

# to tales of bull sharks and big barras

## ESSENTIALS

### GETTING THERE

Emirates (0844 800 2777; [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)) has return flights to Perth from six UK airports from £790. Journey time is just over 20 hours. Skywest (0061 8 9477 8301; [www.skywest.com.au](http://www.skywest.com.au)) flies from Perth to Broome (two and a half hours) from £93, to Kununurra (three and a half hours) from £153 and from Kununurra to Darwin (two hours 20 minutes) from £85.

### GETTING AROUND

Budget (0844 544 3439 in the UK; [www.budget.co.uk](http://www.budget.co.uk)) offers eight days' one-way rental of a Mitsubishi Pajero 4WD Broome to Kununurra from £1,465, including unlimited mileage and, on request, an extra spare tyre.

### PACKAGES

Australian Pacific Touring (020 8879 7444; [www.aptouring.com.au](http://www.aptouring.com.au)) runs regular eight-day 4WD small group tours from Broome to Kununurra and vice versa, from April to October, from £2,491 per person, including twin-share accommodation, breakfast and dinner. Flights are extra.

### WHEN TO GO

"The Wet", or cyclone season, in Western Australia runs from November to the end of April. Precise dates vary but the Gibb River Road is officially open from mid-April to October following the Wet and after inspection by Main Roads Western Australia. Travel outside official open dates risks impassable river crossings and may attract fines of several thousand dollars. Visit [www.mainroads.wa.gov.au](http://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au) for information. When it starts to rain in Perth it starts to dry out in the Kimberley, so if you travel before the end of May you can often take advantage of low-season international air fares.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Websites worth visiting include [www.gibbriverroad.net](http://www.gibbriverroad.net) - Taffy Abbott's website provides a wealth of Gibb history, travel information, accommodation details and even a few yarns.

There's also a free iPhone app called Explore WA which, once downloaded, operates without the need for a mobile reception and is therefore available for use en route.

For more information contact Tourism Western Australia (020 7438 4606; [www.westernaustralia.com](http://www.westernaustralia.com)) in London or the Western Australian Visitor Centre (1800 812808; [www.wavisitorcentre.com](http://www.wavisitorcentre.com)) in Perth.



THEO ALLOPS/CORBIS

Bush comfort: from left, boab trees; a 'Grass Castle' room at the Home Valley Station; and the Pentecost river

### THE INSIDE TRACK

● Mowanjum Art & Culture Centre (9191 1008; [www.mowanjumarts.com](http://www.mowanjumarts.com)) in Derby is the Kimberley's best exposition of indigenous art (daily 9am-5pm May to September, or by appointment).

● Sir John Gorge self-guided relay canoe hike, Mornington Wilderness Sanctuary. You really have to want to visit Sir John Gorge as it lies off the Gibb 60 miles along a 4WD track. Being given a mud map showing two pre-positioned canoes, a picnic, a dry bag, a radio and a paddle, exclusive access to this stunning gorge on the Fitzroy river is difficult to top (9191 7406; [www.australianwildlife.org](http://www.australianwildlife.org); £92 for two).

● The damming in 1971 of the Ord river, beyond Kununurra, created Lake Argyle, mainland Australia's largest artificial body of water. A cruise of the lake and the river explores the project's history, its impact and the resident wildlife. Book through Triple J Tours (9168 2682; [www.triplejtours.net.au](http://www.triplejtours.net.au)).

### THE BEST HOTELS

**Mount Elizabeth Station ££**  
Located 18 miles off the Gibb River Road and as authentic as cattle-station accommodation gets. Six twin rooms overlook the front lawn. There's no television, no mobile coverage and no air con; there are wallabies and dogs. Tours of the station's Aboriginal rock art sites are on offer, as well as walking, fishing and guided 4WD outings. Home-cooked meals are taken communally with owners Peter and Pat Lacey (0061 8

9191 4644; [www.mountelizabethstation.com](http://www.mountelizabethstation.com); £115 per person half board).

### Home Valley £££

Eco tent, homestead room or luxury "Grass Castle" accommodation, with shared pool. Views beyond the Pentecost river towards the Cockburn Ranges are incomparable, as is JR's (John Rodney's) horseback training - progress from passenger to rider in a couple of hours. Restaurant, bar, shop. Excellent workshop facilities (9161 4322; [www.hvstation.com.au](http://www.hvstation.com.au); b&b £118-£281 per night).

### Mornington Wilderness Camp £££

At the end of a 54-mile 4WD access track. Owned by the non-profit Australian Wildlife Conservancy and supporting the

organisation's work to preserve native species; 10 well-spaced en-suite safari tents, along the banks of Annie Creek. No television, no phone coverage, no air con. Remarkably good restaurant and bar. Exclusive access to Dimond and Sir John Gorges (9191 7406; [www.australianwildlife.org](http://www.australianwildlife.org); full board £156 per person per night).

● All of the above offer camping pitches from around £9.50 per person, per night.

### THE BEST RESTAURANTS

#### Lennard River Bridge Snack Stop £

Robert Hadley's caravan has become a Gibb River Road landmark. Among solar panels, wind chimes, week-old newspapers, sleeping cattle dogs and pictures of Barry Humphries, Robert serves soft drinks, microwaved pies and sausage rolls. Unremarkable cuisine but an unmissable experience (Gibb River Road).

### Dusty Bar & Grill ££

A surf-and-turf style menu, with the addition of kangaroo and crocodile entrées. Exceptional desserts and a short, well-chosen wine list. Regular live entertainment from local musicians (Home Valley, Gibb River Road; 9161 4322; [www.hvstation.com.au](http://www.hvstation.com.au)).

### Mornington Wilderness Camp £££

Chefs Jane Bracken and Simon Wallace use local ingredients such as lemon myrtle and rosella flowers, along with fresh greens, grown on site, to produce memorable meals at reasonable prices worthy of a good restaurant anywhere. Due to the remote location this is only a practical option if staying at the camp (Gibb River Road, Mount House Access Road; 9191 7406; [www.australianwildlife.org](http://www.australianwildlife.org)).

### Pumphouse Restaurant and Bar, Kununurra ££

There's little competition for dining out in Kununurra beyond a take out from the BP petrol station, but even if there was, this quirky disused water pumping station restaurant, built on stilts over the Ord river, would stand head and shoulders above the rest. Exceptional. Its speciality is marinated saltwater barramundi fillet (Lot 3005, Lakeview Drive; 9169 3222; [www.ordpumphouse.com.au](http://www.ordpumphouse.com.au)).

### Selene Brasserie, Broome £££

Broome's most chic dining experience. The Selene picked up another deserved award at the end of 2010 - Western Australia's Best Country Restaurant. Signature dish is spiced sautéed pearl meat (Pinctada Cable Beach Resort, 10 Murray Road, Cable Beach; 9193 8388; [www.pinctadacablebeach.com.au](http://www.pinctadacablebeach.com.au)).

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Kimberley was named for its similarity to South Africa's Kimberley diamond fields

### WHAT TO AVOID

● Punctures and blowouts - lower your tyre pressure and speed to reduce the risk of tyre damage. Carry a minimum of two spare tyres; know where the wheeljack is and how to use it.

● Cows and wallabies - your vehicle's roof bars may provide protection in the event of a collision with a wallaby but hit a cow and it's game over. Be particularly vigilant around sunrise and dusk when wildlife and stock are more active.

● Travelling at night - as well as seeing nothing of the landscape, driving in the dark increases the risk of an accident. Most rental insurances exclude cover between

the hours of sunset and sunrise, leaving travellers liable for all costs.

● Running out of fuel - supplies of unleaded and diesel can be erratic even at established roadhouses such as Mount Barnett. Be aware of your vehicle's range and always fill up when possible. Using 4WD increases fuel consumption. Carry an extra jerry can.

● Saltwater crocodiles - the popular gorges along the Gibb are landlocked and thus free of risk. However, around Broome, Derby and Kununurra presume all water is unsafe for swimming unless otherwise indicated. Definitely stay out of the Pentecost river.

before making our way to eat. "But sir, it's 8.30pm. The restaurant is closed." We had definitely arrived.

Have you been to Western Australia? Send any comments to [yoursay@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:yoursay@telegraph.co.uk) or post them on our website at [telegraph.co.uk/travel](http://telegraph.co.uk/travel)

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