

The Amazons Australia 2026

The Cassowary Coast – A rich history!

During the Amazons Australia 2026, participants had the opportunity to explore wilderness areas and visit places a bit off the beaten track, on foot, mountain bike and or kayak using a map and compass to find checkpoints along the way. After the event is over, it is always nice to sit back, look at the maps and reflect on the opportunity, the experiences and what you achieved. When you return to your 'normal life' these little Cassowary Coast communities will continue to thrive and or survive, so here is a little bit of history to reflect on, when you are telling your stories of The Amazons Australia 2026.



Day 1 – 'Taming the Tully' - Tully Gorge, Echo Creek, Davison Rd, Euramo

Tully Gorge

Indigenous Heritage: The gorge is the traditional country of the Jirrbal (western sections) and Gulngay (lower gorge) peoples. They utilized the rainforest's rich resources and passed down generations of cultural history, such as the Gulngay "Water Story" creation narrative.

Gold & Timber (1890s): European settlement in the area began around 1890 when gold was discovered at the headwaters of the Tully River, leading to the brief establishment of the Culpa township. As gold yields slowed, the focus shifted to extensive timber harvesting in the surrounding rainforests.



The Hydro-Electric Boom (1950s): To meet rising post-WWII electricity demands, the region harnessed the powerful Tully River. Construction of the Koombooloomba Dam and the Kareeya Hydro-electric Power Station (88MW) altered the region, resulting in the famous "missing" Tully Falls, as water is diverted underground for power generation.

Conservation & Tourism: The area was first gazetted as a national park in 1923, and in 1988, it became part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Today, the gorge's scheduled dam water releases sustain year-round commercial white-water rafting, including hosting the 2019 International Rafting Federation's World Championships.



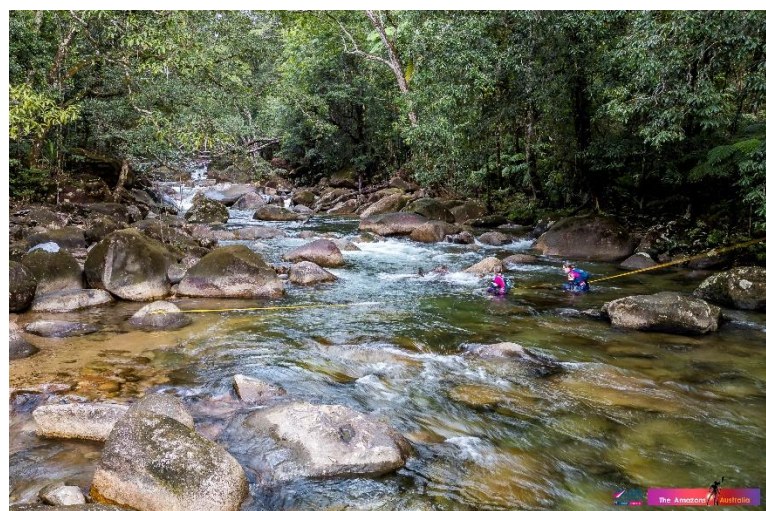
Echo Creek Falls

Echo Creek Falls, located in the lush Tully Gorge National Park in Far North Queensland (approx. 45 minutes from Mission Beach), is steeped in both ancient Indigenous culture and colonial logging history. Parks and forests

Indigenous Heritage

Traditional Owners: The area is the ancestral home of the Janbanbarra Jirrbal Rainforest people.

Ancient Pathways: The trails weaving through Echo Creek and to the falls were originally traditional Aboriginal trading routes used by ancestors to traverse the mountains and trade with neighbouring tribal communities.



Colonial & Industrial History

Timber Getting: During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the dense rainforests of the upper Echo Creek headwaters were heavily exploited by early European timber getters, who prized the area for having some of the best cabinet timbers in the Wet Tropics.

Dave's Camp: The headwaters of Echo Creek feature a historical site known as "Dave's Camp," a remnant of the era when logging teams lived and worked deep in the dense tropical scrub.



WWII Infrastructure: The region also contains World War II defence history, including remnants of early infrastructure like Jeep Track 5.

Modern Conservation: Today, Echo Creek and its surrounding 240 acres of World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics are dedicated to conservation, ecotourism, and educational programs (like those run by Adventure Centre Mission Beach). The area is celebrated for its rich biodiversity and serves as a vital habitat for the endangered southern cassowary.

Davison Rd & Euramo Farming Area

The road begins near the small township of Euramo, about 20 to 25 minutes south of the main Tully township.



The Tully River: The road runs closely alongside and backs onto sections of the iconic Tully River. Many acreage properties here boast direct river frontage used for fishing and swimming.

Farming & Lifestyle: The land along Davidson Road is highly fertile and primarily used for cattle grazing, banana farming, and sugarcane fields. It is a popular spot for people looking for a quiet "tree change" on large lifestyle blocks.

Local Services: The area is locally well-known for the Davison Road Bus Service, a long-running family transport business that provides vital school charters and agricultural transit for the Tully community.



Euramo Hotel

The Hotel Euramo (commonly known by locals as "The Mighty Mo") is an iconic country pub located just 8 kilometres south of Tully. It sits right at the edge of Davison Road and the Tully River. It is famous across Australia for its resilience, community spirit, and unique connection to local weather events.

The "Euramo Yacht Club"



Famous Flood Hub: The hotel is built on high ground, so the main bar stays dry even when heavy monsoonal rains flood the surrounding region.

Arriving by Boat: When the roads close and the car park goes underwater, locals hop into their tinnies (small metal boats), kayaks, and canoes to boat straight up to the pub for a cold drink and a meal.



Official New Name: In December 2023 and February 2025, viral global news photos showed dozens of boats "moored" at the front of the pub. This led to Google changing its map name to the **Hotel Euramo Yacht Club**. Major Australian brewer XXXX even printed permanent official signs with the new "Yacht Club" name to hang on the building.



Day 2 – Reef to Rainforest – Bingal Bay to Kennedy Bay

How "Mission" Beach Got Its Name

The Hull River Settlement: In 1914, the Queensland Government established an Aboriginal reserve on the high ground just south of North Mission Beach.

The Misnomer: Though the local community and settlers always referred to it as "the mission," it was not a religious outpost. It functioned as a strict, state-run penal reserve where Indigenous people were forcibly relocated.

The 1918 Cyclone: On March 10, 1918, a catastrophic Category 5 cyclone completely flattened the Hull River Settlement, destroyed the Cuttens' Bicton plantation, and wiped out the local shipping industry. While the settlement was closed and the survivors were moved to Palm Island, the name "Mission Beach" stuck permanently to the coastline.



Ancient Roots: Djiru Country

The Rainforest Stewards: Long before European arrival, the Djiru Aboriginal people managed the land at North Mission Beach and Clump Point.

Coastal Hub: Clump Point served as a major traditional hub. The Djiru constructed intricate stone fish traps along the rocky headlands and gathered for ceremonies on the coastal rainforest flats.

Resource Conflict: The deep connection between the Djiru and their country faced immense friction when white settlers began clearing native bean and wonga trees. These trees were vital seasonal food sources for the local Indigenous population.

The Pioneering Era: The Cutten Brothers

The First Settlers: In August 1885, four English brothers—James, Leonard, Sidney, and Herbert Cutten—rowed a flat-bottomed boat over 35 kilometres to settle the area.

The Bicton Estate: They selected land spanning from North Mission Beach up to Bingil Bay, naming their massive estate Bicton. They built a 13-room homestead, an operational sawmill, and a private stone jetty.

Australia's Coffee Barons: The Cuttens were incredible agricultural pioneers. They turned the dense jungle into highly productive fields of tobacco, ginger, bananas, and tea. In the 1890s, they became the largest producers of coffee in Australia.



Wongaling Beach

The True Djiru Meaning: Modern Djiru Traditional Elders clarified the true history. "Wongaling" is the Djiru word for the beautiful Superb Fruit Dove (or Purple-crowned Fruit Dove). These brightly coloured birds flocked to the area to eat berries from the white cedar trees

The Ulysses Link: Today, the foreshore features the Ulysses Link Walking Track, a trail linking North Mission Beach to Wongaling Beach that showcases local historical artwork and carvings celebrating this creative, eco-conscious past.



South Mission Beach

Ancient Homelands: The coastal rainforests and beaches belong to the Djiru Aboriginal people. The southern end near Tam O'Shanter Point and the Hull River served as crucial fishing grounds.

The "Mission" Prison Camp: In September 1914, the Queensland Government established the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement on the high hillside overlooking South Mission Beach. It was never a religious mission. It was a strict penal reserve where up to 400 Indigenous people from across the state were forcibly taken in chains and used for hard labour.

The 1918 Tragedy: On March 10, 1918, a massive Category 5 cyclone flattened the settlement. It killed the superintendent, his daughter, and 12 Aboriginal residents. Survivors were forcibly relocated to Great Palm Island. The name "Mission Beach" stuck permanently because of this dark era.

The Mija Memorial: Today, visitors can visit the Mija Memorial Monument at South Mission Beach. It serves as a place of truth-telling to honour the victims and survivors of the camp.

The Great Depression Camps: In 1939, a township was surveyed and named Kenny. However, local out-of-work canecutters from Tully set up permanent survival camps on the beach during the Great Depression. Locals refused to use the name Kenny, and it was officially renamed South Mission Beach in 1963.



The Kennedy Walking Track

The Kennedy Walking Track is a stunning 4-kilometre coastal trail spanning from the South Mission Beach boat ramp, past rocky headlands, and ending at the Hull River mouth. It acts as a vital sanctuary for the endangered southern cassowary.

The Ill-Fated 1848 Landing: On May 24, 1848, explorer Edmund Kennedy and his crew of 12 men landed on the south side of Tam O'Shanter Point. They brought 27 horses and 100 sheep to begin a massive overland expedition north to Cape York.



The Impenetrable Swamps: Kennedy planned to head straight north, but the dense, unforgiving coastal mangrove swamps and rainforests blocked his path. Local Aboriginal guides eventually helped him cross the mouth of the Hull River so his team could escape south to find a way inland. The expedition ended in tragedy, with Kennedy spear-attacked and killed near Cape York, and only three men surviving.

The Bicentennial Dream: The modern walking track was envisioned in 1984 by local resident Len Staff. Len partnered with the Tully Wildlife Preservation Society and secured a \$40,000 Bicentennial grant in 1986. The funding had a strict rule: the track had to be completely hand-built using a mostly Aboriginal workforce to protect the pristine rainforest ecosystem.



Frogs Hollow Reserve & Rainforest School

The Cassowary Corridor & Revegetation

C4 Conservation Work: For years, the surrounding land at Frogs Hollow was targeted for major habitat recovery by the Community for Coastal Cassowary Conservation (C4).

Revegetation Site: Local volunteers and students have planted hundreds of native trees across the open flats.

Connecting the Forest: This heavy tree planting transformed the Frogs Hollow site into a critical, fully functioning cassowary corridor. It gives the endangered southern cassowary a safe, unbroken passage of native rainforest to travel through away from the main coastal roads.



Day 3 – Island Adventures – Dunk Island Group

Dunk Island is part of The Family Islands National Park

Mound Island (Purtaboi): This is the prominent rocky islet you see directly out from Dunk Island's main beach at Brammo Bay. It is a critical sanctuary for nesting seabirds like crested terns.

Kumboola Island: Located right off the south-western tip of Dunk Island. At particularly low tides, a sand spit appears, physically connecting Kumboola to Dunk Island so you can walk across.

Mung Um Gnackum Island: A tiny islet sitting just off the outer edge of Kumboola Island.



Cultural History

The First People: The Bandjin and Djiru Aboriginal peoples have shared and cared for the island for tens of thousands of years.

Peace and Plenty: The traditional name for the island is Coonanglebah (or Gunanggulba). In the local Dyirbal and Warrgamay languages, it translates roughly to "The Island of Peace and Plenty".

Ancient Geography: Before sea levels rose 8,000 years ago, the island was part of the mainland coastal plain. The traditional owners called this area "eastern grey kangaroo country". When the plain flooded, they used bark canoes to paddle out to the new islands to hunt and collect food.

Living History: You can still find tangible evidence of their ancient connection today, including shell middens and old rock art paintings of turtles, fish, and birds hidden in stone shelters.

The Beachcomber: In 1897, a British-Australian journalist named Edmund James Banfield moved to the island for his health. He lived there as a naturalist for 26 years, calling himself the "Beachcomber". He wrote famous books about the island's wildlife and the skills of the local Aboriginal people



Environmental History

World Heritage Protection: Most of Dunk Island is part of the Family Islands National Park. It also sits inside the protected Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Diverse Forests: The island features a dense mix of deep tropical rainforest in the wet valleys. It transitions into open eucalypt woodlands and native palms on the dry ridges.

Animal Sanctuary: It is a vital bird sanctuary home to over 100 species of birds, including rare seabirds like terns and noddies that use the safe shores to breed.

The Island Symbol: The island is famous for the brilliant blue Ulysses butterfly, which has become the official symbol of Dunk Island.

Cyclone Impact: Because of its tropical location, the environment has been heavily tested by major storms. Severe tropical weather like Cyclone Larry (2006) and Cyclone Yasi (2011) stripped the trees bare, but the resilient rainforest has since bounced back.



Tourism History

How It Got Named: In June 1770, Lieutenant James Cook sailed past the island on the Endeavour. He named it "Dunk Island" in honour of George Montagu Dunk, the Earl of Halifax.

The First Resort: Tourism officially started in 1936 when early operators used Banfield's old bungalow to open a small retreat.

World War II Shift: Tourism paused in 1941 when the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) took over the island. They built a runway and established a high-altitude radar station on the peak of Mount Kootaloo to watch for enemy aircraft. You can still hike up to see the rusty radar ruins today.

The Golden Era: In the 1950s and 60s, the resort was upgraded to international luxury standards. It became the ultimate holiday spot for wealthy travellers, celebrities, and families.

Destruction and Rebirth: The luxury Dunk Island Resort was completely devastated and closed down by Cyclone Yasi in 2011. After sitting empty for many years, the island is now being brought back to life. New ownership has recently funded major cleanup efforts, opening a brand-new beachfront restaurant and bar next to the jetty for day-trippers. Official transition area for The Amazons Australia 2025 and 2026.



Reflections

The Amazons Australia is part of The Adventure Racing World Series, supported by The International Adventure Racing Association and we are grateful for the support from Cassowary Coast Council, Cassowary Coast Tourism and allowing us to host the event in this spectacular tropical environment.

Adventure Racing is a sport, with a rich connection to nature and the environment, so we hope that having this background information about the places that you ventured during the event will help remember, reflect, and do your bit to support these local communities and local businesses so they can survive and thrive for many years to come!

Kim & Jan

The Amazons Australia 2026



Photo Credits – Margarete Oti Photography

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