

# UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

## Meet the storytellers from Cultural Attractions of Australia



### Australia's beloved cultural attractions do more than entertain and inspire visitors: they also offer unique insight into what it means to be Australian.

These iconic arts venues, significant historic sites and world-class museums and sporting grounds tell the story of a country full of variety and vibrancy: a place that's both alive to its ancient heritage and eager to embrace the future. Between them, these fascinating attractions encapsulate hopes and dreams of a nation that continues to grow and change.

The attractions are populated by some of the most passionate and dedicated Australians you will ever meet – a diverse group of people whose storytelling instincts and respect for history is second to none. Full of enthusiasm and wisdom, these experts offer a distinctive lens on some of the country's most important destinations.

Each page of this resource focuses on an interaction that visitors can have with a 'true-blue' Australian expert, whether it's a life-long sports fan giving you an all-access tour of the internationally renowned Melbourne Cricket Ground; a seasoned director putting you through your paces on stage at the Sydney Opera House; or a painter revealing hidden artistic gems deep within a notorious historic prison.

You'll also get to know a former casino croupier who curates bespoke itineraries for VIPs and celebrities, a radio presenter who regularly brings tourists to tears, and the woman with the keys to Australia's Federal Parliament. Our storytellers are as varied as the attractions they watch over.

Australia's great cultural sights are spread out across this vast continent, so you'll get to travel, too: from the dusty outback of Western Queensland, where aviation history was made; to the lush southern island of Tasmania, where one of Australia's richest men has constructed an artistic institution full of work by domestic and international heavy hitters; to Western Australia, where thousands of men and women congregated before departing for battle in World War I.

With our storytellers leading the way, you'll gain an understanding of what makes Australia unique. Allow them to take you by the hand and show you a few of this country's cultural riches.



## JANINE DELLA BOSCA

### Fremantle Prison, Fremantle, Western Australia



Visual artist Janine Della Bosca was spellbound by historic Fremantle Prison, long before she began working here as a tour guide. "In the nineties, I did a painting class in the old women's prison here," she says, "and I became fascinated – not just by the 1850s building but also by the stories that permeate the place."

The convict built prison, now a World Heritage site, represents the end of convict transportation to Australia during the 18th and 19th centuries and was operational for 136 years before being decommissioned in 1991.

Today, Janine leads visitors on a variety of tours through the prison, including the night-time Torchlight Tour. But it's the Prison Art and Behind the Scenes experience that she most looks forward to. "There is some brilliant artwork in the cells, particularly by Aboriginal inmates, who were historically over-represented among the prison population," she says.

The work includes etchings, Aboriginal landscapes, dot paintings and a range of graffiti and tattoo art, some of which dates back to the 1800s. Janine says, "Viewing art in a maximum-security prison changes the whole meaning of the artwork. You're not in a nice gallery: you're in this really locked-down circumstance."

Janine says the intimate nature of the Prison Art experience – it's for groups no larger than six – encourages participants to share their thoughts on the work. "Quite often, at the end of the morning, there's a sense of euphoria," she says. "People are exhilarated, and I think that's because we talk about individuals on this tour. These are real people."

She adds, "When you talk about individuals and how they ended up here, it reminds everyone that we're very close to perhaps making a bad decision ourselves and ending up somewhere like this."

"To see something beautiful come out of a place that's quite dark in its history is truly remarkable."

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## LED EMMETT

### Mona, Hobart, Tasmania



Former casino croupier Led Emmett spent more than a decade travelling through the Americas, Africa and Asia before arriving in sleepy Hobart in Tasmania. It was here he met the charismatic billionaire David Walsh, whose Museum of Old and New Art (Mona), on the outskirts of the city, is considered one of Australia's most mind-bending cultural attractions.

David liked Led so much that he created a new role at Mona especially for him. Now, Led works as the museum's guest attaché, curating bespoke itineraries for the steady stream of VIPs and celebrities who visit the venue. One such itinerary is the new Dinner With David experience, which Walsh describes as an "over-priced two-day

abomination" that includes private jet transfers to and from Mona, two nights' accommodation in one of the museum's luxury 'pavilions' and the centrepiece event: a blow-out meal with David himself at the museum's acclaimed Source restaurant.

"David is a fascinating fellow," says Led. "He's highly intelligent: you wouldn't want to battle wits with him at any point. But he's also very down-to-earth. He's the opposite of a prima donna – a perfect dinner companion... especially if you're into rambling astrophysics and maths chat."

Also included is a private tour of the labyrinthine museum with Mona's head curator, who will shed light on a genre-mashing collection

that encompasses ancient Egyptian artefacts, and works by iconic Australian painter Sir Sidney Nolan and international luminary James Turrell. "Everything you see was selected by David," says Led. "He's totally to blame. We're all at the whim of his questionably-wired brain."

The experience also includes the possibility of pre-dinner tennis, but Led cautions against taking David up on this. "His sledging game is too strong."

"When he conceptualised Mona, David really wanted to reinvent the wheel. The presentation is not linear, like a normal museum. There's no 'correct' way to do it. It's all about creating your own adventure."

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## PAUL WILHELM

### Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Victoria

Paul Wilhelm has been a member of Melbourne Cricket Club, which manages the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), for nearly 60 years and reckons he has spent thousands of hours inside the iconic venue. Yet the retired teacher still finds 'The 'G' as mesmerising as he did when he was a boy. "I love the place," he says. "I'm in awe of it. I never forget what a privilege it is to be a member."

Since 2008, Paul has been conducting guided tours of the ground and sharing his knowledge of the venue with an "amazing cross-section" of visitors, from local train drivers to Indian honeymooners. "Many sports lovers have a bucket list of things they want to tick off, and seeing The 'G' is one of them," he says.

Standard tours of the 100,000-capacity ground run daily and give visitors access to behind-the-scenes areas such as the change rooms and media centre. There's also an opportunity to take a seat on the cricketers' viewing balcony, where the teams sit when they are not playing on field.

But only those who book the extended MCG Private Tour experience have the chance to follow in the footsteps of sporting greats and walk out onto the hallowed turf. "There's quite a sense of wonder when you're out there on the ground, surrounded by 100,000 seats," says Paul. "You're standing on the turf where so many amazing – and often controversial – things have happened."



"This stadium has seen a lot of history. Many visitors to Melbourne, even if they're not sports fans, will come just to see the grandeur of the place."

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## CATHERINE ROACH

### Australian Parliament House, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

When she was a girl, Catherine Roach and her family used to climb the grassy hill on which Parliament House stands and marvel at the panoramic views of Canberra. "We'd bring a picnic and kick a football around," she says. "Then we'd roll all the way back down the hill."

Today, as manager of visitor services at Parliament House, Catherine oversees dozens of staff who in turn look after thousands of visitors. But she still makes time to roll down the hill. "Last year, on the parliament's open day, we even held a group roll-down with hundreds of people," she says enthusiastically.

Catherine began working at Parliament House as a full-time tour guide five years ago. Despite her current responsibilities, she still leads the occasional tour, and says

seeing people's reactions "never gets old".

"Many people don't realise how many areas of the building they can actually access," she says. "We go into the chambers on non-sitting days and it's a lovely experience for people knowing that this is where our laws are made. That sort of access is one of the great strengths of the building – and of Australia's democracy."

She particularly enjoys the More Than Politics Tour, which takes visitors behind-the-scenes to meet some of the hundreds of staff that keep Parliament House operating. "You become really immersed in the workings of the building," she says. The tour concludes with an exclusive highlight: an afternoon tea usually reserved for visiting dignitaries.



"Parliament House is like a mini city. We've got incredible teams of caterers, carpenters and everything in between. Visitors are amazed by the scale of it."

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## BRUCE BARNETT

### Sydney Opera House, Sydney, New South Wales



After retiring from a successful career as a radio and television presenter, Bruce Barnett became restless. When he saw a job advertisement for tour guides at the Sydney Opera House, he put his hand up immediately. "The Opera House draws people inexorably to it, and I was no exception," says Bruce. "There's something magical about the place. To this day, I look at it and think, 'Wow.'"

Bruce is one of more than 70 guides who show 564,000 visitors around the Opera House each year. "There's an enormous diversity of people who work here," says Bruce, "from students to retirees." Like Bruce, most of the guides have a background in public speaking – some are former actors while others are lawyers in training – and many are bilingual.

Bruce describes the standard Sydney Opera House Tour as a kaleidoscope of facts and ideas. "We cover everything from engineering to architecture to science, and much more besides," he says. "The range of topics often takes visitors by surprise."

Also on offer is the Sydney Opera House's glamorous A Taste of Opera private tour, which includes a glimpse of the icon's performance venues plus an exclusive private recital of famous arias by a world-class opera singer. Bruce says many of the participants find the event deeply moving. "It's not uncommon that someone will burst into tears," he says.

"It doesn't matter what kind of day you're having: the minute you round the corner and see the Opera House, it just lifts you. It's a building designed to inspire. Those shapes seem to go on forever."

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## TOM HARWOOD

### Qantas Founders Museum, Longreach, Queensland

Tom Harwood has “always been an aviation tragic” but it wasn’t until he moved to Longreach in outback Queensland that he seriously considered turning his passion into a career. “I was working for the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] in Longreach and the folks at the Qantas Founders Museum asked me to help them with a research project,” says Tom. “After that, I started tour-guiding, and eventually I wound up as museum curator.”

The Qantas Founders Museum tells the story of Australia’s national carrier from its modest beginnings in 1920 to its current status as one of the world’s best-known airlines. “It all began with two young fellas who came out

of the army after World War I and got an idea for an air service that would serve remote communities,” says Tom. “Qantas grew and grew, and today it’s our national icon.”

In addition to re-living the airline’s early days, visitors to the museum can join the ‘Spirit of Australia’ Platinum Tour and step aboard a Boeing 747 and a Boeing 707 to learn about the planes’ inner workings. It’s the only place in the world where they can take a walk on the wings of both the aircraft. “No matter how many aircraft museums you’ve visited, you’ll learn things here,” says Tom. “We’ve had former Qantas pilots take the tour, and even they come away amazed.”



“The founders had a dream and a vision. Through their story, we hope to inspire people to see the possibilities in their own lives and follow through on them.”

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## LYNDON TERRACINI

### Opera Australia, Sydney, New South Wales



As the artistic director of Opera Australia, Lyndon Terracini spends his days beneath the sails of the beloved Sydney Opera House, working with some of the most acclaimed singers in the world. “I’m one of those extremely fortunate people whose work doesn’t feel like a job,” he says. “I’d do it even if they didn’t pay me.”

Lyndon’s association with Opera Australia dates back to the 1970s, when he began performing with the company as a baritone. Since taking up the artistic directorship in 2009, he has radically modernised Opera Australia, favouring digital backdrops over handmade sets and mounting an edgy production of West Side Story on a stage jutting out over Sydney Harbour.

He also oversees the company’s Opera Australia: Star at the Sydney Opera House experience, which gives visitors the opportunity to step onto the stage as an extra during an actual performance. On the night, participants enter the venue via the Stage Door and report to Hair and Makeup before mounting the stairs and joining the chorus.

“When the people who take this experience come off stage, some of them burst into tears,” says Lyndon. “It’s a feeling of relief that they haven’t made a mess of it combined with being overwhelmed by the emotion they can feel from all the other performers who are inhabiting their roles. They’ll tell me it’s the best experience they’ve ever had.”

“When you’re standing on that stage and you look out into the audience and see 1500 people on their feet cheering, it’s just such a joyful experience. It’s extraordinary.”

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## MICHELLE MCKENNA National Anzac Centre, Albany, Western Australia

Albany native Michelle McKenna has worked as a tour guide all across Western Australia, but says nothing compares with her current role, which she took up five years ago when the National Anzac Centre first opened. "There aren't many opportunities to be involved in an exciting project such as this from the ground up," she explains.

The National Anzac Centre tells the story of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs), some 41,000 World War I (WW1) troops who massed at King George Sound in Albany in 1914 before being deployed to the Mediterranean, most notably for the Battle of Gallipoli. At the entrance to the centre, visitors can watch rare footage of the troops preparing to embark on their sea voyage; then, in the main museum, they are immersed in the conflict itself.

Those wishing to learn even more about Albany's role in WWI can join Michelle for the early-morning Albany Experience tour. It includes private access to the museum followed by a guided walk around King George Sound, which dates back to 1893 and was part of Australia's early coastal defence system. There's also a light breakfast that coincides with the raising of the flags outside the National Anzac Centre.

Michelle says, "Many of the people who come on the tour have a direct connection to the war. Walking in their relatives' footsteps here by the ocean really reaches them on a very personal level."

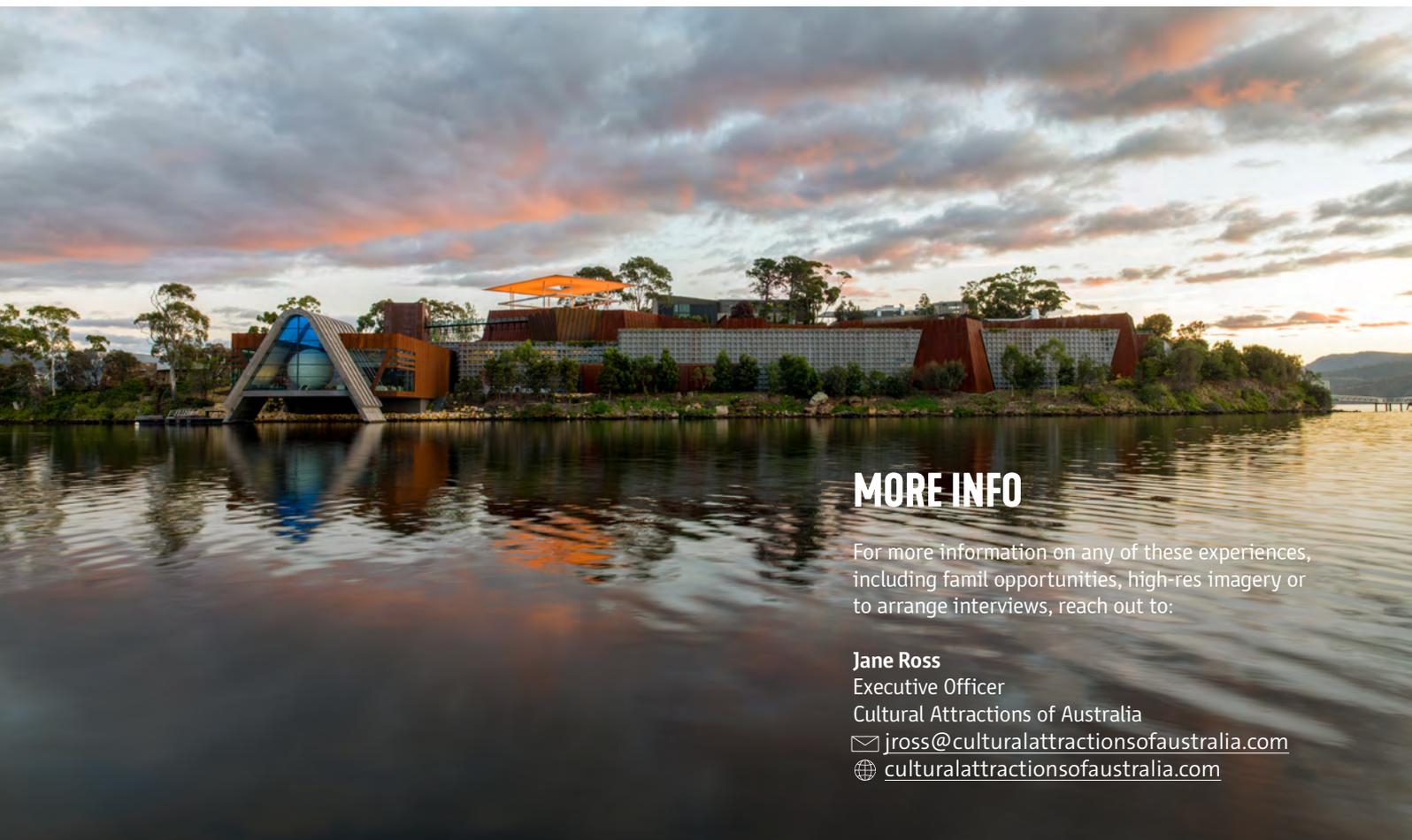


"Visitors are completely taken aback by the looks on the soldiers' faces. The footage shows that these young men really had no idea what they were in for."

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## MORE INFO

For more information on any of these experiences, including family opportunities, high-res imagery or to arrange interviews, reach out to:

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