

P R E S S R E L E A S E

**Orion Expedition Cruises**  
**Mysteries of Ancient Arnhem Land (6th September, 2007 voyage, Darwin/Darwin)**

**1<sup>st</sup> June, 2007**

**[Orion unravels the Mysteries of Ancient Arnhem](#)**

One much-appreciated component of any Orion expedition voyage is the significant contribution made by both the onboard expedition team and specialist guest lecturers who provide insight to enhance onshore experiences and add a valuable extra dimension to the voyage.

Orion's one-off 10 night expedition to unravel the *Mysteries of Ancient Arnhem Land* (6<sup>th</sup> September, 2007) typifies the attention to detail undertaken to ensure guests benefit from expert local knowledge and insight, providing a better understanding and perspective of the peoples and places visited.

On this voyage Orion's range of specialists include Professor Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy, whose knowledge of the language, kinships, anthropology, culture and history of the people of Arnhem Land significantly adds to the shoreside experience.

Frances Morphy is renowned as the most fluent non-indigenous speaker of the Yolngu language of East Arnhem Land, while Howard's fieldwork with the Yolngu people of northeast Arnhem Land (Yirrkala) and in Central Arnhem Land at Ramingining and Maningrida means they are exceptionally well received and highly respected by the local people.

Having people who can speak the language, understand the culture and most significantly are accepted and respected by the communities, makes them great intermediaries in translating stories, enhancing the understanding of what is being interpreted by the indigenous guides and helping to make the indigenous guides feel comfortable in presenting their stories.

Also joining us onboard will be Don Christophersen, a lecturer in Indigenous matters at Charles Darwin University, who has lived and worked all his life in the Northern Territory. He has family links in both North West Arnhem Land and in Kakadu National Park. Drawing on personal experiences, Don will cover many different aspects of the culture and history of indigenous life in the Northern Territory; an informative introduction for guests who have not yet visited indigenous communities or possibly even had direct contact with non-urbanised Aborigines.

For Orion's guests whose main interest lies in acquiring investment art, Dr Colin Laverty, Australia's foremost collector of indigenous art, will be joining Orion for the voyage. His collection, the Laverty Collection, is world renowned and items frequently appear in important art galleries around the world. Colin will discuss indigenous art from a collector's perspective and what to look for when purchasing art.

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Howard's and Colin's presentations compliment each other, approaching the topic of Indigenous art from very different points of view; Howard's being an anthropological view point and Colin's being from an investment/collectors perspective.

As with the last, highly successful, Orion voyage to Arnhem Land in 2006, Joc Schmiechan, Senior Research Fellow in Indigenous Tourism at Charles Darwin University, will again be onboard to share his knowledge on the close interaction between the lands, culture and its inhabitants.

Joc has also been instrumental in solving critical issues of Aboriginal Tourism in the Northern Territory and provides a conduit between researchers, government agencies, the tourism industry and the grass roots operators in order to establish and maintain viable indigenous tourism enterprises.

Genuine interaction with local communities, in order to provide rewarding and meaningful experiences for guests, is an Orion trademark. When we visit Yirrkala our hosts will be Timmy Burarrwanga and his mother Barbara Burarrwanga. Timmy is Chairman of the Yirrkala Dhanbul Council and a recognized traditional owner in East Arnhem Land. The Nyinyikay Homeland we will visit is an example of land that was given back to the traditional owners and is now a functional mini-community in Arnhem Land. Barbara's sister, Nancy Multinga Burarrwanga and her family will be our hosts in Nyinyikay, Arnhem Bay.

As on every Orion journey, Orion's own onboard expedition team will add their skills and extensive knowledge to ensure maximum enjoyment and involvement. Darrin Bennett, Mark Watson and Mike Keighley are all highly skilled in their knowledge of Aboriginal rock art, indigenous use of plants and the natural environment of the Top End, and each member individually has over 10 years experience in guiding guest experiences in the region.

Orion's *Mysteries of Ancient Arnhem Land* provides the ideal medium to taste a little magic, discovering the history, mythology and varying art styles of Australia's indigenous peoples in an unobtrusive manner that touches land and people ever so lightly. This journey will connect Orion's guests to a dynamic culture, dramatic landscapes and an interesting history of Australia few have the opportunity or privilege to visit.

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**Orion's Mysteries of Ancient Arnhem Land**

10 night expedition departs Darwin 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2007

DARWIN, Pirlangimpi (Melville Island), Port Essington (for optional side trip to Mt. Borradaile) Maningrida, Arnhem Bay, Milner Bay (Groote Eylandt), Nhulunbuy (Yirrkala), Jensen Bay/Hole in the Wall, Elcho Island, DARWIN

Fares begin from \$7,200 per person for an Ocean View Stateroom (category B)  
Suites begin from \$9,930 per person for a Junior Suite (category JS).  
Top of the range Orion Owners' Suites at \$15,080 per person

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Cruise fares include accommodation, all meals onboard, the service of 75 experienced crew members, expedition leaders, interpretive lectures, selected landings & activities ashore.

Note: Orion's capacity is just 106 guests in 53 suites and staterooms - this will be the only opportunity to visit Arnhem Land onboard this year so early bookings are recommended.

Further information on Orion Expedition Cruises can be obtained by visiting the website [www.orioncruises.com.au](http://www.orioncruises.com.au)

For reservations or to obtain a brochure call Orion Expedition Cruises: 61-2 9033 8777 (Sydney callers) 1300 361 012 (regional and interstate) or your travel agent. Email: [info@orioncruises.com.au](mailto:info@orioncruises.com.au)

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**Additional information regarding Orion's Mysteries of Arnhem Land itinerary**

**Pirlangimpi**

Orion's first stop is Pirlangimpi, a small community on Melville Island in the Tiwi Islands. Visit the Munupi Arts to view the distinctive features of Tiwi art including ceramics and carved totemic Pukumani funeral poles, unique to Tiwi culture. Guests can visit the remnants of Fort Dundas – one of the original attempts to colonise the Top End, or learn new skills by joining the locals in their small boats to participate in traditional hunting and gathering, spearing fish, collecting mud crabs and items of bush tucker in this pristine marine-eco environment.

**Victoria Settlement**

The ruins of this ill-fated British Military settlement on the Cobourg Peninsula take you back to an era in time often overlooked in Australia's history. Join local guides to explore the remains of Victoria Settlement at Port Essington, where the British had grandiose plans to create a colonial military and trade outpost to rival Singapore. The outpost lasted just 11 years (1838-1849) before being abandoned. Guests will see the remains of the officer's quarters featuring Cornish chimneys and fireplaces, hospital, magazine (where ammunition was stored) and quartermasters store.

For avid fishermen this is the place to try your hand at catching the fighting fish of the north. Arnhem Land is famed for its fishing - Queen fish, Spanish mackerel, hammerhead sharks, giant trevally, sweetlip, coral trout - a spectrum of pelagic, game fish and bottom dwellers.

**Mt Borradaile\***

This area is not only features significant wetlands and abundant wildlife, but arguably contains the most significant collection of indigenous rock art covering every period of time. The numerous galleries depict some of the earliest examples, possibly as old as the renowned Bradshaw art of the Kimberley, right through to contact art depicting detailed illustrations of pearl luggers, rifles and steamships (complete with rudder, smoke stack and wheel house).

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This is the location of the truly magnificent Aburga, a six metre long rainbow serpent, painted on an overhang in red and white ochre, its mouth agape, jaws flashing.

As well as visiting significant art sites, cruise the magnificent wetlands, home to the numerous species of birds and crocodiles and traverse the rugged country at the top end of Kakadu in open 4WD's learning of the Aboriginal uses for the local flora.

\*Optional Shoreside Expedition

### **Maningrida**

A self-governing indigenous community in the heart of Arnhem Land. The township dates back to just after WWII, with migration into Maningrida reflected in linguistic variety and cultural diversity evidenced by the different religious ceremonies and multitude of artistic forms in design, music and dance.

Recognised nationally and internationally, this is one of the powerhouse art areas of central Arnhem Land. Bark painting, pandanus weaving and wood carvings - especially the Mimi spirits - are all distinctive features of the artistic endeavour. The excellent Djim Museum is a highlight, showcasing the richness of the ceremonial apparel and intricacies of the material culture.

Maningrida is renowned for cast metal sculptures, jewellery and bark paintings and with over 350 local artists supplying their art there is a wide variety of styles to appreciate and enjoy.

### **Arnhem Bay**

Orion's visit to Arnhem Bay will be a first for any organised group. Working with the local Yolgnu people we will visit one of the small outstation communities and receive a first hand insight into life in this part of the world. Walk with the traditional owners and learn of the uses of local plant life for both food and medicine, learning many secrets of traditional healing.

### **Groote Eylandt**

Groote Eylandt is a low lying island with vegetation typical of tropical savannah woodland with a mixture of mangroves, paperbark, stringy-bark and pandanus. For thousands of years the island was inhabited by Aborigines who had made their way across the Lowrie and Warwick Channels from Arnhem Land and sparsely settled the island living a simple hunter-gatherer existence.

Early art works from this region feature the Macassan links which were particularly strong. Groote has a good array of rock art which forms the link to the bark and contemporary art of today.

### **Yirrkala**

Our visit to Yirrkala will begin with a short Zodiac ride to Shady Beach where we will be met by a local Yolgnu family who will greet and "cleanse" us with a traditional smoke ceremony followed by traditional face painting and tasting of local delicacies – oysters, freshly cooked mud crab and speared fish.

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Receive first hand insight into the Yolngu culture and share some of the distinctive cultural experiences of northeast Arnhem Land as we split into groups for “woman’s business” and “men’s business”. Woman will learn the secret mysteries of Arnhem Land, while the men will learn how to make spears and more importantly how to use them.

Not to be missed is a visit to The Buku – Larrangay Mulka Art Centre, one of the most prominent indigenous art centres in northern Australia; while the adjoining museum houses the famed ‘Church Panels’, an iconic art work and a powerful political statement. Hear stories about local history, the close link between art and land and see an enticing array of exquisite bark paintings (created by using locally collected earth pigments and a simple brush constructed from a few strands of hair), weaving, carving and Yirrkala world class prints.

The Yidaki (Didgeridoo), Australia’s iconic musical instrument, emanated from this region.

At both Maningrida and Yirrkala, guests will find an extensive range of traditional art, available for purchase either for decoration or investment.

**Jensen Bay**

Marchinbar Island is home to some fascinating rock art in the caves and overhangs around Jensen Bay. As ever, Orion’s expedition team, guest lecturers and locals will provide valuable insight and interpretation to help enhance the experience.

A short walk from the Zodiac beach landing reveals these art sites. Only occasionally inhabited through history this secluded island will enchant with its solitude and beauty.

**Elcho Island**

This is a scenic and historic location. Local stories reflect the close association between the sea and the local Yolgnu clans, who regularly travelled between islands in bark and (later) dugout canoes.

The Morning Star poles - feather decorated funeral rite poles each distinctive to their clan groups - are a special feature of Elcho. Yolngu Art is a reflection of the past and allows the individual to find and maintain a connection with the guiding presence of the spirit that represents the past, present and future. Each art work is based upon inherited designs which originate with ancestral beings that created the land.

Located on a cliff top south east of the Galiwin’ku town centre is an Art Centre (known as the eagle’s nest in Yolngu mythology) with spectacular views looking over Mission Beach, Abbott Island and the surrounding sea. Here the deeply spiritual artists of Elcho Island specialise in producing traditional and highly sought-after Yolngu x-ray style art as well as contemporary interpretations.

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