Kakadu National Park World Heritage Values

Kakadu National Park was first inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, and was subsequently expanded and re-inscribed in 1987, and again in 1992. The World Heritage criteria current in 1992 and against which Kakadu National Park was most recently inscribed remain the formal criteria for this property. These criteria appear below. The World Heritage criteria are periodically revised and the criteria against which the property was listed in 1992 are not necessarily identical with the current criteria.

Examples of the World Heritage values for which Kakadu National Park was listed are described below for each criterion. It should be noted that while these examples are illustrative of the World Heritage values of the property, they do not necessarily constitute a comprehensive list of these values. Other sources including the Nomination of Kakadu National Park by the Government of Australia for inscription in the World Heritage List and the publication Kakadu Natural and Cultural Heritage and Management are available and could be consulted for a more detailed understanding of the World Heritage values of Kakadu National Park.

Natural criterion

Natural criterion (ii) outstanding example representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment.

Kakadu National Park is an outstanding example representing significant ongoing geological processes, particularly associated with the effects of sea-level change in northern Australia, biological evolution and people's interaction with their natural environment. The World Heritage values include:

- the coastal riverine and estuarine flood plains of the South Alligator, West Alligator, East Alligator, and Wildman rivers, which include freshwater flood plains with tidal river channels
- the relatively undisturbed nature of the river systems and their associated catchments
- the mangrove swamps, including remnants of more extensive swamps which formed between 6500 and 7000 years ago on the coastal fringe and plains
- the spatial zonation of the coastal and floodplain vegetation which exemplifies a vegetation succession linked to processes of sea-level change and sedimentation and extends from lower intertidal mangroves to estuarine mangroves to floodplain vegetation
- the range of the environmental gradients and contiguous, diverse landscapes, extending from the sandstone plateaus and escarpments through lowland areas and wetlands to the coast, which have contributed to the evolution of high levels of endemism and species diversity
- the scale and integrity of the landscapes and environments with extensive and relatively unmodified vegetation cover and largely intact faunal composition which are important in relation to ongoing evolutionary processes in an intact landscape, the high spatial heterogeneity of habitats
- the high diversity and abundance of plant and animal species, many of which are adapted to low-nutrient conditions (including more than 1600 plant species, over one-quarter of Australia's known terrestrial mammal, about one-third of the total bird fauna and freshwater fish species, about fifteen per cent of Australia reptile and amphibian species and a high diversity of insect species)
- the Aboriginal archaeological remains and rock art which represent an outstanding example of people's interaction with the natural environment and bear remarkable and valuable witness to past environments in northern Australia and to the interaction of people with these environments
• the ongoing, active management of the landscapes by Aboriginal people through the use of fire, including fire-assisted hunting and the creation of environmental mosaics which contribute to species diversity, provide an important example of people's interaction with the environment
• the diverse range of habitats and vegetation types including:
  - open forest and woodlands
  - lowland and sandstone (*Allosyncarpa ternata* closed forest) rainforests
  - shrubland and heath
  - wetland, riverine, and coastal environments
  - mangroves and floodplains.

**Natural criterion (iii) contain unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty.**

Kakadu National Park has features of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance and contains superlative natural phenomena. The World Heritage values include:
• the expansive and varied natural landscapes which include coastal areas, lowlands, wetlands, floodplains, plateau complexes, escarpments and outliers
• the exceptional natural beauty of viewfields
• the relatively undisturbed nature of the landscape
• the unusual mix and diversity of habitats found in close proximity
• the large scale of undisturbed landscape.

**Natural criterion (iv) contain the most important and significant habitats where threatened species of plants and animals of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science and conservation still survive.**

Kakadu National Park's large size, its diversity of habitats and its position in an area of northern Australia subjected to considerably less disturbance by European settlement than many other parts of the continent have resulted in the protection and conservation of many significant habitats, including those where threatened species of plants and animals of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science and conservation still survive. The World Heritage values include:
• the wide range of natural habitats, including:
  - open forest and woodlands
  - monsoon rainforest areas
  - heaths and shrublands
  - freshwater wetlands
  - mangrove and estuarine areas
  - foreshore and beach areas.
• significant plant associations, including those associated with *Eucalyptus koolpinensis*, the heath vegetation on the margins of the Marrawal Plateau, and woodland containing *Terminalia platyptera* on Snake Plains
• plant species of conservation significance (including endemic species and relict species) such as *Arthrochilus bynessii*, *Cycas conferta*, *Desmodium sp. 2*, *Eucalyptus koolpinensis*, *Hildegardia australiensis*, *Micaira* spp.,
Neobyrnesia suberosa, Pityrodia spp., Plectrachne aristiglumis, Triodia radonensis, Typhonium russell-smithii

- animal species of conservation significance, including:
  - mammals (such as Calaby’s mouse Pseudomys calabyi, Kakadu dunnart Smithopsis sp. Nov., nabarlek Petrogale concinna, false water-rat Xeromys myoides, golden-backed tree-rat Mesembrionyx macrurus, and ghost bat Macroderma gigas)
  - reptiles (such as the pig-nosed turtle Carettochelys insculpta, Pacific or olive ridley turtle Lepidochelys olivacea, green turtle Chelonia mydas, loggerhead turtle Caretta caretta, saltwater crocodile Crocodylus porosus and freshwater crocodile C. johnstoni)
  - birds (such as the Gouldian finch Erythrura gouldiae, partridge pigeon Geophaps smithii, hooded parrot Psephotus dissimilis, little tern Sterna albifrons, masked owl - northern subspecies Tyto novaehollandiae kimberli and red goshawk Erythrotriorchis radiatus)
  - invertebrates (such as crustaceans of the plateau and escarpment streams, especially the families Amphisopodidae, Atyidae and Palaemonidae)
  - fish (such as two newly discovered taxa of goby, including the new genus Cryptocentrus, and a speartooth shark Gypis sp)
  - species which have experienced range reductions (such as the magpie goose Anseranas semipalmata, Gouldian finch Erythrura gouldiae, partridge pigeon Petrophassa smithii, pale field rat Rattus tunneyi and Leichhardt’s grasshopper Petasida ephippigera)
  - endemic species and relict species (including the ghost bat Macroderma gigas, the orange horseshoe bat Rhinonicteris aurantius, saltwater crocodile Crocodylus porosus, freshwater crocodile C. johnstoni, and the pig-nosed turtle Carettochelys insculpta).

Cultural criterion

Cultural criterion (i) represent a unique artistic achievement and a masterpiece of the creative genius.

The rock art sites of Kakadu National Park represent a unique artistic achievement, spanning a continuum tens of thousands of years to the present and continuing to maintain an important function in the cultural and social aspects of contemporary indigenous communities. The World Heritage values include:

- rock art sites which:
  - in themselves represent a unique artistic achievement and which comprise one of the greatest concentrations of rock art in the world
  - are of great antiquity and which represent a continuous temporal span from the Pleistocene Epoch to the present
  - exhibit great diversity, both in space and through time, yet embody a continuous cultural development
  - demonstrate in the record of the art sites a living cultural tradition which continues today.

Cultural criterion (vi) directly or tangibly associated with events or with ideas or beliefs of outstanding universal significance.

Kakadu National Park is associated with events, ideas and beliefs of outstanding universal significance. The World Heritage values include:

- cultural sites which:
  - form a rich collection of places imbued with strong spiritual associations relating to creator beings and are connected to the continuing practice of traditional beliefs and practices
  - demonstrate in the art and the archaeological record a living cultural tradition that continues today
  - are of great antiquity and represent a continuous temporal span from the Pleistocene Epoch to the present
• include archaeological sites which are currently some of the oldest dated within Australia
• exhibit great diversity, both in space and through time, yet embody a continuous cultural development
• preserve a record, not only in the form of archaeological sites but also through rock art, of human responses and adaptation to major environmental change including rising sea levels
• preserve fragile items of material culture not commonly found within other archaeological sites.