



INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES
Regional Development Organisation
Australia

News from the RDO - Indian Ocean Fest

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What a bucket list of ocean adventure and local flavour!

The very first Indian Ocean Fest, held on Christmas Island from 21 – 28 June, delivered participants and partners a bucket list of adventures on every level! The pilot event, the [Indian Ocean Fest](#), was developed by the RDO following extensive stakeholder consultation to build on existing tourism offers, develop partnerships and grow opportunities.

The Fest was designed to celebrate the proclamation of Australia's newest marine parks in the Indian Ocean Territories, and in collaboration with principal partner, Australian Marine Parks, to educate and promote the importance of marine protected areas throughout the Fest program. Equipment purchased for the Fest, such as kayaks and ocean and rescue SUPs, are being donated to the school and CASA lifesavers to promote marine science, and to support water safety and island experiences.

High yield, adventurous and influential travellers from around Australia, including representatives from Tourism Australia, Australian Traveller, and food and travel journalists and photographers, fell under the spell of Christmas Island nature - from curated National Park walks and marine experiences from Parks Australia, to citizen science and learning how to protect our oceans with conservation partners Tangaroa Blue Foundation, to diving into the blue with Freedive CI and CI Wet n' Dry.

Fest Ambassador, Poh Ling Yeow brought 'Stories of Spice' to the table, cooking up a storm with our island aunties, Sania Kawi, Faridah Bahron, and Lucky Ho Chef, David Chan, in an unforgettable collaboration and celebration of local food. Guests were treated to signature dishes from Poh, Sania and David. A special thanks to Lucky Ho Restaurant for their partnership and support.

One-of-a-kind dining to hero producers and local produce was a key feature of the Fest program and the supremely talented Fervor team worked their magic, showcasing farm and foraged ingredients at the Farm and Forage Feast at Hidden Garden Farm, and the freshest of wahoo and tuna from Mark Rochfort for the Sparkling and Sustainable Seafood Feast. Australian ingredients, such as kangaroo, crocodile and emu were also on the menu and given an 'island twist' in satays, potstickers and dumplings in an alfresco evening at Tai Jin House.

Gin maestro, James Young, from Old Young's Distillery, brought his own gin still and under the guidance of local rangers and Hidden Garden Farm, sourced a range of island botanicals which featured in specially produced Christmas Island gin and also a Fest gin that participants made themselves in a gin masterclass.



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Images and video from the Fest will be used in coming months to increase the overall destination awareness and desirability of Christmas Island (and the Indian Ocean Territories), and its unique and authentic nature, adventure activities, food and culture.

Goods and services were sourced locally with direct financial benefit from this pilot event being shared across over 25 local businesses. The *Ocean Film Festival – World Tour* at the Christmas Island Cinema was not able to be screened during the Fest due to COVID-19, but will be shown for the local community at a future date.

We would like to thank our program partners for their support, including Australian Marine Parks, Tangaroa Blue Foundation, Fervor, The Hidden Sea Wine, Old Young's Distillery, La Violetta, Beerfarm, Howard Park Wines, and Australian Traveller. We would also like to thank Travel Exchange Christmas Island, our local booking partner, and the other local businesses and community members who helped us deliver such a successful, one-of-a-kind event.

The Indian Ocean Fest was developed in response to the [Christmas Island Strategic Plan 2030](#) and the [Cocos \(Keeling\) Islands Strategic Plan 2030](#), which both identify tourism as a key sector for economic growth and job creation in the region, and as part of the implementation of the [Indian Ocean Territories Tourism Action Plan](#). The target market for the Indian Ocean Fest, adventurous travellers, is identified in the [Destination Management Plan and Comprehensive Marketing Strategy for the Indian Ocean Territories](#). We would like to acknowledge the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts for providing the seed funding for this event.

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