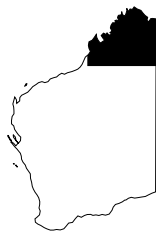


The Kimberley



With just two opposing seasons, the Wet and the Dry, it makes sense that the Kimberley is a land of extremes – semiarid plains dotted with spinifex and outback roads that flow like rivers, spectacular ranges cut by steep stony gorges and tiny pockets of tropical rainforest and tranquil waterholes. It's these dramatic contrasts that make a trip here so compelling.

But despite the region's many attractions, from the pristine Dampier Peninsula and splendid Cape Leveque, to the magnificent gorges of Geikie, Wandjina and Tunnel Creek, to the rough and tumble of Gibb River Rd – there's still no place as engaging or as full of contradictions as Broome.

Broome has a rich, ancient indigenous history and an exotic 19th century pearling past. And then there's the present, a big outback town that plays host to amateur rodeos the same week it holds its annual cultural festival, the Shinju Matsuri, with Japanese food and dragon boat races. But the contradictions of this town are most obvious in its dramatic natural landscapes of contrasting colours – turquoise waters, white-sand beaches, red rock formations and deep blue skies.

All of these things are bewitching, and none of them disappoint.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy sublime sunsets on the sands of **Cable Beach** (p232), near Broome
- Explore **Broome's** (opposite) complex cultures, exotic history and natural beauty
- See a movie under the stars at Broome's **Sun Pictures** (p231)
- Cruise spectacular **Geikie Gorge** (p238) to view splendid indigenous rock art
- Learn about country with Aboriginal communities at **Cape Leveque** (p234)
- Wildlife-spot: emus and roos on the road, eagles overhead, bats at **Tunnel Creek** (p238), and crocs at **Windjana Gorge** (p238)
- Rough-road by 4WD along spectacular **Gibb River Rd** (p235)
- Bushwalk the **Bungle Bungles** at ancient **Purnululu National Park** (p240)



BROOME REGION

With the Timor Sea lapping the Kimberley's northern shores, Broome is closer to Indonesia than it is to most Australian states, and this isolation is pronounced by long empty stretches of road. The Kimberley and the Pilbara are separated by the westerly edge of the Great Sandy Desert, which extends from the Northern Territory to the Indian Ocean.

PORT HEDLAND TO BROOME

The highway runs inland from Port Hedland to Broome for 611km. Willie-willies whip through dusty, flat, featureless terrain while the coast to the west is lovely and unspoilt.

If you want to break the journey, there are great beaches for fishing along the way – the sharks seem to agree! The exit to **Cape Keraudren Reserve** is 154km from Port Hedland, near Pardoo Roadhouse; there are **camp sites** (per vehicle \$6) but no facilities. Around 245km from Port Hedland, shady **Eighty Mile Beach Coastal Resort & Caravan Park** (☎ 9176 5941; unpowered/powered sites \$25/28, cabins d \$50-154) backs on to the beautiful white-sand beach; there's a shop for essentials. **Port Smith Lagoon Caravan Park** (☎ 9192 4983; unpowered/powered sites \$23/25, cabin d \$60-130), 477km from Port Hedland, is on a tidal lagoon.

BROOME

☎ 08 / pop 14,000

An improbable combination of colours – red from the pindan (rust-coloured dirt), the aquamarine of Roebuck Bay and the pearl white of Cable Beach's sands – make Broome's landscape memorable. The dramatic contrasts of colour and weather, from dry vibrant winters to wet torpid summers, along with the town's rich history and cultural complexity, give Broome an atmosphere and energy like no other. This vitality has enticed adventurers, entrepreneurs, artists and travellers to Broome, who have given the town a sense of the cosmopolitan – a vibrant culture, great cuisine, fine art, and unique style that you won't find elsewhere.

Initially established as a pearling centre by Japanese entrepreneurs in the 1880s, Broome quickly attracted Chinese and Malays who joined local Aboriginal divers in the dangerous side of the business. Pearl diving was in open water, and initially without a breathing apparatus; many divers were taken by sharks or got the bends. Pearling peaked in the early 1900s, when the town's 400 luggers supplied 80% of the world's mother-of-pearl (mainly used for buttons). Today, pearl farms have replaced open-sea diving and a handful of successful family-run companies continue to provide the world with exquisite Broome pearls.

KIMBERLEY TOURS

Myriad multiday tours explore the Kimberley. Itineraries, prices and dates vary; shop around and ask questions before committing. Prices usually include meals, accommodation, equipment and park fees.

Kimberley Adventure Tours (☎ 1800 083 368, 9191 2655; www.kimberleyadventures.com.au) Operates tours between Broome and Darwin taking in the Gibb River Rd and Purnululu National Park (\$1395, nine days).

Kimberley Wild (☎ 9193 7778; www.kimberleywild.com) An ecotourism finalist, offering tours from Broome including day trips to Windjana/Tunnel Creek (\$219), Geikie Gorge (\$249) and Cape Leveque (\$219), and a three-day Kimberley Indigenous Experience (from \$879).

Kimberley Wilderness Adventures (☎ 1800 804 005, 9192 5741; www.kimberleywilderness.com.au) Award-winning eco-certified company (co-owned with East Kimberley Aboriginal collective). Offers multiday tours, including the popular 13-day Kimberley Complete (from \$4995).

Specialist tours can make for memorable experiences:

Alligator Airways (☎ 1800 632 533; www.alligatorairways.com.au) Offers a variety of air trips from Kununurra, including full-day Lake Argyle and Bungle Bungles tour (\$495).

King Leopold Air (☎ 9193 7155; www.kingleopoldair.com.au) Air tours of western Kimberley including half-day Buccaneer Explorer (\$360), taking in Horizontal Falls, and full-day Prince Regent Explorer via Mitchell Falls (\$640).

Willis's Walkabouts (☎ 8985 2134; www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au) Multiday bushwalking tours around Northern Kimberley. From \$425 for a two-day trip and up to \$5395 for a 28-day tour.

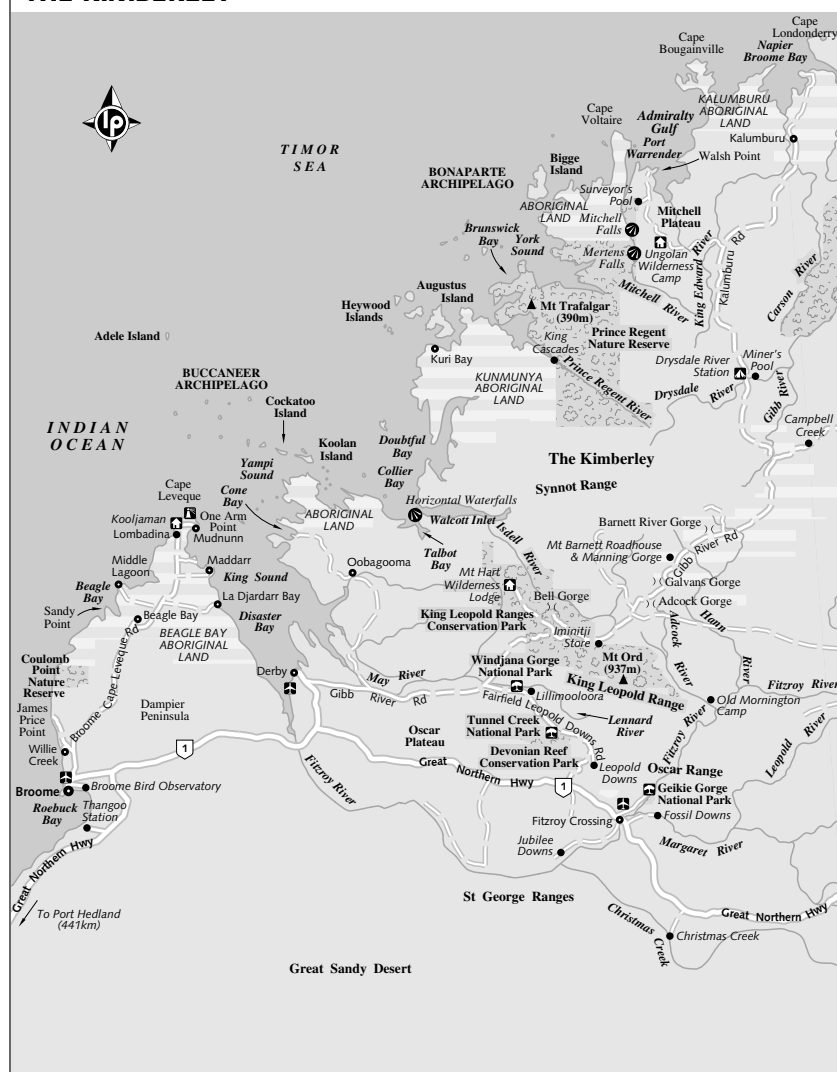
During the Dry, Broome buzzes; this is the best time to visit. During the Wet, prices drop, opening hours are shorter and locals breathe a collective sigh of relief and get on with their lives. While some like visiting during this time, keep in mind many attractions shut and roads can close – you'll need to do more planning and have a certain degree of flexibility.

Orientation

The town of Broome is situated on the west coast of the Dampier Peninsula. Within Broome, Chinatown, the commercial heart, and Old Broome, the administrative and residential centre, are in the town's east, overlooking Roebuck Bay. Hamersley St runs from Chinatown, south through Old Broome to

Town Beach, while Frederick St leaves Chinatown heading west to meet Cable Beach Rd and Cable Beach, and runs into Port Drive, which leads to Broome's deep water port in the south. The majority of Broome's accommodation, restaurants and sights are located in Chinatown, Old Broome, Town Beach and Cable Beach.

THE KIMBERLEY



Information

BOOKSHOPS

Kimberley Bookshop (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1944; 4 Napier Tce; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Stocks an extensive range of books on Broome, the Kimberley, Aboriginal art, fiction, non-fiction and travel guides.

Magabala Books (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1991; www.magabala.com; 2/15 Saville St; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Australia's only independently operated indigenous publishing house has a wonderful selection of indigenous novels, poetry, social history, biographies and children's literature.

EMERGENCY

Broome District Hospital (Map p228; ☎ 9192 9222; 28 Robinson St; ☎ 24hr)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access costs anything from \$5 to \$10 per hour.

Galactica DMZ Internet Café (Map p228; ☎ 9192 5897; 4/2 Hamersley St; per hr \$5; ☎ 10am-8pm) Broome's best; 40 terminals with internet access, skype & webcams; BYO laptop for broadband access; and burn CDs/DVDs among other services. Located next to McDonalds.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Events in the Kimberley (www.eventsinthekimberley.com.au)

Kimberley Tourism Association (www.kimberleytourism.com)

MONEY

There are ATMs on Carnarvon, Hamersley and Short Sts, and Napier Tce.

POST

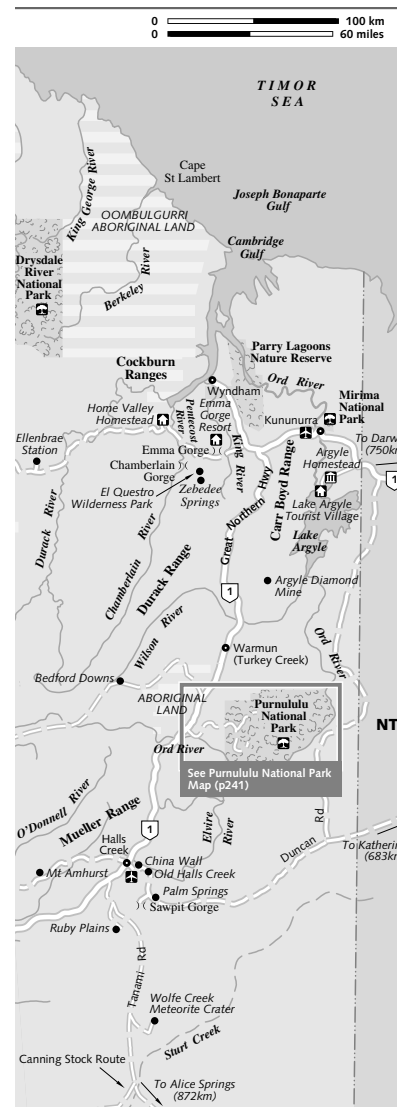
Post office (Map p228; Paspaley shopping centre)

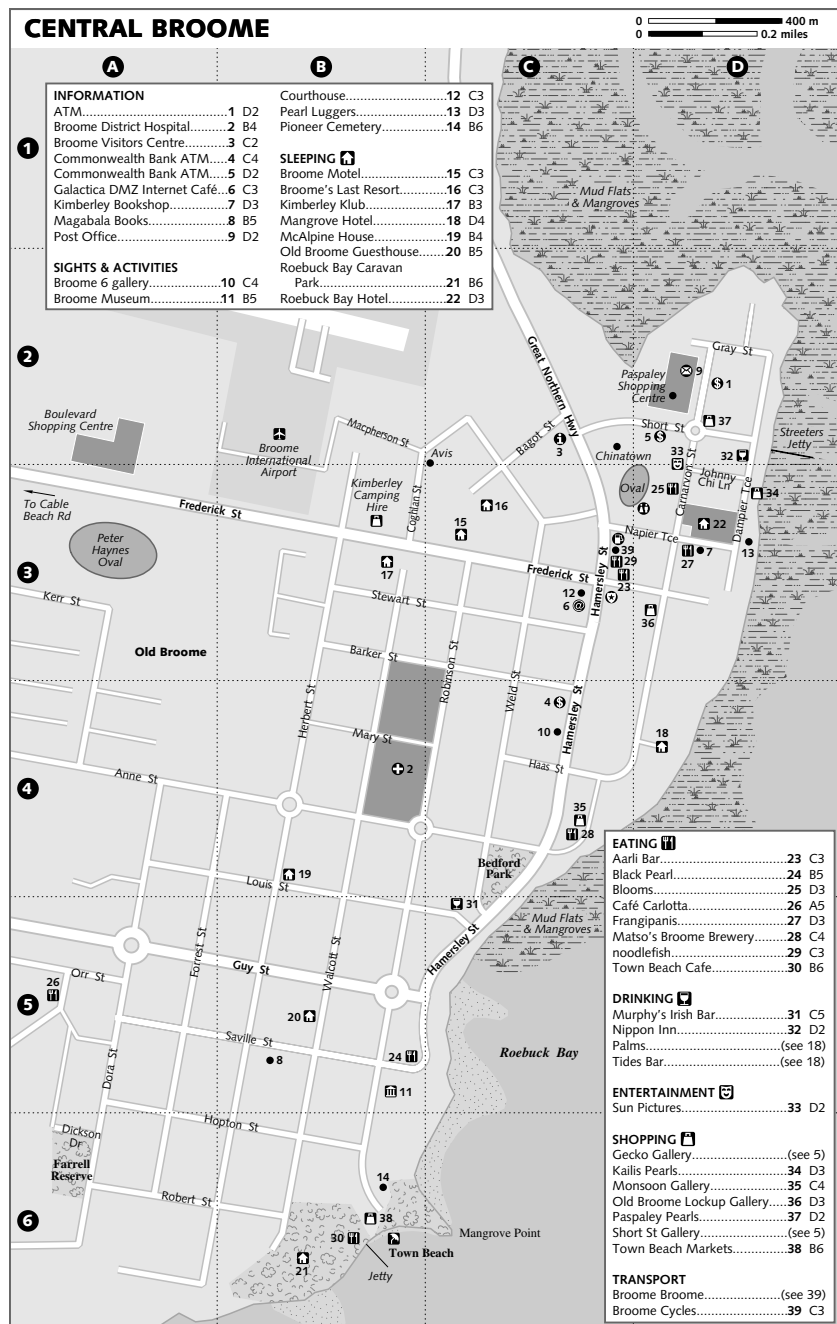
TOURIST INFORMATION

Broome Visitors Centre (Map p228; ☎ 9192 2222; www.broomevisitorcentre.com.au; Male Oval, Short St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri & 8.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Nov, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri & 9am-1pm Sat & Sun Dec-Mar) Has masses of info on the Kimberley (including road conditions) and Broome (including Staircase to the Moon and tide times), and books transport, accommodation and tours.

Sights & Activities

Enchanting **Chinatown** is Broome's historical and commercial heart, but while there's scant evidence of the Chinese now (apart from a few shops, restaurants and street names), its atmosphere comes from its vernacular architecture. Corrugated-iron buildings with lattice, louvres and verandas line Carnarvon





Festivals & Events

Dates for Broome's celebrations can vary from year to year; check with the visitors centre and book accommodation in advance.

Staircase to the Moon Three magical nights each month from March to October. See p227 for details.

Big Moon Rising (www.bamf.org.au) Broome Arts and Music Festival; held in April and May.

Broome Fringe Arts Festival June.

Western Australian Ballet's Ballet on the Beach June.

Kimberley Cup Broome's end of season horseracing carnival; July.

NAIDOC Week National recognition of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture; July.

Opera Under the Stars (www.operaunderthestars.com.au) August.

Shinju Matsuri Festival of the Pearl (www.shinju-matsuri.com) Held in September; includes Dragon Boat Races.

Worn Art A fabulous spectacle of fashion, performance, music and dance; October.

Mango Festival A celebration of the fruit in all its forms, from daiquiris to chutneys, with Great Chefs and Great Bartenders of Broome competitions. November.

Sleeping

Accommodation is plentiful but you need to book ahead or have the flexibility to take advantage of booking sites such as www.wotif.com, which have last minute deals.

BUDGET

Broome's Last Resort (Map p228; ☎ 9193 5000; www.broomeslastresort.com.au; 2 Bagot St; dm \$20-25, d \$65; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Has a wonderful laid-back tropical vibe thanks to wide verandas, a swimming pool shaded by palm trees, hammocks, bar, pool tables and jukebox. The friendly management throw in free breakfast, town tours, barbecues, beach trips, a daily happy hour, and pool comps where you can win a tattoo!

Roebuck Bay Caravan Park (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1366; 91 Walcott St; unpowered/power sites d \$23-28, on-site vans d \$75; 🍷 🍷) Right on the milky waters of Roebuck Bay's Town Beach, and short bus rides to Chinatown and Cable Beach, this shady park has good facilities, including a communal kitchen and barbecue area.

Kimberley Klub (Map p228; ☎ 1800 004 345, 9192 3233; www.kimberleyklub.com; 62 Frederick St; dm \$24-26, d \$80; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This big breezy place has a similar feel to Broome's Last Resort but on a grander scale. There are myriad common areas, a poolside bar, hammock spaces, a

massive kitchen, big-screen TV, table tennis, beach volleyball, free beach shuttle, and themed nights including bingo and open mic nights. YHA discount.

MIDRANGE

Roebuck Bay Hotel Motel (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1221; www.roebuckbayhotel.com.au; Carnarvon St; budget/standard/superior motel d \$100/120/140; 🍷 🍷 🍷) In Chinatown, this is Broome's oldest hotel, built in 1890. Comfortable rooms surround a tropical swimming pool; the best are upstairs overlooking the pool, while the budget sleeps back onto the pub's noisy band area. The backpackers (dorm rooms \$16 to \$19), in a separate building next to the live gig/dance space, attracts a party crowd.

Broome Motel (Map p228; ☎ 1800 683 867, 9192 7775; www.broomemotel.com.au; 51-57 Frederick St; d \$115, self-contained d \$145; 🍷 🍷) This central motel with spotless, comfortable rooms (with TV, fridge, and tea and coffee facilities) represents one of Broome's best motel deals, with double rooms dropping by \$10 after two nights. Prices can dip as low as \$85 in the off-season.

Ocean Lodge (Map p226; ☎ 1800 600 603, 9193 7700; www.oceanlodge.com.au; 1 Cable Beach Rd; d/f \$140/160; 🍷 🍷) Halfway between Cable Beach and Chinatown, these spacious clean rooms are looking a little worn, but guests love the swimming pool, expansive tropical garden and barbecues where they can cook their own food. Prices drop as much as \$50 in the off-season.

TOP END

Mangrove Hotel (Map p228; ☎ 1800 094 818, 9192 1303; www.mangrovehotel.com.au; Carnarvon St; d \$205 🍷 🍷 🍷) The stylish executive rooms (contemporary Asian-inspired design) have divine views over Roebuck Bay's aquamarine waters and the hotel's large swimming pools (and drop by \$30 in the off-season). Rumour is the budget rooms will be renovated into flashpacker accommodation.

Old Broome Guesthouse (Map p228; ☎ 9192 6106, 0429 335 845; www.oldbroomeguesthouse.com.au; 64 Walcott St; d \$240; 🍷 🍷) This tranquil property, decorated in the Broome style with Asian Zen minimalist touches, is the perfect escape for people averse to hotels. The individually styled rooms have enormous sunken baths and private courtyards; if you can bring yourself to leave them there are breezy public spaces to laze around. Prices drop by \$45 off-season.

McAlpine House (Map p228; ☎ 9192 3886; www.mcalpinehouse.com; 84 Herbert St; d from \$300; ☎ ☎ ☎) By the time you've been collected from the airport, handed a glass of sparkling wine, and shown to your comfortable Kimberley-style suite in Captain Kennedy's atmospheric old home (dating to 1910), you'll be feeling like a pearling master. Spend a few days lazing in a hammock, picking mangoes from the tree, swimming in the serene pool, and drinking cocktails on the big verandas at this stylish boutique guesthouse, and you'll be wishing you were. Doubles are \$100 cheaper in the off-season.

Eating

Broome has the only serious dining scene between Perth and Darwin. If you're a foodie, savour it while you can. During the Wet some eateries close, keep shorter hours, or only offer takeaway. Self-caterers will welcome well-stocked supermarkets and bakeries at Paspaley and Boulevard shopping centres.

Town Beach Café (Map p228; ☎ 9193 5585; Robinson St; mains \$6-25; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat) Order from the busy counter inside – try the tempura king prawns or beer battered fish and chips – then take your number to a terrace table overlooking the beach at this busy BYO seafood café.

Café Carlotta (Map p228; ☎ 9192 7606; Jones Pl; mains \$7-28; ☎ 5.30-10pm Mon-Sat) Owners Mic and Charlotte make regular research trips to Italy, and it shows in the daily handmade pastas and authentic wood-fired pizzas. While locals swear by the sizzling garlic prawns, we're just happy to be somewhere that serves Illy coffee. BYO.

Aarli Bar (Map p228; ☎ 9192 5529; cnr Frederick & Hammersley Sts; tapas & mains \$9-16, pizzas \$16; ☎ 7am-late Tue-Sat Mar-Nov) Funky little Aarli Bar isn't actually a bar – it's BYO only. However there's a colourful tiled bar inside lit up with Moroccan lanterns, and it is also part-tapas bar, with large portions of modern Med-influenced tapas. What Aarli does best, though, is authentic wood-fired pizza – delicious! Bookings essential.

our pick Wharf Restaurant (Map p226; ☎ 9192 5800; Port of Pearls House, Port Drive; mains \$9-20; ☎ 10am-10pm) Chilling out with a crisp glass of white and a dozen fresh oysters (half-price from 2pm to 5pm) overlooking the aquamarine seawaters of Roebuck Bay is sublime. Craig Douglas has been keeping locals and tourists sated for 10 years with his fabulous quality seafood (you

won't find bigger or better oysters elsewhere) and a great list of delicious WA wines by the glass sourced by partner Jazz. If you can resist another dozen oysters (we couldn't) then try the chilli blue swimmer crab.

Frangipanis (Map p228; ☎ 9193 6766; 5 Napier Tce; mains \$10-32; ☎ 7.30am-late) Snag a table on the terrace and share the signature Tasting Plate (\$18.50) of Med and mod-Oz flavours: grilled kangaroo skewers, wild olives, feta, chorizo, haloumi, duck shanks and Turkish bread. It also does delicious pastas and seafood. Conveniently, it's licensed and BYO.

Black Pearl (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1799; 4/63 Robinson St; mains \$11-27; ☎ 8am-late) The Med and Mod-Oz cuisine at this stylish BYO eatery can be a bit hit and miss – as can the service. But when both are good, they're great, and when they're not, they're sloppy. Visit on a good day and score a table under the shade sails overlooking Roebuck Bay and you're sure to risk a second visit.

Matso's Broome Brewery (Map p228; ☎ 9193 5811; 60 Hammersley St, cnr Carnarvon St; mains \$11-30; ☎ 7am-late) Excellent Mod-Oz meals served under the ceiling fans in an atmospheric house dating to 1900 or on verandas overlooking Roebuck Bay. Try the delicious 'Ocean and Earth' platter of game sausages, croc skewers, beer battered barramundi, and chilli soft shell crab (\$45 for two); tasty tapas-style snacks (oysters, tiger prawns etc) from 3pm to 6pm; or authentic curry from Matso's Curry Hut (from 6pm Thursday to Tuesday).

Blooms (Map p228; ☎ 9193 6366; 12 Carnarvon St; mains \$12-28; ☎ 7am-late) A convenient pre-/post-cinema spot with a pleasant pavement terrace, Blooms does decent light dishes (salt and pepper squid, fish cakes etc), sandwiches and pastas, and has good wines by the glass. Allow plenty of time – the service when we visited was terrible.

noodlefish (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1697; 6 Hammersley St; mains \$21-28; ☎ 6-9pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct, takeaway only Nov-Feb) Mitch opened noodlefish in 1993 and his contemporary Asian cuisine – from grilled threadfin salmon, green paw paw salad and sweet chilli, to red curry of Kimberley king prawns with fresh herbs – remains unmatched in Broome. BYO only.

Drinking

Matso's Broome Brewery (Map p228; ☎ 9193 5811; 60 Hammersley St) There's no better spot in Broome to kick back with a beer than Matso's wide veran-

FUN AT THE SUN

There's stars on the screen and in the sky at Broome's **Sun Pictures** (below), the world's oldest operating outdoor cinema. Operating almost continuously since 1916, the theatre has a fascinating history.

Originally, this double-fronted tin structure was an Asian emporium that was, in part, a Japanese playhouse for traditional theatre performances. Sold in 1913 to master pearler Ted Hunter, it was converted to a 500-seat cinema. From 1916 to 1933 silent movies were screened, to a tinkling piano accompaniment – often played by local a personality named 'Fairy' – until the projector was adapted for sound in 1933 and Sun Pictures screened its first 'talkie'.

Before a levee bank was built in 1974, the theatre suffered from tidal flooding and women were often carried out of the theatre to higher ground. The theatre also went through a period of racially segregated seating, with the well-to-do Europeans having better seats and the Malays, Koepangers, Filipinos and Aborigines having a separate entrance. While both WWII and the introduction of TV and video to the Kimberly region saw the theatre temporarily close, it was restored between 1998 and 2000.

Today reclining in the canvas deckchairs armed with a choc-top (a classic Australian ice-cream treat) and watching a film as children play, bats make a racket and the odd aircraft flies overhead (it's right on the flightpath!) is as quintessential a Broome experience as a Cable Beach sunset.

das overlooking Roebuck Bay. The wonderful award-winning beers are brewed on site – the Monsoonal Blonde is sensational – and there's live music Sundays in the courtyard from 3pm to 6pm, and occasional DJs and bands on weekend nights.

Roebuck Bay Hotel (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1221; 45 Dampier Tce) Affectionately known as the 'Roey', this is your typical Aussie pub. It boasts a blokes' sports bar with pool tables, darts and skimpies (barmaids in g-strings), a beer garden with counter meals (Cheffy's), a band venue (Pearlers Lounge), and a club/concert venue (the Oasis), with live music and dance parties with DJs.

On Friday nights locals like to down beers under the tiki torches while the sun goes down over Roebuck Bay at **Tides Bar** (Map p228; Mangrove Hotel, Carnarvon St), before moving inside to the **Palms** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1303; Mangrove Hotel, Carnarvon St). Backpackers love the Tuesday jam nights at **Murphy's Irish Bar** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1002; Mercure Hotel, Weld St) and Wednesday nights at the **Nippon Inn** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1941; Dampier Tce) for its 'best beer gut' and wet T-shirt competitions.

Entertainment

Sun Pictures (Map p228; ☎ 9192 3738; www.sunpictures.com.au; 27 Carnarvon St; adult/concession/child/family \$14.50/11.50/9/40) This is the world's oldest operating picture gardens (see above). Sinking back into a canvas deckchair or sprawling out on the grass under the stars will go down as one of your most memorable moviegoing

experiences. Munch on popcorn, choc-tops or Mexican food as you enjoy Aussie cinema, Kimberley-produced docos and mainstream family flicks. Film buffs should do the History Tour (\$5), running 10.30am and 1pm, Monday to Friday.

Diver's Tavern (Map p226; ☎ 9193 6066; Cable Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-late) Hosts occasional music festivals and books excellent live bands including Aussie legends such as Paul Kelly and Tex Perkins, while the regular house bands pack the place out for the Sunday 'sesh'.

Shopping

Broome specialises in pearls and Aboriginal art and while both make treasured souvenirs, they're also great investments. You don't have to be rich – pearl earrings can cost less than \$100, photographic prints from \$40 upwards, while small limited-edition art prints can start at around \$100. For more information on Aboriginal art see .

Monsoon Gallery (Map p228; ☎ 9193 5379; www.monsoongallery.com.au; Hammersley St; ☎ 10am-5pm) Has an eclectic range of art by Aboriginal and other locals, along with quality prints, photography, sculpture, textiles, glass and ceramics.

Old Broome Lockup Gallery (Map p228; ☎ 9193 5633; www.lockup.groovylips.com; Carnarvon St; ☎ 10am-5pm) This was a jail for Aborigines up until the 1950s, and it now sells art by local indigenous painters, along with photography, carvings, didgeridoos and music created by resident artists.

BROOME'S BOOMING ART SCENE

Broome's lively art scene is a wonderful surprise for visitors missing city culture and for those travellers wanting to learn more about the Kimberley's indigenous culture and art.

There are quality art galleries all over Broome, with several on Short St, Chinatown, that have brought some big city sophistication to town, with regular changing exhibitions and inclusive champagne openings. Each gallery has a special area of focus and represents particular artists or work with just a few Aboriginal communities.

In a 100 year-old house (one of Broome's oldest: note the wind tunnel!), **Short St Gallery** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 2658; www.shortstgallery.com; 7 Short St, Chinatown; ☎ 10am-5pm) was Broome's first gallery and specialises in contemporary indigenous Kimberley art.

Belinda Carrigan, a renowned curator of indigenous art who directed the Holmes à Court Collection for ten years, owns **Gecko Gallery** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 8909; www.geckogallery.com.au; 9 Short St; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun, closed Sun & Mon during Wet), which specialises in Central Desert and Utopia art.

Broome 6 Gallery (Map p228; ☎ 9192 6821; www.broome6.com.au; 6/20 Hammersley St; ☎ 10am-5pm) started off representing six local artists but shows other Kimberley artists and is a great supporter of the Mowanjum Community working in the Wandjina Art Tradition.

Look out for the work of Broome's greatest talent, Moroccan-Australian Krim Benterrak, a Kimberley resident of some 20 years, who captures the magical colour and light of Broome better than anyone. Serious art lovers can see his work in his home studio by appointment (☎ 9192 1490).

If you're looking for lustrous pearls, two pioneering family businesses produce the best quality pearls in the most stunning settings. Having established Broome's first underwater pearl farm on a Roebuck Bay seabed, **Kailis Pearls** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 2061; cnr Marine Terrace & Collie St; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) creates elegant understated designs. **Paspaley Pearls** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 2203; 2 Short St; www.paspaleypearls.com; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun May-Oct only) started Australia's first cultured pearl farm 420km north of Broome at Kuri Bay in the 1950s and has been setting splendid pearls in stylish designs ever since.

For local arts, crafts, incense, candles, hippy gear and hemp clothes, head to the **Courthouse Markets** (Map p228; ☎ Sat morning Oct-Apr, Sat & Sun morning May-Sep) or the Town Beach Markets during the Staircase to the Moon (see p227).

Getting There & Away

Broome has flights or links to all Australian capitals and towns throughout the Kimberley.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) flies daily to Broome from Perth and Darwin, while **Airmorth** (☎ 13 13 13) flies between Broome, Darwin and Kununurra. **Northwest Regional Airlines** (☎ 1300 136 629; www.northwestregional.com.au) flies to Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Karratha and Port Hedland. **Skippers Aviation**

(☎ 9478 3989; www.skippers.com.au) flies between Broome and Derby.

Greyhound (☎ 13 20 30) stops at the Broome visitors centre on its daily Perth-Darwin service.

Getting Around

The Town Bus Service (☎ 9193 6585; www.broomebus.com; adult/child \$3/1.30, hop-on-hop-off day pass adult/child \$9/free) links Chinatown with Cable Beach every hour (7.10am to 6.05pm June to mid-October, 10.23am to 6.05pm mid-October to May). **Nightrider** (☎ 9192 8987; adult/child one-way \$3.50/2.50, all night pass \$6/3) runs every half-hour from 6.30pm until midnight. Get timetables from the visitors centre.

Broome Broome (Map p228; ☎ 9192 2210; www.broomebroome.com.au) has air-con cars from \$30 a day, 4WD from \$105 (plus insurance), and scooters from \$35 for two days. **Broome Cycles** (Map p228; ☎ 9192 1871 Chinatown, 0409 192 289 Cable Beach; \$50 deposit) rents bikes for \$18/70 per day/week. For taxis phone **Broome Taxis** (☎ 9192 1133) or **Chinatown Taxis** (☎ 1800 811 772).

CABLE BEACH

Cable Beach comprises the long stretch of wonderful white-sand beach and the expanding laid-back suburb backing on to it, 4km west of Broome's Chinatown. At the northern end, near the surf club, you can hire beach

umbrellas, deck chairs, surfboards, and boogie boards (all under \$10). Nude sunbathing is allowed beyond the rocks further north.

Amble along three well-marked trails through **Minyirr Park**, running along Cable Beach, a spiritual place for the Rubibi people, or go with an **indigenous guide** (☎ 9194 0150). The Broome Visitors Centre has brochures with a map.

Australia's original crocodile hunter, owner of **Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Park** (☎ 9192 1489; Cable Beach Rd; adult/child/family \$20/16/50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Nov, croc-feeding tours 3pm, alligator-feeding tours 11am Mon-Fri), was making classic Aussie adventure films *Across the Top* and *Follow the Sun* in the late 1960s when the late Steve Irwin was just a kid. To get the most out of your visit to Douglas' croc park, time it with a feeding tour.

Broome's coast has one of the most varied collections of **dinosaur footprints** in the world – nine different types – and a group of 10 well-preserved footprints around 135 million years old at **Gantheaume Point**, 7km south of Broome. At extremely low tides these are exposed, but they're difficult to find. You'll easily be able to identify **Anastasia's Pool**, carved into the rock by the former lighthouse keeper to ease his wife's arthritis.

Sleeping

Cable Beach Backpackers (☎ 1800 655 011, 9193 5511; www.cablebeachbackpackers.com; 12 Sanctuary Rd; dm \$20-25, d \$65; ☎ ☎ ☎) Within splashing distance of Cable Beach, this relaxed place has a lush tropical courtyard, swimming pool, big communal kitchen and bar. The friendly management picks guests up from their bus, provides shuttle buses into town, hosts free

sausage sizzles and rents surfboards, bikes and scooters.

Palm Grove Holiday Resort (☎ 1800 803 336, 9192 3336; www.palmgrove.com.au; cnr Cable Beach & Murray Rds; unpowered/powerd sites \$32/36, studio d \$155, 2-bedroom park homes \$180; ☎ ☎) Across the road from Cable Beach, this shady caravan park has free barbecues, campers kitchen, and a gorgeous swimming pool. The well-equipped studios and 'park homes' are in the Broome style and rates drop substantially in the off-season.

Cable Beach Club Resort (☎ 1800 199 099, 9192 0400; www.cablebeachclub.com; Cable Beach Rd; d from \$255; ☎ ☎ ☎) What makes this idyllic resort special is the unique combination of Broome architecture and Eastern Zen style. Add to that lush gardens, serene swimming pools, great eateries and friendly service. It all makes for a memorable stay.

Eating & Drinking

Sunset Bar & Cafe (☎ 9192 0470; Cable Beach Club Resort, Cable Beach Rd; mains \$12-25; ☎ 6.30am-late) Arrive around five to get a prime sunset-viewing spot as sunset cocktails is a ritual for Cable Beach Club guests. The great-value global menu spans everything from crispy pizzas to tasty Asian noodles, and the popular Sunset Seafood Platter for two (\$75).

Diver's Tavern (☎ 9193 6066; Cable Beach Rd; mains \$12-29; ☎ 11am-10pm) This is the place to head for a few games of pool and a no-nonsense counter meal. The delicious Divers Burgers (\$16) are deservedly popular although many find it hard to resist 'Half An Ass' (a half-kilo rump, gravy, chips and salad \$26).

Old Zoo Cafe (☎ 9193 6200; 2 Challenor Rd; mains \$17-27; ☎ 7am-late) In one of Lord McAlpine's old zoo buildings, this café is popular with locals

THE CABLE BEACH CAMEL COUP

One of Western Australia's most iconic images is a camel train silhouetted by a golden sunset at Cable Beach. But behind this idyllic scene a tale of intrigue has been playing out. Until mid-2006, four licensees were issued to lead camel trains along the beach. However, in July 2006 one operator, Red Sun Camels, was awarded all four licences from 2007, effectively putting the other three operators out of business – including the man who started the industry, Abdul Casley and his Ships of the Desert. Paying \$100,000 a year for each of the five-year permits (they were formerly \$500 each) and throwing in a couple of new four-wheel-drives for the council rangers for beach patrols, Red Sun Camels has a monopoly on Cable Beach camel rides. Appeals, public protests and questions about what happened behind the scenes have had Broome buzzing for months. While you could say it's just business, in a relatively small town such as Broome, where the concept of a 'fair go' still means something, the whole episode is seen as being as sour as camel's breath.

and travellers alike for its laid-back atmosphere and tropical gardens. Expect delicious breakfasts, light meals and a great selection of wines by the glass.

Zanders (☎ 9193 5090; Cable Beach Reserve, Cable Beach Rd; mains \$18-27; ☎ 7am-late) Its beachside location keeps Zanders busy, especially around sunset, while its range of eating options – from take-away at picnic tables to bistro-style eating with table service – keeps everyone happy. Unfortunately the menu – salt and pepper squid, seafood basket, surf n' turf – is predictable.

Club Restaurant (☎ 9192 0411; Cable Beach Club Resort, Cable Beach Rd; mains \$30-34; ☎ 4pm-late) Dress up for Broome's best restaurant in an elegant dining room decorated with Lord McAlpine's antiques and Sidney Nolan paintings. The must-try dish is the tangy Pearl Meat Ceviche with rocket, green paw paw, lime and toasted coconut (\$24).

AROUND BROOME

Broome Bird Observatory

On the Roebuck Bay shores, 25km from Broome, this wonderful **bird observatory** (☎ 9193 5600; Crab Creek Rd; admission & binocular hire adult/child \$5/free) is a vital staging post for hundreds of migratory species, including 49 waders (nearly a quarter of the world's total species). An incredible 800,000 birds arrive each year, travelling some 12,000km to get here, on their way to or from Asia and Siberia. Join an excellent two-hour tour (from observatory/Broome \$50/85); a full-day tour of the freshwater lakes (\$120/155, BYO lunch); a one-hour introductory walk (\$15); or do a seven-day all-inclusive course (\$790 including transfers, accommodation and meals). You can camp on-site (\$11 per person), or rent a room (single/double \$30/\$55) or fully-contained chalet (double \$105). Transfers from Broome are \$35. If you're driving, access is via a decent dirt road, which can be closed in the Wet.

Dampier Peninsula

Stunning scenery of aquamarine waters, white-sand beaches and red rock formations, along with the opportunity to learn about the indigenous culture and country of the Ngumbarl, Jabirrjabirr, Nyulnyul, Nimanburru and Bardi peoples, your hosts and guides, are great reasons to visit the remote Dampier Peninsula.

Access to the isolated Aboriginal communities is by 4WD only, along the rough, corrugated,

red pindan 200km-long Cape Leveque Rd (turn-off 9km east of Broome). You must plan your trip in advance, obtain permits and book accommodation before leaving. Permits exist to protect privacy of the community, preserve Aboriginal heritage and culture, and the natural environment, as well as ensuring your own safety. You can obtain a free transit permit in advance online from the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (☎ 1300 651 077; www.dia.wa.gov.au); this can take around three days to be processed. Get the *Dampier Peninsula Travellers Guide* from Broome visitors centre, which can make accommodation arrangements for you. You need to be completely self-sufficient and take fuel, food and water to last the period you'll be away. Check road conditions before leaving.

The first turn-off, Manari Rd, takes you to the **Willie Creek Pearl Farm** (see p227), while another 40km north is **Coulomb Point Nature Reserve**, which protects unique pindan vegetation and the rare bilby.

Back on Cape Leveque Rd, it's 110km to **Beagle Bay** (☎ 9192 4913; entry per person \$5), notable for the extraordinarily beautiful mother-of-pearl altar at Beagle Bay church, built by Pallotine monks in 1918. There are no public facilities or accommodation, just a shop and fuel (week-days only). Contact the office on arrival.

Tranquil, unspoilt **Middle Lagoon** (☎ 9192 4002; entry per car \$8, unpowered/powered sites per person \$13/16, beach shelters d \$44, cabins d \$125-200), 170km from Broome, is ideal for swimming, snorkelling and fishing, and is popular with Broome families. No fuel available.

Between Middle Lagoon and Cape Leveque, **Lombadina** (☎ 9192 4936; www.lombadina.com.au; entry per car \$5, dm \$44, unit d \$165, guided walks 1hr \$33, 2hr \$55, boat tours from \$154), about 200km from Broome, has fishing, whale-watching, mud-crabbing, and indigenous 'footprint' tours. Fuel is available Monday to Friday. Around 7km from Lombadina, gorgeous **Chile Creek** (☎ 9192 4141; www.chilecreek.com; camp sites per person \$17, bush shelters per person \$25) keeps it real with basic bush shelters and a rustic camp kitchen where travellers share stories.

Cape Leveque is rather spectacular, with pristine beaches and stunning red cliffs, and ecotourism award-winner **Kooljaman** (☎ 9192 4970; www.kooljaman.com.au; camp sites d \$32 plus \$5 for power, beach shelters/mini safari tents d \$60, cabins d \$140, safari tents d \$240) is the most sophisticated of the communities, with accommodation ranging

from hill-top resort-style safari tents with panoramic views to thatched beach huts. Kooljaman gets busy during the in-season, but is almost deserted off-season. **Dinkas Restaurant** (mains \$10-22; ☎ Apr-Oct) offers eat-in or a bush butler service!

Peninsula Transfers (☎ 9192 2660; one way adult/child \$95/60; ☎ depart 8am Sun, Wed & Fri Apr-Oct) operates 4WD services from Broome to Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Cape Leveque. Other destinations and the return trip must be negotiated when booking. Tour operators to Cape Leveque from Broome include indigenous-owned **Chomley's Tours** (☎ 9192 7307; www.chomleystours.com.au; 2-day tour incl 3hr Aboriginal guided tour \$310) and **Over the Top Adventure Tours** (☎ 9192 5211; www.4wdtours.com; one/two day Cape Leveque tour \$225/410).

GIBB RIVER ROAD

The Gibb River Rd was constructed as a 'beef road' to move cattle to and from surrounding stations. Spanning some 660km from Derby to Wyndham and Kununurra, it may be more direct than the highway by several hundred kilometres, but it's a rough, corrugated 4WD-only dirt road that's often closed after rain, and is closed altogether during the Wet.

The route leads through vast empty country and dramatic terrain. The scorched earth is scarred with spectacular lush gorges and awesome riverbeds, their rocky surfaces parched during the Dry and surging with water during the Wet.

If you want just a taste of back-country adventure, do the 'tourist loop' that takes you 125km along the Gibb River Rd from Derby to the Fairfield Leopold Downs Rd turn-off, then 124km past Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek to the Great Northern Hwy, 43km west of Fitzroy Crossing.

The neighbourhood is made up of Aboriginal communities and private cattle stations, so if you plan to leave the main roads, get permission first from owners. Apply for permits to transit or visit Aboriginal communities online from the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (☎ 1300 651 077; www.dia.wa.gov.au); permits may take three days to be processed. Get *Travelling in Outback Western Australia* or check www.dpi.wa.gov.au/pastoral for information on driving through pastoral stations; the *Travellers Atlas of Western Australia* shows lease boundaries.

The *Gibb River & Kalumburu Roads Travellers Guide* (\$4 from visitors centres) is indispensable with essential advice, sights, fuel stops and accommodation listings (often tented cabins at stations, which must be booked in advance). Make sure you're driving a high clearance 4WD, have spare tyres and tools, and stock up on several days' food and water in case you get stranded. Before leaving check **road conditions** (☎ 1800 013 314; www.mainroads.wa.gov.au; ☎ 24hr).

If you're not an experienced four-wheeler, opt for the hop-on, hop-off **Gibb River Road Bus** (☎ 1800 197 262; www.gibbriverbus.com.au; multistop ticket one way/return \$260/390; ☎ departs Derby 6am Wed, Fri & Sun, Kununurra 6am Tue, Thu & Sat, May-Sep only). Many organised tours also travel the road (see p223).

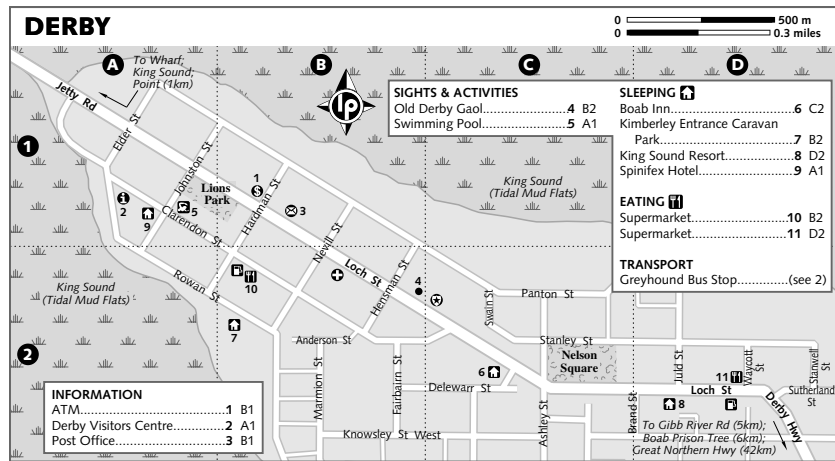
DERBY

☎ 08 / pop 5000

Drowsy Derby, the administrative centre for west Kimberley, sits astride a peninsula jutting into King Sound, surrounded by tidal mud flats. Its mangroves attract over 200 bird species, including migratory waders. This is crocodile country so squeeze the last bit of beach out of Broome (219km south) before heading here. Derby is short on sights but makes a decent base for trips to the national parks of the ancient Devonian Reef (see p238) and the islands of the Buccaneer Archipelago; it's also the western entrance to the Gibb River Rd.

HORIZONTAL WATERFALLS

One of the most intriguing features of the Kimberley coastline is the phenomenon known as the 'Horizontal Waterfalls'. Despite the name, the falls are simply tides gushing through narrow coastal gorges in the Buccaneer Archipelago, north of Derby. What makes it such a spectacle is the huge tides – often varying up to 11m, the rate of the water flow reaches an astonishing 30 knots as it's forced in and out of the constricted sandstone gorges. The two narrow gaps, the first being 20m wide and the second 10m wide, often see the 'waterfall' reach a height of 4m. The falls are best seen by air and form part of many tour operators' itineraries (inquire at the Derby and/or Broome visitors centres).



Information

The supermarket and ATMs are on Loch and Clarendon Sts.

Derby visitors centre (☎ 1800 621 426, 9191 1426; www.derbytourism.com.au; 2 Clarendon St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri & 9am-noon Sat Oct-Mar) Sells bus tickets, can advise on road conditions, and books local mud crabbing and fishing tours.

Post office (Loch St)

Sights & Activities

Derby's first wooden jetty was built in 1894 to serve the growing pastoral population and gold rush, while the current **wharf** opened in 1964 to export cattle (nowadays mainly lead and zinc). Locals like to fish here for north-west salmon, shark and mud crabs and it's the best place to see the colossal 11m tides. There are crocodiles, so if you want to swim head for the swimming pool on Clarendon St.

The **Old Derby Gaol** (Loch St), next to the police station, is the town's oldest building, dating to 1906, and is a grim reminder of the violence between the indigenous people and European settlers that racked the town from the late 1800s.

The **Boab Prison Tree**, 7km south of town, is Derby's most famous attraction. With a girth of 14m and a hollow trunk it's said to be over 1000 years old. Prisoners were locked up here en route to Old Derby Gaol.

Begun in 1960, the **Boab Festival** (July) entertains locals with concerts, sports (including mud footy) and street parades.

Tours

Derby's biggest drawcard is its proximity to the natural splendour of remote **King Sound** and the **Buccaneer Archipelago**, uninhabited islands that are best viewed from the air or sea. **One Tide Charters** (☎ 9193 1358; www.onetide.com; 5-day tours \$2450) offer all-inclusive multiday 'sea safaris' with camping overnight at idyllic spots. **Kimberley Seaplanes** (☎ 9191 1760; www.horizontalfalls.com.au; fly-cruise-fly 5hr/overnight tours from Derby \$395/\$495) and **Buccaneer Sea Safaris** (☎ 9191 1991, 0419 917 797; www.buccaneerseasafaris.com; 4-day tours from Derby \$1790, from Broome \$2100) offer tours combining sea and sky vistas. You can do the flight only with **Bush Flight** (☎ 9193 2680; www.bushflight.com; 90min tour from Derby \$255).

Sleeping & Eating

Kimberley Entrance Caravan Park (☎ 9193 1055; www.kimberleyentrancecaravanpark.com; 2 Rowan St; unpowered/power sites \$18/24) Friendly managers Ian and Julie provide great facilities in leafy surrounds.

Spinifex Hotel (☎ 9191 1233; Clarendon St; dm \$25, budget s/d \$45/60, motel d \$85; ☎) Rooms at the Spini may be basic but most travellers will pass their time in the affable pub, which also does decent meals (mains \$11 to \$22).

Boab Inn (☎ 9191 1044; boabinn@bigpond.com; Loch St; s/d \$110/145; ☎) The best value accommodation in town. Prices drop by \$40 in the off-season. Rooms are clean and comfortable and there are excellent counter meals (mains \$12 to \$26) in the pub's restaurant. They even have a real espresso machine!

King Sound Resort (☎ 9193 1044; Loch St; d \$150; ☎) Make this your last resort. The rooms are spacious but were infested with cockroaches when we stayed.

Point (☎ 9191 1195; mains \$11-26; ☎ 10am-late) In a prime sunset-watching spot overlooking the jetty, this BYO place is Derby's best, serving delicious seafood. The barramundi and croc steaks are very popular. It also does takeaway.

Getting There & Away

Skippers Aviation (☎ 9478 3989) flies to Broome Monday to Saturday. Daily **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) buses to Darwin and Perth stop at the visitors centre.

GIBB RIVER ROAD TO WYNDHAM-KUNUNURRA ROAD

Mowanjum Wandjina Art (☎ 9191 1104; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri; phone ahead), about 4km along Gibb River Rd, is an Aboriginal community renowned for its artists painting in the Wandjina style.

The 5000-acre **Birdwood Downs Station** (☎ 9191 1275; www.birdwooddowns.com; Gibb River Rd; camping \$11, Savannah huts d \$120), about 20km from Derby, offers outback accommodation and trail rides through the savannah (per person \$50 for a 90-minute ride).

After crossing the Lennard River bridge (120km from Derby) you'll come to the Yamarra Gap in the King Leopold Range (145km). Narrow 5km-long **Lennard River Gorge**, 8km off Gibb River Rd, has a refreshing pool and waterfall.

At 184km you'll see the turn-off (and 50km rough drive) to enchanting **Mt Hart Wilderness**

Lodge (☎ 9191 4645; www.mthart.com.au; d incl 3-course dinner & breakfast per person \$180).

About 26km past the Mt Hart turn-off is stunning **Bell Gorge**, 29km down a rough track, with a picturesque waterfall and camping at **Silent Grove** (adult/child \$9/2).

Refuel and meet some locals at characterful **Imintji Store** (☎ 9191 7471), your last chance to get supplies. Next to Imintji Aboriginal Community is **Imintji Wilderness Camp** (☎ 1800 889 389; www.kimberleywilderness.com.au; d incl breakfast \$135) with safari tents.

Mornington Wilderness Camp (☎ 9191 7406; camping adult/child \$15/7, safari tents full board d \$450), on the Fitzroy River, is 100km south of the 247km mark, with spacious tents and tours.

Horseshoe-shaped **Galvans Gorge** has a swimming hole less than 1km off the road at the 286km mark.

Mt Barnett Roadhouse (☎ 9191 7007; camp sites \$10), at the 306km point, is owned by the Kupingarri Aboriginal Community and has fuel and a store. **Barnett River Gorge** is another good swimming spot, 5km off the 328km mark.

At 406km you reach the Kalumburu turn-off (see p238). The Gibb River Rd continues through spectacular country; at 579km there are views of the Cockburn Ranges, the Cambridge Gulf and the Pentecost and Durack Rivers. About 2km further is **Home Valley Homestead** (☎ 9161 4322; www.homevalley.com.au; camp sites per adult/child \$10/5 plus \$10 for power, homestead per person incl breakfast \$80) with swimming, fishing and horse-riding.

At 590km is the infamous **Pentecost River** crossing. Take care: water levels are hard to predict and salt water crocs love it here.

THE BEASTLY BOAB

One of the key features of the Kimberley are its huge and austere boab trees. An anomaly of Australian fauna, the boab (*Adansonia gregorii*) is found only in the Kimberley and Victoria River area of the Northern Territory. Intriguingly, the only other places where members of the boab family are found is Madagascar and Africa.

Most visitors only see the trees in the Dry and being deciduous, they have already lost their leaves – giving them that stark appearance. One local story is that the boab formed too high an opinion of itself, displeasing the gods so much they pulled it out of the ground and thrust it back in upside-down, exposing its roots and earning it the nickname 'upside-down tree'.

However, at the beginning of the Wet, the boab produces new leaves and large white flowers. The boab produces a fruit as well, which the local Aborigines use for decoration by carving pictorial scenes onto the hard surface of the fruit. Aborigines have also used the tree widely for such things as shelter, food, medicine and water. The European settlers, of course, found a different use for the often hollow centre of the boab tree, as 'lock-ups' (prisons) for Aborigines, the best-known example being the Boab Prison Tree near Derby (opposite).

At 614km, the million-acre **El Questro Wilderness Park** (☎ 9169 1777; www.voyages.com.au; park permit \$15; ☹ Apr–Nov) has a range of accommodation, including luxurious **El Questro Homestead** (d incl meals \$1780; ☹); the more down-to-earth **El Questro Station Township** (camp sites per person \$15, safari tents d \$135, bungalows d \$298; ☹), the best value; and over-rated **Emma Gorge Resort** (safari-style tent cabins d \$248; ☹ ☹), at 623km. There are restaurants and bars at the Township and Emma Gorge resorts. Highlights include boat tours up the wonderful **Chamberlain Gorge** to see indigenous art, and the 40-minute bush walk along gorgeous **Emma Gorge** to a pretty pool and waterfall.

At 630km you cross King River and at 647km you finally hit bitumen: Wyndham is 48km to the northwest, and Kununurra is 52km east.

NORTHERN KIMBERLEY

KALUMBURU ROAD

While unsealed Kalumburu Rd is in better condition than the Gibb River Rd in some spots, in others its severely corrugated or covered in rocks or bull dust. During the Wet, the road becomes a river, and after the Wet, locals find parts of it have disappeared altogether; it may not open again until May or even June. Distances are given from the junction of the Gibb River and Kalumburu Rds, 419km from the Derby Hwy and 248km from the Wyndham-Kununurra Rd.

You need permits to visit the Kalumburu community; apply in advance online from the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (☎ 1300 651 077; www.dia.wa.gov.au; free) – permits from here may take a week to be processed – and the **Kalumburu community** (☎ 9161 4300; kalumburumission@bigpond.com; 7-day permit per car \$35).

After crossing the Gibb River at 3km and Plain Creek at 16km, you reach the first fuel stop at 59km, **Drysdale River Station** (☎ 9161 4326; www.drysdaleriver.com.au; camp sites \$9–14, d \$130), where you can get supplies, meals and, in the Dry, scenic flights to Mitchell Falls (per person \$250).

The Mitchell Plateau turn-off is at 172km, from where it's 70km to the turn-off to spectacular **Mitchell Falls**, 16km downhill; you have to walk the final 3km. In the Dry, the water spills down the terraces; in the Wet, it thunders over all the escarpments and a scenic

flight from Kununurra is the only way to see the spectacle. There is accommodation at the **Ungolian Wilderness Camp** (☎ 1800 889 389; www.kimberleywilderness.com.au; safari B&B \$135), at the turn-off to the falls. The **Gibb River & Kalumburu Roads Travellers Guide** lists further options on remote areas of the coast accessible by air only.

From the Mitchell Plateau turn-off, the road heads northeast, crossing **Carson River** at 247km. In another 20km you'll arrive at **Kalumburu Aboriginal Community** (☎ 9161 4333), a picturesque mission nestled among giant mango trees and coconut palms, with a shop, food and **fuel** (☹ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri). You can pitch a tent at Honeymoon Bay (☎ 9161 4366; camp sites \$9).

GREAT NORTHERN HIGHWAY

DEVONIAN REEF NATIONAL PARKS

The West Kimberley's three national parks feature three stunning gorges that were once part of a western 'great barrier reef' in the Devonian era, 350 million years ago. Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek National Parks are accessed via Fairfield Leopold Downs Rd (linking the Great Northern Hwy with Gibb River Rd), while Geikie Gorge National Park is just northeast of Fitzroy Crossing.

The walls of beautiful **Windjana Gorge** soar 100m above the Lennard River, which surges in the Wet but is a series of pools in the Dry. Scores of freshwater crocodiles sunbake on its banks and lurk in the water. Bring plenty of water for the 7km return walk from the **camp ground** (site \$9) to the end of the gorge. The ruins of **Lillimooloora** homestead (1893) are 3km from Lennard River; once a police outpost, this is where Aboriginal tracker Jandamarra shot Constable Richardson (see p240).

Tunnel Creek is a 750m-long passage, 3m to 15m wide, created by the creek cutting through a spur of the Napier Range. In the Dry, you can walk all the way to the end; be prepared to meet bats along the way and wade through cold, knee-deep water in places. Take a strong torch and change of shoes. There are Aboriginal paintings at either end. No camping.

The magnificent **Geikie Gorge** is 18km north of Fitzroy Crossing on a sealed road. The best

way to enjoy the gorge and its abundance of wildlife (including bull sharks and crocs – no swimming!) is on an entertaining **DEC boat tour** (☎ 9191 5121, 9195 5500; tickets from DEC kiosk at Geikie Gorge; 1hr tour adult/child \$20/5; ☹ 8am, 9.30am, 11am & 3pm Jun–Aug; fewer trips & times vary Apr–May & Sep–Oct). You can also take cultural bush walks and boat tours with an indigenous guide through **Dangku Heritage Tours** (☎ 9191 5355; 2hr walk adult/child \$55/45, 3hr boat cruise \$70/55).

Tours

Tour companies also go to the gorges from Broome and Derby.

Australian Adventure Travel (☎ 1800 621 625; www.safaris.net.au; 5-day tour \$895) Departs from Broome to all gorges via the Gibb River Rd, then Kununurra.

Broome Day Tours (☎ 1800 801 068; 1-day tour \$190) Geikie Gorge & Windjana.

Derby Bus Service (☎ 9191 1426; 1-day tour \$121) Windjana & Tunnel Creek.

Kimberley Getaway Safaris (☎ 9193 7139; www.kimberleysafaris.com.au; 1-day tour \$595) From Broome to all gorges.

FITZROY CROSSING

☎ 08 / pop 1100

This is a true outback town, located where the Great Northern Hwy crosses the Fitzroy River, with a large Aboriginal population hailing from the Gooniyandi, Bunuba, Walmajarri and Wangkajungka communities. Fitzroy Crossing is a good access point for Geikie and Windjana Gorges and Tunnel Creek. The **visitors centre** (☎ 9191 5355; finfo@sdwk.wa.gov.au; ☹ 8am–5pm Apr–Sep, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri Oct–Mar) is on the highway.

The oldest pub in the Kimberley, lively **Crossing Inn** (☎ 9191 5080; crossinginn@bigpond.com.au; Skuthorpe Rd; unpowered/powerd sites d \$17/21, dongas s/d \$60/80, motel s/d \$93/110; ☹) provides a chance to meet locals, inside its tin shed and across the road at the billabong. Basic accommodation is at the back of the pub. The tin walls feature wonderful paintings by talented local high school students.

Fitzroy River Lodge Motel Hotel & Caravan Park (☎ 9191 5141; Great Northern Hwy; unpowered/powerd sites \$11/25, safari tents d \$135, motel d \$175; ☹ ☹) has a wide range of high-quality accommodation, from comfortable motel rooms and safari tents to shady camping spots, and a friendly bar with delicious counter meals (mains \$10 to \$23).

Northwest Regional Airlines (☎ 1300 136 629) has daily flights to Broome and Halls Creek.

Greyhound (☎ 13 20 30) has daily buses to Perth and Darwin that stop at the visitors centre and Fitzroy River Lodge.

HALLS CREEK

☎ 08 / pop 1590

On the edge of the arid Great Sandy Desert, Halls Creek is a small predominantly Aboriginal settlement of Kidja, Jaru and Gooniyandi communities.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9168 6262; ☹ 8am–4pm Mon–Sat, 8am–2pm Sun) is on the Great Northern Hwy and can organise tours with local companies to Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater and Purnululu National Park.

China Wall, 5km east of town, is a quartz vein protruding 6m off the ground, the longest single fault of its type in the world.

The tranquil swimming holes of **Palm Springs** (45km from town) and **Sawpit Gorge** (52km from town) are off gravel Duncan Rd, southeast of town.

Halls Creek Caravan Park (☎ 9168 6169; lanus@bigpond.com.au; Roberta Ave; unpowered/powerd sites \$19/22, dongas \$24, cabins d \$74; ☹) offers travellers some shady camping areas as well as a well-stocked shop.

Best Western Halls Creek Motel (☎ 9168 6001; hallscreekmotel@westnet.com.au; 194 Great Northern Hwy; dongas \$50, motel d \$120; ☹ ☹) has clean, well-equipped rooms, including decent budget rooms, and hearty meals at **Russian Jack's** (mains \$12–28).

Kimberley Hotel (☎ 9168 6101; www.kimberleyhotel.com; Roberta Ave; budget/motel d \$91/164; ☹ ☹) has comfortable rooms with all mod cons and an atmospheric bar and **restaurant** (mains \$16–31) overlooking the pool.

Northwest Regional Airlines (☎ 1300 136 629) has daily flights to Fitzroy Crossing and Broome. **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) has buses running between Perth and Darwin.

WOLFE CREEK METEORITE CRATER

The massive 850m-wide and 50m-deep Wolfe Creek meteorite crater – believed to have happened when a meteorite plunged into earth more than a million years ago – is the second largest in the world. According to the local Djaru people's Dreaming, the crater, Kandimalal, marks the spot where a huge rainbow snake emerged from the ground.

The crater is best appreciated from the air. **Northwest Regional Airlines** (☎ 9168 6462; www.northwestregional.com.au) offers flights (\$255, 70

JANDAMARRA

As a talented young Aboriginal stockman, a Bunuba tribesman, Jandamarra, earned himself the nickname 'pigeon' for his ability to flit around like the local crested spinifex pigeon. Barely in his teens, Jandamarra was equally at home with a pair of reins, sheep shears or a gun in his hands.

Jandamarra was working with a white stockman named Richardson when the station that employed them went broke. Richardson became a policeman and enlisted Jandamarra as his tracker. At this time the relationship between the white settlers and the Bunuba people had reached a low point, with the white settlers (already struggling to survive) not taking kindly to sheep being stolen and the Bunuba, in turn, being outraged at the settlers who had invaded their land and shown little respect for their sacred sites.

The Bunuba people were rounded up by the police and the team of Richardson and Jandamarra were a redoubtable one. Having captured a fair slice of the Bunuba leaders in October 1894, Richardson took them to the Lillimooloorra Police Outpost. However, one of the prisoners, Elle-marra, who'd guided Jandamarra through his tribal initiation, convinced the young man to swap allegiances. The night before departing for Derby, Jandamarra shot Richardson in his sleep and freed the prisoners. Thus began one of the few armed resistances to the white occupation.

After ambushing some white settlers, Jandamarra and his crew faced a day-long battle with police and squatters from Derby. Though heavily wounded, Jandamarra eluded the police and for three years taunted them by managing to easily evade capture. Jandamarra's ability to just slip away earned him the nickname 'magic man' among his people and it was believed that only another spirit could ever capture him.

On April 1, 1897 that spirit arrived in the form of an Aboriginal tracker named Mongo Mick, who killed Jandamarra in his Tunnel Creek hideout.

For more on Jandamarra, get a copy of the *Pigeon Heritage Trail* (\$2.50) from the Derby or Broome Visitors Centres, or the fascinating *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance* by Howard Pedersen and Banjo Woorunmurra.

minutes) on demand from Halls Creek. Otherwise, it's a challenging drive along a rough 4WD road. The turn-off is 16km west of Halls Creek, from where it's 137km south along the Tanami Track. You'll need plenty of food, water and fuel.

PURNULULU NATIONAL PARK & BUNGLE BUNGLE RANGE

The Purnululu National Park, 3000 sq km of ancient country, is home to the wonderful ochre and black striped 'beehive' domes of the Bungle Bungle Range.

The distinctive rounded rock towers are made of sandstone and rough conglomerates (rocks comprised of pebbles and boulders), moulded by rainfall over millions of years. Their stripes are caused by the differences in clay content and the porosity of the layers; the rock within the dark stripes is more permeable, allowing algae to flourish, while the lighter layers consist of oxidised iron compounds.

While the local Kidja people have always known about them – purnululu means 'sand-

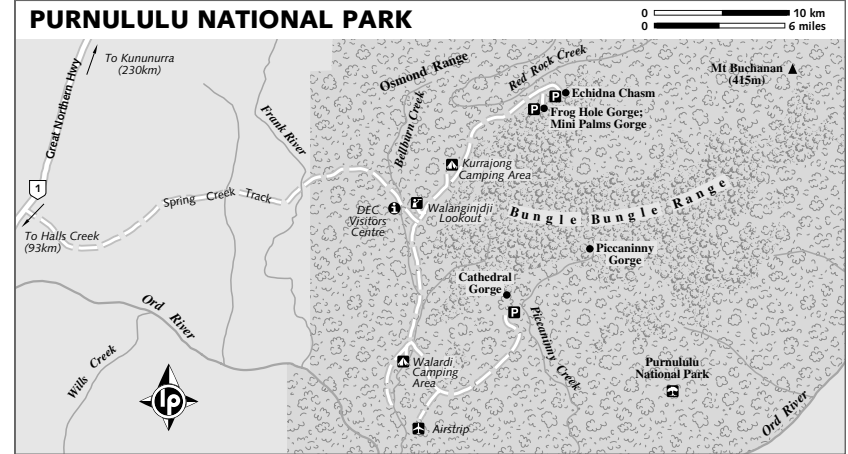
stone' in the Kidja language and Bungle Bungle is thought to be a misspelling of 'bundle bundle', a common grass – the formations were only 'discovered' during the mid 1980s, the park created in 1987, and in 2003, added to the World Heritage list.

The park has wonderful Aboriginal art galleries, gorgeous swimming holes within the gorges, and a wide array of wildlife, including over 130 bird species.

The stunning **Echidna Chasm** in the north and **Cathedral Gorge** in the south are about an hour's walk from the car parks, while the soaring **Piccaninny Gorge** is an 18km round trip that takes a full day to walk. The restricted gorges in the northern part of the park can only be seen from the air.

The park is open April to December; rangers are based here during these months. If you're driving, you'll need a high clearance 4WD, as there are five deep creek crossings. The turn-off from the highway is 53km south of Warmun, then 52km along a very rough 4WD-only track to the Three Ways junction. Allow at least 2½ hours to get to the visitors

PURNULULU NATIONAL PARK



centre. **Kurrajong Camping Area** and **Walardi Camping Area** have fresh water and toilets (camp sites per person \$9).

Tours

East Kimberley Tours (☎ 9168 2213; www.eastkimberleytours.com.au; 1-day tour \$396, 2-day tour \$796) has a wide range of tours from Kununurra, while several operators include Purnululu in multiday Kimberley tours (see p223). You can also do scenic flights from Kununurra in helicopters with **Slingair** (☎ 9169 1300; www.slingair.com.au; per person 20min tour \$175, 1hr tour \$450) and light planes with **Alligator Airways** (☎ 9168 1333; www.alligatorairways.com.au; 135min tour per person \$230). Helicopters get you closer.

WYNDHAM

☎ 08 / pop 900

A languid outback town at the confluence of five rivers, Wyndham, 60km north of the Great Northern Hwy, was established during the Gold Rush.

Kimberley Motors (☎ 9161 1281; Great Northern Hwy; ☎ 6am-6pm) has tourist information, maps and tide charts and can book fishing and 4WD tours.

As this is crocodile country, a giant 20m concrete replica of one greets you at the entrance to town. The excellent **Wyndham Crocodile Farm** (☎ 9161 1124; Barytes Rd; adult/child \$15/8; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Dry, 11am-2pm Wet) has some magnificent specimens and the guides get close to them during an entertaining tour at feeding time (11am). **Warri Dreamtime Park**

(Koolam St) features enormous bronze statues of an Aboriginal family and some native animals. **Five Rivers Lookout** on Mt Bastion has splendid views of the King, Pentecost, Durack, Forrest and Ord Rivers entering the Cambridge Gulf; best at sunrise and sunset.

About 15km from Wyndham is **Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve**, a beautiful wetlands that teems with birds in the Wet, and the **Grotto**, a peaceful pool surrounded by lush vegetation in a small gorge.

Wyndham Caravan Park (☎ 9161 1064; Baker St, Three Mile; unpowered/powerd sites per person \$10/13, dog-gas \$45; ☎) has a wonderful boab in its shady grounds, offers fishing tours, and provides a good campers kitchen where you can cook your catch in the evening.

The rooms at **Wyndham Town Hotel** (☎ 9161 1202; O'Donnell St; s/d \$88/110, meals \$5-24; ☎) are basic, but you'll be spending most of your time in the atmospheric pub meeting the locals. The home-style steaks and salads are enormous.

You can do a one-day Wyndham tour from Kununurra with **Triangle Tours** (☎ 9168 1272; triangleretours@bigpond.com; adult/child \$165/90).

KUNUNURRA

☎ 08 / pop 6000

Kununurra is a neat, pleasant town nestled beneath the red domes of Mirima National Park, with lovely Lily Creek Lagoon lapping at its shores. Founded in 1960 as the centre for the Ord River irrigation scheme, an ambitious government incentive to harness the region's

water, tourism developed quickly thanks to the proximity of the Gibb River Rd, Lake Argyle, and Purnululu National Park.

If you're coming from the Northern Territory, note that there's a 90-minute time difference, and throw out your fruit as strict quarantine restrictions apply in WA.

Information

Boab Books (☎ 9169 2574; 114b Coolibah Dr) has an excellent range of books on the Kimberley.

DEC office (☎ 9168 0200; Konkerberry Dr) For park permits.

District Hospital (☎ 9168 1522; 96 Coolibah Dr; ☒ 24hr) Emergency facilities.

Kununurra Telecentre (☎ 9169 1868; Coolibah Dr; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Internet.

Visitors centre (☎ 9168 1177; www.kununurratourism.com; Coolibah Dr; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat Dry, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Wet) Has tonnes of information, and can advise on road conditions and book tours.

Sights & Activities

MIRIMA NATIONAL PARK

A short stroll from town (1.5km), **Mirima National Park** (per car \$9) is a stunning area of rugged

sedimentary formations that look like a mini Bungle Bungle Range. The 350 million-year-old sandstone rock has taken shape by uplift over the past 20 million years.

The splendid gorges of Hidden Valley are home to spinifex-covered hills and boab trees. There are excellent bush walks and wonderful bird- and wildlife; Mirima is home to honeyeaters, finches, black kites, and the rare white quilled rock pigeon, along with wallabies, dingoes, echidnas, pythons, monitors, dragon lizards and snakes. The two easy, well-marked walking tracks take around a half-hour each – head here a couple of hours before sunset so you can see the magic the sun's light works on the rocks.

OTHER SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Lily Creek Lagoon is a mini-wetlands with lots of wonderful birdlife and freshwater croc. Locals like to stroll here in the late afternoon. **Lake Kununurra**, also called Diversion Dam, has pleasant picnic spots and great fishing.

The **Waringarri Aboriginal Arts Centre** (☎ 9168 2212; 16 Speargrass Rd; ☒ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) is an Aboriginal-owned art gallery and studio

with local artists working in their unique abstract style using ochre pigments. **Our Land Gallery** (☎ 9168 1881; 10 Papuana St & 110 Coolibah Dr; ☒ 9am-5pm) specialises in ochre paintings from the Kimberley in the Papuana St gallery, and around the corner sells authentic Aboriginal artefacts.

Kelly's Knob is a favourite sunset viewpoint on the town's northern fringe. During the Wet, distant thunderstorms are spectacular from here, although it's sometimes struck by lightning!

Tours

A number of tour companies offer canoeing trips on the Ord River over one, two or three days. Eco-certified **Go Wild** (☎ 1300 66 33 69; www.govild.com.au; 1-day tour per person \$150) also offers abseiling tours. **Kununurra Cruises** (☎ 9168 1718; adult/child \$67/25) does popular sunset 'BBQ Boat' cruises on Lily Creek Lagoon and the Ord.

Sleeping

Hidden Valley Caravan Park (☎ 9168 1790; Weaver Plains Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/22, cabin d \$95, extra adult \$10; ☒) Under the looming crags of Mirima National Park, this excellent little park is a bit out of the way. The amenities are good, there's a large pool and the self-contained cabins are well priced.

Lakeside Resort (☎ 9169 1092; www.lakeside.com.au; Casuarina Way; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/22, self-catering studio d \$125, motel d \$155; ☒) At the edge of Lily Creek Lagoon, there's a good range of accommodation set within leafy gardens.

Lakeview Apartments (☎ 9168 0000; www.lakeviewapartments@wn.com.au; 224 Victoria Hwy; 1-/2-/3-bedroom apt \$165/195/255; ☒) These spacious, self-contained apartments across the road from Lily Creek Lagoon have all mod cons and fully-equipped kitchens.

Kununurra Backpackers (☎ 1800 641 998, 9169 1998; www.adventure.kimberley.net.au; 24 Nutwood Cres; dm \$21-23, d \$54; ☒) and **Kimberley Croc Backpackers** (☎ 1300 136 702, 9168 2702; www.kimberleycroc.com.au; 120 Konkerberry Dr; dm \$22-24, d \$55; ☒) are both excellent value with lush tropical gardens, swimming pools, barbecues, good communal facilities and Kimberley tours.

Eating

There are two well-stocked supermarkets, bakeries, and a couple of takeaways.

Valentine's Pizzeria (☎ 9169 1167; 4 Cottontree Ave; pizzas \$12-20; ☒ 5-9pm) Thick with toppings, they

may not be authentic but these filling pizzas will do the trick. BYO or get it delivered to your room. Tex-Mex is also on the menu.

Kimberley Asian Cuisine (☎ 9169 3698; 75 Coolibah Dr; mains \$14-21) This pan-Asian place, serving Aussie versions of Chinese and Thai, will satisfy those Asian cravings. Eat in (BYO) or takeaway.

Gulliver's Tavern (☎ 9168 1666; 196 Cottontree Ave; \$14-25) Does hearty counter meals – all the usual suspects plus a smattering of Asian dishes (Thai beef salad, hokkien noodles etc) and local favourites such as the Barra Burger.

Zebra Rock Restaurant (☎ 9168 1344; Kununurra Hotel, 8 Messmate Way; \$13-26) has the most sophisticated menu, albeit served in casual pub surroundings – bruschetta, tasting platters, 'Ocean and Earth', barramundi and Thai curries.

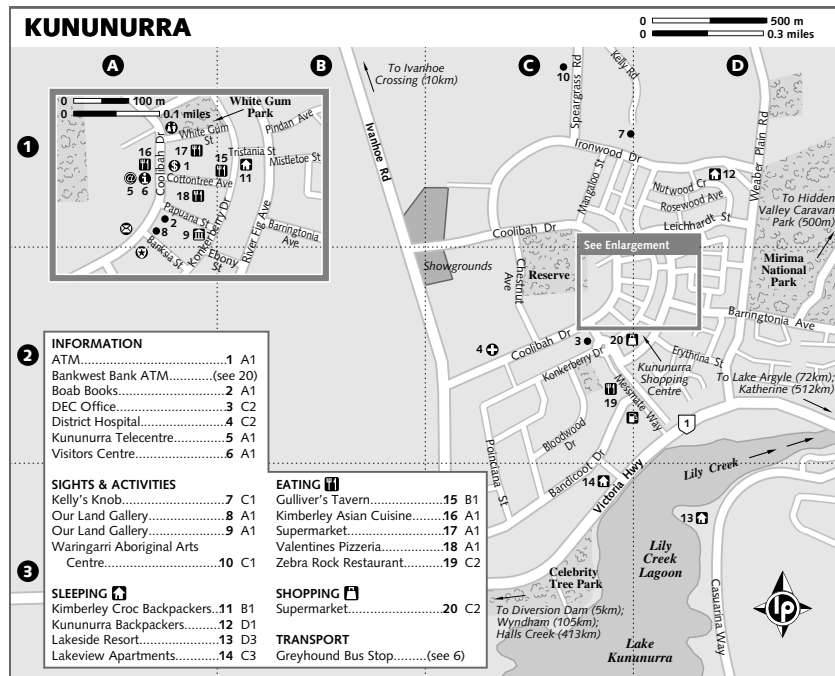
Getting There & Around

Qantas/Airlink (☎ 13 13 13) flies to Broome (three weekly) and Darwin (five weekly). **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) has daily buses to Darwin and Perth that stop at the visitors centre. Destinations include Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby and Broome.

LAKE ARGYLE

Enormous Lake Argyle, Australia's second-largest reservoir, created by the Ord River Dam, can hold around 18 times the water of Sydney Harbour. Unfortunately, there hasn't been enough rainfall for the Lake to reach capacity since it filled to the brim in 1973 (and the spillway flowed until 1984!). However this bold 1969 initiative to harness the Ord River waters and develop the tropical north has still had amazing results: 58,000 hectares of dry clay plains have been irrigated, the riverside ecology improved, and wildlife numbers increased (especially turtles, fish and freshwater crocodiles), with some struck off endangered species lists (eg the buff-sided robin). The scenery is spectacular, with high, steep red ridges plunging into the lake's deep blue waters.

Atmospheric **Argyle Homestead** (☎ 9167 8088; adult/child \$3/1; ☒ 7am-4pm Apr-Oct), home of the Durack pastoral family and currently managed by Michael Durack, was moved here when its original site was flooded. Fascinating old black-and-white photos and memorabilia are displayed and there's a small family cemetery where some of the pioneering Duracks are buried. Pick up copies of Dame Mary



Durack's *Kings in Grass Castles* and *Sons in the Saddle*, detailing the family's extraordinary achievements.

Lake Argyle Cruises (☎ 9168 7687; cruises \$40-120, Kununurra transfers \$15) offers several cruises, including swimming and fishing, but book ahead as they'll cancel trips if there aren't enough numbers. Award-winning **Triple J Tours** (☎ 9168 2682; admin@triplejtours.net.au; adult/child \$170/100) offers the more comprehensive

'Lake Argyle-Ord River Combo Tour' visiting Argyle Homestead, cruising Lake Argyle, and returning by boat to Kununurra on the Ord River.

Lake Argyle Tourist Village (☎ 9168 7777; paradise@lakeargyle.com; Parker Rd), once a wonderful caravan park and camping grand, was closing at time of research for major redevelopment. It's due to open its luxury self-contained villas sometime in 2007.