

SPOTLIGHT ON SONIA BECKWITH

CO-FOUNDER AND GENERAL MANAGER OF
LIVE NINGALOO, EXMOUTH



Sonia's sheer tenacity and go-give spirit has taken her on quite a journey, from the construction industry and corporate world in the United States, to the tourism and non-profit sectors here in Australia. Having beaten all the odds, and cancer, she's extremely passionate about making dreams come true for others by providing meaningful nature experiences.

I take every guest on a personal journey from the very first touchpoint, helping them feel safe, assured and excited so they can really relax and enjoy the experience, get everything they wanted (and more) out of that moment, and never stop talking about it when they leave.

Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

We create individually tailored and intimate wildlife tours, taking singles, families, couples and small groups out to the Ningaloo Reef to swim with whale sharks and humpback whales. And we take it at the pace that nature wants to travel, to reclaim time in a meaningful way and give people the space to really feel something.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

In the little town in the US where I grew up, tourism was not a career option and the culture was a lot different to Australia. Gap years were not encouraged, and the only way to get ahead was to go to college. But I never got to finish my studies. I had a jaw issue requiring surgery and ended up getting a full-time job at a construction company to pay off my medical debts. From there I got into sales, got married and switched to a corporate job. Had I been bold enough to take the risk and explore when I was younger, I think I would have found myself in this amazing industry a whole lot sooner than I did!

So, how did you get into tourism and hospitality?

I'd gone as far as I could on my merits in the corporate world, and there was no way to advance my career without a degree. Then divorce and a cancer scare shook me up and prompted me to travel to Australia, where I discovered my true calling in tourism management – the perfect fit for all the skills I'd picked up in corporate sales. And in a little under two years, my new partner – in business and in life – had started our own tourism business together.

How would you describe yourself?

My personality was suited to tourism the entire time, I just didn't know it. I'm a persevering individual with a go-give spirit. I love that everything I do, I'm doing for our guests. I'm always looking for ways to lighten the load for those around me, always trying

to anticipate their needs before they need to ask me, and always going the extra mile for others.

What do you love most about the industry?

I love that through helping people connect with nature and really feel something, our industry has the capability to spark conversations about conservation. Together, we have the power to create the give-a-hoot factor and inspire people to think about different ways we can live, travel, work and minimise our impact on the environment.

What's the best part of your job?

Making dreams happen. And sometimes that's helping people feel more confident about getting in the water. I take every guest on a personal journey from the very first touchpoint, helping them feel safe, assured and excited so they can really relax and enjoy the experience, get everything they wanted (and more) out of that moment, and never stop talking about it when they leave.

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

Embrace the amazing opportunities and flexibility you have here in Australia to explore and enjoy a variety of different experiences in tourism and hospitality. That's a really important component in helping you decide what's right for you, so you can start fashioning a lifestyle you prefer.

And what's next for you?

My partner and I are working on upskilling the team and recruiting so we can start spending less time working in the business, and more time working on the business and on boards to help expand WA's sustainable tourism offering.

Connect with Sonia on LinkedIn

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