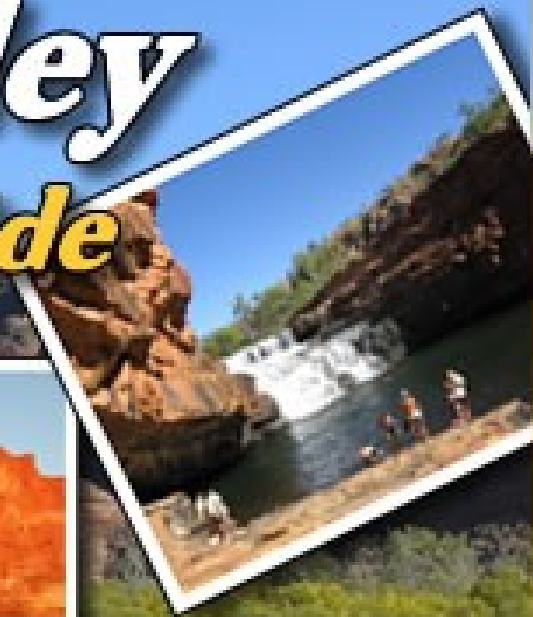


Kimberley ***Pocket Guide***



***Exploring Australia's
Last Frontier***

Birgit Bradtke

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About The Book

Thank you for downloading “**The Kimberley Pocket Guide, Exploring Australia's Last Frontier**”.

I wrote this booklet to help you with the planning of your Kimberley trip. I hope it will give you a good overview of the area, the issues and decisions involved in a trip up here, and that it will answer your important questions. After reading it you should be able to decide

- when you will go,
- for how long you will go,
- how you will get around,
- and most importantly, what you want to see and do while here.

This book is NOT a detailed travel guide. It is, however, a preview of what you can find in my full guide, “**Destination Kimberley**”.

(Available at www.kimberleyaustralia.com/destination-kimberley.html)

In fact, *Part II: General Information*, contains at least half of the general information found in the full guide.

Part III: The Guide, is drastically shortened, and *Destination Kimberley* also has a *Part IV: The Gibb River Road*, which the Pocket Guide does not have.

If you plan to take a fully organised tour through the Kimberley or if you want to just quickly drive through in a 2WD vehicle, then you may decide that this quick guide, combined with what's on my website, is enough for you.

But if you plan a self-drive holiday in the Kimberley then you need more information. A LOT more. [Destination Kimberley](http://www.kimberleyaustralia.com/destination-kimberley.html) has that information.

A few more comments:

If you feel this quick guide is lacking somewhere, don't hesitate to [let me know](#)! Even a good product can always be improved.

Also, as you may know, I am “German Australian”. I lived in the Kimberley for nearly 18 years, but English will always be my second language. I apologize in advance for any grammatical oddities, clunkers and “Germanisms” that you may come across. (And I hope my random approach to punctuation does not distract from the information contained in these pages.)

Again, don't hesitate to let me know about errors. Don't think you can't complain just because the booklet is free. You are helping to make this little guide better for others!

Talking about others... If you find this guide and the website useful, then please help others to find out about it. Mention it on forums, if you have a blog or website, please consider adding a link in a post, the blogroll or favourites, tweet it, pin it, add a link to your Facebook wall... You get the idea. Every link helps!

Thank you!

How To Use This Guide

This guide is written in e-book format. Most of you will be familiar with PDF e-books, in which case you can skip this section and dive straight into the book. But for those of you who are not familiar with PDF e-books, here are a few tips:

If you haven't saved it to your hard drive yet, look around the screen for a disk icon or where it says "Save a copy". (You may need to move the cursor there for it to appear.) Click it, browse to a folder you'll remember and click save.

If you use an iPad, tap near the top of the document in the browser window and choose "Open in iBooks". It will download and store in the iBooks app until you delete it.

Now you can open the e-book and read it on your screen any time you like. Or you can **print it out** and read it like any other book.

All my detailed Destination Guides are formatted and designed to be printed out. Of course! A travel guide that you can't take with you is not much use, is it? This little booklet can also be printed out. But it was mostly designed to be read, and used, from your computer. And while you are still in the planning stage of your trip this can be very handy.

For example, you will come across links in this book. Some of them work just like links on the Web. They take you to webpages with more information. You will recognize such "external" links because they are always written with the www in front of them. Like this: www.kimberleyaustralia.com
Any references to my full guide book, [Destination Kimberley](#), are also external links.

Other links are internal links. They take you to a different part of this booklet. The links in the Table of Contents (TOC) on the previous page are internal links. Clicking on them takes you straight to that chapter. [Try it](#).

And last but not least there are email links. They will open your email editor so you can send a message to the provided address, e.g. a Tourist Information Centre.

Navigation

You have many options to get around this book. You can just scroll up and down, with your mouse or with the scroll bar on the right side of the screen. You can use the little arrows (at the top or bottom of the screen, depending on your version of Adobe Acrobat). You can use the jump links in the TOC. And, if you remember the page number you want to go to, you can type that at the top or bottom of the screen where you see the page numbers. Play around with everything a bit and see what you find most comfortable.

You can also adjust the size of the text by using the plus and minus sign at the top of your screen, or by changing the percentage number that's displayed between the plus and minus sign.

And if none of this makes you feel comfortable while reading, just print the darn thing!

Glossary - Aussie Slang

This page is for non-Australian readers.

Some of our expressions and abbreviations might be unfamiliar to you. They are explained here, some even have a German translation. I just kept adding things as I was writing, whenever I stumbled across something that I thought you might not know. Anything missing? [Let me know](#) and I'll add it.

BBQ: barbecues can be wood or gas fired. Gas barbecues at campgrounds or other tourist facilities are often coin operated. If you want to make use of the cooking facilities at the many Kimberley campgrounds you better have some change handy and learn how to cook on a BBQ plate.

BYO: stands for "bring your own" and means you take your own alcohol to a restaurant. Makes eating out much more affordable!

Cattle station: see *station* below

Corrugations: ridges and dints on the surface of unsealed roads, that make them look like corrugated iron. They shake your bones apart and make the car disintegrate when driving on them... (Wellblechpiste)

Esky: cooler, ice box (Kühltasche)

Homestead: the heart of a *station* (see below). This is where the managers live, but on a large station it's more like the center of a little village, with all the sheds and workers accommodation etc. surrounding it.

Licensed: allowed to serve or sell alcohol. You can't buy alcohol at any supermarket, service station or kiosk, as you can in many European countries. Alcohol sales are very strictly regulated in Australia.

Station: huge expanse of land where cattle is farmed. In the US it would be called a ranch (and be tiny by comparison).

Swag: a bed roll, a whole bed inside a canvas cover that can be rolled up to take with you. Much better than a sleeping bag, unless you want to do an overnight hike...

Thongs: flip flops (Badeschlappen)

And now, let's finally get to the Kimberley...

Part I: Introduction and Overview

The Kimberley plateau covers the north west corner of the Australian continent. It is a wild and still largely untouched land of sweeping plains and huge tidal rivers, rugged ranges and dramatic gorges, as far away from all the Australian population centres as possible, without dropping off the edge of the continent ...

The Kimberley is 421,450 sq km (162,680 sq miles) in size, about a sixth of Western Australia.



On an Australia map the Kimberley looks small, but make no mistake. You are looking at a region that is over three times the size of England, bigger than Germany, larger than Victoria and Tasmania together, or comparable to California. But people are few and far between.

Estimates put our numbers in the region of 35,000.

And there is only one sealed road, the Great Northern Highway, skirting this area along the southern edge. It connects Broome on the west coast with Kununurra on the eastern border. Those two towns are the main entry points and “bases” for tourists.

The third major town in the Kimberley is 220 km north of Broome. Derby is the starting point for the only other main road in the Kimberley: the famous Gibb River Road. This unsealed road runs somewhat parallel to the highway, but cuts right through the red, wild heart of the Kimberley ranges.

Sometimes little choice is a good thing. Having only two roads can greatly simplify the planning of a trip. Drive up one road and back down the other...

Let's do that, starting in Broome.

A Quick Round Trip



Broome on the west coast is the biggest town in the Kimberley and well connected to the rest of Australia by air and by road.

Most Kimberley travellers either start or wrap up their trip in Broome. Some do both.

Broome markets itself as a tropical beach destination with exotic flair. **Cable Beach** with its 22 km of pure white sands is world famous and the turquoise Indian Ocean and red pindan soils and cliffs are of course a photographer's dream. The exotic flair stems from Broome's colourful past as the world's pearling capital and the resulting mix of races and nationalities that make up today's population.

Broome is a good place to relax and acclimatise after a long flight before starting your adventure, and also a place to enjoy a bit of comfort and luxury after a camping trip across the Kimberley.

The Dampier Peninsula north of Broome is still mainly a 4WD destination, even if its main road has now been fully sealed. (The work was completed in November 2020.)

On your way up to beautiful **Cape Leveque** you pass deserted beaches, fantastic fishing spots and many Aboriginal communities that welcome travellers. The Dampier Peninsula has seen a lot of tourism development in recent years. You have many more options for accommodation and camping here than you used to have. From luxury stays to very remote and basic bush camps and Aboriginal experiences, you can find it all.

Once you leave the Broome area and follow the highway north you get to **Derby**, a major regional administration centre and a very friendly, welcoming town. If you

found Broome a bit too hectic and busy (and during peak season it is) you will breathe a sigh of relief when reaching Derby.

Though only 200 km from Broome, and also located on the coast, Derby is definitely not a beach destination. What you find here are huge tidal mud flats, mangrove swamps, and lots of crocodiles. But if you have some time you can jump on a boat cruise to the **Buccaneer Archipelago**, a group of 800 to 1000 of the world's remotest islands. A highlight for many is a flight to the **Horizontal Waterfalls**.

However, for most tourists Derby is simply the place for last minute preparations and to fuel up and stock up the 4WD for a **Gibb River Road** trip.

The Gibb River Road starts just outside Derby. 2WDs can come along for the first part of the trip. The first big turn off from the Gibb River Road takes travellers to the **Tunnel Creek** (now called Dimalurru) and **Windjana Gorge** (now called Bandilngan) national parks.

If you want to see all of the Gibb River Road then you will do this as a detour, and then you have to backtrack. 2WDers, however, just continue on this side road until it joins the Great Northern Highway, where they turn east, towards **Fitzroy Crossing**, or west, back to Broome. (If this sounds confusing have another look at the map.)

The Gibb River Road has miles and miles of exactly what you expect from the Kimberley: colourful, sweeping landscapes, steep ranges, lushly vegetated gorges, enticing rock pools and waterfalls, tidal rivers, cattle stations, road trains... And lots of dust and corrugations!

Hiking, swimming, camping and four wheel driving are the main activities here. And marvelling at the views and the grandness of nature, at the wilderness, the wildlife, and the friendliness of the people who live out here.

The most publicised attractions in order from west to east are **Bell Gorge** (now called Dalmanyi), Galvans Gorge, Manning Gorge, and **El Questro/Emma Gorge**. But there are many, many more not so well known gorges and waterholes, more stations and parks, some along detours on rougher tracks, so bring a sense of adventure.

The awe-inspiring **Mitchell Falls** require a detour to the north (and several extra days). So does a trip to the remote and welcoming Aboriginal community **Kalumburu** on the northern coast (popular with fishermen).

(Note: the access track to the Mitchell Falls is not a gazetted road. Read the fine print of your car hire contract regarding this. Some hire companies don't allow you to travel such roads, so if you do you void any insurance cover. Other companies may not allow it in their standard agreement but will give written permission when asked.)

The much photographed Pentecost River Crossing, a major obstacle to many an early season Gibb River Road trip, is located between the turn off to the Mitchell Falls and El Questro. El Questro is the last big attraction along the GRR. At the end of the Gibb River Road you can turn left/north to visit the historic port town **Wyndham**. Turn right/south and you get to Kununurra.

Kununurra is the main hub of the East Kimberley and home to the Ord River Irrigation Scheme. It's lush and green and tropical, thanks to **Lake Argyle**—a massive dam only 70 km from Kununurra by road. The East Kimberley is a lot more scenic than the flat Broome area. There is a heck of a lot of water here and a heck of a lot to do!

If for some reason you have to skip the Gibb River Road then you may want to allow more time for the East Kimberley around Kununurra. Kununurra gives you access to the actual Kimberley plateau and ranges, so you can still experience what the Kimberley is all about.

Many swimming holes and waterfalls are in the immediate area, the **Ord River** is great for boating and canoeing, and the big tidal rivers keep our fishermen busy. There is a reason why there is a boat in every yard in town.

A visit to **Lake Argyle** is a must and is best combined with a boat trip on the Ord River, all the way down to Lake Kununurra.

Mirima National Park, a “Mini Bungle Bungle”, is only 2 km out of town.

Keep River National Park is only a short hop across the Northern Territory (NT) border, which is only 30 km from Kununurra.

This is the eastern end of the Kimberley. From Kununurra you either continue your trip into the NT, towards Katherine and Darwin, (following my second guide book “[Destination Top End](#)”), or you head back towards Broome.

You can visit the famous **Bungle Bungle National Park** on a return trip from Kununurra (self driving or as part of a tour), or you visit it on the way, when travelling between Broome and Kununurra along the Great Northern Highway. A visit to the Bungles requires a 4WD. (Scenic flights are available from Kununurra.)

Not far from the Bungles turn off is the small town **Halls Creek**. The township itself may not offer much in terms of major attractions, however, several gorges and other sights along the **Duncan Road** are certainly worth a detour.

Wolfe Creek Crater National Park can be accessed via the **Tanami Road**, which starts not far from Halls Creek. That trip is a slightly bigger detour. Following the Tanami Road to the end takes you to Alice Springs and the Red Centre. (Covered in Monica Coleman's [Destination Red Centre](#).)

Following the highway, the next settlement is **Fitzroy Crossing**. There you find the **Geikie Gorge National Park**, the only Kimberley National Park with a sealed access road.

Well, and that's pretty much it. Leave Fitzroy Crossing and head further west, and when you see signs of civilization again it means you are back in Broome.

This was the quick round trip to give you an idea where the big name sights are located, and some sense of orientation. Of course there are other possibilities for routes and schedules, and many more things to see and do. We'll get to that...

Part II: General Information

Getting There

Visa Information

Unless you are an Aussie or a Kiwi (New Zealander) you need a visa to enter Australia.

For most tourists the ETA (Electronic Travel Authority, subclass 601) or eVisitor visa (subclass 651) replaces the old style paper visa and stamp in the passport. An electronic visa is included if you book a package holiday. It can also be arranged by your travel agent or by your airline if you book your flight directly with them. So usually you don't have to worry about a thing, it's all done for you.

This visa allows you to stay in Australia for up to three months.

If you want to stay in Australia for longer, or if for some reason you need to arrange your ETA yourself, you can find all the necessary information, download application forms, apply online and pay online at the very user friendly website of the Department of Home Affairs: www.border.gov.au

Flying

The Kimberley is somewhat out of the way. Most overseas visitors fly into Melbourne or Sydney. Well, unfortunately (or should I say luckily?) we are on the opposite corner of the continent. To get to the Kimberley you often have to get yourself to Perth or Darwin first, though you may be able to fly directly to Broome.

Qantas offers daily direct flights between Perth and Broome and flies at least weekly between Perth and Kununurra as well as Brisbane/Broome and Darwin/Broome. (www.qantas.com.au)

Air North is a Qantas partner airline and flies between Darwin, Kununurra and Broome and sometimes Kununurra-Perth. (www.airnorth.com.au, code share with Qantas)

Virgin Australia flies directly between Darwin, Kununurra, Derby, Broome and Perth. (www.virginaustralia.com/au/en/)

Singapore Airlines (allied with Virgin Australia) trialled a direct Singapore-Broome flight in 2018 (only 4 flights). It did so again in 2019. Unfortunately, these seasonal flights weren't continued beyond June 2019. There haven't been any further trials or permanent routes established since then.

No real budget carrier services our neck of the woods. All flights to the Kimberley are expensive. The earlier you book the better your chances to get a good price.

Driving

Driving can be a very attractive option for those who have the time.

From Darwin:

The 860 km trip from Darwin via Katherine to Kununurra is one of the most scenic drives you can do in this country. On the way lie Kakadu and Litchfield National Park, the Katherine Gorge (Nitmiluk), Gregory National Park (Judburra) and the Keep River National Park. And in between the parks this drive simply has some of the best scenery in all of Australia.

You can cover the distance in a single day. Three to five days allow for some stops in the parks. (I recommend Litchfield, Katherine Gorge and Keep River for a shorter trip.) If you want to have a good look around plan for one to two weeks. If you want to really explore the region allow more.

For people who plan to travel via Darwin I offer a second guide book, called [Destination Top End](#). It covers the tropical regions of the Northern Territory, including such icons as Kakadu, Litchfield and Katherine Gorge, and certainly covering a lot more than those usual tourist hot spots! I can take you to places where even during peak season you can get away from the masses and experience some real wilderness instead.

You can find out more about it here:

www.kimberleyaustralia.com/destination-top-end.html

From Perth:

Driving from Perth is also a possibility, but only recommended for people who have a minimum of four weeks or more available for the whole trip (whole trip means including your time in the Kimberley).

You can cover the over 2400 km distance from Perth to Broome in two to three days. Take a week and you'll see a few things. I recommend no less than two weeks to really make it worthwhile to drive all that distance.

Here are a few places you will probably want to look at on the way:

- Pinnacles Desert
- Kalbarri
- Monkey Mia
- Coral Bay
- Exmouth
- Karijini National Park
- Millstream-Chichester National Park
- Eighty Mile Beach

From Alice Springs:

For people coming from central Australia the Tanami Road is an interesting short cut from Alice Springs to Halls Creek (a distance of about 1050 km). You don't need to be a hard core adventurer to cross the Tanami Desert. Any reliable 4WD vehicle is up to the job, no matter how inexperienced the driver. Depending on the road conditions it can, however, at times be a slow and tiring drive.

(I have included a chapter with all the necessary information about the Tanami Road in the main guide, [Destination Kimberley](#).)

The alternative is the over 1600 km drive along the highway, via Tennant Creek (Devils Marbles), Mataranka and Katherine to Kununurra. (This area, including the Alice Springs and Uluru region, is covered in the third Destination guide, [Destination Red Centre](#), which was released in March 2017).

By Bus:

Greyhound operates between Darwin, Kununurra and Broome. To give you an idea what you are in for, here are the approximate driving times:

- Broome-Darwin: 23.5 hrs
- Broome-Kununurra: 13 hrs
- Kununurra-Darwin: 10.5 hrs

See their website for current details on prices, passes and specials.
(www.greyhound.com.au)

The Best Time To Visit The Kimberley

I get many questions along the lines of, "We plan to go in April/June/September. We really want to see the ... but wonder if ... What are your thoughts?"

So, here are my thoughts:

(Tables with the temperature averages are at the end of this chapter. But averages don't mean much. Our climate is characterised by its extremes. On top of that climate change is making things even more unpredictable, like elsewhere in the world.)

April

April is the pre-start of the dry season and the pre-start of the tourist season. **Some** of the tours that close over the wet season start operating again, **some** of the more out of the way places and accommodations open. For example El Questro Station traditionally opens for tourists on April 1. **If possible.**

You **may** be able to get into the Bungle Bungles **if** your car (and the driver) can handle deep water. You **may** be able to see parts of the Gibb River Road, but you won't be able to drive all the way through. The Pentecost River will likely stop you.

But there is also the chance that the Kimberley will see a late cyclone, and that means there is a chance of flooding. Even the highway could get closed for a few days. It's still pretty warm (day temp. can be above 35°C) and sticky, and you need insect repellent to sit outside in the evenings.

On the upside, April is definitely a great month for nature enthusiasts and a great month to see the waterfalls and rivers still raging. And that **is** an awesome sight. The Kimberley is most beautiful during and immediately after the wet. There is no doubt about that.

When people ask me, "Will we be able to do this or that?" all I can say is, "I don't know." **Every wet season is different and nobody can predict what you will find.** April is for people who are adventurous, flexible, can take enough time, and who are willing to take it as it comes and make the most of what they find.

May

This is the month when things really kick into gear. All the tourism businesses are operating and most roads are open. However, there is no guarantee that the Gibb River Road will be open. The later in May you arrive, the better your chances. The last roads to open, usually a few weeks after the Gibb River Road opens, are the Kalumburu Road and the track up to the Mitchell Falls.

Catching the gorges and waterfalls along the Gibb River Road at their best is a gamble for overseas tourists. You have to book your trip well in advance, yet nobody can

predict when the roads will open until a few weeks or even days beforehand. And even then there is no guarantee!

If you plan to venture off the beaten track make sure you get the latest updates about the state of the road.

Downsides: early May can still be warm and sticky. There may still be the odd shower around. Also, nobody told the mosquitos and other bugs that the wet is over!

In my personal opinion May is the best time to see the Kimberley. All the roads open at different times, and all the attractions are at their best at different times. You can never see everything at its best. A trip in May offers a good compromise.

One word of warning: Broome gets very busy a lot earlier than all other places. Book ahead. Anything you want to do in Broome, accommodation, car hire, tours, book ahead. By mid May Broome is booked solid.

June

Peak season starts mid to end of June. (It varies a bit, depending when the school holidays start). During June tourist numbers are steadily increasing. Most travel agents and tourism mammoths say June to August is the best time. I think that depends what you are looking for... June to August is certainly the time with the most pleasant day temperatures. (But nights can get cold!)

June is a good time for people who want to make sure they can see all of the Gibb River Road and the Mitchell Plateau, and also for people who are very worried about the four wheel driving, but who'd love to see the more out of the way places on their own.

You will still find a lot of water in the pools, but by the end of June the smaller falls may be reduced to a trickle or dry. (Not the Mitchell Falls. After a really good wet season they can flow well into September, but of course the flow rate will be less and less.)

The dry season is dry. Blue skies and wonderful temperatures are guaranteed every day. At least that's what we all knew and that's what the tourists knew who were out and about along the Gibb River Road, on the Mitchell Plateau and in the Bungles in June 2007.

And then it rained. And rained. And rained. It rained on and off for over a week. Not a little stray cloud and a bit of drizzle, but constant, solid, soaking rain that led to extended road closures and had people stranded for many days. The sun did not show at all for over a week, the North-West was under a solid blanket of thick clouds.

Huh? Back then, if anybody had suggested such a weather event may occur, we would have laughed at them. But that was then.

The reality is that nothing is impossible any more. Things are changing. The climate is shifting and the wet seasons are becoming ever more unpredictable.

It rained again in June in 2008. (Though not as much.) It didn't rain seriously in 2009, but there were days when it looked as if it might. Then there was 2010, when May was as wet as March and it still rained in June! The pattern hasn't gotten any more reliable since. 2016 and 2017 wet seasons were huge and late. 2019? There basically was no wet season, no big rains worth mentioning. What can I say... When it comes to the end of our wet seasons there are no guarantees, ever.

July/August

Tourist numbers are peaking from July to August. School summer holidays in the northern hemisphere overlap with school holidays in Australia. This is a very busy time of the year anywhere in the Kimberley. Yes, it's nice and cool during the days, but it is also getting progressively dry and dusty.

Everything is packed. There is a steady procession of caravans trundling along the highway and a similar procession of 4WD campervans on the Gibb River Road. Campgrounds fill up early so if you want a good spot be there early! Book accommodation ahead where possible, definitely book well ahead if you want to hire any vehicle and avoid Broome best as you can. (The second half of August is quieter.)

The cooler weather offers the best opportunities to see crocodiles, especially in the mornings. They will be lazing on river banks and logs to warm themselves.

Fishermen and -women take note: the colder the rivers the harder it gets to catch barramundi!

September

Now it starts to noticeably warm up and the place noticeably clears out. Every year we have a week or two of hot weather in late August/early September. It makes all the Australian winter escapees hitch up their vans, point their vehicles south and head off.

And then we usually get several more weeks of reasonable temperatures after that (though it's a gamble regarding when exactly that will be...) September is not a bad time IF you don't mind hot weather. The heat is still very dry and therefore very bearable. The nights are still reasonably cool and camping is great. No bugs and you don't freeze your bum off. Late in September the longer hikes during the day can become strenuous and especially among the rocks of the Bungle Bungle range you will feel the heat!

October

This is the very last month of the tourist season and there aren't many people around. Some businesses start to shut their doors, depending on their location and offerings.

It will get hot and hotter, even a bit humid, and you will see the first storm clouds piling up on the horizon. There may be the odd downpour bringing welcome relief,

but don't count on it. The countryside is all brown and even the big waterholes are now stagnant and smelly, if not totally dry.

If you plan to go camping take into account that the nights can be stifling. Long drives in cars without air-conditioning become unbearable. Plan any walks for the early morning hours, go for a swim in the afternoon if possible, (or do your driving then if you have air-con).

One reader asked me if I think he's crazy planning a camping trip for October. Well, I can't call him crazy. My first visit to the Kimberley was in October and I fell in love with the place and stayed. So if you think you can handle the heat...

The best way to deal with the heat is to be active (within reason), to drink lots and to not think about it. We just ignore it. You can do the same.

Upsides: From a local's point of view... We can drive to the supermarket or post office and park near the door. Just like that!

November

By November everything looks parched and burned, and everybody is looking towards the sky. When will it rain? Some years the rain comes early, some years you think it will never happen.

The tourist season is definitely over. Many tourism businesses have closed, and it's just too hot to even think about doing anything. Camping is no fun in this weather.

Afternoon showers can cool things down for a few hours, but gradually the Kimberley just turns into one big sauna. The first roads get closed.

In my opinion it's the worst month for a visit to the Kimberley. That doesn't mean you can't do anything while you're here. (See below.) But if you can somehow plan things differently, I would...

The only upside: it's mango season!

December to March: the Wet Season

If your only chance to come here would be during the wet season, does it make sense to visit the Kimberley during that time of the year? Or is it madness?

I think it makes sense. Many locals consider the wet season the best time of the year, and so do I. But it is important to understand that a wet season visit is a totally different experience from what you see advertised for the average Kimberley holiday. Depending on what you are looking for it may not make sense for you.

And it is important to understand just how unpredictable the wet season is! We can't predict when it starts. We've had years with freak early storms in September, we've had years where it hardly rained at all until March.

November/December most rain falls in form of thunderstorms in the evenings, over night into the early mornings. (If it rains at all...) The country is very dry and can absorb staggering amounts of water. Flooding is very unlikely. It's an uncomfortable time of the year, stinking hot, but at least you won't get stuck. The highway should be open. Unsealed roads, however, will mostly be closed.

The thunderstorms are an awe-inspiring experience. The purple and green clouds pile up on the horizon, roll in, the temperature drops, with the first clap of thunder the wind starts to howl and then the tension of the whole day releases in a sudden deluge... ankle deep water rushing down the roads within minutes... The spectacle is followed by a lightning show on the horizon that lasts for hours, and a deafening frog concert that lasts all night.

Christmas, New Year and early January our towns look like ghost towns. **Nothing** is open, except for the supermarket, post office and pub. And those are empty. This is when **everybody** goes on their well deserved holiday. For most business owners it's the only time of the year they can afford to take a big break.

January to March can be very wet and the temperatures drop. Cyclones are always a possibility. In between cyclones it can be sunny and steamy hot for weeks. If a cyclone or tropical low pressure trough comes through you may experience up to a week of low, grey skies and non stop rain.

Only the coastal towns need to worry about the destructive winds, but the rain and floods reach far inland.

The highway **always** floods and gets cut off at some stage. But we can't tell you ahead when, where, or for how long. If you have to be somewhere at a certain date, fly. Don't plan to drive across the Kimberley unless you can afford to be a week late.

The humidity is extreme. The dishes in the cupboard look as if they haven't been dried, the clothes you don't wear smell stale, we use ExitMould as deodorant and wardrobe desiccators are the hottest selling item.

As far as sightseeing goes, there are still many things you can do here. Broome will be humid but at least there will be some room to move.

You may be able to get to Cape Leveque. Fly if you need to. At Cape Leveque you can even swim in the ocean. You can't in Broome, because it's stinger (jellyfish) season.

Scenic flights along the northern coast are spectacular! The falls are at their best in the wet, and many are only visible from the air.

There are scenic flights over the Bungles, river cruises or canoe trips on the Ord in Kununurra, and lots of smaller waterfalls and swimming holes that don't even exist during the dry.

The land is lush and green and fresh and clean. You can watch things grow and all the wildlife is frantically mating and breeding. Granted, you can't go far, but you don't have to. There are rock pools and waterfalls absolutely everywhere, and the barramundi are biting like crazy.

To visit during the wet season you need to take time, you need to be willing to put up with the inconveniences, and you need to have a real appreciation for nature. Not so much for nature as a pretty back drop, but for nature as a force, a powerful and humbling life force that pulsates through the whole place.

Average Temperatures in the Kimberley

Here are the promised temperature averages. Please, use them only as a rough guideline. The actual daily maximum or minimum temperature can easily be ten or more degrees above or below the average. Also, humidity adds another dimension. Broome might be cooler in summer, but that does not mean it's more comfortable.

All the temperatures in the table are in degrees Celsius.

The west coast (Broome), the south (Halls Creek) and the eastern border (Kununurra):

Broome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
average daily max	33.3	32.9	33.9	34.3	31.5	29.2	28.8	30.3	31.7	32.8	33.5	33.8
average night min	26.3	25.9	25.4	22.5	18.2	15.3	13.6	15.0	18.4	22.3	25.0	26.4

Halls Creek	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
average daily max	36.4	35.3	35.1	33.3	30.0	27.2	27.3	30.3	34.1	37.0	38.2	37.7
average nightly min	24.3	23.8	22.9	20.5	17.1	13.9	13.1	15.6	19.5	22.9	24.6	24.8

Kununurra	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
average daily max	36.2	35.6	35.4	35.3	32.9	30.3	30.6	34.0	36.3	38.3	38.6	38.0
average nightly min	25.0	24.9	24.2	21.7	19.1	15.9	15.2	17.9	21.2	23.9	25.5	25.7

The Gibb River Road (Mt Elizabeth Station) and the far north (Mitchell Plateau):

Mt Elizabeth	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
average daily max	33.1	32.3	32.2	32.4	30.1	28.0	28.4	30.4	34.1	36.1	36.3	34.0
average nightly min	22.0	21.8	20.3	16.9	12.2	9.0	8.0	9.4	14.9	19.5	21.8	22.3

Mitchell Pl.	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
average daily max	32.5	32.1	32.7	33.2	31.7	29.6	30.1	32.5	34.5	35.7	36.0	34.5
average nightly min	22.8	22.6	21.9	18.6	14.8	11.2	9.7	12.7	16.4	20.0	22.3	23.0

How Much Time Should You Take?

How much time do you need to see everything? How much is enough?

It's not uncommon for Australians to escape to Broome for a **long weekend**. You can find some amazing packages during the off season, and if all you want to do is relax on the beaches, slurp some cocktails, and enjoy a stroll while gazing at the most amazing sunsets this planet has to offer... Go for it. Better to recharge the batteries for three days than not at all.

Five days give you a chance to have a good look around the Broome area and enjoy a night or two at Cape Leveque. An alternative is to combine a Broome stay and a round trip to Derby, Tunnel Creek & Windjana Gorge (one night), Geikie Gorge/Fitzroy Crossing and back to Broome. Make it **seven nights** and combine all of the above. Or add one more night and see at least Bell Gorge on the Gibb River Road.

For a **trip from Broome to Kununurra on the highway**, taking in Derby, the above parks and the Bungle Bungle, you should take a minimum of four to five nights (one or two in the Bungles). This does **not** include any time spent in Broome or Kununurra. 2WD drivers have to skip the Bungles, you only need two or three nights.

For a **trip from Derby to Kununurra along the Gibb River Road**, again including Tunnel Creek and Windjana, but without the Mitchell Plateau, I recommend a minimum of four nights. To **include the Mitchell Plateau** add at least another two.

Of course, you can drive from Broome/Derby to Kununurra in a single day, both on the highway or via the Gibb River Road. But you won't see anything. The suggested times give you time to see the main attractions. Quickly. You will need more if you want to enjoy some time camping and exploring or get off the beaten track.

For Gibb River Road adventurers who want to see the Bungles but who are not returning to the starting point of their trip: allow two nights for a **round trip from Kununurra to the Bungles and back**, or all you do is driving. Add a third night and use the Duncan Road for one leg, instead of backtracking on the highway.

You can see **Kununurra** in a day. Add a day each for an excursion to Wyndham, Lake Argyle or Emma Gorge/El Questro. From Kununurra you can drive to Darwin in a single day if you are in a hurry, or in a week, taking in all the national parks on the way. (Keep River, Gregory, Katherine Gorge, Litchfield and Kakadu.)

The above times are the absolute minimums I recommend for the individual areas. Mix and match as required. You can get through faster, but then you have to start skipping things. Sometimes that's the only option.

To see "everything", or rather at least most of the main attractions as covered in the [Destination Kimberley](#) guide, I suggest a minimum stay of three weeks. Four weeks to include sightseeing on the way to Darwin.

If you have more time, all the better!

Getting Around

Public Transport and Busses

Public transport is a possibility, but certainly not the most attractive option to see a remote wilderness region. Having said that, thousands of backpackers and budget travellers arrive in the Kimberley each year and they get around just fine.

Greyhound was already mentioned in a previous chapter. Their service stops at all towns. If you need to get off in between (say you made an arrangement with someone from a cattle station to pick you up) let the driver know. Usually they pull up for you.

Unfortunately they have dropped their service between Perth and Broome and these days only service Broome – Darwin. (The route includes Derby.)

Self Driving

The best way to see the Kimberley is to have your own wheels, period. Self driving is by far the most popular way to see this region and the [Destination Kimberley](#) guide is written for self drivers.

2WD or 4WD?

If you plan to explore along the Gibb River Road you need a 4WD. If you plan to drive into the Bungles you need a 4WD. You also need a 4WD to drive to Cape Leveque north of Broome.

If you plan to skip the Gibb and to fly over the Bungles, to Cape Leveque and over the Wolfe Creek crater, if you are not interested in exploring any little used bush tracks to less famous waterfalls or great fishing or camping spots, then you don't need a 4WD.

The remaining (few) tourist attractions are usually (though not always) accessible by 2WD, even if some of the roads are unsealed. (E.g. the road to Tunnel Creek and Windjana Gorge.)

During the dry season some people even take 2WDs across the Gibb River Road. It's risky, but not impossible.

However, if you are hiring a vehicle you can't access any of those places. Hire companies do not allow 2WD vehicles to be taken off road. (Also always read the fine print of **any** 4WD hire agreement regarding roads that may be excluded.)

If you are travelling around Australia in a 2WD you have the option to hire a 4WD for just a day or two, for example to drive to Cape Leveque or into the Bungles, or to explore the Kununurra area, or El Questro, or whatever takes your fancy.

Caravans and Camper Trailers

You can't take dual axle or standard caravans and trailers into the **Bungles**, period. It's not allowed so don't try. Only single axle, dedicated off road/heavy duty vans and trailers are allowed.

You shouldn't take standard caravans along the **Gibb River Road**. Very sturdy, dedicated off-road vans can be ok, provided you don't mind them getting knocked around a bit. Depending on the make of van and on the road conditions at the time, it may suffer though. The emphasis is on sturdy.

Off-road camper trailers are fine, provided they are sturdy, (designed for a tough life, not just "off-road" by name, as some are) and that you drive slowly and carefully.

If you are towing you can **store your caravan** in Broome, Derby or Kununurra (for a Gibb River Road trip), in Warmun or at the start of the Spring Creek Track (to visit the Bungles) and at Drysdale Station on the Kalumburu Road or at the King Edward River Camp (to visit the Mitchell Plateau). See the relevant chapters in [Destination Kimberley](#) for more details.

How Much Experience Do You Need?

If you plan to skip the Gibb and to fly into the Bungles, solely because you think you are not up to the four wheel driving, think again! Please.

Provided the roads are dry and creeks are low – and during the main tourist season they are – you don't need any experience and you won't be doing any four wheel driving. Not on the Gibb River Road and not in the Bungles. All you do need is the high clearance and tough tyres and suspension of a four wheel drive vehicle because of the rocks and holes on the roads, the corrugations and the bumpy creek crossings.

The Kimberley is touted as a remote wilderness and real challenge, but the place isn't exactly deserted. During the tourist season it's actually very busy. You can't get away from people here! As long as you stick to the tracks you will never be alone.

Don't miss out on a wonderful trip because someone told you nonsense about how difficult and dangerous it is!

People who give that kind of advice have either never been here, or they were here twenty years ago (it was a bit wilder then), or they stand to earn money if you book a tour or scenic flight instead.

Much more detailed information can be found in the chapter "Driving around the Kimberley" in [Destination Kimberley](#). It has absolutely everything you need.

Everybody can self drive the Gibb River Road.

I have wonderful trip reports from single mothers with children, from retirees in their 70s, and from countless people who have never done any camping or four wheel driving before, people who were warned that they would wreck their tyres, their cars, their holiday... Warned by people who do not know what they are talking about.

Kimberley Trip Reports: www.kimberleyaustralia.com/kimberley-trip-reports.html

Gibb River Road Trip Reports: www.kimberleyaustralia.com/gibb...

Driving in the Kimberley is not hard. The car does the work. You just turn the steering wheel in the right direction and accelerate and brake as required.

Anyway, in *Destination Kimberley* you will find a long chapter about driving in the Kimberley, and the destination chapters include very detailed information about all the roads and tracks, and about how easy or rough they are. There may be some side tracks that you decide to skip, but do not skip all of the Kimberley by limiting yourself to sealed roads.

(Having said all that, the wet season is a different story. But the issue of river and creek crossings is addressed in *Destination Kimberley* as well.)

Crossovers, Softroaders and All Wheel Drives

These days there are so many different AWDs, "softroaders" and other "toy" 4WDs out there, it makes your head spin.

Which of them are suitable to "tour the Kimberley"? This question comes up in some form or other quite regularly.

There is no hard and fast answer. It all depends what exactly you want to do, on the time of the year, and on the driver.

Someone who has grown up in country Australia and started driving old paddock bombs around the bush at age 16 will be able to go nearly anywhere in a 2WD. But he'll probably also know how to fix it if something goes wrong!

You can "travel the Kimberley" in any vehicle. But the kind of vehicle determines what you can see and do, where the limits are.

Because the conditions of our roads change so much from year to year and over a season, it is impossible to say exactly which models will go how far.

If you have a high clearance 4WD like a Landcruiser or a Patrol (hire 4WDs and 4WD campervans usually are high clearance), then you can access all the places I write about during the dry season, and it doesn't matter if you ever sat in a 4WD before or not.

There are also many smaller 4WDs that are not as expensive to run but have good clearance and low range gears and are well up to the challenge. Hiluxes, Rodeos, Pathfinders are examples and there are many more.

It gets trickier when you get to the new All Wheel Drives and crossover models. If you have such a low vehicle, then you have to wait a bit longer into the season for the rivers to drop further. You also have to pay a lot more attention to the road.

The lower the car, the more careful you have to be, especially at all the creek crossings. The less clearance you have, the more experience you need. You need to be able to judge if the underside of your car will clear an obstacle. When necessary, you need to be able to put your wheels exactly where you want them, i.e. on the high parts of the road, not into the ruts and holes.

You also need to understand that your tyres and suspension are weaker and more vulnerable as those on the "real" 4WDs. Your car was not designed for this terrain.

It's amazing how far you can take those cars, IF you know what you're doing, and IF you are willing to drive slowly and carefully enough.

But AWDs and crossovers are certainly not the ideal car for this terrain, and many of them you probably would not want to take into the Bungles or up onto the Mitchell Plateau, no matter what the time of the year.

If you do want specific advice for your particular make and model, I suggest you visit the exploroz.com forum (www.exploroz.com/Forum/Default.aspx).

That's a very active 4WD forum with many members. Between them they have driven pretty much any car on any (doable) track in Australia and they can share their first hand experiences, something that one single person obviously can't offer for all cars.

My road classification system

The quality of our roads depends on two main factors: when it was last graded, and your personal perception. To call roads "good" or "bad" can be misleading. It all depends on your views, your background and experience, and on the timing.

I remember one particular trip that we made in several cars. Two local cars plus one car load of visitors. During a break I commented to my local friend what an excellent job the shire had done on that road, how good it was now and how well it had held up over the wet season.

The visitor from down south heard that comment and exclaimed, "Are you kidding? This is the worst road we've ever been on! It's shocking!"

Yep, perceptions vary.

I also remember two reader letters I once received in the same week. In the second one the man criticized my description of the Cape Leveque Road as rough as totally misleading and said it ought to be listed as excellent. The first letter had mentioned that it was the worst road the people had ever been on. (And those guys had been around and across Australia a few times.)

It turned out the shire had graded the road before the other fellow got to it.

Yep, road conditions also vary.

So, to make sure we understand each other, here is my personal classification system:

Excellent

When I call a road excellent it means that although it is unsealed it is suitable for high speed cruising (up to and above 100 kph). The surface is smooth, there are no pot holes or washouts or sandy bog holes etc. Creek crossings are often reinforced with concrete. Caravans and trailers are fine. Examples are the Duncan Road and the southern half of the Tanami Road (once they've been fixed up after the wet and before they've become totally knackered out again).

However, you may encounter places where you have to slow down, like creek crossings, or after rain you may come across damaged parts, so be vigilant. Also keep in mind that a lot of cattle country is unfenced and that wildlife is plentiful. I never drive that fast on the dirt, even though many of our roads would allow it.

Good

Roads with a more uneven surface, slightly rocky or corrugated, allowing you to drive at 50 to 80 kph. Caravans and or trailers may or may not be fine. It depends how sturdy they are, the distance, and how fast you drive. It's not the most comfortable ride, but other than that there are no problems whatsoever, you just have to slow down a bit. 2WD vehicles will also get through.

Most of the Gibb River Road itself is an excellent to good road, though it can vary over the length of it and over the year. (The western half is usually in better shape than the eastern parts.)

The side roads off the Gibb River Road, which take you to the attractions, are not always so good, plus there are of course the river and creek crossings, hence the recommendation of a 4WD for the Gibb River Road.

Rough

A rough road in my books is one where I can't use fourth gear. If I am stuck with using first and second only then it's very rough. But this is still not difficult! You just need to make sure that you allow enough time for the trip. Anybody can drive these roads and any off road camper trailer is fine. The real off road vans should be ok in most cases, too.

But this is where flimsy standard trailers and caravans are definitely not recommended. They can not withstand the knocks and vibrations coming from the corrugations and rocks and may very well just disintegrate on you. Vans may have trouble clearing steep creek banks. AWDs may come up against their limits, 2WD vehicles are also unsuitable. Usually you need more clearance.

Some side roads of the Gibb River Road are rough, the track into Purnululu is another example. The Gibb itself can also get rough in parts when it's due for grading or if it's been damaged after unseasonal rains.

Experience required

This means you may need the low range gears or the actual 4WD of your car, or that you have to cross water deeper than 500 mm (for which you should engage low range 4WD).

You don't really need to have much experience, but you do need to know how to engage the low range gears and the four wheel drive and how much water your car can handle. As long as you make sure the 4WD hire man shows and explains all that you will be fine. Those tracks require confidence and common sense more than actual skill or experience. Just take it easy.

An example may be parts of the road to the Mitchell Plateau, especially early in the season, though most of it is just rough to very rough. Another example is the road into Purnululu in the first few weeks of the season (mainly because of the many creek crossings) or even the Gibb River Road when it first opens. As soon as they dry out and the rivers and creeks drop those two are just rough or even good.

Challenging

Real 4WD tracks that may involve rock hopping, deep soft sand, boggy mud. If you never sat in a 4WD before then only attempt this in a convoy with more experienced drivers.

None of the roads to the usual Kimberley destinations are challenging.

Summary

Most roads and tracks combine several of the above or fall somewhere in between. Generally the worst case scenario is that you have to drive a lot slower than you would like to.

The main point to take away is: You can do this!

Tours

If you don't have your own transport, or if you have a 2WD, or if you are towing a caravan, then you can see the less accessible places by joining a tour.

There is quite a selection available, especially out of Broome and Kununurra. You can pick from half day, full day and several day tours. There are bus tours and 4WD tours, cruises and flights, canoe trips and hikes, and some tours combine several of the above.

You will find comprehensive listings and contact details for local tour operators in the full guide book, [Destination Kimberley](#).

Alternatively you can check with the Kimberley Tourist Information Centres. In the chapter called [More Information](#) you find contact details for all the Kimberley Tourist Information Centres. They have the most up to date info on most tours that are available and will be happy to help you find just the right one.

Maps

The Kimberley map that I recommend is produced by HEMA. It is **the** best map of the Kimberley for tourists, period.

This is not just a personal preference of mine. The HEMA Kimberley map is the map that you see laminated and glued to the desk of every tourist information centre in the Kimberley. It is the map that best helps the people behind the desk to answer your questions.



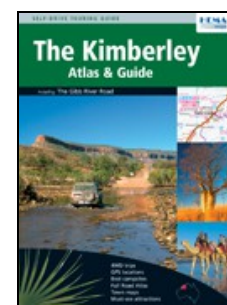
[The HEMA Kimberley map](#) is more than just a road map:

- It highlights all the attractions, reserves, national parks etc, and gives you a short description of what there is to see and do.
- It shows exactly what services are available at the remote roadhouses, stores and wilderness camps.
- It lists GPS coordinates for every roadhouse, landmark, Aboriginal community, for anything that has a name.
- It lists phone numbers for wilderness camps, national park offices, shire offices, main roads offices and other government departments, anything you might need on your trip.
- On the back you have a larger scale map of just the Gibb River Road, again with explanations of all the sights along the way.
- And on top of all that you get a lot of beautiful pictures of the Kimberley, and a short travel guide for the region.

It's a must have map.

Unless, of course, you own the [HEMA Kimberley Atlas & Guide!](#)

(If you are not in Australia you can also get those maps on Amazon and elsewhere.)



National Parks

The opening times of national parks in the Kimberley vary. Most parks are open by the end of April and remain open until December. Our weather is, however, unpredictable and early or late wet season rains can warrant park or access road closures at other times.

Visitor fees apply to many national parks across Western Australia. You can pay for access to parks individually. You can also purchase a **parks pass** that covers all of them.

Several parks in the Kimberley that were formerly free now attract entry fees. As of 2024 those parks are:

- Wunaamin Miliwundi (formerly King Leopold Range) Conservation Park
- Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungle)
- Dimalurru (Tunnel Creek) National Park
- Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) National Park
- Mirima National Park (Hidden Valley)

Note: the Geikie Gorge National Park boat trip is NOT covered by a pass. It costs extra.

Note: a WA parks pass is no longer needed to access the Mitchell River National Park, due to the introduction of the Ngauwudu Road Zone Pass by the local indigenous community. (\$50 per person for adults, \$20 for one or more children. See Mitchell Plateau chapter in Destination Kimberley for details.)

Camping fees are not covered by the passes, you pay extra for camping. As of 2024 camping fees are \$15/\$12.50/\$4.50 for adults/concession card holders/children in camps without facilities and \$20/\$15/\$5.50 with facilities like toilets, showers, picnic tables, barbecues or shelters.

Day passes for individual parks can be purchased at park entry points. The park entrances are not always staffed, so you may need to have the correct change to pay your entry fee.

Parks passes that cover all parks are more convenient and also a lot more economical to buy.

Where to buy passes

All passes can be bought at

- DBCA offices (formerly DPaW Department of Parks and Wildlife)
- The online shop on the DBCA website: shop.dbca.wa.gov.au
- Over the phone: (08) 9219 8000
- From select tourist outlets and retail stores across WA. (Ring the above number to find the nearest park pass outlet or [check this page.](#))

Entry Pass Pricing

(as of April 2024)

Day Pass

You can visit more than one park with this day pass (if you can get from one to the other quickly enough).

- \$17 per vehicle (up to 12 legally seated people)
- \$10 per motorcycle and concession card holders

Holiday Pass

Allows unlimited entry to all parks, valid for a number of days or weeks for one vehicle, regardless of number of passengers. The best pass for most Kimberley visitors. Available options:

- \$70 for four weeks
- \$50 for two weeks/14 days
- \$30 for five days

Annual Pass

Unlimited entry to all WA parks for 12 months.

- \$130 per vehicle

Money Matters

You are not leaving the 21st century behind when visiting the Kimberley.

There is the usual range of major banks in all Kimberley towns. Your credit card will be accepted pretty much everywhere, you can find ATMs in all towns and just about everybody who has a cash register offers EFTPOS.

There are some exceptions (some remoter roadhouses, small businesses), so it is advisable to always carry some cash.

On the Gibb River Road:

There are obviously no banks, but several of the stations and roadhouses offer EFTPOS facilities and accept major credit cards. Having said that, some of the stations out here that do welcome tourists can only take cash.

You will also need cash to pay your camping fees at some of the campgrounds.

Costs

I won't beat around the bush: it won't be a cheap holiday. Western Australia is the most expensive state in Australia and the Kimberley is the most expensive region in Western Australia. The reason is obvious: we are far away from everywhere. Everything has a high transport cost associated with it.

Transport:

The prices for hire vehicles vary too much to list everything here. Factors are size of the vehicle, 2WD or 4WD, one way hire or return, camping gear included or not, how long the trip is... Check the hire company websites for quotes. Avis, Britz, Hertz, Budget etc. all have depots here. Do an internet search to get an idea for prices.

Remember: always read the fine print of **any** 4WD hire agreement regarding roads that may be excluded!

Not all cars are allowed on all roads! Make sure you get the permission to take the vehicle along the Gibb or into the Bungles, or up to the Mitchell Plateau. And note that different branches of the same hire company may give you different answers on this! Local hire can be easier because the staff in local branches are familiar with your needs, Perth staff may not be. It can be a headache!

You can also hire camping trailers and individual equipment separately:

www.broomehirecentre.com.au, Broome, 4 Pembroke Rd, 0481 055 927

www.kimberleyadventurehire.com.au, Kununurra, 14 Plum Ct., 0476 024 192

Your biggest cost after that will likely be fuel. The further you move away from the main towns, the more expensive it gets. So don't do your budgeting on fuel prices that you saw quoted for Western Australia. Kimberley town prices are a good 20 cents above Perth prices.

The FuelWatch website will give you a good idea what to expect:

www.fuelwatch.wa.gov.au

Along the Gibb River Road you will spend a lot more, well over \$2.50 a litre in places. (Prices vary wildly. It depends how far you are from the nearest point of civilization.)

Accommodation:

- A hostel bed in a dorm room costs between \$20 and \$30 a night.
- Cabins at campgrounds can be under \$100 a night (for one or two people) but can also be a heck of a lot more in the towns during peak season!
- Twin or double rooms start from around \$120 for budget rooms, from around \$200 for standard rooms in hotels/motels. It goes up quickly from there.

(Prices are considerably lower between November and March.)

Camping:

- Unpowered camping costs from \$10pp, powered caravan sites \$25-\$40/site.

- Camping in national parks is \$15-20 per person per night as of January 2024.
- Bush camping is often free and possible in many places.

I'm a die hard bush camper myself and therefore [Destination Kimberley](#), [Destination Top End](#) and [Destination Red Centre](#) have a **lot** of information and directions regarding free camping

Food:

- Eating out: a main course for dinner will set you back between \$20 and \$40.
- Prices for all your essentials at the supermarket will initially shock you, but you get used to it quickly.
(It's not that bad, but prices are considerably higher than elsewhere in Australia.)
- Ideally you should buy (and be able to store) enough food to last you for the length of the Gibb River Road. You can buy some basic supplies (bread, milk, tins) on the road, with luck even some fresh food, but don't count on it.

Drinking Water:

That is one thing that you do not need to worry about. We have lots of it. It's available and free almost everywhere. You just bring enough containers. (The Bungles are the only exception, no drinking water inside the park.) Details for the Gibb River Road, Bungles etc. can be found in the respective chapters of [Destination Kimberley](#).

More Information

Every town in the Kimberley, no matter how small, has a Kimberley Tourist Information Centre. Addresses and contact details for all of them are below.

If you have any questions that aren't answered in this guide, ring them, fax them, email them, just ask them, they'll help.

In my experience they have all been great. Whenever I walked into one I was given a stack of free maps and information materials, and never did anyone try to sell me any tour or accommodation or anything that I hadn't asked for.

Broome is a bit of an exception. The staff are still extremely courteous and helpful, but no matter what I asked, I was invariably just presented with a brochure and price list to choose from. **Broome is just too busy** and they really don't have the time. They generally steer you in the direction of mainstream and pricier options, and they'll make bookings for you. But that's it. It ends up feeling very commercial. (I suspect during peak season the other towns can get a bit like that as well.)

Broome Visitor Centre

1 Hamersley Street (First round-about as you enter town)

Ph: 9195 2200, (international +61 8 9195 2200)

www.visitbroome.com.au

enquiries@visitbroome.com.au

Derby Visitor Centre

30 Loch Street

Ph: 9191 1426 (international +61 8 9191 1426) or 1800 621 426 (within Australia)

www.derbytourism.com.au

info@derbytourism.com.au

Currently closed and supposed to reopen in 2024.

In the meantime the shire is managing visitor enquiries but does not make bookings any more.

Call 9191 1426 or email dbytourism@sdwk.wa.gov.au.

Fitzroy Crossing Tourist Bureau

Cnr. Flynn Drive/Forest Rd.

PO Box 101

Ph: 9191 0999 (international +61 8 9191 0999)

www.fitzroycrossingtourism.com.au

fxtourism@sdwk.wa.gov.au

Halls Creek Visitor Centre

Cnr. Great Northern Hwy/Hall St.

Ph: 9168 6262 (international +61 8 9168 6262, skype HallsCreekTourism)

www.hallscreektourism.com.au

tourism@hcshire.wa.gov.au

Closed. Currently the shire is managing visitor enquiries. Call 9168 6007.

Kununurra Visitor Centre

75 Coolibah Drive (East Kimberley Tourism House)

Ph: 9168 1177 (international +61 8 9168 1177)

www.visitkununurra.com

info@visitkununurra.com

Wyndham Tourist Info

See Kununurra Visitor Centre

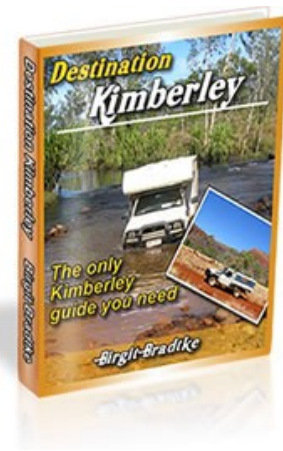
Part III: The Guide

This part of the book is no more than a greatly abbreviated overview of some of the contents of the full guide.

This information, together with the photos and descriptions that you can find on my website, should give you a good idea of what you might want to see and do. It is not meant to replace a proper guide book.

In *Destination Kimberley* I cover absolutely everything in great detail, the same insider information that you can find on the website, but for **all** the locations, and with even more detail. I cover every secret, hidden little corner of the Kimberley.

Plus, you get all the usual facts you'd expect from a guide book: comprehensive listings for accommodation, tours, eating out, etc. and more. (See the following chapters for more information about the contents.)



Destination Kimberley also has the most up to date information available. When I become aware of a change, I update the guide immediately.

(Whereas I have to admit that due to my overall workload I sometimes get a bit behind with this free booklet and the website. I apologize in advance for any outdated info you may find in either and always appreciate when readers take me to task for that!)

For now I will keep it short. I just want to share with you some thoughts on the individual destinations and attractions, regarding

- what a place has to offer,
- who might enjoy it, and who might not,
- how easy/difficult it is to get there,
- how much time to spend there,
- what kind of tours/accommodation are available.

The attractions and destinations are presented from west to east, very much in the same order as you will encounter them on a trip from Broome to Kununurra.

Broome

Broome's location is magnificent. Endless white beaches, fringed by the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean, strikingly contrasted against the red pindan cliffs... Most people are smitten before the plane even lands.

It's easy to see why the place is marketed so heavily.

What's not so easy to see is that the very same marketing has changed Broome. And according to most, not to the better. In a way Broome has become a victim of its own success. Be prepared to find a rather busy and commercial town.

Broome's pearling history makes it a very multicultural place with an interesting architecture and an enviable food scene. (It doesn't compare to, say, Melbourne. But it's the best that you will find in the Kimberley.)

A couple of days is enough to see all there is to see in and near town. The main attractions all have to do with either the pearling industry and its history (Chinatown, Willie Creek Pearl Farm) or with the beaches and the ocean.

How much lazing on **Cable Beach** and resort style holidaying you want to add to those two days is up to you.

Broome is by far the most touristy location in the Kimberley, and regarding tours and accommodation you will find anything you can possibly ask for.

A reminder: [book well in advance](#) if you want to visit Broome between May and August. It DOES get extremely crowded.

North Of Broome—The Dampier Peninsula

- Distance from Broome to the tip of the Peninsula: 206 km

To explore the Dampier Peninsula north of Broome you still need a 4WD. The main road may be sealed now, but all the side tracks to the many camps, outstations and Aboriginal communities that welcome visitors are still as sandy and rough as they've always been.

The Peninsula is for people who love the bush, camping, fishing, deserted beaches, who'd like to visit Aboriginal communities and get an insight into their traditional lifestyle, or who just want get away from the crowds in Broome. There is nothing much out here other than wilderness and an amazing coastline.

At the northern tip of the Dampier Peninsula you find **Cape Leveque** and the famous **Kooljaman Eco Resort**. This part of the Peninsula can also be visited as part of an organised trip from Broome (fly or drive).

Kooljaman offers very good facilities (it's still a wilderness camp, though!), but many other places on the Peninsula are very basic, offering accommodation in simple cabins, bunkhouses, or just camping. The more self sufficient you are, the better.

For now you can find some photos and more information about Cape Leveque and Kooljaman on my website:

www.kimberleyaustralia.com/cape-leveque.html

Allow two nights to visit only Kooljaman (two nights is the required minimum stay), more to see more, about a week to check out everything.

Note that Kooljaman is currently closed! It unexpectedly closed in November 2021 and it is not known when it will reopen. A lovely alternative with equally good facilities is the Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm. See Destination Kimberley for details.

Derby

- 220 km from Broome
- From Fitzroy Crossing: 258 km (via highway) or 291 km (via GRR)
- From Kununurra: 906 km (via highway) or 712 km (via Gibb River Road)

Derby is the name of the small town that's located on the edge of the King Sound north-east of Broome, just south of the mouth of the Fitzroy River, and only just above the high tide mark. And high tides they are!

Derby's claim to fame is having the highest tides of any Australian port. 11 m (36 feet) of tidal difference means there is an enormous amount of water rushing in and out every 6 hours... Add to that the silty outflow of the Fitzroy River... It means muddy waters.

Even though you are only about 220 km from Broome, the Derby area looks totally different. Mudflats, mangrove swamps... No, Derby is not your typical tropical holiday destination. It is, however, an honest and welcoming place, one that I always enjoy visiting.

Most tourists do visit Derby as the starting or end point of their **Gibb River Road** trip. Another draw card is the **Buccaneer Archipelago**, a group of 800 to 1000 of some of the most remote islands in the world. This is also where the **Horizontal Waterfalls** are located, a phenomenon created by the huge tides rushing through narrow gaps between islands.

There is enough to see and do here to justify spending a day in Derby, but unless you go on some flight, island cruise or tour (organised or self guided tours in the surrounding areas are available) there is no reason to stay any longer.

Derby is a modern town with all facilities and accommodation for all budgets.

Windjana Gorge

- 144 km from Derby
- 35 km from Tunnel Creek
- 147 km from Fitzroy Crossing

Windjana Gorge National Park is easily reached from either Derby or Fitzroy Crossing, but can also be visited from Broome, bypassing Derby. (It's just a longer drive.)

The park is accessible in a 2WD, and it can be visited as a day tour, together with Tunnel Creek National Park.

The park protects a 3.5 km gorge in the Napier Range which can be explored along a hiking path. Main features are the towering cliffs, the monsoonal vegetation, and the big numbers of freshwater crocodiles in the permanent pools.

Camping is available (very basic facilities).

Commercial day tours are available from Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Broome.

Tunnel Creek

- 35 km from Windjana Gorge
- 179 km from Derby
- 112 km from Fitzroy Crossing

Tunnel Creek National Park is only 35 km south east of Windjana Gorge. It is one of the places that you absolutely shouldn't miss.

The main feature of the park is the 750 metre tunnel that a creek has worn through the Napier Range and that you can follow to the other side. It involves wading and is a bit spooky, so all in all great fun! The tunnel is the oldest cave system in Western Australia. Make sure you take a torch!

The park is a day use area only. There is a small parking area, an information shelter, a bush toilet, and... that's pretty much it.

Commercial day tours are available from Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Broome.

Gibb River Road

- Starts 4 km from Derby town entrance
- Ends 53 km from Kununurra, 48 km from Wyndham
- Distance: 663 km (give or take a couple)

[Destination Kimberley](#) includes a complete, ultra detailed guide to the Gibb River Road as a separate Part IV.

It addresses everything, from planning, to four wheel driving requirements and tips, to descriptions of all side tracks and not so well known waterfalls, (it also includes the road to the Mitchell Falls and Kalumburu), all accommodation, all camping, both free and commercial grounds, all contact phone numbers... Everything.

It is by far the most detailed guide to the Gibb River Road available.

There is too much to say about the Gibb River Road to offer an abbreviated version here, but you can find a LOT of free information on my website.

www.kimberleyaustralia.com/gibb-river-road.html

www.kimberleyaustralia.com/mitchell-falls.html

For your planning:

- You need a 4WD.
- You don't need experience.
- You do need common sense.
- Caravans are not recommended, off road trailers are fine. (And people do take dedicated, tough off-road vans. It's not impossible, just not recommended.)
- If planning an early season trip (April/May) always get the latest updates about road conditions and the water depth at crossings, and be flexible with your plans.
- You should allow three nights as the absolute minimum to see the main attractions between Derby and Kununurra/Wyndham WITHOUT the Mitchell Falls detour.
- Four nights avoids making it a mad rush.
- Allow six nights to include the Mitchell Falls.
- Theoretically you can drive all the way across in a single day.
- The more time you have the better. There is a lot to see and do and many opportunities to get off the beaten track. (Yes, the Gibb River Road is very much a beaten track these days.)

[Destination Kimberley](#) has enough information to keep you entertained for several weeks along that road. It also includes all the info you need to work out a detailed schedule for your trip: distances, detailed notes for side roads, example itineraries, estimated times needed, as well as very detailed descriptions of all the individual places, the swimming holes, the walks, the camps... to help you make those hard decisions if you don't have enough time for all of it.

Here's the Table of Contents for that part of the guide, to give you an idea:

Chapters in the guide:

History

How Long Does It Take?

What You Need To Know

- Permits/Permission
- Your Vehicle
- Fuel Availability
- Road Conditions
- Driving/Speed
- Tyres and Tyre Pressures
- River and Creek Crossings
- Camping/Accommodation
- Supplies
- A Short Summary

THE TRIP...

Overview

...AND WHAT THERE IS TO SEE AND DO

From Derby To Kununurra Along The Gibb River Road

- Birdwood Downs
- T/o to Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek National Parks
- Lennard River Bridge
- Queen Victoria's Head
- Inglis Gap
- Mt Hart Wilderness Lodge
- Lennard Gorge
- Lookout
- About The King Leopold Range Conservation Park
- Bell Gorge
- Imintji Store

- Mt House Station, Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary, Mornington Wilderness Camp
- Charnley River Station
- Adcock Gorge
- Galvans Gorge
- Mt Barnett Roadhouse and Manning Gorge
- Barnett River Gorges
- Mt Elizabeth Station
- Ellenbrae Station
- Durack River Crossing
- Jack's Waterhole, Durack River Station
- Lookout
- Home Valley Station
- Pentecost River Crossing, Old Karunjie Road
- El Questro Wilderness Park (Station Homestead and Township, Zebedee Springs, El Questro Gorge...)
- Emma Gorge Resort
- Digger's Rest, King River Road

Accommodation and Camping List

Route Description (Distances and Supply Points)

KALUMBURU ROAD AND MITCHELL PLATEAU

Drysdale River Station

- Accommodation and Facilities

Mitchell Plateau (Mitchell Falls)

- The Mitchell River National Park
- Getting There
- King Edward River Campsites
- The Mitchell Falls Camping Area
- Scenic Flights
- The Hike To The Mitchell Falls
- Port Warrender, Surveyor's Pool, Crystal Creek

Kalumburu

USEFUL CONTACTS

Fitzroy Crossing

- 396 km from Broome
- From Derby: 258 km (via highway) or 291 km (via GRR)
- 290 km from Halls Creek
- 634 km from Kununurra

There are only two "towns" along the over 1000 km stretch of highway between Broome and Kununurra. Fitzroy Crossing is one of them. It is a welcoming, pleasant little township with a mostly Aboriginal population.

The town owes its existence to the Fitzroy River, which in full flood is one of the largest rivers in the world and an awesome sight to behold. (Not that many travellers ever get the chance...)

In the past the river was often difficult or impossible to cross. Travellers had no choice but to pull up at the infamous Crossing Inn and to wait for the waters to recede.

These days there is a highway and a bridge further south, and the whole town has shifted south as a result. Still, during particularly wet periods the road still gets cut. It happens a few times every wet season. Nothing much we can do there.

During the big Fitzroy floods in 2023 the whole Fitzroy bridge washed away. With that the main traffic artery between the East and West Kimberley was cut. You can read in detail about those floods in my January 2023 newsletter: https://www.kimberleyaustralia.com/Kimberley_Top_End_and_Red_Centre_News-issue99a.html

The bridge was rebuilt in record time, six times stronger than before, and reopened six months ahead of schedule in December 2023.

There are some historical attractions, easily covered in half a day, but the main attraction is the **Geikie Gorge National Park**. One day is enough for everything.

There are tours into the surrounding areas (some Aboriginal operated), and camping, budget, and standard hotel/motel style accommodation.

Geikie Gorge

- 21 km north of Fitzroy Crossing

Geikie Gorge National Park is the most easily accessible national park in the Kimberley. It's only 20 km outside the small town Fitzroy Crossing, and the access road is sealed.

You can do several short walks in the park, but the most popular way to see the gorge is on the DPaW operated boat tour. (Tickets can be bought inside the park.) You could also do the **Darnku Heritage Cruise**, a half day (5 hour) tour that includes a guided walk, operated by the Bunaba Aboriginal owners of the gorge. (Book ahead.)

Geikie Gorge is a day use only park. Most people spend only a few hours here anyway.

Halls Creek

- 360 km from Kununurra
- 290 km from Fitzroy Crossing

Despite Halls Creek's interesting history as a gold town, from a travellers perspective there is not much else to the town. Get there, fuel up your car, get out. That's what I usually do.

However, the country surrounding Halls Creek is some of the most beautiful along the Great Northern Highway and there are several magnificent places just out of town where you can camp for a night. Or for several nights.

Halls Creek is also the place closest to the **Bungle Bungle** (Purnululu National Park) and closest to the turn off to **Wolfe Creek Crater National Park**. So if you aren't set up to go camping you may want to spend a night in Halls Creek.

There is a nice tourism information centre, an eight million dollar swimming complex and a couple of welcoming hotels/motels as well as a campground.

Duncan Road

- Starts in Halls Creek, ends 56 km east of Kununurra
- Unsealed distance: 441 km

The unsealed road from Halls Creek to Kununurra is a beautiful drive through the hilly back country east of Lake Argyle. It can be used as an alternative to the highway (one day to drive to Kununurra). Several historical sites worth visiting are just outside Halls Creek. Several terrific swimming holes, rock pools and gorges are a bit further. Great bush camping! (An alternative to spending a night in Halls Creek).

Wolfe Creek Crater National Park

- 151 km from Halls Creek (unsealed)

The Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater is located on the southern edge of the Kimberley region, on the border of the Tanami and Great Sandy Deserts of northern central Australia. It's out of the way and can only be reached via the unsealed Tanami Road. (Starts just outside Halls Creek.)

4WD is recommended, but not always strictly essential.

A walk leads up to the crater rim (takes about 2 min, great views) and then down the steep slope to the crater floor.

Wolfe Creek can be visited as a day trip from Halls Creek. Bush camping at the crater is also available. No facilities except for bush toilets, no water. Be self sufficient.

The Tanami Road

- T/o 16 km south of Halls Creek
- Distance to Alice Springs: 1050 km

The Tanami Road crosses the **Tanami Desert** and is a short cut from Halls Creek in Western Australia to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.

The Tanami Track is often portrayed as a dangerous desert crossing, but today it is an easy drive on a usually good road (provided the road is dry), a large part of it is already sealed. Even 2WDs can make the trip in the dry season. A 4WD will be more comfortable as the road can get badly corrugated.

In several years even that will not be an issue any more as the sealing of the remaining parts is under way.

Everything you need to know to make this trip is included in [Destination Kimberley](#).

Bungle Bungle-Purnululu National Park

- T/o 250 km from Kununurra, plus 52 km access track
- T/o 108 km from Halls Creek, 382 km from Fitzroy Crossing

Same as for the Gibb River Road, it's difficult to offer a short summary here. The main guide goes into great detail about the drive, the weather, the camps, the available flights, all the hikes, facilities, costs, possible itineraries, contact details... Everything.

I love the place. Nothing like it exists anywhere else in the world. It's an absolute must.

It's possible to drive in and out from Halls Creek and not spend a night in the park, but expect to spend at least 8 hours of that day in your car! 3 hours minimum each way, plus driving inside the park.

I suggest one night as the minimum stay. Two is great. If you are equipped to do overnight hikes then you may want to take more time. The overnight walk into Piccaninny Gorge is one of the best hikes you can do in the Kimberley.

The only accommodation inside the park is camping. Public camp sites are very basic. No showers. There is a commercial tented camp with more upmarket facilities.

Scenic helicopter flights are available from within the park, from Halls Creek, and from Warmun (located between the Bungles turn off and Kununurra). Fixed wing flights are available from Kununurra. Some operators combine flights with on the ground tours, and drive in tours are also available.

To see pictures and find out a bit more about Purnululu see my website:
www.kimberleyaustralia.com/bungle-bungles.html

Kununurra

- 1040 km from Broome
- 360 km from Halls Creek
- 825 km from Darwin.

Kununurra is the name of the lively, booming town on the eastern edge of the Kimberley. In the local Aboriginal dialect the name means "*The Meeting Of The Big Waters*". An appropriate name indeed, as water is the most noticeable feature of this region.

Countless gorges and waterfalls, several big tidal rivers, dozens of smaller streams and creeks, Lake Kununurra, and of course the huge expanse of **Lake Argyle**... The vast majority of the attractions in and around Kununurra involve water, lots of water. And water means life, both an amazing flora and abundant wildlife. (And of course excellent fishing!)

Water is not the only reason the area is so attractive. The East Kimberley looks very different from the Broome region. The country around Kununurra is a LOT more scenic. A myriad of ranges and gorges and cliffs and escarpments... No matter which way you drive or look, the beauty of this region is astounding.

And there is a heck of a lot to do, too! Active and adventurous people will love it here.

(But since Broome is marketed much more heavily, and since most people start their trip in Broome, a lot of travellers run out of time once they get here.)

The town itself is nothing special, even in my biased opinion as a Kununurra resident. It's the surrounding areas that make the place.

Half a day should cover the town area, a full day to two most of the immediate surrounds, including **Mirima National Park**.

Stay a bit longer to check out all the pools and waterfalls in the area, or to use Kununurra as a base for day trips into the region.

Kununurra Surrounds

Lake Argyle, Wyndham, Parry's Lagoon, Argyle Diamond Mine, Bungle Bungles, Keep River National Park, El Questro, Fishing Tours, Boat Tours, Canoeing, Horse Trekking, Scenic Flights...

As you can see from that list, there is a lot to see and do in the area. Some of the places you will probably visit on your way to or from Kununurra, but many of the attractions in the Kununurra area lend themselves to day trips, saving yourself the continuous packing and unpacking of all your things.

Below is a list of destinations you can visit from Kununurra as a day trip. All of them are covered in detail in the main guide. Listed here are only the most obvious destinations. The main guide also includes many places that other tourists will never know about.

Lake Argyle

- 70 km from Kununurra

The huge man made lake (several times the size of Sydney Harbour!) is the reason that Kununurra exists. Lake Argyle is part of a very ambitious and successful irrigation project. It has allowed Kununurra to become a tropical fruit bowl and agricultural centre in this remote and harsh region.

But Lake Argyle is a lot more than a water and power supply to the town and its farmers. It is a newly formed habitat and natural wonder in its own right. The wetlands are of such significance to wildlife that they are now protected by the Ramsar Convention.

The area is a paradise for bird and nature lovers, but there is also the old **Argyle Homestead and museum** to visit, the main dam, the spillway... It is an incredibly scenic area, the drive to Lake Argyle from Kununurra alone would be worth the trip. That's how beautiful it is.

Lake Argyle makes a great day tour, but obviously you could also visit it on your way to/from Darwin. Both camping and motel accommodation are available at the lake shore.

Boat cruises can be organised there, or from Kununurra. There are cruises both on the lake and also on the river between the lake and Kununurra. The best way to see the lake, dam and river, however, is the one to three day canoe trip from the top dam back to Kununurra!

To appreciate the sheer size of the lake it's best to take a scenic flight. (Flights to the Bungles from Kununurra take in Lake Argyle as well.)

Keep River National Park

- 45 km from Kununurra

Keep River National Park is located 50 km from Kununurra. By rights this is not the Kimberley any more. Keep River National Park is just on the other side of the Northern Territory border. However, the landscapes in this stunning little park are definitely Kimberley landscapes. The sandstone formations are similar to those you find in the Bungle Bungle range and there are a couple of terrific walks through them.

Since Keep River National Park is so close to Kununurra, and can easily be explored in only one day, I have included it and cover the park in detail in the main guide.

Wyndham

- 101 km from Kununurra
- 56 km from Great Northern Highway intersection
- 48 km from Gibb River Road intersection

The port town of Wyndham is 100 km north of Kununurra, which makes it Western Australia's northernmost town. It is also the oldest town in the Kimberley region. I find it an intriguing place. (But I've always been attracted by places that have a somewhat desolate feel about them.)

Wyndham is steeped in history, dating back as far as the 1880s, when Wyndham served as a landing port for prospectors during the gold rushes. (Compare that to Kununurra, which was founded in the 1960s.)

Sitting on the edge of the Cambridge Gulf, Wyndham offers a stark contrast to lush and green Kununurra: salt lakes and tidal mudflats dominate the landscapes. Five Rivers Lookout is a great place to see the Gulf and the five huge tidal rivers draining into it. It's a good place to be around sunset.

There are many historical sites to visit in Wyndham, and a bit outside Wyndham the prison boab, the Moochalabra Dam, and **the Grotto** (waterfall and rock pool).

A trip to Wyndham can also be combined with a visit to Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve or, for the more adventurous, with a trip along the King River Road or the old Karunje Road, via Digger's Rest Station, and to the Pentecost River Crossing on the Gibb River Road (see Gibb River Road chapters in main guide for details).

Purnululu National Park/Bungle Bungle

You can not visit Purnululu National Park properly in one day from Kununurra, but you can take a scenic flight over it.

A scenic flight over the Bungles is a good option for people on a very tight schedule. Some of the Kununurra tours to the Argyle Diamond Mine also involve a trip over the Bungle Bungles on the return leg.

However, if at all possible take the time to see Purnululu properly. It really is worth it. (See Bunge Bungle chapter in the main guide for more info)

El Questro Station

- 76 km from Kununurra to Emma Gorge (part unsealed)
- 102 km from Kununurra to El Questro Homestead (part unsealed)

El Questro is a huge former cattle station at the beginning of the Gibb River Road. Though they didn't give up cattle farming altogether, the main focus of the station now lies on upmarket tourism instead. The land they own is spectacular.

To make the most of it you need to stay overnight at El Questro itself. Accommodation ranges from ultra-luxurious to mid-range and camping is also available.

A couple of the well known attractions at El Questro, namely **Zebedee Springs** and **Emma Gorge**, can be visited as a self drive day tour from Kununurra. You could also visit **El Questro Gorge** as a day tour, even do a boat cruise on **Chamberlain Gorge**, but you can't see all of them in one day and drive back to Kununurra.

Anyway, you need to buy a permit to go. Best get one from their booking office in Kununurra before you go (next door to the Visitor Centre), that will save you the detour to the station township at El Questro. You can also buy a permit at Emma Gorge Resort.

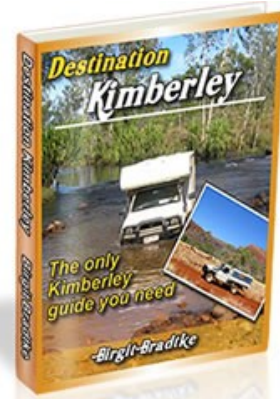
Of course, you don't have to organise the visit yourself. El Questro do offer a range of tours, both from Kununurra and on the station.

For more details on accommodation, tours, walks and attractions at El Questro see Part IV: Gibb River Road in the main guide, [Destination Kimberley](#).

Get More Information

Well, and that's it. It was only a quick trip across the Kimberley, but I hope it convinced you that you should have a closer look!

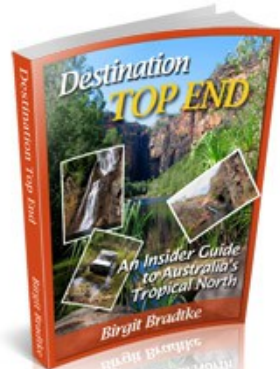
If it did, then I encourage you to at least have a look at the full guide, [Destination Kimberley](#). It is the perfect guide for anyone planning a self drive holiday in the region.



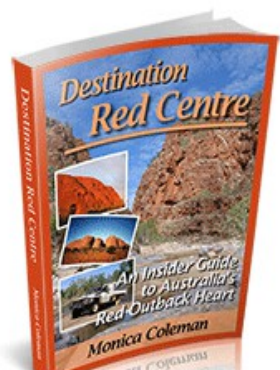
Should you decide to drive from or to Darwin, then I suggest you also take a look at my second guide book:

[Destination Top End](#).

(You can buy both guides together to get a nice discount.)



And for those planning to also visit the region around Alice Springs and Uluru (Ayers Rock), the long awaited third guide in the *Destination* series is finally here. First released in March 2017, check out [Destination Red Centre](#).



When to Plan and Book

How early you need to plan and book depends on your timing and your style of travel.

If you are **travelling outside the main season and camping** all the way, then you don't need to book anything and can make arrangements on the road, 24-48 hrs ahead.

But if you are looking at **hiring a 4WD and staying in accommodation**, and you want to do so during the main season, and you plan to visit some of the most popular places on a specific date, then you may need to get your bookings in VERY early.

Certain styles of accommodation at places like for example Cape Leveque or Mornington Wilderness Camp may book out as much as a year ahead. Not for the whole season of course, but if you need accommodation at such a place at a specific date, then I recommend you book rather sooner than later.

(If you are a bit flexible with your schedule, then it's usually possible to adjust it to work around any unlucky dates that are already full. This is where the above mentioned trip planning and booking assistance comes in handy.)

Generally, the main planning and booking season starts on January 1.

Seriously. I can see this every year with my website traffic. As soon as Christmas and New Year is over, people get started on their holiday planning and website traffic explodes.

So if you are hoping for good car hire packages and accommodation during peak season and want to beat the rush, I recommend you get your plans finalised and everything booked before the year is out, or as soon as possible after New Year.

Again, this is most important for people with limited time, rigid schedules, or who want to stay in accommodation in popular places with limited capacity.

Everybody else has two or three months more time, but if I wanted to travel during peak season, I would make sure everything is booked and finalised by end of March the very latest to avoid disappointment. If you can do so earlier, all the better.

Final Words

I do hope that you found this little introductory guide useful. Whether you did or didn't, I'm grateful for all feedback that I receive. You can tell me what you think about it here:

www.kimberleyaustralia.com/contact.html

It will help me to make both this and the Destination Guides better.

I would be absolutely delighted to hear from you again, either during or after your trip. And I would be even more delighted if you could share some of your photos or experiences on the website, because I know that other readers would love to read your stories:

www.kimberleyaustralia.com/kimberley-trip-reports.html

If you do know of someone else who might benefit from this quick guide, please send them to the website so they can get the latest copy for themselves.

Also, if you find this guide and the website useful, then please help others to find out about it. If you have a blog or website, please consider adding a link in a post, the blogroll or favourites. Tweet it, Pin it, add a link to your Facebook wall... you get the idea. Every link helps!

Thank You!

Thanks for reading all the way to the bottom, and I hope to see you here soon.

*Happy Travels!
Birgit*

(Birgit "B" Bradtke)