu and Gagudju Aboriginal Associations and park staff. No rainforest or imported timbers were used.

Our aim was to provide a building which blended in with the environment and encouraged visitors to use the park sensitively.

Peter Wellings, Park Manager - (late 80 – 90s)

We tried to capture the excitement of the park in the display. It was important to use as many natural materials as possible.

David Lancashire, David Lancashire Design
Culture is important because it keeps us in touch with our country and other Aboriginal people throughout the region.

Sandra McGregor

In Bininj/Mungguy culture, it is often not appropriate to display the names or images of deceased people. Some displays may contain labels that cover the names and images of people who have passed away. Please respect the wishes of Kakadu's Aboriginal owners and leave the names and images covered.

These protocols can vary from area to area and family to family. In some cases family members may provide permission for the names and images of the deceased to be displayed after a period of time.

Bininj/Mungguy – please be aware that at Bowali and Warradjan there may be names or images of deceased people. These names are only displayed with family permission.

Gamuk (thank you).

For more information contact:
Bowali Visitor Centre,
Kakadu National Park
PO Box 71, Jabiru NT 0886
Tel: (08) 8938 1120 Fax: (08) 8938 1123
info@kakadu.com.au
www.kakadu.com.au

© Director of National Parks.