

## POSTCARD

## Northern Territory

A new off-train experience gives guests travelling on The Ghan a closer look at Nitmiluk National Park's rock art. [Clare Vooght](#) reports

"If you want to take a selfie here with the gorge – we call that the gorgeous selfie," jokes Landon, one of our two young Aboriginal guides, as our boat glides up to the rocky bank of the Katherine River's Nitmiluk Gorge.

Towering sandstone cliffs rise up on either side, one half bathed in the sun's glow, the other providing welcome shade from the heat. Landon explains how the ancient sediment formed, layer upon layer over time, and was pushed up by tectonic activity. "If you cut up a mango and push it upwards, that's sort of what the gorge looks like from above," he adds.

But we're also here to explore the equally fascinating rock art as part of a new Nitmiluk Rock Art Cruise off-train experience for guests travelling on The Ghan, which has redesigned its Gold Premium carriages for 2025. The tour takes a closer look at the rock art found in the Nitmiluk National Park, where tourist operations are 100% owned by the Jawoyn people, with proceeds being put back into land management and the community.

Also guiding us today is Jodi, who explains the rock art we find just steps away from the riverbank – some of which has been dated from 10,000 years ago – and telling us how the colours were made: the red ochre is iron oxide, created from sun-baked, crushed-up rock that was traditionally mixed with water and animal blood.

The paintings of meat, fish and turtle eggs were intended to show others the food that could be found nearby. "I like to look at it as a shopping list," says Jodi.

As well as being a way to signpost food sources to others passing through, the art was a way to tell stories. Another larger, more menacing creature painted on the rock is the enormous Bolung, or rainbow serpent. According to Jawoyn legend, it carved out the river gorge when it slithered through the landscape in ancient times, leaving destruction in its wake. "Those were the stories I grew up with my grandmother telling me," says Jodi.

It may be a 'gorgeous' spot for a picture, but hearing these fascinating stories, passed down through generations of the world's oldest culture, shows how a trip on the Katherine River offers so much more than just a great selfie. **TW**



## BOOK IT

The Nitmiluk Rock Art Cruise is included in The Ghan fare. Great Rail Journeys offers a 10-day Australia's The Ghan tour, from £4,095 for travel in 2026, including flights from Heathrow to Adelaide and back from Darwin, four nights' hotel accommodation and two nights in a Gold Twin Cabin on The Ghan. [greatrail.com](http://greatrail.com)



TOP: The Ghan in the MacDonnell Ranges, Northern Territory ABOVE: Rock art paint, Nitmiluk

PICTURES: Andrew Gregory; Tourism NT/Tourism Australia/Nitmiluk Tours/Shana McNaught