



Capture the spirit of this Kimberley region when
visiting the towns of Kununurra and Wyndham

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA BLOFFWITCH

THE CRA CKING EAST KIMBERLEY

■ **WHERE:**

Kununurra and Wyndham are located in Western Australia's far northwest Kimberley region. Access to Kununurra is via the Victoria Highway and Wyndham is accessible via the Great Northern Highway.

■ **INFORMATION:**

The region has something for everyone; including sensational bush camping, 4WDing, magnificent gorges and waterfalls, swimming, boating, fishing, photography, tours, and bushwalking.

■ **FUEL & SUPPLIES:**

Fuel and supplies are readily available from Kununurra. The cheapest fuel is available from ORDCO, located 5-10 minutes from town on Weaber Plain Road. Fuel and basic supplies are available from Wyndham. Fuel purchased here is often significantly cheaper when compared to Kununurra.

■ **BUDGET ATTRACTIONS:**

This section of the eastern Kimberley has loads to explore. Around Kununurra, watch spectacular sunsets from Kelly's Knob, cruise the spectacular Ord River, fish for barramundi, and pick up local produce and products at the town's weekly market (Saturday). Wyndham's sensational Bastion is a must-visit and the local museum is full of Kimberley history.

■ **WHAT TO TAKE:**

For travelling any of the dirt roads away from the towns, take recovery gear, air compressor, basic spare parts and a repair kit.



We've finally hit the bitumen and made our way into Kununurra where we based ourselves for a few days. It was time to wash off a little of the red dirt tinge we had become accustomed to that definitely penetrates anything and everything! I can't quite put my finger on it, but I'm always excited when arriving in Kununurra. It could be for its laid back country feel, but its proximity for exploring the region's sensational icons

definitely also makes it a perfect gateway to East Kimberley attractions.

Our stay coincided with the Kununurra Agricultural Show and this is one activity you should add to your must-do list that is a lot of fun for the whole family. It's on for two days and is jam-packed with all types of events, stalls, showbags, exhibits, competitions, and entertainment for young and old.

Whilst in Kununurra we also took the opportunity to catch up with friends and visit



Feeling pretty pleased here - my scones won first prize at the Kununurra Show



The Telegraph ruins light up in the afternoon sun



some of our regular hangouts. If you're a first-timer to the area, the town is the perfect base to visit surrounding attractions like Kelly's Knob Lookout (sunset viewing), Ivanhoe Crossing (fishing), Town Beach (swimming) and the nearby Mirima National Park. We allowed a day trip to visit a few local springs a little further out of town as they're all worth visiting.

As luck would have it, some friends had a new boat, so we were pretty stoked to be able to cruise up the Ord River where we visited Lily Creek Lagoon, Sleeping Buddha and the Diversion Dam. We then travelled further up the Ord where we were dwarfed by the incredibly high cliffs on both sides. This view was simply

THE OLD HALLS CREEK ROAD HAS NUMEROUS WATER CROSSINGS AND WASHAWAYS EARLY IN THE DRY SEASON



■ **BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:**

Kununurra and Wyndham can be visited all year round, although milder temperatures are experienced during the months of May – October. 4WD tracks and their attractions can be closed during wet season rains so avoid travelling at this time if possible. To help plan your visit, check with the Kununurra Visitor Centre for up to date road condition information.

■ **TRIP STANDARD:**

Air down your tyres when travelling the 4WD tracks to the region's attractions. The Old Halls Creek road and King River Road are suitable for off road camper trailers and would be a D-grade. Washaways caused from wet season rains and water crossings can be experienced depending upon when you visit. The Karunjie Track would be C-grade as track conditions vary anywhere from a two wheel track and the occasional jump up, to the eerie moonscape looking mudflats and river drift sand sections.

■ **THINGS TO DO:**

Kununurra

Kimberley Moon Experience (May), Kununurra Show (July), town market, swimming, sandalwood factory, rum distillery, and one of the many water and air based tours.

Wyndham

tour the King River Road and Karunjie Track, Old Halls Creek Road, Five Rivers Lookout, the Grotto, Parry Creek Farm, and Parry's Lagoon Nature Reserve.

■ **RESTRICTIONS AND PERMITS:**

A National Parks permit is required for visiting Mirima National Park located in Kununurra.

■ **KEY CONTACTS:**

KUNUNURRA VISITOR CENTRE
PH: (08) 9168 1177

WA PARKS & WILDLIFE
PH: (08) 9168 4200



spectacular and made even better when the afternoon setting sun turned the cliffs a spectacular rich red.

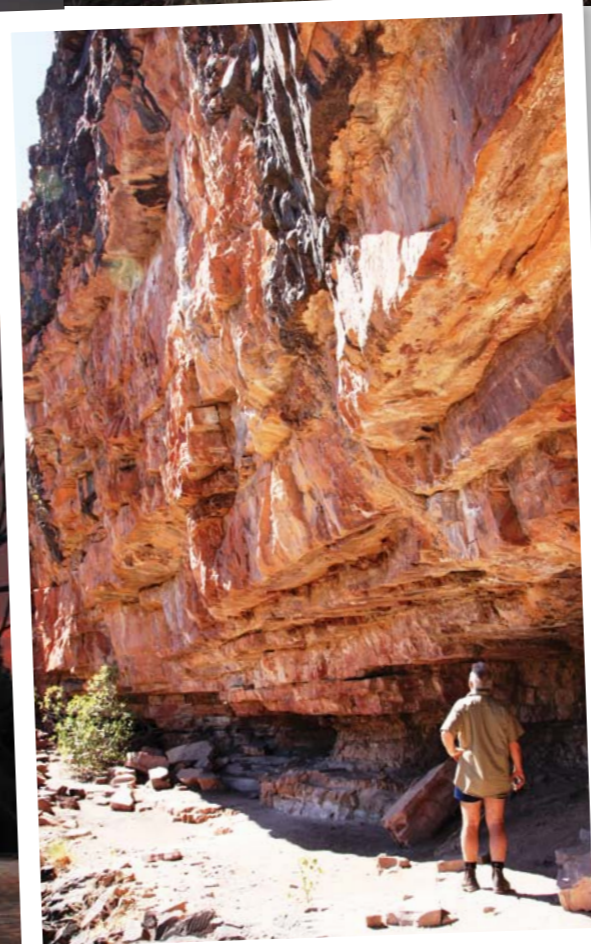
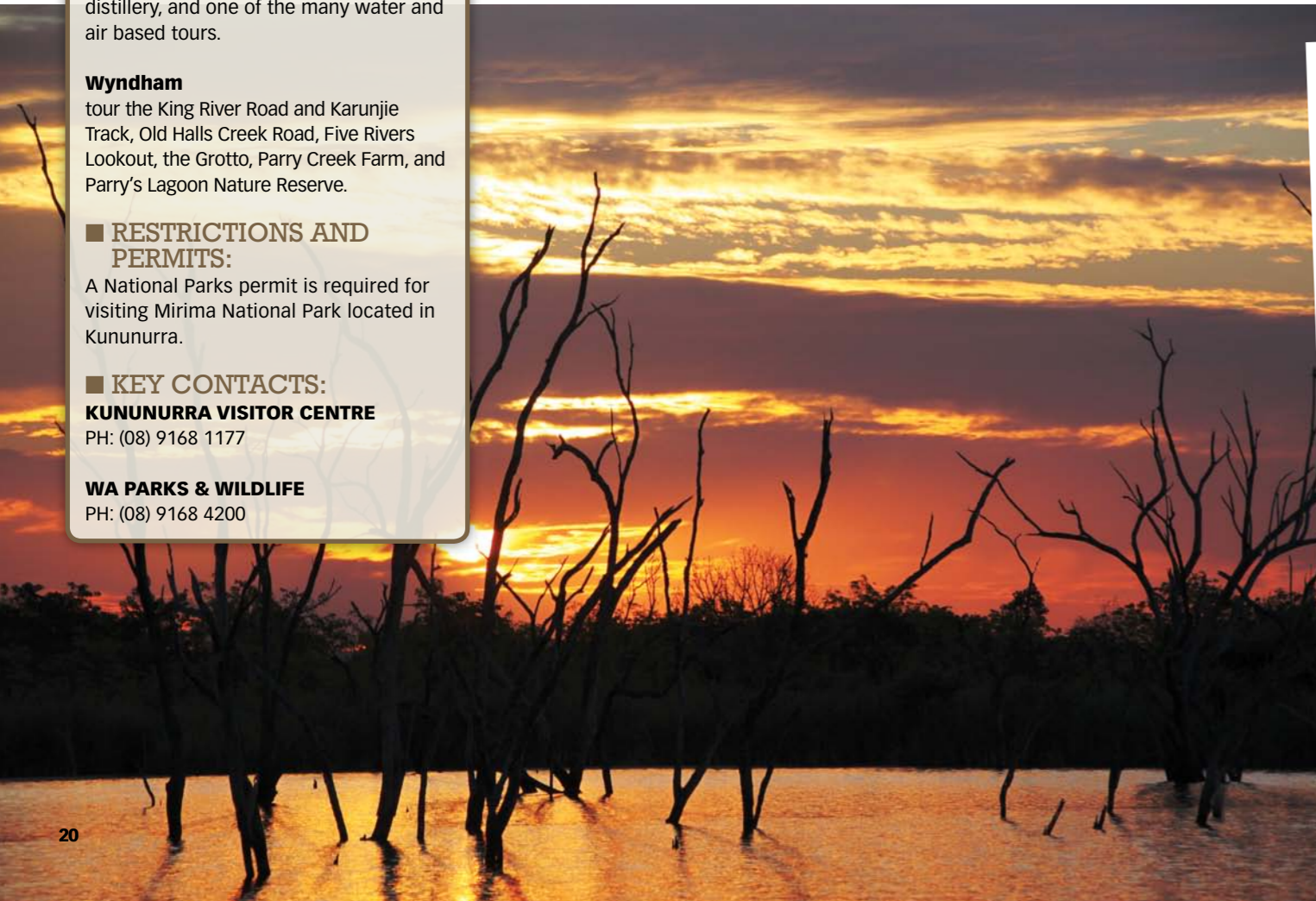
Getting the social activities out of the way, it was time to re-stock, refuel and head off to do some more exploring around Wyndham. It's easy enough to travel the one hour trip from Kununurra to Wyndham on the black top, but we had other plans. We aimed to spend a

few days around Parry Creek Farm and base ourselves there to visit surrounding attractions. We travelled the Great Northern Highway as far as the Old Halls Creek Road turnoff. Early in the dry season, this old road has numerous water crossings and washaways, so check road conditions with the visitor centre before travelling this route.

Being part of the original road which linked



Leave gates as you find them when you travel the Karunjie Track



MARLGU BILLABONG COMES TO LIFE WITH BIRDS AT SUNRISE AND JUST BEFORE SUNSET

Wyndham and Old Halls Creek from the mid 1890s, it's one of those drives you just don't want to rush. The single lane road (it's more like a track) can be overgrown in places, but keep watch for sections where pavement stones that were hand laid into the road are still visible. You also pass ruins of stone water troughs, but as time goes by, these too are further succumbing to the elements.

Before long, our leisurely drive had us arriving at Parry Creek Farm. This is the perfect place for camper trailer tourers as the campground is large and well-spaced out, and is one of the few station stays which offer powered sites if you need it. There is good bushwalking, birdwatching and saltwater crocs to be spotted in the creek, and you can even swim in their pool and enjoy some good food.

The farm is an excellent place to have as a base to visit the nearby Parry's Lagoon Nature Reserve. Marlgu Billabong is located within the reserve and comes to life with birds at sunrise and just before sunset. I'd definitely suggest visiting

at one of these times, or both as we did. This place can be chock-full with birds and the odd saltwater crocodile, so be croc-wise. A boardwalk and interpretive display boards have also been provided to help you to identify bird species.

But there's more to see here as well. Before arriving at the billabong, you pass through Telegraph Hill. Perched overlooking the flood plains below and distant ranges, the telegraph station was built in 1914 to assist with the ships using Wyndham's port during World War 1. Not a lot remains today, but it's worth a look.

Arriving in Wyndham, the town has a colourful history and dates back to 1886. Those initial early days saw the town's port bringing in supplies and gold miners by the ship load, and the port is where the gold was shipped out from. Wyndham was also renowned for its meatworks which began in 1913 and was used by surrounding cattle stations until its closure in 1986.

We headed straight for the port area to check out the town's jetty and to see some of the few remaining old buildings in the main street

It's hard not to be impressed by Kununurra's Sleeping Buddha at sunset



including a visit to the town's museum. The museum has an excellent display of local history and after a couple of hours here, we definitely worked up an appetite! We couldn't go past the excellent meals at the Five Rivers Café which we've frequented on numerous Kimberley visits now. It might be a big call, but we rate their barra and chips as some of the best fish and chips we've ever had when travelling around Australia!

Later in the afternoon, we drove up the Bastion to Five Rivers Lookout for an amazing view of the rivers that flow into Cambridge Gulf. It's a spectacular view and a top spot to crack a coldie

and watch the magnificent Kimberley sunsets.

The next morning we were all packed and itching for our next adventure on the Karunjie Track. As we would be returning to Kununurra late in the day, we chose to take our Tvan with us. But you could easily leave your camper trailer at Parry Creek Farm and do the track as a day trip if you didn't want to take it with you. Before going far, we made a quick visit to the Grotto which is a spectacular large and deep rock pool that is a wonderful swimming spot early in the dry season. You just need to be prepared to climb down (and back up) 140 steps!



CAMPsites:

Kununurra has facilities to suit all types of tourers – from caravan parks through to resorts. Within the town you have several caravan parks to choose from and one in Wyndham. Outside of both towns, there are numerous camping opportunities covering free bush camps through to powered site station stays.

MAMBI BOAT RAMP



PARRY CREEK FARM



KIMBERLEYLAND



How is this for Karunjie Track mudflat cracks!



The King River Road leads to the Karunjie Track and its turnoff is not far from the Grotto. Our first stop along here was Moolchalabra Dam which contains Wyndham's water supply. But what really interested us was a small amount of indigenous rock art which is located close to the dam. Although it's faded, we think it's still worth the stop. Further along the King River Road we stopped at a prison boab tree. Its size is just as big if not bigger than the one in Derby, and is another reminder of the region's history.

The Karunjie Track is an absolutely cracking track that is an old stock route starting out of

Wyndham and stopping by the Pentecost River. The track isn't maintained as it doesn't get a lot of traffic, but the scenery is something you just don't want to miss. I don't think anything prepares you for the track's mudflats that reminds me of an eerie moonscape and simply goes for miles. To top it off, the amazing Cockburn Range is a backdrop, and I couldn't have asked for anything better.

Track conditions varied anywhere from a two wheel track and the occasional jump, to river drift sand sections as we got closer to the Pentecost River. At the river, it was a top spot

THE KARUNJIE TRACK IS AN OLD STOCK ROUTE AND IS AN ABSOLUTELY CRACKING CHALLENGE!



■ AUTHOR'S OPINION:

What was your favourite part of the trip?

Kununurra's Agricultural Show was a lot of fun as we had a chance to get involved and enjoy the country atmosphere. Also spending time boating on the Upper Ord was magnificent as it gave us an opportunity to see the spectacular scenery from a different perspective.

Where else have you been recently?

We've taken a few weeks and travelled via Broome, the Dampier Peninsula and Derby, and visited a bucket load of attractions along the Gibb River Road.

Where are you heading next and why?

We continue our Kimberley adventure by visiting Lake Argyle and then get back on the dirt to drive the Duncan Road to Halls Creek. From there, we venture a little further to visit the Bungle Bungles and Wolfe Creek Crater.



Check out the hand laid pavement stones when you travel the Old Halls Creek Road



Day after day the region's sunsets are incredible

to pull out a couple of chairs to have afternoon smoko. We arrived back in Kununurra late afternoon just in time to wash the dust off and reminisce what an epic few days we'd had. Driving the Karunjie Track and exploring the area in and around Kununurra and Wyndham was stacks of fun and is definitely recommend!

The East Kimberley is a magical place and we've only just scratched the surface. Join us when we continue our adventure as we head further east to the spectacular Lake Argyle and then get off the highway to travel the Duncan Road to visit some more spectacular Kimberley attractions. We can't wait! ■

DON'T MISS THE FINAL PART OF LINDA'S SENSATIONAL KIMBERLEY TRIP!

The fifth and final part of this Kimberley epic takes us to Lake Argyle and the infamous Wolfe Creek crater. Make sure you grab **your** copy of the next issue of **Camper Trailer Touring!**