



**eco BEACH™**  
retreatresortrejuvenate  
broome western australia

**REUNITE AND REJUVENATE WHERE RED EARTH  
MEETS TURQUOISE OCEAN**

***Eco Beach Broome recently won the 'Unique Accommodation' award at the  
Qantas Australian Tourism Awards 2010.***

**Rachel Beadle takes us on a journey that awakens all the senses.**

So you think you can relax? Mmm....I'll guarantee you haven't fully relaxed until you've experienced Eco Beach Broome. Set on the edge of the north west Australian coast, just south of Broome, this eco haven has the perfect list of ingredients for reuniting and rejuvenating family and friends. And may I add, the perfect list of culinary ingredients to go with it!

My friend Susie and I, and our kids, have spent years keeping in touch via snail mail, email and Skype, but after 3 years apart, it's time to reunite in the flesh. The trip 'brief' is thrown my way - "a destination with a difference, designed to rejuvenate and entertain the entire group: 4 adults and 6 kids"! After much finger tapping, searching the world-wide travel web, the antidote soon becomes apparent - Eco Beach Broome. Direct Sunday flights from Melbourne and recently Brisbane to Broome make the trip a breeze. We transfer directly to Eco Beach via road. In the short 1.5 hours drive, we pass just one roadhouse, two cars and one road train (for those eastern states travellers, that's a truck carrying two or three trailers - an integral part of the outback and a force in its own right!)

I know as soon as the wheels of our four wheel drive leave the Great Northern Highway and hit the red earth track, that we are leaving the world as we know it far, far behind. A colourful squadron of dragonflies leads us ten kilometres down the 'pindan' track to the retreat's parking area (no vehicles are permitted around the retreat), where we are then escorted over a small hill and into the valley of the retreat. At that moment it is honestly like stepping through C S Lewis' magical wardrobe into a Narnian-like wonderland. A wonderland that just gets better every one of our 6 days. A spoonful of Indian Ocean and an endless horizon are our first remedies towards rejuvenation. We only have to glimpse the calm turquoise waters and our lungs are forced to inhale fresh, untainted oxygen - an instant hit of calm. We all turn to each other and smile. I am content.....my choice of destination already has everyone's stamp of approval.

Before Eco Beach, the only footprints to grace the shores of this majestic coastline are those of the original custodians – the Yawuru Aborigines. The retreat maintains a close link with this family group and believe me, a spiritual presence can definitely be felt. The Indigenous 'Welcome' in the

guest compendium entices us to take another deep breath and make this a truly sensory visit : *"As you move through this land, allow your body to relax, and tune into nature. Stop often. Look wide - listen, smell, have a feel of the rocks and shells. Let your senses come to life, and appreciate the environment."*

What we are experiencing is Eco Beach "Take 2". The original Eco Beach was built in 1996 and comprised 41 simple elevated timber cabins, all naturally ventilated and linked by raised wooden boardwalks. A pioneer of the green travel movement, the retreat won many sustainable tourism accolades. However, in April 2000, Cyclone Rosita (a Category 5 severe tropical cyclone) decimated the entire place. Owner Karl Plunkett's resolve to rebuild was finally realised in 2009 when the new Eco Beach opened its doors. This time a little more up-market. Our group could choose between Eco Safari Tents (true "glamping"), air-conditioned luxurious Eco Villas or two Beach Houses. We opt for the Beach Houses - perfect for two or even three families. Set on a cliff top, overlooking the ocean and bushland, the Beach Houses are linked by wooden decks and boardwalks, which enable our families to flow easily between both abodes. The open-air living space in the middle, complete with comfy lounges, provides the perfect set up for reunification!

As the sun begins to set on our first afternoon, the red cliffs of Cape Villaret, named by a French maritime expedition in 1801, throw out a palette of soft pink and purple hues that make us dizzy with amazement. Even more amazing is the fact that Susie and I are left to sip chilled Western Australian champagne in tall-back cane arm chairs on the edge of the cliff whilst the boys cast a few lines off the beach and the children fossick along the shoreline. Our eldest two nature-loving girls promptly don their binoculars and take themselves off to the 'bird hide' at the start of the bush walk to spot some of the area's abundant birdlife. Apparently some 150,000 migratory shorebirds visit Broome's Roebuck Bay every year, flying all the way from Siberia and China! Now all we need is a humpback whale to cruise past and put on a playful display. Oh alright then, a couple of dolphins will do!

The Beach Houses are self-contained, beautifully appointed and stylishly furnished. The combination of vibrant and earthy colours creates enduring visual pleasure and reflects the meeting of two natural worlds - the outback and the ocean. Whether we are inside or out, we never for a moment lose sight of where we are.

With two bathrooms in each house and self catering an option, we can enjoy spacious and affordable self sufficiency. Cooking outside on the deck barbeques, sundowner in hand, overlooking the ocean is a memorable treat. Oh, and with a nest-full of 'green' initiatives, we can sleep soundly, knowing that we are supporting the sustainability of the planet. A unique energy monitoring system, solar power and building designs that maximise the natural flow of the cooling sea breezes are just a few of the retreat's sustainable features.

We have already decided to cook at the Beach Houses for two nights and eat at the retreat's signature restaurant 'Jack's' for the other four. Eco Beach's 'Chef de Cuisine', Kenneth Clapham understands the synergy between food and a rejuvenating holiday for mind, body and soul. The

menu focuses on what is fresh, seasonal and organic with a dedication to Western Australian produce. And when WA produces some of Australia's best wines, cheeses and fish, we're not complaining. Dishes influenced by the tastes of the Kimberley, Asia, Japan, India and the Mediterranean have us wishing we'd never opted to eat in two nights! A personal favourite lunch of mine is the 'Chilled Vermicelli Noodle, Green Pawpaw & Sesame Wakame Salad' - a delicious combination of culinary delights. And as the menu tells me; "*pawpaws sing many medicinal benefits and aid in the digestion of protein, whilst wakame is a highly nutritious seaweed, great for weight loss and full of energising vitamins and minerals to produce a healthy glow.*" I make sure I get one of these under my belt every day! I definitely want to leave 'glowing'. We also love the fact that you can get mouth-watering, healthy sweet and savoury snacks all day long - a good thing when the nearest shop is 130 kilometres away!

Even the kids are impressed. It isn't just your standard 'nuggets and chips' (though they do keep our 5 year-old team member very happy). Grilled Threadfin Salmon on a bed of steamed vegetables is a crowd favourite, followed by the rather decadent banana sundae . Sufficiently 'grown up' for our fussy pre-teen group members!

The presence of what appear to be several foreign workers around the retreat awakens my curiosity, so one afternoon I follow one.....and land in the retreat's impressive organic gardens. These gardening enthusiasts are in fact international volunteer members of Willing Workers on Organic Farms - Australia ("WWOOFers"). They help maintain the herb and vegetable gardens in exchange for food and accommodation. I quickly make a mental note to become a "WWOOFer" in my next life - just so I can wake up in this remarkable destination morning after morning.....glowing!

By far the best remedy for rejuvenation is the early morning, complimentary yoga session, just a stone's throw from our Beach Houses in the breathtaking Dragonfly Sanctuary. With sweeping ocean views to the cape, the soporific sighing of waves lapping the shore and a gentle sea breeze to help awaken our sleep-filled bodies, it's no wonder these sessions become addictive for me and Susie. The sanctuary's message is clear - do as the dragonfly does. Life is short, so live every moment to the fullest. So one morning we extend our indulgence with a heavenly massage! Meanwhile, the boys are happy to sleep in and the kids are only just opening their eyes when we return.

Our mornings are family focused. After a delicious breakfast at 'Jack's' we are drawn to the beach where we swim, snorkel, kayak or paddle board around the cape on glass-like turquoise waters. A natural adventure playground, the kids are never bored. What really strikes us is the safety of the place. With wide open beaches, secret coves and caves mostly to ourselves, we feel completely at ease with our kids wandering independently along the shores or around the retreat. And they revel in the freedom. A highlight is taking a picnic hamper lunch (prepared Chef Kenneth) on the bush walk and then along the beach to 'the caves' - a magical and mystical sandstone rock hideaway, carved out by the waves and winds of time. We spend the entire afternoon there with nature the only other life force around us. An osprey pair tends its nest of fledglings high up on a

sandstone pillar, a turtle pops its head out of the water briefly, pied oyster catcher birds peck away at oysters on rocks.....the kids even chip off a few oysters and present them to us on flat rock plates, garnished with seaweed. It is truly life stripped bare of all its baggage.... getting back to nature and the intimate art of spending time together with playful communication.

From October to January, Green Sea Turtles nest along Eco Beach's shores and guests can partake in night-time turtle watching tours. We are already planning to return one May to September to jump aboard a whale-watching boat tour to witness Australia's largest annual migration of Humpback Whales.

If you're chasing the sun, May to October is the best time to visit Eco Beach. The days are perfect - a consistent 32-degrees with clear skies, endless horizons, low humidity and no rain. A good thing for the "glampers" in the Eco Tents! The nights retain a balmy air about them and are just cool enough for a light jacket. For the Yawuru Aborigines it's a time when salmon, lizards and kangaroos are fat, many wattle trees are blooming and the cool south-easterly winds blow in off the desert.

John and Pete jump aboard several sport fishing charters and come home with big smiles and tall tales of elusive Barramundi and powerful Mangrove Jack, all caught and released under a sustainable fishing policy. After one trip, just enough fish is kept for our group and Chef Kenneth cooks us up a culinary treat.

One tour we all partake in is the 'Mud 'n Bubbles' or simply 'Mud 'n Fun' for the kids! This life transforming experience is the ultimate in letting inhibitions go, bonding, pure fun and relaxation. We meet our charismatic guide at the high tide mark, where she seamlessly encourages young and old, male and female, all shapes and sizes, to strip down to just bathers. Then, ankle deep in the soothing Indian Ocean waters, we begin to gently exfoliate our skin with small handfuls of wet Kimberley sand. The joyous circular motions of this playful act soon dispel any inhibitions, clear any lurking negativity and release our inner child.

Then, from top to toe, we cover ourselves in Jack's Creek revitalising, healing mangrove mud. Our guide collects this mud fresh from Jack's Creek - a thriving mangrove ecosystem about 11 kilometres north of Eco Beach. The smoothest clay, she tells us, comes from a special place in the middle of the creek, about 30 millimetres deep. "Once you smell a hint of sulphur, you know you've stumbled across the best quality mud with superior healing qualities", she claims, running the mud through her fingers.

Newly initiated mangrove warriors, we lay in a circle, heads in, eyes closed, bodies sinking into the sand. Our guide's soft voice then attunes our senses to Mother Nature....the peaceful sigh of the waves, the cooling sea breeze, the feel of the warm sun and sand enveloping our bodies, the calls of the sea birds....our breath. 20 minutes of unadulterated blissful meditation. And then to be woken up to the sweet sound of popping champagne corks and jumping fish! Surely life doesn't get much better. We help each other wash off our mud in the cleansing Indian Ocean, sip bubbles

or orange juice, laugh out loud and return revitalised, all senses awakened, to our cliff top Beach Houses. That night, the millions of stars above us shine more brightly than ever. We've found our utopia.....right here on the edge of Western Australia.

Whether it's the daily dose of Chilled Vermicelli Noodle Salad, the mangrove mud or simply the holistic Eco Beach experience.....we all leave 'glowing' and make a group pinky-promise to return. Our inner child has definitely emerged!

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