

THE ROAD AHEAD

SUMMER 2023/24

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RACQ



Diamond IN THE WEST

YOUR GUIDE TO ENJOYING THE BEST OF KUNUNURRA'S LEISURELY LIFESTYLE – MORNING, NOON, AND NIGHT.

STORY NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

LIKE THE SPARKLING diamonds discovered in a dry riverbed nearby, Kununurra is a unique, beautiful gem among the wild and rugged Kimberley region of north-west Western Australia.

Kununurra is young, unlike the surrounding million-year-old landscapes and mineral wealth.

Meaning 'big water' in the local Miriwung Gajerrong language, Kununurra was established to service the Ord River dam construction workers in 1959.

The damming created Lake Argyle, which provides water for the Ord River Irrigation Project and the region's hydroelectricity. A staggering 20 times larger than Sydney Harbour, Lake Argyle is Australia's largest man-made freshwater reservoir.

A diamond in the dust, Kununurra has many hidden treasures waiting to be unearthed. Fortunately, they can be discovered in the same laid-back, relaxed way of the local, leisurely lifestyle over a few days while creating memories that will last a lifetime.

MORNING

Kelly's Knob is a peaceful place to begin

your day. At 191m, it is Kununurra's highest point and provides 360-degree panoramic views of the town, Elephant Rock, Lake Kununurra and the vibrant richness of the Ord River farming lands.

The surrounding rich-rust rock and Cockburn Ranges burn brightest at sunrise (and sunset).

The bitumen road access and ensuing 1.2km round walk are quietest at dawn. If mobility is an issue, the car park offers outstanding views.

Visiting the world-renowned Bungle Bungle is a must on most people's lists.

Situated 300km south of Kununurra in the World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park, the 360-billion-year-old sandstone massif is almost 99 times larger in area than Uluru.

One of the best ways to see these striped, orange domes is by an Aviair scenic flight, allowing you to also grasp the vastness of Lake Argyle and the now-closed Argyle Diamond Mine.

Flights depart from 6am and options include a two-hour flight only; landing at Bellburn Airstrip and helicopter flight over the domes; a four-hour walk into Cathedral Gorge with lunch before flying back to Kununurra; or add an overnight stay at Savannah Lodge to the walk and

lunch, flying back the next morning.

Cafe culture is alive and well in Kununurra, with one on almost every corner.

Wild Mango Cafe is renowned for its mango smoothies, Cornerside Cafe for its unique boab root dishes, and Ivanhoe Cafe offers relaxed views of Kelly's Knob.

For something a little different, head to Spilled the Beans, operating from a converted shipping container at Kimberleyland Waterfront Holiday Park.

Afterwards, stroll the jewellery shops searching for your own 'pink' diamond. Kimberley Fine Diamonds also has a range of locally produced artworks and homewares.

Then check out the famous names at Celebrity Tree Park alongside Lily Creek Lagoon.

NOON

Waringarri Aboriginal Arts is the first wholly owned Indigenous art centre in Western Australia and the oldest in Australia.

Established in the heart of Miriwoong country in the 1980s, emerging artist Cathy Ward conducts tours of the studios and galleries alongside her father Ben Ward and grandmother Peggy Griffiths.

Bungle Bungle's Cathedral Gorge.
Photo Nannette Holliday.



Triple J Tours on the Ord River.
Photo Tourism Western Australia.



LIKE THE SPARKLING DIAMONDS DISCOVERED IN A DRY RIVERBED NEARBY, KUNUNURRA IS A UNIQUE, BEAUTIFUL GEM AMONG THE WILD AND RUGGED KIMBERLEY REGION OF NORTH-WEST WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

The painters, carvers, sculptors, boab engravers, printmakers and textile artists happily discuss the stories and meanings behind their work.

Tours operate on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 11am and 12.30pm.

All proceeds remain within the community, supporting their up-and-coming artists and ongoing projects.

Sandalwood is widely grown around Kununurra. Don't miss the opportunity to stop at The Sandalwood Shop on Weaber Road. The beautiful sandalwood aromas will calm your soul and mind while shopping for locally produced oils and skincare products.

A little further up Weaber Road, enjoy lunch and sample the iconic Ord River Rum at Hoochery Distillery, Western Australia's oldest continuously operated legal still.

The rum is meticulously handcrafted from pure, local rainwater and sugarcane,

just as founder Spike Dessert did 25 years earlier.

Today, their range of gins, whiskey and liqueurs is worth sampling too. Sit back and relax in the rustic old shed, savouring a lunch of homemade wild barramundi tacos and their famous rum cake before taking a tour of the property and learning about the unique production methods.

Another great way to spend a half-day is aboard the Triple J Ord River Discoverer with Sunset tour. From 11.30am–5.30pm, this provides an excellent overview of the area's pastoral history, natural landscapes and wildlife.

It begins with a comfortable air-conditioned bus ride to Lake Argyle via the Argyle Downs Homestead Museum (the 1895-built Durack family home) before crossing the dam wall to board the purpose-built shallow-bottom jet boat opposite the hydroelectric station.

The thrilling 55km cruise snakes

between massive ochre cliffs, savannah forests, peaceful waterlily and reed-laden backwaters along the Ord River to Lake Kununurra.

Various stops allow you to understand more about each diverse environment and its inhabitants. A delicious home-baked afternoon tea is served at a pre-set riverside camp, allowing you to stretch your legs.

NIGHT

Situated in an Ord River Irrigation Scheme historic building where the inside dining tables surround the original machinery, PumpHouse Kununurra is the perfect spot for sunset drinks and delicious local fare.

Overlooking Lake Kununurra, the outside deck is a popular space to chill with a refreshing beverage and delightful culinary share plates while watching the golden sun reflect in the inky waters before sinking behind the Cockburn Ranges.

If you want to make a grand entrance (like me), disembark your Triple J Ord River cruise on the PumpHouse jetty.

Another leisurely way to while away the afternoon is aboard MV *Jabiru* on a Lake Kununurra Sunset Dinner Cruise. From 3.15pm–6.15pm, mid-May to the end of August, enjoy the serenity of nature as the flat-bottomed boat glides through picturesque Lily Creek to Lake Kununurra, passing Sleeping Buddha, the Diversion Dam and other iconic landmarks.

The tasty Kimberley-inspired BBQ dinner is served at tranquil Packsaddle Lagoon as the sun slowly paints the sky in kaleidoscopic tones.

For those who prefer to get even closer to nature, Gourmet Camp Oven Experience is no ordinary outside dinner affair.

Held in a secret, picturesque bush location minutes from Kununurra, here candles, chandeliers and the starry night illuminate the dozen guests around the linen-clothed table. Partake in a mouth-watering three-course epicurean meal with BYO beverages.

Besides being the chef, Josh also sings while Tamsyn ensures everything runs like clockwork.

Operating mid-April to mid-September 4–7.30pm, it's a unique and memorable evening and the consummate way to round off your Kununurra stay. ■