

STILL WATERS

This mighty expanse in WA has more on offer than you realise. Here are five reasons why you should add Lake Argyle to your Kimberley itinerary

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FROM MAIN A cruise on the *Kimberley Durack*; glorious sunset across Lake Argyle; it wasn't hard to find freshwater crocs; kids (and adults!) leap from the boat at Happy Hour



They reckon Lake Argyle, in the heart of WA's Kimberley region, is 18 times the size of Sydney Harbour and was once the largest man-made lake in the southern hemisphere. They can even double its size by adding six metres of height to the dam and spillway walls.

Yes, you'll be left gobsmacked when you first set eyes on Lake Argyle, it is just amazing! Here are five reasons why you should add it to your must-see list.

1. TAKE A CRUISE

Upon checking into the Lake Argyle Resort, an advertising board caught my attention. It was for a sunset cruise on the lake with a long list of inclusions and was something I didn't want to miss.

The bus picked us up from outside the bistro, driving us across the dam wall and down to the power station before returning to the boat loading area on the lake. The *Kimberley Durack* was waiting for us and we were welcomed onboard by our captain Paul, and Josh, our guide.

Floating past the dam wall, the history of Lake Argyle was explained before we began croc hunting. We came up close and personal with several of the freshwater crocs warming themselves on the stony banks of the lake. At Hagan Island, we watched a small troop of wallaroos munch on food pellets thrown from the boat. In another sheltered bay, the Silver Cobblers, also known as Lake Argyle catfish, teemed as food was thrown into the water by kids.

With the sun beginning to dip, we ventured into deeper water and tied up to a buoy. The swimming noodles were dispensed, and the fun began. A floating table was loaded with glasses of wine, cheese and nibbles and Josh directed the beer cans to the swimmers who wanted them. With kids jumping into the water from the roof, Happy Hour was in full swing.

The water temperature sits between 22C and 26C and is extremely pleasant to swim in. It's no wonder the 25,000 crocodiles love it here. The sun disappeared behind the Carr Boyd Range before we started moving, with the kids having a ball taking turns to 'steer' us home.



2. DIY EXPLORATION

Thanks to Hema Maps, I zoomed in on my HX-1 and discovered a couple of 4WD tracks that might take me to great viewing points of Lake Argyle. Driving the tracks turned out to be an adventure and offered magnificent views of the lake and Carr Boyd Range.

Only 250m from the Argyle Downs Homestead is a track off to the right that leads out to Pannikin Bay lookout. It is a 1.2km unmaintained 4X4 track that may need some traction control or low range activity when climbing up to the final section. The locals love this spot, with spectacular views out over the lake and the range, and many wedding photos have been captured here.

I sat for an eternity, watching the brown goshawks gliding in the breeze as they searched for a meal and the boats cruising across the blue waters. It is a great place to have a picnic and enjoy the serenity of this amazing place. The best time to really enjoy this spot is at sunset, and don't forget your camera. If you don't have a 4WD, you can drive to the base of the ridge and then walk the final 600m to the lookout.

Next stop was Dead Horse Springs, which was just 4km from the resort. This beautiful little billabong is picture perfect when there is a good amount of water in it as the gap in the range offers views of the lake, while also looking stunning reflecting from the water. There was evidence that people have camped here, but I believe it is only a day-use area. Again, it would be an amazing place to be at sunset.



FROM TOP A 4WD track leads to a beautiful viewing point; the Kapok flower tells the timing of laying and hatching of saltwater crocodile eggs; Dead Horse Springs is prettier when full



fast

FACTS

Lake Argyle is in Western Australia's Kimberley Region, in the north west. It is 70km from Kununurra and 513km west of Katherine via the Victoria Highway and only 34km from the turnoff.

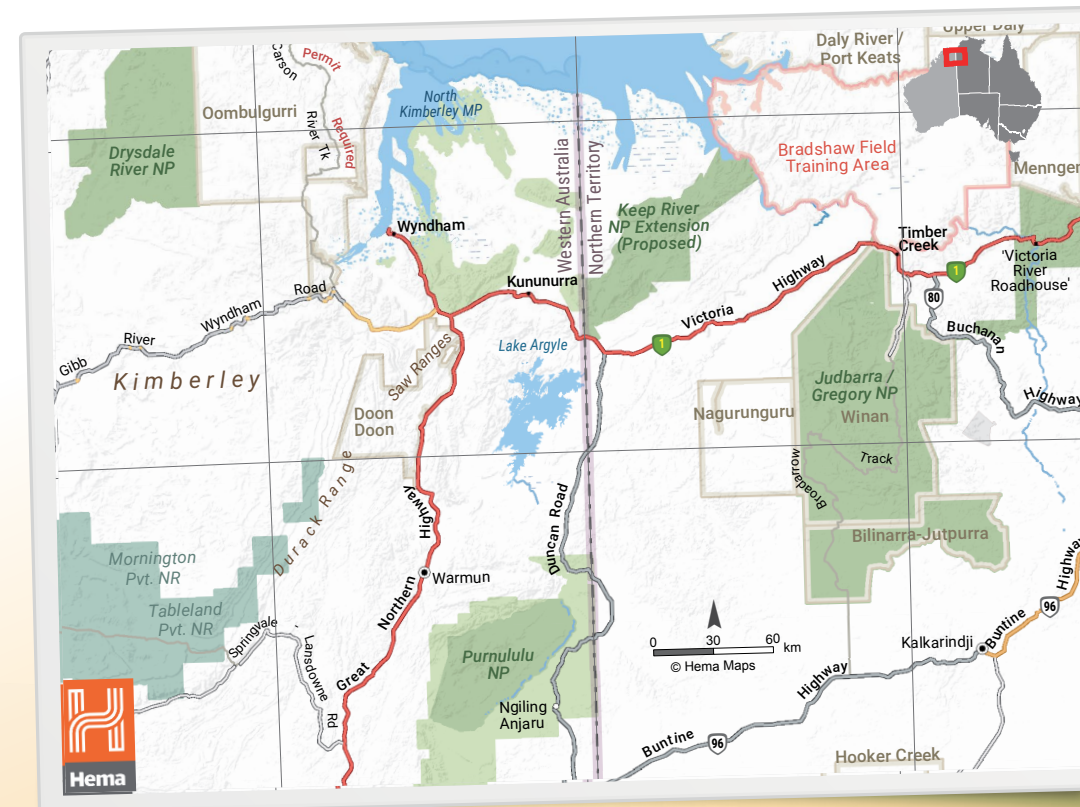
It's open 365 days a year, and even during the wet season it is busy as the Kununurra locals use it as a holiday spot.

Where to stay:

📍 **Lake Argyle Resort:** Powered and unpowered sites, cabins and villas. Bistro/cafe, clean amenities, infinity pool, tour bookings, grassed sites. More info: www.lakeargyle.com or call (08) 9168 7777

📍 **Free Camp:** Spillway bridge (16° 1' 49" S 128° 46' 52" E), no facilities, safe swimming, take only photos and leave only footprints.

📍 **Lake Argyle Adventures:** www.lakeargyleadventures.com or call 0457 570 132



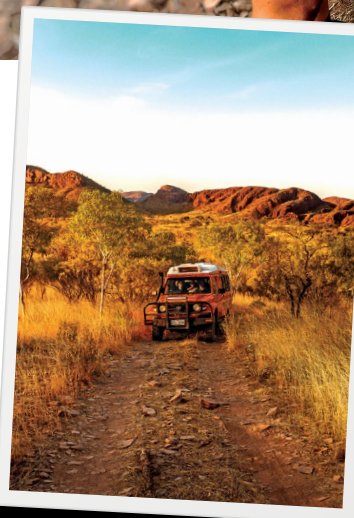


3 GOURMET DELIGHTS

Travelling solo, it gets a bit monotonous cooking for oneself night after night, so when Josh told me about his Gourmet Camp Oven Dinner while on the cruise, I joined the party straight away.

Josh picked us up at the resort and drove us in his orange stretch LandCruiser Troopy up a rocky track to a private lookout with a view over the resort and Lake Argyle. Here we were met by Tamsyn who greeted us with a smile and a complimentary Matso's alcoholic ginger beer (one of the best ginger beers I've tasted in Australia).

The three course Gourmet Camp Oven Experience was one of the most memorable meals I have had. Using local produce fused



with bush tucker, the tastes and textures were divine. Barramundi, pork belly, the Kimberley salad and an Ord River Rum brownie dusted with powdered boab – my mouth is watering as I reminisce. Throw in the ambience of a Kimberley sunset followed by clear skies dotted with sparkling stars, the laughter of fellow travellers and a live music performance, it's something you have to experience for yourself.

4 LET SOMEONE ELSE DRIVE

It turns out that Josh is a man of many talents. His business, Lake Argyle Adventures, not only handles the gourmet dinner, but he also conducts the Beyond Argyle tours. As I jumped into the front seat of the Troopy, I was confident I was about to experience something unique.

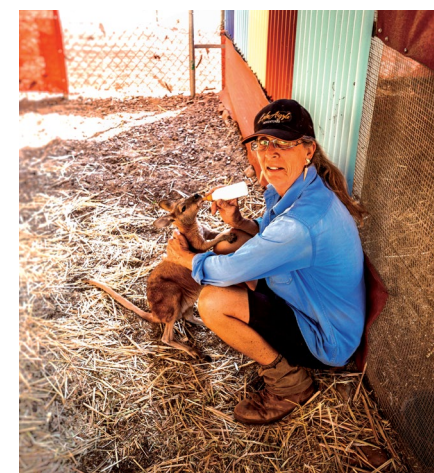
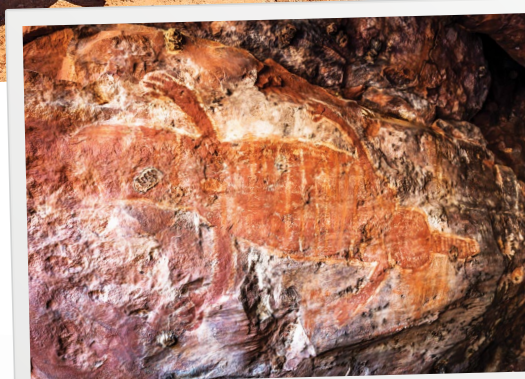
You see, Josh takes you to places not often visited by travellers, so I was amazed when

he showed me some Aboriginal rock art just off the main road. Josh also taught me a little bit more about bush tucker and I even got to taste the flesh of the boab nut. With a flavour of tangy citrus, it is extremely high in vitamin C and has twice as much calcium as milk.

Next stop was Roy's Retreat.

Here I met Barbara Walker, wife of the legendary Argyle Downs head stockman Roy Walker. Friend to the land, nature and the local indigenous people, his resting place is one of the most magical places you will see. Barbara is a true Aussie with an accent, but she was born in the Swiss Alps. She never expected to end up in the Australian outback, especially the stunning Kimberley region.

The retreat is now a place for injured native animals (and one rather crazy dog) to be looked after, nursed back to health and then soft released into the bush. They all qualify for a lifetime membership to the Roy's Retreat Wildlife Reserve. Before the tour concludes, you can wander around the Stockman's Museum before enjoying a scrumptious homemade morning tea.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Josh serves up a gourmet meal; Tamsyn prepares dessert; the orange LandCruiser Troopy tackling 4WD tracks; dinner by candlelight; evening entertainment

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Josh is a man of many talents; indigenous cave art; a rescue bird at Roy's Retreat; Barbara walker with her animals; the tombstone of Roy Walker



FROM ABOVE The infinity pool at Lake Argyle Resort is not to be missed; accomodation for all!

5 STAY AND PLAY
Lake Argyle Resort is the best place to set up and stay at the lake and is a one-stop shop for everything you may want to do while exploring Lake Argyle and beyond. The resort is also open every day of the year.

You can book the lunch or sunset cruises aboard the *Kimberley Durack*, a helicopter flight with HeliSpirit or hang out with Josh from Lake Argyle Adventures. You can even organise a floatplane flight to Purnululu from here, a magical way to see the gorges and beehives.

The resort also has a restaurant, cafe and beer garden that is open seven days a week for meals and snacks, although operating

hours may be reduced at certain times of year. Enjoy a relaxing lunch under a shady tree or an evening meal with fellow travellers while listening to live music – there is always something happening.

There are more than 200 powered and unpowered grassed sites, and most are shaded at some part of the day, a camp kitchen and BBQ area, clean amenities and your fur babies are welcome. If you would prefer some modern comfort, the accommodation options are perfect too with Kimberley Cabins, Lake View Villas and Grande Villas.

The pièce de résistance is the infinity pool. This stunning piece of architecture makes



you feel as though you are hanging over the precipice and melding with Lake Argyle or the rugged cliffs across the way. The best time to enjoy the breathtaking vistas is early in the morning before all the rug rats appear. During the warmest parts of the day, the pool is packed. 📍



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