



**BIG TRIP:** For the first time an indigenous tour company is heading to Los Angeles for G'Day LA week, Jenny Hunter, Andy Ralph and their daughter Catherine, 6, will be promoting Kakadu Culture Camp. Picture: FIONA MORRISON

## Cultural tourism to say G'day USA

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**INDIGENOUS** tourism operators will represent Australia for the first time in one of the world's largest trade conferences.

Kakadu Culture Camps owner Andy Ralph will represent one of 11 indigenous businesses attending the G'Day USA conferences in Los Angeles, New York and Toronto next week.

"We'll be saying to them, 'Think about coming to Australia. It will be the trip of a lifetime. It will be only once and tell your friends'," Mr Ralph said.

"We need to get those people, not just to the Great Barrier Reef and the Opera House, but to the Top End and Kakadu."

The delegation of indigenous tourism operators will give demonstrations of cooking, basket weaving and story telling to the 15,000 people at the conference.

"It's great if we can portray all the great things about the Territory, the indigenous culture, the fishing, the lifestyle," he said. "But I think Territorians are the biggest asset to this place."

Tourism Minister Kon Vatskalis will be joining the delegation and said he was "astounded" indigenous businesses had always been left behind.

"The best thing we have to offer overseas, we don't bring it with us," he said.

Mr Vatskalis said he believed the trip was money well spent, despite an expected drop in tourism numbers from the United States caused by the financial crisis.

"If we don't go now and try to reverse the trend, we won't be able to do it later," he said.

"We cannot ignore the North American market. We need to call out to them in these tough times."

Mr Vatskalis said the Territory was also promoting tourism within Australia.

"We're hitting Australia hard, because if international tourists don't come, we want Australians to," he said.

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