

Eco Warrior

Russell Boswell, Wilderness Challenge

LIVING what you preach might seem hard to most people working within the Ecotourism industry but for self confessed nature lover and director of Wilderness Challenge, Russell Boswell, it just comes naturally.

The former English and history teacher has been involved in the environment for as long as he can remember, developing a love affair with nature as a youngster in Sydney.

"Our family was always going off on jaunts to the bush, camping, and exploring the fantastic waterways and river systems around New South Wales," he said.

"I have always had an affinity for nature, especially the bush and the beach, so when the opportunity arose to live in Tropical North Queensland I grabbed it with both hands."

Russell, who moved to Cairns with his wife and extended family in the early 1990s, has been involved with Wilderness Challenge ever since, running 4WD safaris into the Daintree rainforest, the rugged terrain of Cape York and across the Gulf Savannah.

The company, which is operated by Russell and his wife Sam's family, offers him the ideal mix of work and pleasure.

"To be able to connect with the bush and share its charm and beauty with people while also working with my family is the best job I could possibly have asked for," he said. "We are even training the kids!"

Russell said his former role as a teacher combined with his love of nature was a great ecotourism starting point. "My education background has obviously been very important because imparting knowledge is one of the key steps in encouraging conservation."

A driving force within the Ecotourism industry, Russell has been heavily involved in encouraging operators to become certified, and setting standards in tour guiding practices. As a keen supporter of organisations such as Guiding Organisation Australia, Savannah Guides and the Wet Tropics World Management Authority, he has played a pivotal role in teaching and fostering high standards within the Ecotourism industry.

"The opportunity for business growth is not the only issue people need to focus on in this industry," he said.

"It's essential that we work together in order to improve the overall standard of tourism delivery, especially through tour guides, to grow as an industry. In this way we can also help protect the incredible array of natural and cultural attractions in Queensland - teaching visitors and locals, and bringing in revenue for conservation action."

Russell says his life motto is to be passionate about what you do and considers life, like the tourism industry to be a team sport.

"It is essential to use teamwork in everything you do, and when you can work with the right people in a clear and positive direction, it's amazing what you can achieve," he said.

Wilderness Challenge, which has won a host of regional and state awards over the years has also been the proud recipient of the Australian Tourism Award for Significant Tour Operator in 2003.

Russell himself has also earned personal recognition, taking out the coveted 2004 Cassowary Award, which acknowledges personal achievement within the Wet Tropics. www.wilderness-challenge.com.au

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