Art and about

trail in north Queensland

Looking out at the vast tidal mudflats of Coova Beach. most of us would see a barren wasteland. But Juan Walk-

er knoses better "See these little swirts?" he asks, pointing to the ground. "Well, it's worm poo. They live under the mud and stingrass come and suck them up. At night if you shine a light you'll see hundreds of stingrays. As a child, Walker and his brothers spent their days hunting for mud crabs and foraging for pipis and clams along these shores near the mouth of the Mossman

way. But now he's the teacher, possing on his knowledge

fore starting his small group tours two years later, joking that as the youngest brother he got given all the bad jobs. Walker explains his unusual name came about be-"black-birded" and taken to work as divestows. The third

Our tour begins with a quick lesson in spear throwing

We walk barefoot across the mud towards a lone grey



guide Juan Walker, above; Daintree bush foods, left

children 5-15 years;

Canopy Art Centre in

Cairns are available on

Meetings with



to the next generation.

Some wear elaborate headdresses, others simple loincloths, their skin painted with handprints. Some perform traditional hunting dances

rancing with spears poised in time to the beat. Others hold their arms out to the side and soar like eagles across the festival ground An elder in a bright orange T-shirt emblazoned with the word Hawaii is so moved by the performance she kicks off her shoes and joins in. promptly stealing the show.

perform at the 2017 Laura Festival DRESSED FOR THE DANCE Dust swirls as dancers, glistening with sweat, stomp their feet on the dry, brown earth to the banging of clapsticks and drone of the didgeridoo. Children in traditional costumes, their faces painted with ochre, stand on the side, eyes wide and mouths agape, watching as they await their turn. Elderly ladies, their faces swirled with white sit on plastic chairs in a row clapping, whistling and laughing raucously as their families perform Over three days, dancers young and old from 20 Cape York communities take to the stage to nact their stories at the Laura Aboriginal Dance



digenous guide Aaron Minniecon. After a traditional welcome-to-country smoking cer nony, we follow the old hunting and gathering trail Minniecon points out mossy red cedars used to carve duzout cances and clubs and shields used in warfare. As we pass sacred areas, he calls to his ancestors to let them know we are friends. He shows us grinding stones beside the roth that his ancestors used to crack nuts, and other a natural earth pigment that comes in 18 colours ranging

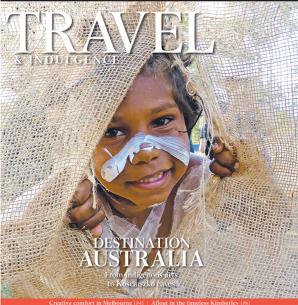
from yellow to brown and used as face paint for special Art is integral to indigenous culture, and tropical north Queensland is dotted with cultural centres and ealleries where artists come together to work and showcase their offerings. Many also display their work at the Cairns

Indigenous Art Fair, held each July. At Canopy Art Centre in Cairns we meet Glen Mack-Walkabout Cultural who retells the myths and levends of Yam Island in th Torres Strait, where he was born and raised, through group, half-day tours for \$165 a person or full-day vinyl cut prints. He says the island is known for warfare, tours for \$209 a nerson durong and turtle hunting and collecting shells. "My grandfather taught me the carving design." with pick-up from Port Mackie says. "He used to draw the designs in the sand Doorlas Mossman and Daintree Village when I was in primary school, and in high school he More walkshoot something. This means crocodile this is shark "he continues, pointing to his works. "I use [those] designs be-

ause they're my parents' totems. I also make my own signs. Markie moved to the mainland 15 years are: "My Dad has a crayfish factory and store, but it wasn't for me," he says. "I'm the only artist from Yam Island and I saw it as my duty to educate people and tell them the story of His works are now exhibited at the National Gallery

of Australia, National Museum of Australia and Queens land Art Gallery in Brisbone and his murals sell for up to \$16,000, but he says he doesn't care about the mone "I'd rather educate people about my culture."

Angela Saurine was a guest of Tourism and Events Queensland





On the indigenous culture

ANGELA SAURINE

River, just north of Port Douglas, learning the traditions of the Kuku Yalanji people from their grandparents. As

an adult, he still spends his time pretty much the same Walker's older brothers, Linc and Brandon, began leading cultural tours in 2006. He worked with them be

was a Filipino man who was fishing in the islands, hence Juan, his Spanish name

and instructs us to aim, step forward and flick. "Point a finger at the back, palm up, and let him rip," he says. My first two attempts floo a few metres away. Walker swans me to a smaller, lighter spear. It arches high in the air and Then he throws his, and it lands about 30m away. But that's nothing. He says the farthest he has ever thrown is 35m, while the world record is 124m.

mango tree that juts out of the distant horizon. "Think of this as a free pedicure," Walker says. He explains that indisenous Australians look for different food sources depending on the season. At the time of our tour the weather is cool, which is ideal for shellfish. Around a full moon, the current is also stronger, so the crabs eat more and fatten up faster.



We change direction and continue wading through the warm shallows towards the mangroves. Walker Checklist catches a mud crab for our lunch but all I manage is a leaf "That's for vegetarians," he jokes. Searching the mangrove roots, we find sea snails, neriwinkles and ovsters

but Walker warms these must be cooked to eat because they suck bacteria from the trees. "These mangroves are really special. You'll pewer run out of food here. Across the road at Walker's mum's house, we wash our feet under the garden tap before going upstairs to the kitchen, where he cooks our bounty with freshly picked chillies. Then we sit on the veranda and savour the succulent flesh sucking the juice from the shell.

"Make a mess," he says. "If you're not making a mess Ngadiku Dreamtime you're not doing it properly. Walks at Mossman As we eat, Walker shows our group three boomerangs Gorge deport daily; \$68 for adults and \$35 for

of different shapes. To our surprise, he says there are alone, and only two or three styles are carved flat on one side and curved on the other so they return. Some are suitable for catching small animals such as bandicoots, goannas and possums; others are specifically made to snare wallabies. He then plays us tunes on a didgeridoc that sound like dingoes howling and kookaburras laughing and shows us how to check if it is authentic final made in Taiwan') by feeling inside for termite tracks.

Just down the road at the southern end of Daintree National Park, the oldest surviving tropical rainforest in the world at 100 to 150 million years old, lies Mossman