



Destination...

# AUSTRALIA

Baz Luhrmann's epic has inspired the world to discover our outback. Step into Hugh and Nic's footsteps in the Top End and experience where they shot their film

## Darwin, NT

**T**his tropical Top End town has had its fair share of dramatic history – not least the 1942 bombing of Darwin, which provides a dramatic climax to *Australia*. Head to the revamped Wharf Precinct to see the exact spots where bombs were dropped and where the movie was filmed. You can also get a great meal or enjoy the outdoor cinema ([www.deckchaircinema.com](http://www.deckchaircinema.com)). Baz got caught in the rain here during a screening, which inspired him to make the rainy love scene in *Australia*. Locals bring slabs of beers and watch the stunning lightning storms that hit Darwin daily during the build-up to the wet season (November to April).

There's plenty more to see, so make like Nicole and her hubby Keith Urban and hire scooters from The Scooter Shop ([www.the.scootershop.com.au](http://www.the.scootershop.com.au)), then hit the coastal trail with the wind in your hair. Or take a walking tour of the historic city. Steve from [darwinwalkingtours.com.au](http://darwinwalkingtours.com.au) is a font of local knowledge and full of tales about the filming of *Australia*. You can splash out on your own pearls at Paspaley in Smith Street Mall, which custom-made much of Nicole's jewellery for the movie.

Mitchell Street is unmissable. Have cocktails at Tzars Vodka Bar then make your way to Mindil Sunset Markets at the beach ([www.mindil.com.au](http://www.mindil.com.au)). Or why not head to Cullen Bay Marina, just out of town? It's Darwin's more laid-back answer to Sydney's Darling Harbour, with waterfront bars and restaurants stretching along a wooden jetty. Sit down and tuck into some spicy Asian cuisine while watching the fish dart about beneath your feet.

### Bamurru Plains

Nicole counted visiting Kakadu as one of

her most memorable *Australia* experiences. This award-winning safari-style property is just west of Kakadu National Park... and it's totally A-list and unique. It's luxury (think gourmet meals and private airy huts) meets wild reality (er, think snakes and man-eating crocodiles). The seasons bring ever-changing colour and wildlife – you'll go on a night safari, spot crocs while flying across the flood plains in an airboat and see billabongs teeming with amazing native wildlife. Last year's big-croc thriller, *Rogue*, was filmed here.

Visit [www.bamurruplains.com](http://www.bamurruplains.com).

**'The seasons bring ever-changing colour and wildlife'**

### Bullo River Station

In the north-western

corner of the Northern Territory near the Western Australian border, Bullo is one of the most famous working stations in the land (but relatively small, a mere 200,000 hectares!). Here you can recreate Lady Sarah's challenging overland experiences. Go Brahman-cattle mustering (in a helicopter, if you wish), fish in the croc-filled Victoria River, discover thousand-year-old Aboriginal art within the ochre-red gorges and swim in jade waterholes. A light plane will drop you here from Darwin (it's 800km by road), so you'll feel the isolation and the vastness of the station as you fly in over the boab trees. Bullo's friendly and hard-working owners, Marlee and Franz, love to share their stories (word has it, Baz and his crew stayed here incognito while scouting for locations). Check out [www.bulloriver.com](http://www.bulloriver.com).



Above: **Nicole Kidman** and crew film on Darwin's harbour. Below: Darwin and the Kimberley are in the famous 'Top End', where there are only two seasons, the Wet (November-April) and the Dry (May-October). The southern winter is the best time to visit

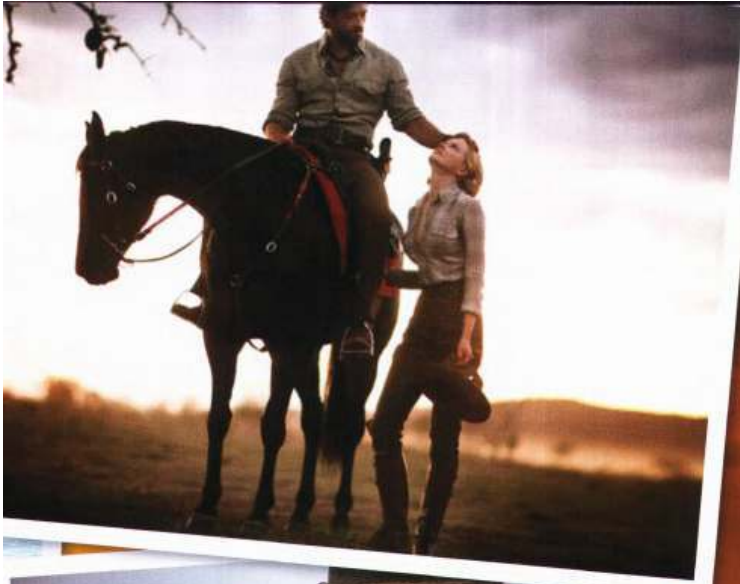


**Baz was inspired to include a rain-soaked love scene after a downpour at Darwin's deckchair cinema!**

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY TOURISM COMMISSION



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Old pals **Nicole** and **Hugh Jackman** said exploring the film's remote locations was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. "This is a celebration for me and hopefully for the country," Nic says of playing in scenes such as the bombing of Darwin (below)



**✈ Ready for take-off?**

**Getting there:** Qantas flies direct to Darwin from Cairns, Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Alice Springs. Check out [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au).

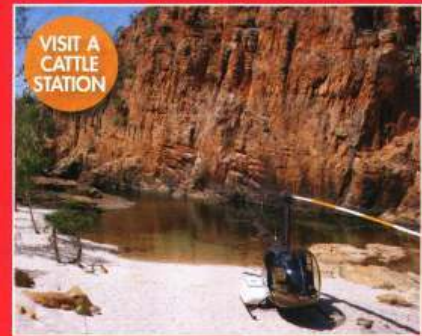
**Stay like a star:** You can't stay in the privately owned apartments Nicole Kidman did, but the next best thing is Moonshadow's blissful rainforest villas. Swim in the pool among the orchids, shower in your private outdoor bathroom and enjoy the chilled mangoes that appear daily in your fridge. Weekly rates start from \$1999 per villa. Visit [www.moonshadowvillas.com](http://www.moonshadowvillas.com).

**Stay for a steal:** Banyan View Lodge in the centre of town is operated by the YWCA and has ensuite rooms from \$120. Go to [www.banyanviewlodge.com.au](http://www.banyanviewlodge.com.au).

**Celebrity holidays**

**DARWIN HIGHLIGHTS**

The Territory's tropical capital lets you experience the real Australia



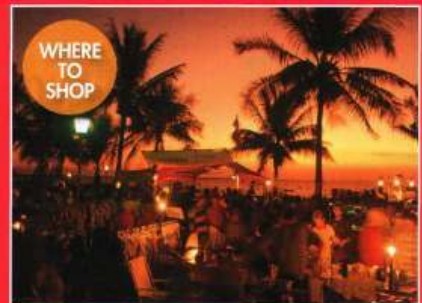
**CRACK THAT WHIP!**

Make like *The Driver* and try your hand at cattle mustering or bull catching on a visit to Bullo River Station. Stay in comfy ensuite rooms and enjoy the station's organic beef and barramundi. Go to [www.bulloriver.com](http://www.bulloriver.com).



**HARBOUR CRUISE**

Take a sunset tour on Anniki, the beautifully restored pearling lugger that starred in *Australia*, and spend a lazy few hours enjoying champers and nibblies. Visit [www.australianharbourcruises.com.au](http://www.australianharbourcruises.com.au).



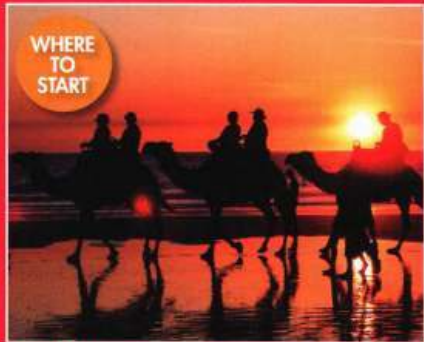
**MINDIL BEACH SUNSET MARKETS**

Listen to laid-back local music as you browse pearl jewellery and Aboriginal art, then watch the sunset over the ocean as you devour a kangaroo kebab!

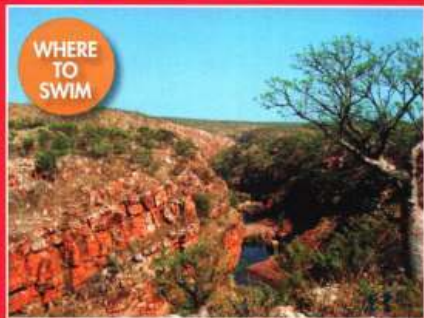


# KIMBERLEY HIGHLIGHTS

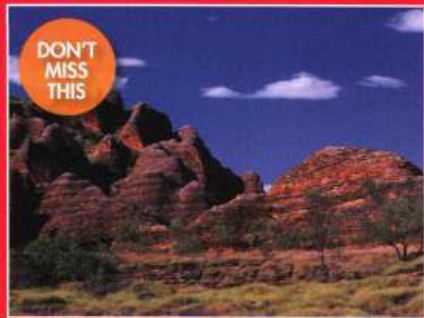
**In an area three times the size of England, you'll have plenty to see!**



**BROOME**  
 Sunset camel rides beside the Indian Ocean on Cable Beach are just one of the iconic attractions of this legendary, laid-back coastal town, which is the gateway to the Kimberley.



**GORGE EXPLORING**  
 Swimming holes framed by soaring gorge walls and the unusual bulging trunks of the boob trees are two signatures of the Kimberley. Bell Gorge, in the west, has both in abundance.



**BUNGE BUNGE RANGE (PURNULULU)**  
 The red-and-black-striped 'beehives' are 350 million years old and one of the Kimberley's most famous attractions. Visit them from Australia's base of Kununurra.

Below and right **Hugh**, aka The Drover, with one of the Kimberley's most recognisable icons, a majestic boob tree. Director Baz says it was under one of these that **Nicole** sat him down and told him she was pregnant!





Celebrity holidays

# The Kimberley, WA

**W**estern Australia's sprawling Kimberley country provides the backdrop for Faraway Downs, the rundown cattle station owned by *Australia's* laced-up Englishwoman Lady Sarah Ashley (Nicole Kidman). It's easy to see why the Kimberley was chosen – the north-west's endless skies, blood-coloured soil and dreamy sunsets make for a rough-edged beauty straight from the Australian outback of our imaginations.

Stepping off a plane from the eastern states into the Kimberley's steaming heat and raw landscape is a culture shock. Whether you arrive at the coastal tourist hub of Broome in the region's west, or the eastern town of Kununurra where the cast and crew were based for a six-week shoot, it soon sinks in that you've stepped into a different world.

'I was kind of reeling for about three days,' says Nic. 'Then it started to capture me... I was saying to my husband, 'It's got me'. It grabs hold of you, there's something in the air, the sunrises and the sunsets. There's something in the earth and the nature of the people. Before you know it, you're part of the land.'

## Gorgeous gorges

The striped domes of the Bungle Bungle range in Purnululu National Park are the region's most famous tourist attractions, but in this sparsely populated 42,000sqm area, they're just the beginning.

Broome is the entry point for most visitors

exploring the Kimberley. An atmospheric tourist town with a raucous boom-and-bust history of pearling and pirates, it now boasts world-class resorts, thanks to its proximity to the stunning Cable Beach, beautiful winter climate and a decidedly laid-back atmosphere. Launching yourself into the wilderness of the Kimberley from here gives you a holiday of contrasts – one day sipping sunset cocktails at the beach, the next hiking between soaring gorge walls, swimming in waterfalls and camping under the stars.

**'There's something in the air and the earth. It grabs you'**

Intrepid Travel (through local operators Kimberley Wild Expeditions) specialises in short tours from Broome, including the picturesque Kimberley Gorges Safari. The tour spends four days and three nights travelling from gorge to gorge, letting you recreate Hugh and Nic's romantic waterhole exploits.

Heading east from Broome along the Gibb River Road, comfy air-conditioned trucks can only take you so far until it's time to hike into the spectacular gorges which inspired Baz.

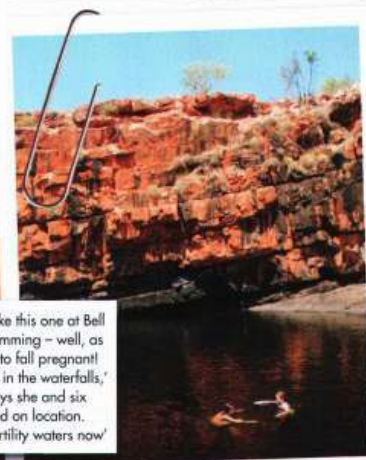
On a walk through Windjana Gorge, spot freshwater crocs (slightly less frightening than their toothier saltwater cousins) and see

ancient rock art daubed under overhangs and in caves that have acted as shelters and homes for thousands of years.

Bell Gorge has a picture-perfect swimming hole fed by a three-tiered waterfall, while a short hike into Manning Gorge brings you through majestic boabs to a deep pool where the adventurous dive in from the sky-high rocks.

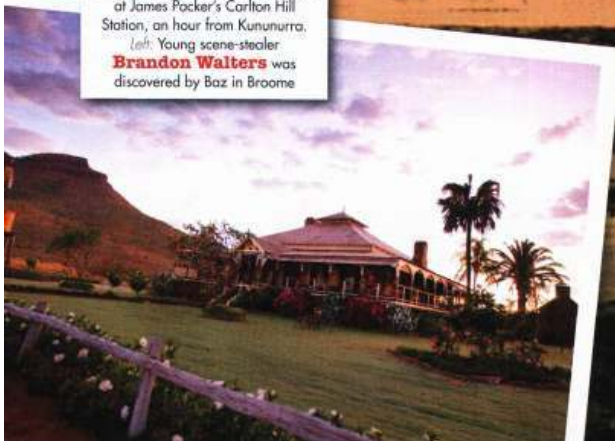
Nicole's now-famous theories on the miraculous conception properties of Kimberley waterholes aside, there is something downright magical about discovering this area one gorge at a time. Sleeping under a star-spangled sky in a swag is a true-blue *Australia* experience that would bring out The Drover in anyone. Travelling along the remote Gibb River Road in the heat of the day to set up camp beneath an iconic boab tree and indulge in a pre-dinner billabong dip is a treat you will never forget. **OK!**

TEXT BY HOLLY WAINWRIGHT AND CARMEN CROMER  
 PHOTOGRAPHS BY AUSTRAL GETTY  
 PHOTOLIBRARY.COM, PICTUREMEDIA



Stunning waterholes, like this one at Bell Gorge are safe for swimming – well, as long as you're happy to fall pregnant! 'We all went swimming in the waterfalls,' says Nicole, who says she and six crewmates conceived on location. 'So we can call it the fertility waters now'

Below: Faraway Downs, the fictional cattle station owned by Nicole's character Lady Sarah was created at James Packer's Carlton Hill Station, an hour from Kununurra. Left: Young scene-stealer Brandon Walters was discovered by Baz in Broome



## ✈ Ready for take-off?

**Getting there:** Qantas flies to Broome direct from Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Visit [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au).

**Getting around:** Intrepid Travel's *Australia – On Location* trip from Broome to Darwin, takes in many of the sites where the movie was filmed. The 10-day trip is from \$3690pp and includes meals, camping equipment and transport. The Kimberley Gorge Safari is a four-day trip from Broome, visiting Windjana Gorge, Manning Falls and Bell Gorge, among others. From \$865pp, it includes all transport, meals and camping equipment. For info and bookings, go to [www.intrepidtravel.com](http://www.intrepidtravel.com).

**Stay like a star:** Even Nicole Kidman struggled to get a bed at the world-famous El Questro Homestead, west of Kununurra. Prices start at \$1890 for a two-night package. Book ahead. Visit [www.elquestrohomed.com.au](http://www.elquestrohomed.com.au).

**Stay for a steal:** Camp out! A swag under the stars is the best bed to truly experience the breathtaking north-west. For more information, go to [www.westernaustralia.com.au](http://www.westernaustralia.com.au).

Check out the trailer at [okmagazine.com.au](http://okmagazine.com.au)