

The impact of the Kimberley experience

Catriona Rowntree 2019



No doubt, the decision on my favourite travel destination may be influenced by the fact that I worked there for years and enjoyed every moment... but I would have to say El Questro Station, a one-million-acre tourist resort in East Kimberley, Western Australia, now called [El Questro Wilderness Park](#). I worked there in the early 90s, when it was transitioning from a cattle station into a unique and first-class tourist resort. My first accommodation was a tent; the phone was a radio; and we showered in an iron structure along with chooks, peacocks and any other wildlife chasing a hose down. The various accommodation and facilities today ensure this is not now the case! The people and adventures may have shaped my impression, however the magnificent grandeur of the rock faces and rivers, the soothing thermal springs and the rugged escarpments are unquestionably some of the most glorious scenery I have seen. The impact of experiencing the Kimberley is spiritual and lifelong.

Top Tips for holidaying in the Kimberley

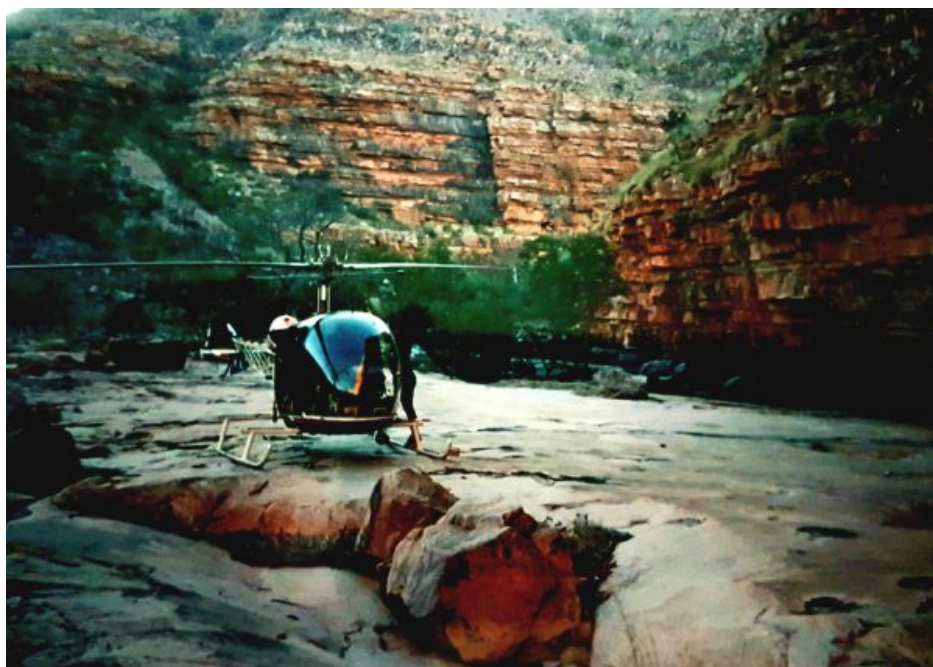
People can often be blasé about travelling in the outback. Don't be! Always take extra supplies, plenty of water and let others know where you are going. If you cannot walk across a river, you cannot drive across it.

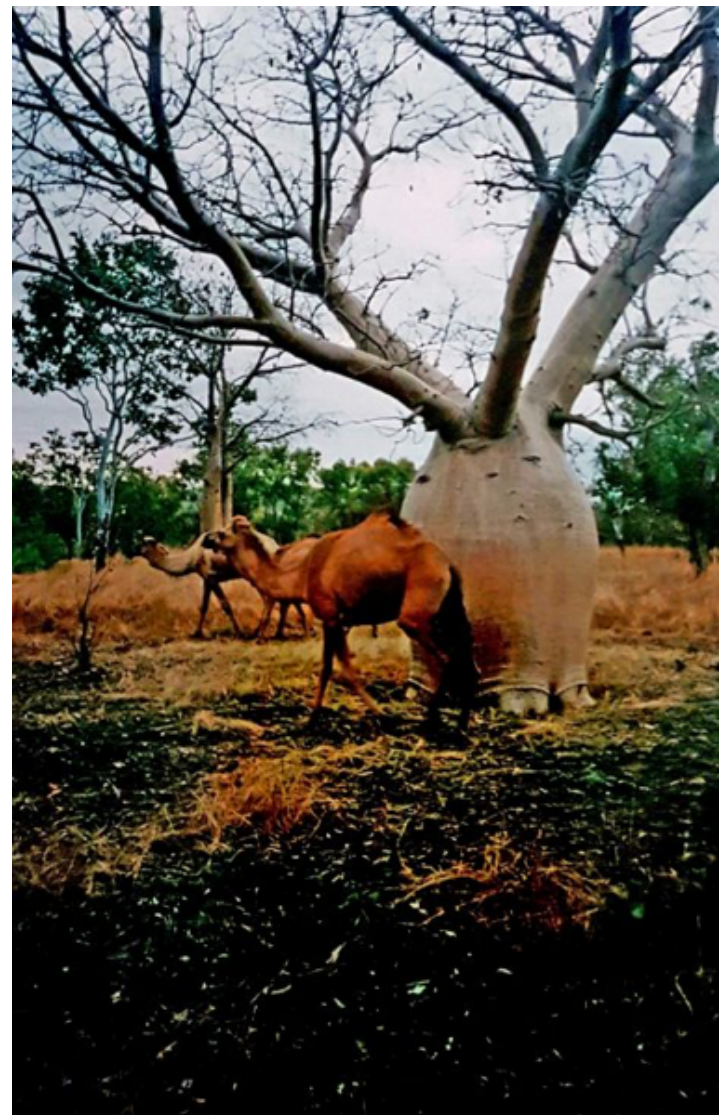
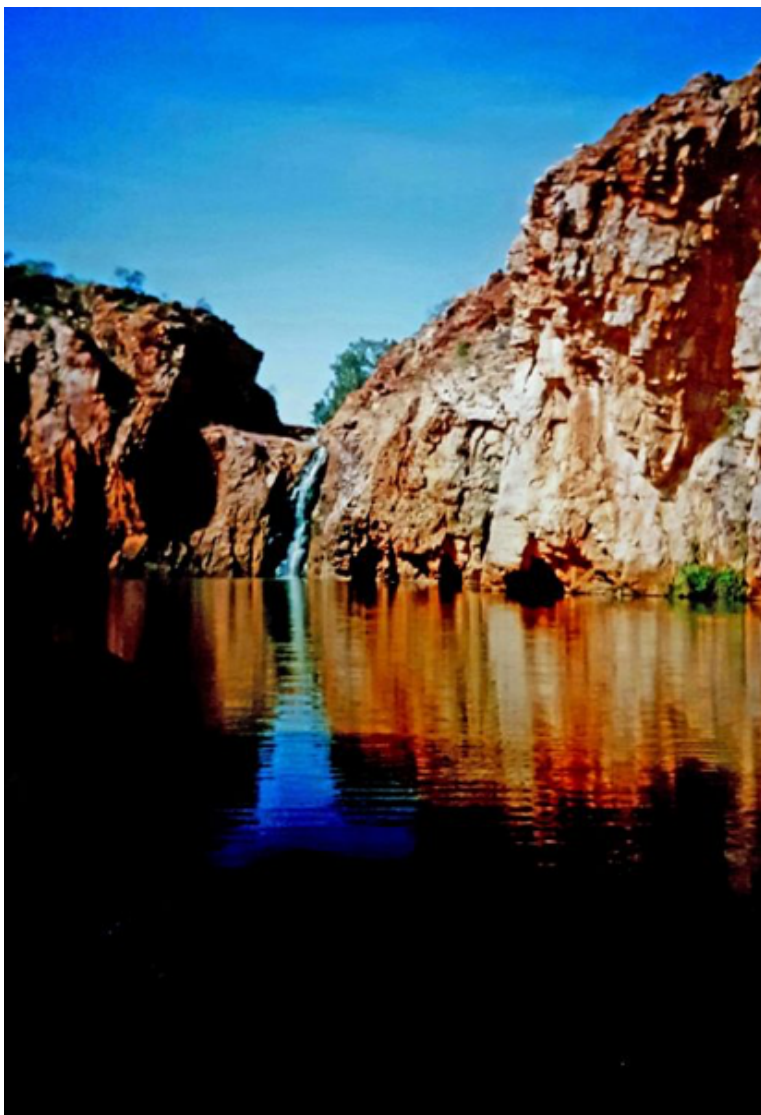
Surrender. Let the Kimberley seduce you with her majestic splendour and enchant you with her spirit.



Something she always packs when she travels

Always pack less than you think you will need and always a comfortable and worn-in pair of shoes. I also like to take with me an open mind and plenty of respect for different people and cultures.





Somewhere on her bucket list

Whilst I have spent time in Italy, I would love to return, hire a Fiat Bambino and go on a gastronomy journey from Lake Maggiore to the Amalfi Coast.

A disaster or near-miss

As a backpacker with a Eurail pass, one tended to nap in any place possible. This was certainly the case for me on the Cologne to Brussels express train, September, 1985. On awakening, I found myself in a dark, empty carriage in the back blocks of the Brussels train yard. Noooo... this could not be... I had a connecting train and ferry to catch from Calais. I poked my head out the door and whilst contemplating my options, a trainguard spotted me and yelled harshly in my direction. It was only a short walk along the tracks to the platform however the guard frantically waved at me to stay put. They then proceeded to find an engine, hook up the carriage and with thunder gazes upon me, transported me back to the platform. The reception from other passengers was a combination of curious, annoyance and humour. Needless to say, I missed the ferry.



About Jo Rothwell

Jo Rothwell grew up in the Yarra Valley, Victoria. The travel bug hit in her early 20s and the lure of foreign countries saw her work and travel in Europe for many years. She then took her passion for adventure and travel into outback Australia. There she taught children on cattle stations via the School of the Air and her tourism knowledge grew broader when she was employed at El Questro Station in the Kimberley, WA.

On her return to the Yarra Valley, she established Rothwell Publishing and has written and published 14 children's books. The "My Adventure" and "One Yelpy Kelpie" series explores specific Australian themes and destinations. Continuing this theme, she has recently launched the "Australian Adventure Passport" (Facebook & Instagram). All her books are on the Premiers' Reading Challenge list and have sold over 100,000 copies.

Whilst Jo was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011 and a subsequent incurable prognosis four years ago, she continues to write stories and values her time encouraging children to read and explore Australia. 'Wednesday's with Harry' (Facebook) is her tribute to creating lifelong memories with her son.