

TOURISM AUSTRALIA

Sustainability STORYTELLERS

CRAIG 'HASSIE' HASLAM

Owner Operator, Untamed Escapes



When Craig 'Hassie' Haslam says sustainable tourism has 'consumed his life', he's not exaggerating.

Beginning in 1999 with a run-down, 100-year-old house on a 1240-hectare farm on the wild and rugged Eyre Peninsula, 700 kilometres east of Adelaide, Hassie and wife, Jo have transformed the property into the Coodlie Park Farm Retreat, offering on-property tours, camping and accommodation.

In 2004 they bought Australian Wildlife Adventures (now Untamed Escapes) and grew it from bankruptcy into a thriving tour company providing diverse, interactive tours

throughout South Australia, Western Australia and the Red Centre. Covering everything from history and culture to wildlife and wine, tours range from swag camping to tailored luxury; from craggy coastlines to desert dunes.

In every facet of the businesses, Hassie's guiding principle is to leave things in better shape than he found them, proving that even a little business 'out in the sticks' can set a leading example for sustainability.

The focus from Day One has been on re-use, re-cycle and rehabilitate – it's become a way of life. Hassie built the Coodlie Park campground out of timbers recycled from an oyster lease.

"WHEN I'M GONE, I HOPE PEOPLE WILL SAY, 'HE WASN'T A BAD FELLA – HE TRIED HARD AND THE WORLD'S A BETTER PLACE FOR HIM BEING HERE.'"

He designed a solar and wind-operated toilet and reduced water usage from 50,000 litres a year to under 2000 litres by designing a bucket shower system that uses just eight litres of water per person.



"WE BELIEVE WE'RE THE ONLY AUSTRALIAN TOUR OPERATOR THAT'S 100 PER CENT CARBON NEUTRAL, THROUGH OFFSETTING OUR EMISSIONS INTERNALLY."

"You have to be a bit creative when you've got no budget!" he says.

"But people love the bucket showers – and it starts them thinking about saving water back home."

Hassie – who still personally guides some of the Australian Wildlife Adventures tours - aims to involve, encourage and support as many like-minded businesses as possible en route, especially emerging and indigenous operators. He's developed strong relationships with the elders of several indigenous communities and has mentored and trained indigenous guides.

"I don't have to be the 'guru' of everything. Wherever possible, we try to include local specialist business owners, so that guests hear their stories first-hand."



"I can honestly say that 99.9 per cent of guests that do one of our tours leave with a changed perspective of what Australia is really all about."

At Coodlie Park, Hassie and Jo have set aside a third of the property for environmental rehabilitation and, since 2008, have been collecting and propagating seeds from the property and re-planting 1.2 hectares of native vegetation every year.

Along with hosting tourism students on live-in placements (25 students over 13 years), Hassie encourages travellers to offset their own carbon emissions by working on the farm: they've hosted over 300 WWOOFer volunteers to date. 🌱

"SUSTAINABILITY IS A COST OF BUSINESS THAT YOU NEED TO WEAR: IT'S SIMPLY NOT OK NOT TO DO THE RIGHT THING."



CONTACT DETAILS:

Craig 'Hassie' Haslam
Owner Operator, Untamed Escapes,
+61 428 870 455
hassie@untamedescapes.com.au
www.untamedescapes.com.au