

TOURISM TRAILBLAZERS

WADNA



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About Wadna

Established in 2014 by proud Adnyamathanha man, Kristian Coulthard and his wife, Gabby, Wadna is a home for Aboriginal art in the Flinders Ranges & Outback. Initially starting as a hobby, where Kristian and Gabby would sell their art and handicrafts at local fairs and markets, the business has grown to be a popular tourism destination in the region. In 2020, just as the pandemic began, the pair opened a shop in Blinman. Here, visitors can see Kristian carving out traditional woodworks as well as a range of works from around 25 Aboriginal artists. Passionate about sharing his culture, Kristian also offers authentic cultural tours on country and immersive awareness workshops. This unique combination of offering both authentic Aboriginal art and cultural tours has seen Wadna go from strength to strength over the past two years.

Challenges faced

- In 2020, Kristian and Gabby were still working their day jobs and had planned to take their art on the road to local country fairs over the Easter break. By March, border closures and COVID restrictions meant all of the local fairs and markets were forced to close.
- With local opportunities to sell their products 'off the table' for the foreseeable future, Kristian and Gabby started thinking about making their dream a reality, to build and open a shop for their art in Blinman.

Overcoming adversity

- Saw the lockdown of 2020 as a silver lining to build their new Blinman shop and make crafts to sell such as bags and jewellery. By the time lockdown lifted, they were open for business and ready to cater to the intrastate market who were motivated to see their own backyard after months of lockdown.
- Used a strong social media following that had been built up since 2014 to promote the business, including the shop front development. Once opened in October 2020, Kristian and Gabby were blown away by the support they received from locals and visitors alike.
- Filled market gaps. Kristian and Gabby noticed there was a limited cultural focus on art being offered, so began providing authentic, community-based art through their shopfront which provides a place for Aboriginal artists to sell their work.

Lessons learnt

- **Do something different.** The unique offering of Aboriginal art and cultural tours has proven popular in the COVID-normal environment, with visitors wanting to experience the great outdoors and learn more about the land they are on.
- **Build it and they will come.** Kristian and Gabby took a chance and built their Blinman shop and could then cater to pent-up demand from the growing domestic market once lockdown was lifted.
- **A personal approach goes a long way.** Visitors can see Kristian carving traditional woodworks which are often purchased as soon as they are finished. Kristian and Gabby take the time to talk to their visitors, get to know them and teach them about the local area and culture by sharing their own stories. This has led to repeat visitation over the past two years.



I'm passionate about sharing my culture with others because it helps to break down barriers. When we look into it, you'll realise that we're not that different.

Kristian Coulthard, Wadna

The Wadna approach

- **Follow your dreams.** Do what you are passionate about and do it well – people will want to see what is on offer.
- **Work with your neighbours.** Kristian and Gabby work in partnership with other local businesses in the Flinders Ranges & Outback including Wilpena Pound Resort, Beltana, Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, The Prairie Hotel and Iga Warta. They support each other with word-of-mouth recommendations, sharing the love across the tourism region.
- **Don't wear yourself out.** It is okay to take a break. Make the business work for you so you can offer the best experience possible for visitors.

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