

Title:

The Kimberley - Australia's Last Outback Frontier

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Summary:

Few regions of the world can offer an authentic outback experience like Western Australia's Kimberley. The Kimberley has it all ... vast, remote and unspoilt natural landscapes, spectacular coastlines, living indigenous Aboriginal cultures, and true outback towns with rich and colourful histories.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Few regions of the world can offer an authentic outback experience like Western Australia's Kimberley. The Kimberley has it all ... vast, remote and unspoilt natural landscapes, spectacular coastlines, living indigenous Aboriginal cultures, and true outback towns with rich and colourful histories.

The Kimberley region is located in northern Western Australia, and stretches from Broome in the west to Kununurra in the east. To the west it is bordered by the Indian Ocean, to the north by the Timor Sea, to the east by the Northern Territory, and to the south by the Great Sandy Desert. The Kimberley covers a huge area of over 420,000 square kilometres, making it larger than Japan, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the Australian state of Victoria.

The Kimberley is a remote outback region with a total population of around 25,000 inhabitants. It has only three towns with a population greater than 2,000: Broome, Derby and Kununurra. European settlement in the Kimberley is quite recent, and dates from around 1885 when the MacDonalds and the Duracks arrived to establish cattle stations there. When gold was discovered at Halls Creek, many other Europeans soon arrived. The gold rush was short lived, but some miners stayed on to establish the town of Halls Creek.

The Kimberley today is diverse, from the laid back cosmopolitan ambience of Broome, to the living indigenous culture of the Dampier Archipelago and the outback adventure of Kununurra. Apart from mining, other important industries in the Kimberley have included pearling (particularly in Broome until the 1940s), mining (the Argyle Diamond mine today produces 1/3 of the world's diamonds),

agriculture (in the Ord River Irrigation Area near Lake Argyle) and of course tourism.

Broome is located on the shores of Roebuck Bay, and is the southern gateway to the Kimberley's spectacular wilderness regions. Established in the 1890's, this former pearling port is today a unique, exotic, and colourful seaside town with a romantic and flamboyant history. The town's multicultural heritage includes indigenous Aborigines, Europeans, Malays, Chinese and Japanese, and the subsequent cultural fusion has resulted in the town's unique cuisine and colourful characters.

The Rowleys Shoals lie some 300 kilometres off the Broome coast, and represent Australia's best examples of shelf edge coral atolls. The shoals are home to a rich and diverse array of coral reef flora and fauna, and the area is a premier diving and nature based tourism destination which also offers world class sports fishing.

The Dampier Peninsula north of Broome is characterised by clean, sandy white beaches, the clear blue waters of the Indian Ocean, and mangrove lined creeks. Here it is possible to experience unspoilt natural beauty and to share the lifestyle of the Indigenous saltwater people who have lived here for many thousands of years.

Derby is the Kimberley's oldest town. It is an excellent base from which to explore the 1000 islands of the Buccaneer Archipelago. Derby is also the gateway to true outback adventure along the Gibb River Road, and the ancient rock forms of Windjana Gorge National Park and Tunnel Creek are within an easy day's drive.

Kununurra is the eastern gateway to the Kimberley and normally the first stop for tourists arriving from the Northern Territory. It offers some of the best adventure activities in the Kimberley, and is the perfect base to explore the rugged Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungles), the Mitchell Plateau, the Argyle Diamond Mine and the Ord River.

Halls Creek is a service centre for the pastoral and mining industries and Aboriginal communities, and provides base from which to explore the surrounding Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungles) and the Wolfe Creek Crater National Parks.

Wyndham is a small and relatively unknown town which typifies the Kimberley character and spirit. Situated on the tidal waters of the Cambridge Gulf, where the confluence of the King, Pentecost, Durack, Forrest and Ord Rivers meet, Wyndham is the northernmost town in Western Australia.

The Gibb River Road spans 660 kilometres of the most remote and spectacular landscapes in Australia. Travelling its length between Derby and Kununurra is one of the last truly outback experiences. Luxury 4WD tours now provide easy access to this remote area, which is home to wildlife sanctuaries, ancient landforms, deep gorges and fresh water holes.

Set high on the banks of the mighty Fitzroy River, Fitzroy Crossing is a quintessential outback Australian town. It provides an excellent base from which to explore the spectacular Geikie Gorge National Park.