

# Queensland's Colourful Characters

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*Queensland is renowned for its size and the diversity of its tourism experiences. Just as special are the colourful characters you can meet up with during your holiday.*

## **Willie Gordon from Guurrbi Tours**

Willie Gordon, Nugal-warra Elder and Guugu Yimithirr speaker and author, is passionate about his indigenous culture and spirituality, and on his tours generously shares his enormous knowledge along with his great smile and infectious laugh. Willie takes his guests to ancestral rock sites high in the hills above Hopevale outside Cooktown in Tropical North Queensland where he shares the stories behind the art. As a small boy Willie would accompany his father on hunting trips, learning about the land, its bush tucker, bush medicines and stories. Willie launched Guurrbi Tours in 2003 and they are now recognized as among Australia's best indigenous tours. [www.guurrbitours.com](http://www.guurrbitours.com)

## **Brian and Jill Perry from Hervey Bay Whale Watch**

Known for 'inventing' whale watching, Brian and Jill Perry founded their business in 1987 in Hervey Bay which is now known as the whale watching capital of Australia. Their first whale watching tour involved a small plane flying above the Hervey Bay waters and the pilot throwing toilet rolls into the water where the whales were so Brian knew where to take the boat. More than 20 years later Brian and Jill are still running the business, right down to making the muffins for the day tours. Their daughter Sarah joined them last year as a full-time skipper. The Perry's guarantee whale sightings on their full day or half day tours or passengers get a free trip. Whale watching season in Hervey Bay runs every year from July through to November when these amazing creatures migrate from the Antarctic to give birth to their calves in the warm waters of Hervey Bay. Their playful tricks include saluting with their flippers, splashing their powerful tails as they roll over like puppies and the spectacular 'breach', the most sought-after photograph by visitors – all of this only metres from your vessel! [www.herveybaywhalewatch.com.au](http://www.herveybaywhalewatch.com.au)

## **Rob Ievers from Kronosaurus Korner**

Rob Ievers and his brother Ian discovered two of the world's best vertebrate fossils on their family property 'Marathon' in 1989, one of which is the Richmond Pliosaur. In 1995 Rob founded The Richmond Marine Fossil Museum in his home town of Richmond in the Queensland Outback. Today that museum is known as Kronosaurus Korner and is home to one of Australia's most exciting fossil displays showcasing some of the world's best fossil discoveries. Rob received the Centenary Medal in 2001 for his service to the community and as founding member of the Richmond Fossil Museum. He was also presented the Gallery and Museum Association (GAMAA) Industry Award in 2008 for his outstanding service as a volunteer to Kronosaurus Korner. As with the museum Rob is an active member of the local community and has been a Councillor of the Richmond Shire since 1998. [www.kronosauruskorner.com.au](http://www.kronosauruskorner.com.au)

## **Terri Irwin from Australia Zoo**

She jumps on crocs, wrangles venomous snakes, runs Australia Zoo, shoots documentaries in some of the wildest places on Earth, educates people around the world and makes time to raise her two kids. Wife of the late Steve Irwin, Terri Irwin is a wonderful advocate for Queensland, as is her daughter Bindi and son Bob. Born in America, Terri has called Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast home since she moved to Australia in 1992. Drawing thousands of people from around the world through the zoo doors every day, Terri and her team's enthusiasm and passion for wildlife and conservation is contagious. [www.australiazoo.com.au](http://www.australiazoo.com.au)

## **Ian Jenkins from Snakes Downunder**

Get up close and personal with some of the world's most venomous snakes who call Australia home at Snakes Downunder in Childers, a four hour drive north west of Brisbane. Most people would give these creatures a wide berth, but not Ian Jenkins, who has been handling snakes for more than 40 years. Spending part of his childhood in Kenya, Ian had many opportunities to handle snakes with his father who was also a snake-lover. When he moved to Australia in 1980 Ian landed in snake heaven, and jumped at the opportunity to fulfil his lifelong dream to handle the world's most deadly snakes. After a few years giving educational talks about snakes to school children, Ian decided to open Snakes Downunder. The site now includes a snakes arena, two saltwater crocodiles, lizards, monitors, dragons, frogs and turtles. Daily snake and crocodile shows are a highlight at Snakes Downunder. [www.snakesdownunder.com](http://www.snakesdownunder.com)

## **Alan Smith from Outback Aussie Tours**

Tour company Outback Aussie Tours is the dreamchild of bushie Alan Smith. Alan grew up in Blackall in the Central West of Queensland's Outback and since childhood has held a passion for the bush. At age 21 he decided he didn't have the means to set up a property but liked meeting new people, taking on a challenge, was attracted to the hospitality industry and liked driving in the bush so he set about forming a tour company. He started off with an eight-seater Toyota Troop Carrier, an answering machine for potential customers when he was working elsewhere, a camp oven and a billy, and ran local tours of Longreach for billy tea and damper at sunrise. The thriving company now specialises in half and full day tours and complete holiday experiences within a 300km radius of Longreach. Still based in Longreach, Alan is a great local character, as well as a current board member of the Outback Queensland Tourism Authority, Qantas Founders Outback Museum and the Tourism Representative for the Lake Eyre Cooper Creek Catchment Management Committee. [www.oat.net.au](http://www.oat.net.au)

## **Merle Jochheim from Jochheim's Pies**

Seventy-three year-old Merle Jochheim of Jochheim's Pies is a Bowen matriarch and descendent of the town's founding father. Once just known for selling the best pies in town, Merle is now renowned for 'selling Bowen' to director Baz Luhrmann for the filming of his \$130 million 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox production, 'Australia'. For nearly two months in 2007, Bowen was gripped by the 'Baz Buzz' when the town hosted a cast and crew of hundreds for the filming of the movie. Situated 45-minutes' drive north of Airlie Beach at the tip of Queensland's picturesque Whitsundays, Bowen was used to recreate the Darwin Harbour which was bombed during World War II. Today, Merle will happily recall her many encounters with the stars, including Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman, and proudly show visitors the pie shop's 'wall of fame' with photos of the cast, crew and locals. [www.tourismbowen.com.au](http://www.tourismbowen.com.au)

## **Allan Sharpe from Hervey's Range Heritage Tea Rooms**

When Allan Sharpe stumbled onto one of the world's rarest coffee blends - Kopi Luwak - he knew it was the perfect drawcard for the newly-opened tea house which he and his wife had created from a building considered the oldest known in northern Queensland. Hervey's Range Heritage Tea Rooms are located in the split log building which was a former Cobb and Co inn and rest stop in early mining days. The coffee which has made the Heritage Tea Rooms famous internationally sells for \$AUD1250 a kilo, or \$AUD50 a cup at the tea rooms and is colloquially referred to as 'cat poo' coffee. The Heritage Tea Rooms are also the only place in Australia licenced to sell the 'cat poo' coffee. Allan's resume prior to opening the tea rooms is long and eclectic, with his job list including tent fighter, fruit picker, truck driver, miner, pest controller and Golden Casket Lottery executive. This innovative man with a colourful past is always willing to have a chat with anyone stopping in for a cuppa. [www.heritagetearooms.com.au](http://www.heritagetearooms.com.au)

## **Col ‘The Platypus Hunter’ Adamson**

Col escorts small groups deep into the rainforest, interpreting flora and fauna, and spotting the elusive platypus. This delightful, crusty character has many a tale to tell when you get him out in the bush. He and his wife Jenny have operated Reeforest Adventure Tours in Mackay in Central Queensland for more than five years, taking groups into a special bush camp in Finch Hatton Gorge otherwise known as ‘The Finch Hatton Hilton’, a base for the Platypus and Rainforest ECO tour. Col’s relaxed and laconic nature is reflected in the tours where there is plenty of time for guests to do what they enjoy – taking photos, swimming, animal spotting and to hear some real and not so real stories of the area’s colourful history. [www.reeforest.com](http://www.reeforest.com)

## **George Christensen from Dive Musgrave**

Queensland’s Coral Coast is a diver’s and fisherman’s paradise, and this is one of the reasons why George Christensen is the one who can’t get away. As a kid in the 1950’s, George used to catch a ride with his friends out to Lady Musgrave at the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef to camp and dive and then simply wait for another passing trawler to hitch a ride back home. Today George is the skipper of the Venus II and leaves nothing to chance. He will guarantee a great reef experience for divers and anglers who want to plumb the depths of the reef. His stories can hold an audience for hours, like the time he got stranded for five days at Lady Musgrave and had to shoot goats with a spear gun, or his firsthand knowledge of the sunken historical treasures at the Wreck Reef. Dive Musgrave is based in Bundaberg. [www.divemusgrave.com.au](http://www.divemusgrave.com.au)