

The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Confluence → Cataract Gorge

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:02

We're in the northern part of Tasmania, very close to the city of Launceston.

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We're in the Cataract Gorge, which is a very significant landmark for most Tasmanians.

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And many people who live in Launceston feel that this place is a place of belonging and very important to them.

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And especially, to Aboriginal people because it's a place where old people for thousands of years came to this place to conduct ceremonies - and celebrate this Country.

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Today, we're going to experience some of the wonderful resources that - exist here in this place; to hear about the stories and the history and the significance of Country.



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The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Confluence → Attraction

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:04

Well, I think that the Cataract Gorge is very iconic to most Launcestonians, and of course, on the tourism trail people come here because it is so beautiful.

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It's spectacular when the river's flooding.

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It's spectacular when the river's quiet.

Dean Greeno

00:00:22

I would call this the *heart of Launceston*, as in the beating, actual visceral heart and the arteries are your footpaths in and out, because literally if you stood above it, you would see just people endlessly massing all times of the year, all hours of the day.

Cecilia Wheatley

00:00:38

So breathtaking.

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Just walking down the hill and getting to see the water and also the massive rocks that obviously surround the Gorge.

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It just makes you feel so at home and so comfortable like this is your place.

Patsy Cameron

00:00:52

It's a beautiful place where people can come and reflect, have a picnic perhaps, or just walk around and look at the landscape, which is mostly intact near a big city.

00:01:04

It draws people because of its sheer beauty.

The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Confluence → Connection

Video Transcript

Dean Greeno

00:00:01

00:00:04

The Gorge has a presence.

I find that if I'm not at least barefoot and touching the earth here, I don't feel I've completed the circuit that is me.

Cecillia Wheatley

00:00:15

Every time I come to the Gorge, I feel very connected like there's people watching me and I feel like that's my ancestors actually here in this place, watching over us Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people.

Patsy Cameron

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00:00:43

So when I come in I look first of all at the morphology of the hills and the river, the vegetation; and the resources that are here now would have been here in the deep past.

So it allows me to connect with my ancestors.

So I have that feeling of walking with the ancestors in their footprints.

Cecillia Wheatley

00:00:48

00:01:02

That connection then makes you feel like you've actually been there a hundred times before, and so that feeling of knowing the place and feeling like that you've been there is a great feeling that you experience, which then makes you feel good inside.

So then you want to learn more and so that you can experience that feeling everywhere that you go.

Patsy Cameron

00:01:07

00:01:17

And so my heart sings when I come in here, because it's a place where I know our people gathered for thousands of generations.

It's important that visitors to this place and locals understand how significant this place is to Aboriginal people in the past and the present.

The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Confluence → Development

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:01

I deal with the infrastructure that's here, the grassy lawns and the buildings, by just saying, well OK, they're here for a purpose.

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They're not part of my story as such.

00:00:12

So I tried to dismiss those things.

Dean Greeno

00:00:14

I think this is pretty much developed as far as that they ever want to take the Gorge.

Cecillia Wheatley

00:00:19

It makes it more modernised, I suppose.

The bridge is great because obviously you wouldn't be able to access the other side and the chairlift's great for people that can't walk very far.

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So they get to experience it as well.

Patsy Cameron

00:00:30

I understand that we need the pathways around and of course the protections, you know, with a fence like this.

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We need to make sure people are safe.

Dean Greeno

00:00:39

Half the aspect of it is the fact that you have to walk in.

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The fact that you've got to walk in and listen to the river running, the birds doing what they do, gives you that engagement.

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If you drove up to the middle of the Gorge and stepped out of a car, 98 percent of it's ruined.

Cecillia Wheatley

00:00:56

Usually when I come to the Gorge, though, I sort of go right down, away from all the structures and also all the people, because that's when you get your true experience of on Country is when you're not surrounded by man-made things.

Patsy Cameron

00:01:10

So I have to reconcile that there are things that are intrusive to our culture and spirituality here in the Gorge, but we just have to live with those things, I guess.

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And to see them as overlays.

That they overlay Country, but Country's still there.

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It will always be here, but we can't really have too much more development in a place like this.



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The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Depth → Returning

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:00

If I could read out this paragraph, it will give some idea about how important this place was in the past and how this place resonated with this leader who came here in 1847.

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Remembering that this is colonial language, and remembering for him to understand what this place meant to Aboriginal people, he uses language that's a little bit strange to us but ...

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he wrote, "a chief accompanied the Commandant to Launceston in 1847. At his own request, he was taken to see the Cataract Basin of the South Esk, a river that foams and dashes through a narrow channel of precipitous rocks until a wider space affords its tranquillity".

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So this leader came here with the man that was in charge at Wybalenna and he's talking about this very place where the river comes through a narrow channel and then affords its tranquillity right here where the basin is.

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So you can see how calm that basin is and you could imagine before it was dammed, this river would have been quite wild.

00:01:08

He went on to say, "it was a station of his people".

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We can think about what that might be, what would they be doing here?

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And I think it means that they would be trading in goods, that they would be dancing and singing, that they'd be exchanging information, technology, stories.

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So people would come here from different nations to gather for ceremony.

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They'd also exchange women in marriage, which was part of a cultural way of marriage.

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And I think it's wonderful that West uses these these words to describe this place.

The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Depth → Absence

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:03

"As he drew near, his excitement became intense. He leaped from rock to rock with gestures and exclamations of delight."

00:00:10

So what's he doing?

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He's not just leaping like ...

he's dancing and he's calling out because he says ...

00:00:21

not just to do with his gestures, it's also to do with his exclamations of delight.

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He's singing a song in this place.

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"So powerful were his emotions that the lad with him became alarmed, lest the associations of the scene should destroy the discipline of twelve years exile."

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So there was a young lad with him who was about twelve years old, who had been in exile on Flinders Island for at least 12 years.

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And this young lad got alarmed.

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And I was thinking, why would this dance cause this lad to be concerned when on Flinders Island, you know, the Old People would be dancing anyway?

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This young lad would have seen this elder, this leader dancing, but what he witnessed here caused him to be alarmed.

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It must have been so intense and so incredible and so deep in this man's heart and soul.

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And what he was trying to do here was to call everyone here to come and join him.

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"But the woods where silent: he heard no voice save his own, and he returned pensively with his young companion".

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And, of course, there was no one here to come and join him.

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It must have been so gut wrenching that there was no response to his call.



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The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Depth → An Aboriginal Place

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:02

I want to refer to a quote by Aboriginal historian Dr Shayne Breen, and it's Shayne's perception of Launceston as a cultural space.

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"The site where Launceston was built is a place of great antiquity. It was and remains an Aboriginal place. Two hundred years of British colonisation have obscured but not erased the Aboriginal past. It will always be there because it is etched in the land, visible to those with the eyes to see."

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And I think Shane's quote is very poignant in that it reminds us that you can build a city or roads or you can have infrastructure, but it doesn't erase the Aboriginal past.

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And I think the Gorge is a good example of even though there's development, buildings and the swimming pool and other structures here, it still doesn't erase the story of this place because the boulders and the river and the basin have been here since time began.



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The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Depth → Living Entity

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:02

The river that runs through the Gorge is very significant and you can - hear her flowing over the rocks right now.

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And I'm suggesting that the river is a female, in my belief.

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She's the longest river in Tasmania, and she flows from the Ben Lomond ranges over to the northeast.

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As she comes out of the Ben Lomond Ranges, her name is the *Mangana* Lienta, which translates to 'big water' or Lienta, which translates to 'big water' or 'headwater'.

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Aboriginal people in the past had different names to explain the nuance of a place like a river.

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And as the river flows around Perth and past Hadspen, she's called the *Moorronnoe*.

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I'm not sure what that name translates to, but as the river comes through the Gorge and through the cataract, she's named the *Pleepertoomerla* and that *toomer* part of that name means fast flowing.

00:01:07

And we're surrounded by 200 million year old dolerite, that formed during the time when the dinosaurs walked the Earth.

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And then I look at those dolerite boulders and because I spoke of the river being female, I see the dolerite boulders as being very male and that they are the warriors, that they are the protectors of this place.

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And when the leader came and danced, he danced on those rocks over there and he would have been reconnecting with the spirits of the Gorge.

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In one sense, the river tells us about how Aboriginal people looked at places, and that places are very nuanced.

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And to Aboriginal people, the river would have been a living entity, and part of this place we now call the Gorge.



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The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Reflection → Spirit of Place

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:02

I think probably that feeling that one gets when you walk into the Gorge and to feel like you're coming into a very special place, is something to do with that essence of ancientness.

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And over time, that essence is still here.

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And perhaps the sheer beauty and the feeling of a river running right through this place can touch people's hearts.

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And that's probably what happens when you walk here into this place.

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And it's a place of belonging.

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It's a place where our being is.

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So when you come to a beautiful place like this, I think of Country telling a story about our ancient origins and our histories.

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And I'd like to think the beauty of it represents our existence.



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The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Reflection → Growing Up

Video Transcript

Dean Greeno

00:00:02

I went to Riverside High School.

Part of going to Riverside was we used to row.

00:00:06

And the rowing sheds were at the Tamar Marine, which is just down the front end of the Gorge near the King's Bridge and as part of the training exercise my genius coach, by the name of Chooker, used to have us run what's called the Zigzag Track up through here and back.

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This is at the end of the school day, so you're just going to school all day and had a really great time getting educated, then we'd do this three kilometre run to warm up to go rowing.

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And as such, me and all the boys used to hang in the Gorge all the time since we were like eleven or twelve.

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So that whole connection was very interesting during early period of your life, when you are seeking and trying to get questions to other parts of your own life.

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I didn't connect to it as an Aboriginal till later, but I connected to it straight away, which is kind of very interesting that there might have been a spiritual connection ahead of time.

Cecilia Wheatley

00:00:57

Growing up, we were never allowed to swim in the Gorge.

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We grew up swimming in the pool and we started coming here about the age of six and we started learning about native plants.

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And so as children, we used to walk around the tracks and actually eat the plants.

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So the she oak, which is everywhere here, you can actually eat that - straight off the tree.

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When you take a bite it tastes like sour lollies.

The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Reflection → Place of Learning

Video Transcript

Dean Greeno

00:00:00

I think it's a great place now to learn and move on from.

00:00:03

I think The Gorge now presents itself as a good place of engagement.

Cecillia Wheatley

00:00:08

I've brought groups down here from East Tamar Primary School.

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For them to be able to stop and actually pick something off the tree and just automatically eat it, and for it to be safe, and to see their faces when they actually try it, it's an amazing experience for me to watch.

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And then they they get excited because then they're like, they want to eat all the trees, and obviously that's not possible!

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So it's great to be able to teach them what trees they can actually eat and what bushes they they can eat and when it is safe.

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And they get a lot out of that.

Dean Greeno

00:00:37

I love taking the little kids on a walk and you walk them around the footpaths here.

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You get them to walk through here.

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What I do is I take them on a theoretical journey from St Helens to here.

00:00:45

"Did you have plastic bottles back then?"

"No".

00:00:47

"What are we going to use for water?"

We get water.

00:00:49

We make water carriers.

"So do we organise a trip overnight?"

"No".

00:00:53

"How far ahead are going to organise a trip that's going to take several ... " Oh, well, let's see.

00:00:55

You go to our four-week layout where you're going to make items, you've got to make your trade items.

00:01:01

And so this sort of educates kids and they'll bring them up to the Gorge and you go, "right, you're going to cross the river."

00:01:03

Oh, cross the bridge...

00:01:06

"bridge wasn't here 200 years ago, how we gonna cross the water?"

"We make canoes."

00:01:10

"Well how do you make them?"

Paperbark, and then you point out the trees and various items.

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So it's an interesting crucible of many craft materials just getting to know these items.

00:01:21

It re-engaged, reinvigorated, refired the culture within me.

Cecilia Wheatley

00:01:26

I think the culture being shared is really, really important.

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I think that people that hold in culture, it's going to eventually get lost.

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They're gonna die.

It's going to go to the grave with them.

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And then unfortunately, like the younger generation aren't gonna be able to learn and they're not going to be able to know about their own ancestors.

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And then they can't get the sense of belonging, because they haven't had the experience from what their Old People were doing.

The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Reflection → Grandfather Tree

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:01

So this tree is a black peppermint gum, it's got lovely fluffy leaves, beautiful dark bark.

00:00:08

My ancestral grandfather, *Mannalargenna*, told that it is our Countryman, our kin, our family.

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So Aboriginal people in Tasmania didn't just relate to Country as a whole entity.

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Within Country, there are the trees that belong to certain nations.

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So the black peppermint gum is my family.

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Oyster Bay Nation had the banksia tree as their family and the Bruny Island people had the stringybark gum as their kin and family.

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They told the story that if one group were cranky with the other group - and they would go and spear each other's trees and then say Grandfather would come along and see black peppermint with spears in it and he would pull it out and then go and spear perhaps the banksia.

00:01:02

So it was a wonderful way of resolving conflict, probably.

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But at the same time, he told us how we relate to Country, that everything is precious, our resources are precious.

00:01:14

We need to care for our family.

00:01:17

This one, this old tree here might be 300 years old.

00:01:22

It's really quite old.

00:01:24

What a beautiful tree, it's so majestic and strong and powerful, just like grandfather *Mannalargenna* is and was.

Cataract Gorge

Reflection: Future



The Orb → Living Cultures → Cataract Gorge → Reflection → Future

Video Transcript

Patsy Cameron

00:00:00

You have to work hard at trying to maintain your cultural heritage when there are other things that impact on the outside.

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And so in order to carry out my responsibility, I'm on the Gorge Advisory Committee with the Launceston City Council and I try to impart my views when we're discussing issues to do with the Gorge.

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That's one way of dealing with it at that level.

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So you have to do what you can in order to make a difference or maintain your heritage.

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It allows me to reconnect as a custodian of this area around Launceston because there are no descendants, as far as we know, of this nation where Launceston is.

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Those people are no longer here and their voices are now silent.

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So to me, I feel I can bring a voice to those ancestors in order to make sure the Aboriginal essence of this place is maintained.



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