

JAMIE VAN JONES

CO-OWNER AND OPERATOR,
SALT AND BUSH ECO TOURS

“Tour guiding is the best career in the world. I didn’t know it existed when I was in high school and even university. I wish more people knew it was a career choice.”



JAMIE LED EXPEDITIONS FROM THE ARCTIC TO THE KIMBERLEY WITH HUSBAND SEBASTIAN UNTIL COVID BROUGHT THEM BACK TO WA TO START THEIR ECO-TOURISM BUSINESS. THEY NOW SHARE THE SECRETS OF THE STUNNING PEEL REGION, INSPIRING VISITORS TO PROTECT THE PLANET. IN 2022, JAMIE WAS NAMED THE COUNTRY’S BEST TOUR GUIDE.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO YOUR JOB?

My background is environmental science, which I started in Canada and then completed my degree in WA in sustainable development. That really got me looking at how we can take better care of our planet. What I realised was if you bring in tourism and you get people to have an amazing experience in nature, then those conversations about how we can take care of it just naturally come. I can reach a more diverse and wider audience by embracing eco-tourism.

Sebastian and I have worked in tourism for the last 10 years. We were working around the world as expedition tour guides. Prior to that we ran a sailing school and sailing charter business in Fremantle (Walyalup). We now run Salt and Bush and we do everything; it’s just the two of us.

WHAT’S THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

We operate from the waterways, taking people kayaking and sailing; and then in the bush, doing bushwalks and nocturnal walks, looking for wildlife, looking for amazing wildflowers during spring, and even things like stargazing. We love the diversity.

It’s the excitement of not knowing what to expect. Just the other week I was launching the kayaks and two bottlenose dolphins were popping up right in front of me - nothing beats starting off your day with an amazing wildlife encounter. If we do nocturnal tours, some nights we will see a critically endangered Western ringtail possum straight away. Other times we might see a boobook owl.

WHAT’S YOUR ADVICE FOR ANYONE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN TOURISM OR HOSPITALITY?

You need to be curious. You want to find amazing information to share with people. I absolutely love learning and constantly finding out new things and turning them into great stories. That is a great skill to have.

People need to have a passion for the natural world and for people. Another thing is getting used to talking in front of a group - doing things like speaking at school will give you really good experience and boost your confidence. It’s all about how you communicate; start feeling comfortable and confident in yourself to be able to tell stories in front of a group.

If you love nature, you could volunteer with other tour operators, even with wildlife care groups - anything that will give you an insight into the natural world, which will then fuel all the stories that you can tell guests.

STEPPING STONES

