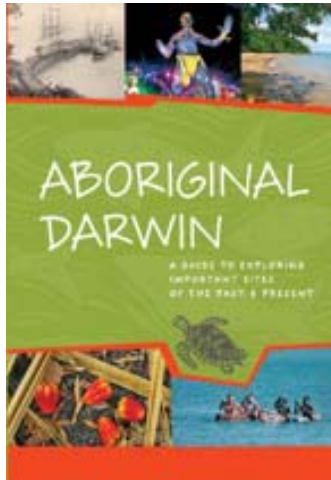


Aboriginal Darwin: A Guide to Exploring Important Sites of the Past & Present by Toni Bauman. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006, pp. 150, AUD\$34.95, ISBN: 085575446.



While the homepage of Northern Territory Government's Travel Authority *travelnt* webpage states 'Our indigenous culture, the Aboriginal people, hold a deeply spiritual connection to the land that dates back tens of thousands of years, yet can still be shared in the present day – through a walk in the desert in search of bush tucker, a visit to the ancient rock art galleries, or simply sitting in on a storytelling session', this work moves away from a somewhat restricted outback mindset about Aborigines by describing Aboriginal life and history in the urban centre of Darwin. By so doing it seeks, and succeeds, in embedding Aboriginal people and their indigenous culture in a broader understanding of Australian consciousness.

This well-illustrated book succeeds at a number of other levels, not least it is an attractive and easy to follow guide for the visitor to Darwin, whatever their interests and concerns. Visitors will discover that Darwin is much more than the modern tropical city which serves as a gateway to some of the most stunning landmarks in Australia; the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park, Litchfield and Nitmiluk National Parks, the Tiwi Islands and Arnhem Land. Instead, there is to be found in Darwin itself a captivating and complex community that draws its fascination from an understanding of the historical, cultural, economic and social contribution of the City's Aboriginal people. This book provides such opportunities very well, and any person contemplating a visit to Darwin will arrive better informed and assured of a fulfilling visit by reading this work.

But it is not just the visitor who can benefit from this work, so can the school student, the interested layperson, the university student, and the scholar. At an elementary level, reading this work is a good starting point for any school student who wishes to know more about, and wishes to better understand, Aboriginal society today and yesterday. For the student interested in history, geography and current affairs, it provides a valuable introductory but broadly conceived platform for thorough investigation and understanding of the issues that necessarily emanate from clashes of cultures, and the processes (or lack thereof) by which societies endeavour to learn to understand and respect one another, so as to live in harmony, with justice and common aspirations.

For any university student, scholar or interested layperson, seeking to comprehend the social fabric of Australia, more particularly its past and the relationships between Aborigines and the varying waves of migration that have come to these shores, this work is a good 'taster'. For more than telling a story, the book begs, indeed at times confronts, the reader with a range of questions needing to be addressed.

There is a good index, a helpful list of Aboriginal events and organisations, advice as to how to be respectful in dealing with Aboriginal people and their customs, and a worthwhile further reading section. Twenty-seven sites in and around Darwin are located, described and illustrated. While not everyone who reads this book will end up in 'Paradise' as the people of Darwin think of it, they will be wiser as to questions of life in this delightful part of Australia.

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