



Visiting Aboriginal Lands in the Groote Archipelago

Land Access Permits

Are Land Access Permits legally required?

Yes. Commonwealth and Northern Territory law says that entry to Aboriginal land requires a written permit.

Unauthorised entry to Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory can result in significant fines under the Northern Territory Criminal Code and individuals found to be deliberately accessing lands without a permit can be asked to leave the Eylandt.

The Anindilyakwa Land Council is responsible for administering the permit system for Traditional Owners in the Groote Archipelago. It issues three types of Land Access Permits: Recreation Area Permits, Special Access Permits (including research) and Work Permits.

Chief Minister's permits are issued by the Northern Territory Government to Government officers carrying out their duties under an Act of Parliament. This does not cover them for recreational or other non-work purposes.

Why are Land Access Permits necessary?

Aboriginal land is privately owned. It is neither Crown land, nor public land. Like other landowners in Australia, Aboriginal people have the legal right to grant or refuse permission to people wishing to enter or travel through their land.

A permit is a written permission from the Traditional Owners to enter the private land of a family or group of Aboriginal people. This is similar to gaining access to a farm or station on the mainland.

The permit system is designed to help protect the privacy of Aboriginal communities, preserve Aboriginal culture, safeguard the natural environment and promote visitor safety.

When will I need a Land Access Permit?

If you wish to undertake any of the following activities on Aboriginal land in the Groote Archipelago, you will need to apply to the Anindilyakwa Land Council for a permit:

- Enter Aboriginal land for any purpose
- Travel by road through Aboriginal land (Note: this does not apply to public roads or mining leases (held by Groote Eylandt Mining Company GEMCO).
- Enter or visit an Aboriginal outstation/community where no Commonwealth Government head lease applies. Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra communities are covered by Commonwealth Leases; visitors do not require a permit to visit these communities.



Please note that permit requirements apply to all persons visiting Aboriginal lands (not under lease) for work or other purposes on a short or long-term basis. This includes:

- Recreation areas
- Tourists
- Contractors
- Journalists
- Hawkers
- Representatives of any group, company agency or government department not covered by statutory permit arrangement

Depending on your purpose, you will require a Work, Recreation, or Special Access Permit.

Work Permit: Individuals wishing to enter or remain on Aboriginal land (including outstations) for the purposes of work must obtain a Work Permit. Work permits are not required for Angurugu, Umbakumba or Milyakburra communities as they are covered under a Commonwealth town lease.

Recreation Permit: Anindilyakwa Traditional Owners have designated recreation areas within the Anindilyakwa Land Council region. All persons over the age of 15 must hold a valid Recreation Permit.

Special Access Permit: Visitors wishing to enter Aboriginal land outside designated recreation areas must apply for a Special Access Permit. This includes, but is not limited to, those seeking to enter land for recreational purposes or to undertake research, environmental or commercial projects. If individuals wish to access recreation areas for any purpose other than recreation, they must also apply for a Special Access Permit.

Is there a charge?

There is no charge for a Work Permit and in most cases there is no charge for a Special Access Permit. Anindilyakwa Traditional Owners reserve the right to charge entry to some destinations in specific circumstances. Recreation Permits incur a fee.

Contact the Anindilyakwa Land Council office for general information regarding Land Access Permits. Phone: (08) 8987 4006 or email: admin@alcnt.com.au

Contact the Anindilyakwa Land Council's Land and Sea Rangers for information regarding Special Access Permits for the purpose of environmental research or other environmental projects.

Phone: (08) 8987 6703 or email admin@alcrangers.com.au

Process for Land Access Permits

Designated staff of the Anindilyakwa Land Council and the Anindilyakwa Land & Sea Rangers consult with relevant Traditional Owners for the area or community where access is requested.



Because permit delegates of particular Aboriginal communities have to be contacted directly by the Anindilyakwa Land Council in each case, it is not possible to issue a general permit to enter all Aboriginal land in the Groote Archipelago.

If permission is granted, the applicant generally picks up the permit from the Anindilyakwa Land Council office. The issue of a permit is purely discretionary and may be revoked at any time.

How long does it take for a Land Access Permit to be processed?

The Anindilyakwa Land Council may require up to 5 working days to process a Recreation Area Permit and/or Work Permit (please note however, these permits are usually processed on the same day the application is received). Depending on the nature of the Special Access Permit, Anindilyakwa Land Council staff may require up to 1 month to process the application.

While it is important to allow enough time for Traditional Owners to be contacted, it is not advisable to apply for a permit too far in advance of your trip. Applying too far in advance increases the likelihood of unforeseen weather conditions, ceremonial events or funerals, which can result in a permit being cancelled at short notice. It is advisable to check closer to your travel dates to make sure the permit is not cancelled or delayed.

Are there special rules to observe?

Yes. Traditional Owners and the Anindilyakwa Land Council may stipulate special conditions of entry. You must carry your permit with you at all times. General conditions are:

- **Liquor:** All Aboriginal communities and areas of Aboriginal land in the Groote Archipelago have been declared dry by the NT Liquor Commission. Alcohol must not be consumed on those areas of land. There are very severe penalties under the Liquor Act for breach of these provisions. For more information relating to alcohol on Aboriginal land please contact the Liquor Commission on 08 89991328.
- **Environment:** Permit conditions may aim to protect the environment. These may include conditions relating to the condition of motor vehicles, litter disposal, etc.
- **Activities:** Permits do not necessarily authorise a range of activities, including, but not limited to cutting down trees, fishing, hunting and carrying firearms.
- **Privacy:** We ask that you respect the privacy of people living in Aboriginal communities as you are travelling through. Aboriginal people tend to be more polite to strangers than most non-Aboriginal groups and are therefore more inclined to "agree" to requests from visitors (e.g. requesting to take photographs). It is important to avoid taking advantage of people's hospitality, offending people or intruding into people's lives uninvited. Please also be aware of local views on such matters as dress, as skimpy attire can sometimes offend.

