

An aerial photograph of a coral reef. The top half of the image shows deep blue water. Below it, a wide, textured expanse of light-colored sand or coral sand is visible. A prominent, bright orange-yellow line of coral or reef structure runs diagonally across the lower half of the image, separating the sandy area from a darker, more complex reef structure at the bottom.

THE ULTIMATE KIMBERLEY

Expedition Guide

BY PONANT



Montgomery Reef





I often reflect on the time I have spent in the Kimberley, and I am always left with very few words. Harsh yet magnificent. Seemingly uninhabitable yet inhabited for perhaps 65,000 years. It always beckons my return to again explore timeless landscapes more than two billion years in the making.

You wake each morning with a sense of anticipation, as nothing can truly prepare you for the marvels that lie ahead. This may not mean anything to you now, but the Kimberley is nevertheless one of the most untamed regions in the world.

Imagine this – immense horizons, vertiginous waterfalls, sandstone cliffs tortured by massive geological forces, a colour palette of intense blue skies and mauve peach sunsets.

It doesn't end there. You will witness extreme tidal movements – some of the most dramatic in the world – and have the opportunity to reflect on Gwion Gwion rock art, intricate and complex depictions of the human form five times older than Egyptian hieroglyphs.

You won't be alone on your journey of this vast coastline that spans 12,000 kilometres, as the Kimberley is home to both the largest living reptile, the saltwater crocodile, and the largest number of migrating humpback whales in the world, estimated to have numbered 60,000 in 2023.

My vision was to introduce luxury small-ship expeditions into the Kimberley region to showcase Australia's greatest natural asset to the world, and offer life-changing experiences to all who visit.

I invite you to take a moment to immerse yourself in Australia's iconic Kimberley, and to challenge your perspective of a world much larger than us.

Sarina Bratton AM
Chairman Asia Pacific
PONANT



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We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples today.

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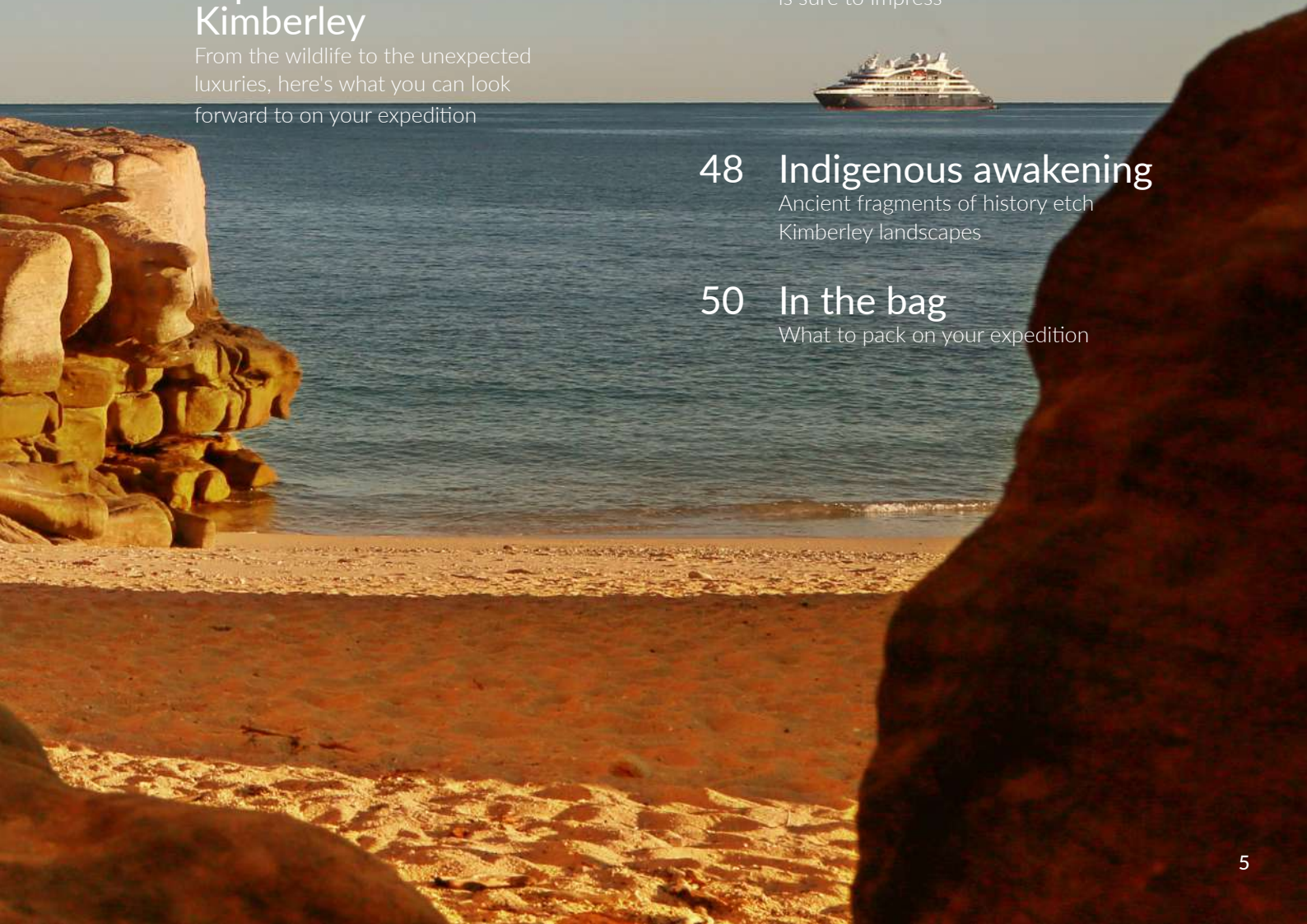
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THE PONANT *difference*

For over 35 years, PONANT has shared the emotive experiences of sailors as they approach lands on the edge of the world. Guests are invited to discover and respect both natural and cultural treasures harboured by these lands.

Founded in 1988 by officers of the French Merchant Navy, PONANT has created a new style of exploration. A unique conception of sea travel under the French flag, coupled with an unwavering commitment to promoting sustainable and responsible tourism.

PONANT promises a unique and authentic voyage. Aboard the refined design of PONANT yachts privileged access to exceptional territories is

allowed, whilst the art of living and excellent cuisine take pride of place.

Our modern fleet consists of small-sized ships designed for luxury expeditions or yachting.

From *Le Ponant*, our iconic three-masted yacht, to sleek *Le Commandant Charcot*, the world's only luxury icebreaker powered by liquefied natural gas, our fleet is fitted with cutting-edge equipment.

We ensure both the safety of guests and respect for areas visited by our fleet of sustainable small capacity ships, designed for environmental protection and under the guidance of experts.



The six *PONANT* Signatures



Award-winning
itineraries



Sustainable
small ships



World-renowned
expert guides



World-class dining



All-inclusive
onboard luxury*



Included excursions

*Onboard inclusions: All meals, 24-hour room service, open bar and mini bar restocked daily, wellness area, enrichment and entertainment.

MAP OUT YOUR ROUTE

Whichever direction
you venture, your
Kimberley coast
expedition promises
to deliver natural
drama in spades.



The Lacepedes

BROOME

Collier Bay

Ashmore Reef

Montgomery Reef

Wijingarra Bard Bard

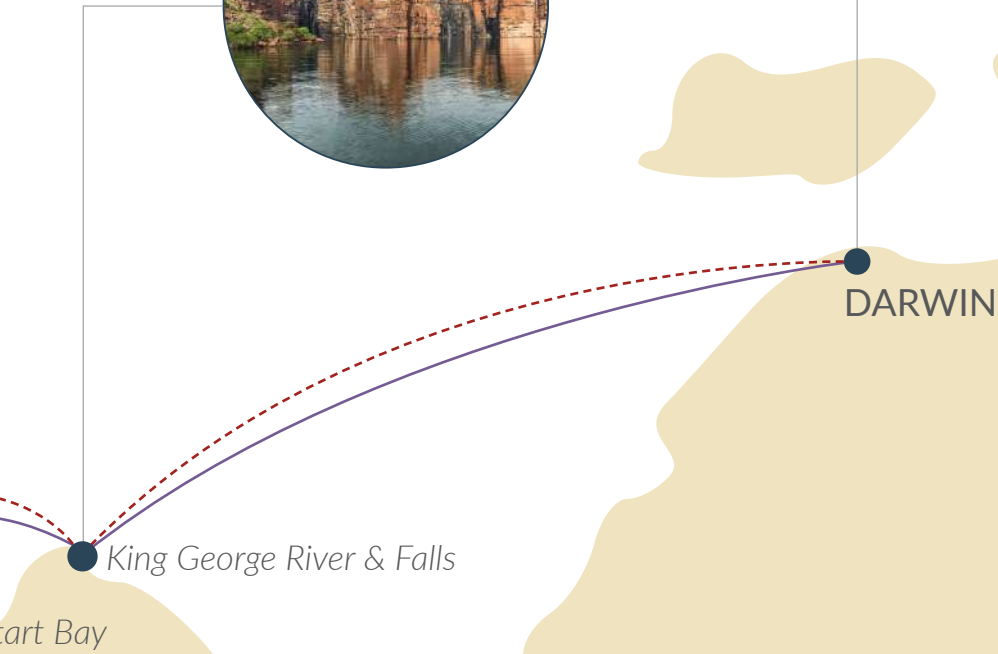
Horizontal Falls

Careening Bay

Hunter River

Vansitt
Swift Bay





art Bay

DARWIN

NORTHERN
TERRITORY



WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

----- DARWIN TO BROOME
————— BROOME TO DARWIN

Which voyage TO CHOOSE?

From the itinerary to the season, here's what to consider before booking your Kimberley expedition.

The itinerary

PONANT operate Kimberley voyages between Darwin and Broome (Southbound) and Broome and Darwin (Northbound). Whilst there won't be any difference in the length of your voyage, each direction holds its own uniqueness. Every voyage will allow you to witness iconic landscapes and natural phenomena such as the King George River, Montgomery Reef and Horizontal Falls, to name a few.

If sailing out to the remote Ashmore Reef and enjoying that extra bit of time at sea sounds appealing, then Darwin to Broome is the itinerary for you. Or if visiting a historic WWII DC3 aircraft wreck nestled in Vansittart Bay piques your interest, then Broome to Darwin might be your perfect choice.

The season

The Kimberley season runs from April to October – the rest of the year it is too hot, humid and wet. Pick a month based on what appeals most. As an added bonus, turtles, dugongs and dolphins are in the Kimberley year-round.

Waterfall Season

April & May

One of the main drawcards of the Kimberley coast is its legendary waterfalls – including the towering 80-metre King George and four-tiered Mitchell Falls. Most of the coast's falls are fed by the Kimberley's drenching wet season rains, so the earlier in the season you go the more spectacular the falls are.





Peak Season

June & July

This is the most popular time of year to travel to the Kimberley, likely because the 'dry season' weather is characterised by clear blue skies and balmy days.

Depending on the amount of rain during the wet season, there might be some water still flowing over the big falls as late as August.

This is also a prime time for crocodiles, and the crisp light is ideal for stellar photography. On board every PONANT voyage you will be accompanied by a photographer and videographer, so feel free to ask for tips along the way.

Whale Season

August, September & October

From August to early October each year, the Kimberley coast is the world's epicentre for whale-watching.

Up to a staggering 60,000 humpback whales make their way from their Antarctic feeding grounds to the warm tropical waters of the Kimberley to breed and give birth, and you will have the beat seat in the house. Make sure to keep an eye out!



02

01 Mitchell Falls in full force © Nick Rains

02 On the lookout for marine life © Nick Rains

03 Whales are a common sight during migration © Laure Patricot



03

SHIP SHAPE

Refined luxury.
Environmentally friendly.
Technologically advanced.
These are the themes that
carry into the very design
of our vessels. Here is your
guide to our fleet calling the
Kimberley home.

The Explorers AT A GLANCE

Length: 131 metres

Passenger capacity: 184

Cruising speed: 12.5 knots

Stylish, eco-conscious design is at the centre of each of PONANT's vessels, and our Explorer class offers sustainable, refined luxury at its most adventurous.

Across five decks, guests have access to nine Zodiacs, a theatre, two restaurants, a pool and wellness area, and three lounges including The Blue Eye; a dramatic multisensorial underwater space that offers glimpses of surrounding marine life.

Head to the spa to unwind with Sothys facials and massages. The wellness space also houses a free-access sauna and gym, providing a haven for your health.

Relax in your choice of 92 sleek staterooms and suites, awash with nautical blues and calming wooden elements.

Each accommodation is tastefully decorated and styled, and your stay is complemented by luxe Diptyque Paris bath products, a well-stocked (and daily replenished) mini-bar and a Nespresso coffee machine.

Room service is available 24 hours a day, and guests staying in the Owner's Suite, Grand Deluxe Suite, Privilege Suite and the Prestige Suite on Deck 6 will enjoy priority boarding and a butler on call around the clock.

When it comes to wining and dining, Le Nautilus offers endless sea views to enjoy over region-inspired à la carte gastronomic dining. Additionally, the Grill Restaurant steals the scene with a relaxed ambience overlooking the pool and a tasty multicultural buffet.

Dishes are accented with hyper-local produce gathered from the destinations you explore as well as further afield in Western Australia.





01



SCAN THIS CODE
to take a virtual tour
of *Le Lapérouse*.

01 Our explorer ship *Le Lapérouse* at sunset © Nick Rains

02 Stylish staterooms and suites © Laure Patricot

03 The Blue Eye © Christophe Dugied



02



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The ultimate way to explore

Zodiacs are the expedition craft of choice aboard our fleet, transporting guests to remote Kimberley locations where harbours and ports are scarce. Rugged but comfortable, sleek and safe, these are easy to navigate and suitable for a range of different conditions.

Offering plenty of torque while maintaining low emissions and noise pollution means you can get close to Kimberley wildlife, including crocs and birds that are endemic to this postcard-perfect pocket of Western Australia.



04

The Sisterships AT A GLANCE

Length: 142 metres

Passenger capacity: 264

Cruising speed: 14 knots

PONANT's ships are custom-built to transport guests across the farthest, most intriguing corners of the globe in refined luxury. The Sisterships are no exception. These elegant vessels blend cutting-edge technology with premium design and effortless service to offer the ultimate luxury expedition across the Kimberley.

The fleet's interiors are a stunning homage to yachting. The ship boasts 132 tastefully furnished staterooms, replete with all the creature comforts you could ever want. Expect 24-hour room service, flatscreen TVs, bluetooth speakers and a bathroom stocked with luxe Diptyque Paris products.

Sizes range from the 18-square-metre Deluxe Stateroom, featuring a private balcony and king bed, to the 45-square-metre Owner's Suite, complemented by butler service and daily canapés, among other exclusive luxury touches. Guests aboard *Le Soléal* can spend their days flitting between the Wellness Area – offering a free access hammam and fitness studio, Sothys products, massages, a hair salon and beauty treatments – the stunning pool deck, and the Recreation Area that graces Deck 5 with Studio PONANT, where guests can view the photos and videos taken by the on-board photographer and videographer.

There are six guest decks to explore, or, settle in at the Main Lounge with its bar, live entertainment and dance floor. There is also a theatre, exterior bar overlooking the pool deck and the Panoramic Lounge – featuring a library, bar, internet space and more entertainment. Eleven Zodiacs await to transport guests to remote locations for land and close-to-shore expeditions.





04 Our Sistership *Le Soléal* © Laurent Lavole 05 Stylish spaces © Francois Lefebvre
06 The Pool Deck © Nick Rains.




SCAN THIS CODE
to take a virtual
tour of *Le Soléal*.

Gourmands are well catered for with both French-inspired gastronomy and a newly crafted Australian offering highlighting fresh produce sourced from the locations it visits. The Gastronomic restaurant L'Éclipse plates up refined French, Australian, and international cuisine, while the Grill offers breakfast, buffet lunches and themed dinners in a relaxed yet refined setting. A la carte meals at the Gastronomic restaurant are complemented by a selection of quality drops from the wine cellar – guests can ask our on-board sommelier for recommendations.



KIMBERLEY CALLING

Western Australia's Kimberley region delivers nature writ large, writes Travel Editor, Natasha Dragun.



You could be forgiven for mistaking the Kimberley's scenery for a sci-fi movie set. One of the most sparsely populated places on the planet – with just 40,000 people across 423,500 square kilometres – this pocket of northwest Australia is remote, rugged and ravishing. Waterfalls seem to pour off every cliff edge, vast caves are decorated with the world's oldest depictions of the human form, gorges carve through two-billion-year-old sandstone escarpments, and epic tides tumble over reefs, transforming ecosystems in minutes. Amid it all are sprinkled tropical forest-topped islands – thousands of them – and impenetrable ochre chasms enveloped by bottle-shaped boab trees and tall stands of grass that bristle like an old man's beard.

Some landscapes are so convincingly Jurassic you expect to see dinosaurs. What you find are crocodiles, in the tens of thousands: the 'freshies', with which locals think nothing of swimming; and the 'salties' – not quite as friendly – in unfathomable lengths, wallowing in mangroves on the hunt for fish and crabs and sunning themselves on rocks.

It's not just the lizard-like reptiles that are larger here – in the Kimberley, the skies feel wider, the air cleaner, the stars brighter, the wilderness, well, wilder. This is nature writ large, a true frontier that excites your imagination like nowhere else in Australia.

Wilderness and solitude are amplified the further north you travel in the Kimberley, until you reach a point, around Mitchell River and Prince Regent national parks, beyond all towns or roads. Just rivers wending through gorges, spilling into the Indian Ocean. Needless to say, the best – often the only – way to explore this remote pocket of Western Australia and its rugged coast and offshore islands is by ship.



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The PONANT take

In this part of the world, with PONANT the whole experience is 'anti-cruise'. There are no bulging buffets, no queues, no casinos, no enforced inactivity. And there's no formal attire, either. In fact, many days you can roam barefoot.

That's not to say there aren't high standards on board. The decor across *Le Lapérouse's* 92 staterooms and suites seems to meld into the countryside you're traversing, all cream and ochre with pops of azure. There are plenty of nice touches, and chefs prepare meals with culinary flair, putting together pretty plates revolving around the bounty surrounding, whether that's tuna or barramundi, fingermark or mud crabs.

As comfortable as it is, it's not about the ship – it's about the experiences; the destinations.

Island idyll

For fear of crocs, there's very little time allocated for hanging out on beaches across the Kimberley, although there are ample ringings the region's 2,600 islands. There are a few exceptions. On Jar Island, we pause on the bone-white sand to be welcomed to country by the local Indigenous community. Then we fossick through caves to discover spectacularly well-preserved Gwion Gwion Aboriginal rock paintings, some more than 12,000 years old. Australia's Indigenous communities created so many artworks here that the Kimberley is considered the world's largest alfresco gallery.

Each morning of the expedition you wake in a destination more dramatic than the last, whether spotting brolga and candy-coloured kingfishers beside the crashing twin King George Falls in the

North Kimberley Marine Park, or on the lookout for rays, turtles and snubfin dolphins amid the opaline waters of Montgomery Reef, the world's largest inshore reef.

Between Camden Sound and Collier Bay, the 420-square-kilometre reef system emerges from the sea at low tide, water cascading from the reef top and bringing marine life with it. As the reef empties, the channel fills with a huge number of marine animals, from sawfish and dugongs to six species of threatened turtles, whose throng of beaks pop skyward then duck for cover.

This part of the Kimberley coast is the gateway to the Buccaneer Archipelago, 1,000 tiny islands that pop like jewels from the turquoise sea. A proposed 660,000-hectare marine park will ensure the protection of the fragile ecosystem, from the rocky uninhabited islets



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topped with lime-green pandanus and emerald rainforest, to the 'Iron Islands' rich with ore.

Falling for you

It's here, surrounding the Buccaneer, that Collier Bay breaks records for the highest tides in the country, and among the highest in the world.

To fully appreciate this intensity, get set to witness the Horizontal Falls, described by Sir David Attenborough as "Australia's most unusual natural wonder". He's not wrong. Nothing quite prepares you for an in-person encounter with this dramatic phenomenon, pulling visitors in – literally – with its forceful movement of water.

At peak flow there are up to a staggering 14 million litres of water passing through the wide gaps of the Kimberley's rust-red McLarty Range, effectively making

the scene appear like a waterfall turned sideways. As the tide turns, the flow rushes in the opposite direction through the chasm.

Boats crossing the falls buck and jive over enormous undulating eddies and froth, while light aircraft hover over the spectacle's rising spray.

Final frontier

Broome enjoys a prime position on the Dampier Peninsula, a slice of white sand and pindan soil between the turquoise water of the Indian Ocean and the mangroves of Roebuck Bay. This place is remote – some 2,500 kilometres from the nearest capital city (Perth). Its last-frontier setting brings with it plenty of country swagger, but also a surprisingly cosmopolitan lifestyle thanks to the hugely multicultural population; more

than 57 languages are spoken around town. Early settlers were drawn here by the prospect of finding fortunes in the pearling industry, which thrives to this day. But modern-day fortune-seekers arrive for the blazing sunsets that set Cable Beach aglow each evening. If you time your trip right (April through October), you might catch the Staircase to the Moon, a natural phenomenon caused by the full moon's reflections across the mudflats of Roebuck Bay, creating the illusion of a stairway reaching skywards. It's a fitting finale to a remarkable voyage that spans horizons and changes lives.

01 Stylish *Le Lapérouse* © Christophe Dugied 02 Montgomery Reef © Laure Patricot 03 Fine dining is guaranteed © Nicolas Matheus 04 One of the plentiful birdlife to be found here © Nick Rains





20 reasons to visit THE KIMBERLEY

A beguiling wilderness of rugged ancient landscapes, cavernous gorges and wildlife-filled ravines, the Kimberley is one of the world's last true frontiers. With PONANT as your guide, a once-in-a-lifetime adventure through this spellbinding region is guaranteed.

1 Spot whales

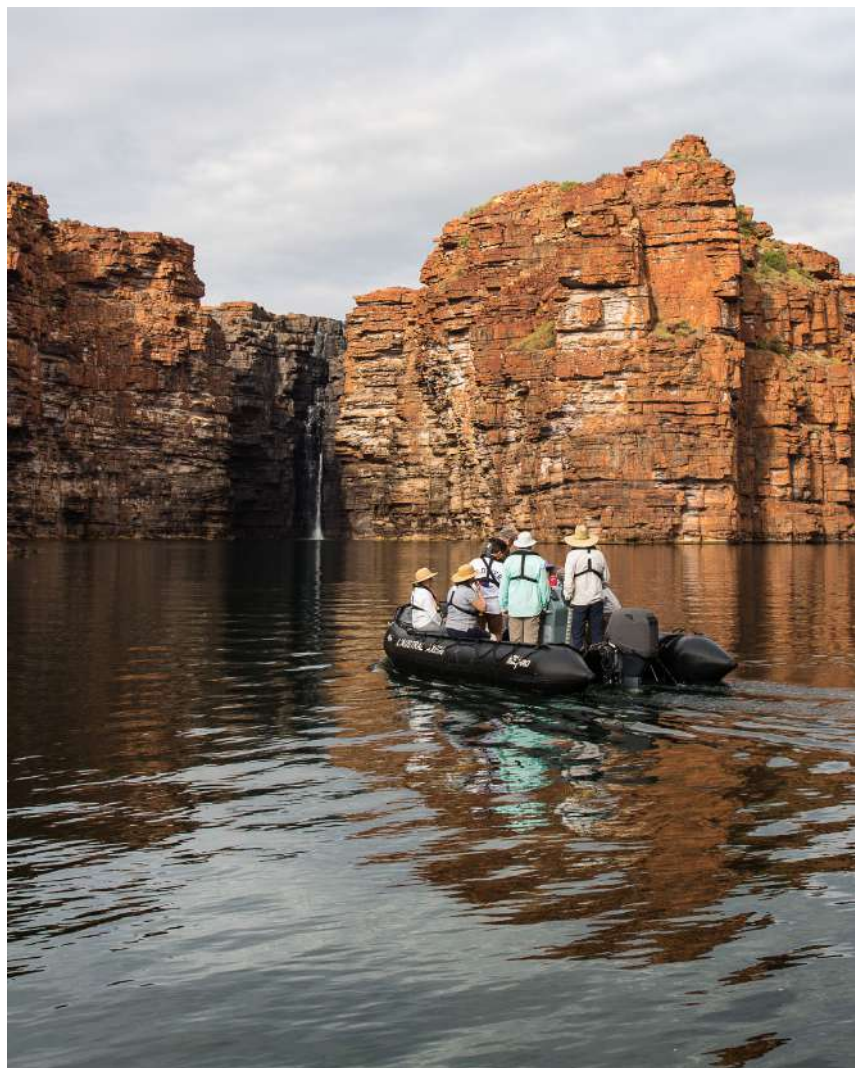
Witness the largest population of migrating humpback whales on the planet as you sail in the shallow waters of Lalang-gaddam (Camden Sound) Marine Park. From July to October each year, around 60,000 whales calve and raise their young in these warm, pristine waters.

2 Chase waterfalls

Spend your days soaking in the mist of the towering Twin Falls of King George and the four-tiered Mitchell Falls. Most falls have dried up by late July, with the exception of Mitchell Falls, which flows all year round. April and May are the best months to see them at their most spectacular, fed by the wet-season rains.

3 Montgomery Reef

Dramatic natural wonders are in no short supply in this pocket of the planet. Exploring Montgomery Reef, the world's largest in-shore reef, will have even the most seasoned travellers grinning with childlike wonder as its thriving marine ecosystem – immense coral bommies, bobbing turtles, dugongs, lurking crocodiles – is revealed by quickly dropping tides.



4 Kimberley sunsets

As the sun sets on each day, the sky becomes a canvas filled with breathtaking shades of burnt orange, mauve and pink. Take a moment to admire the forever-changing colours of the Kimberley coast.

5 Horizontal Falls

A PONANT Kimberley expedition allows you to get up close to the Horizontal Falls, heralded as “one of the greatest natural wonders of the world”, by Sir David Attenborough. This unique phenomenon is caused by powerful tides forced through the narrow gorges of the McLarty Range. Thrilling is an understatement.

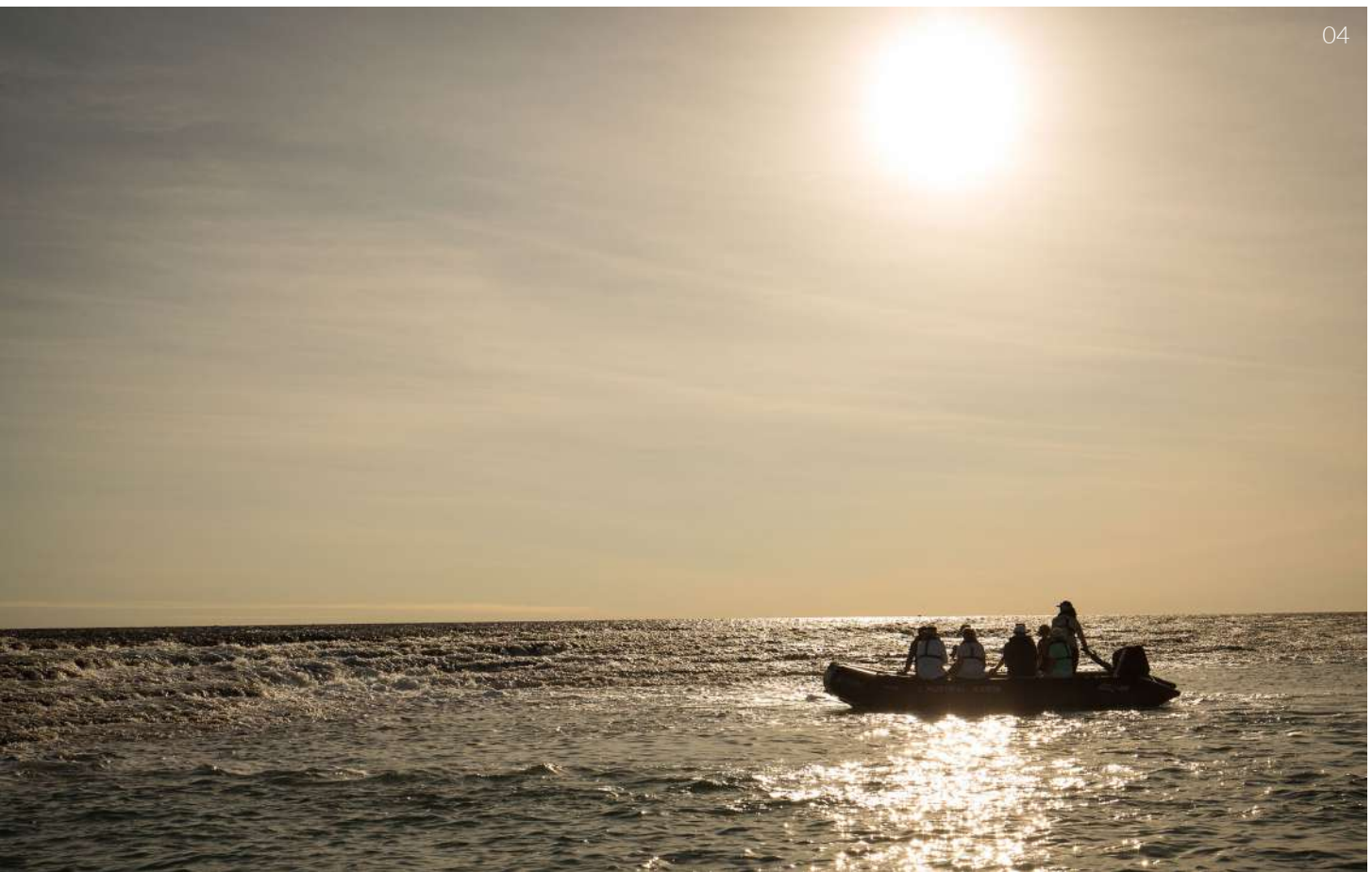


02

- 01 Visiting the Horizontal Falls in a Zodiac © Nick Rains
- 02 King George Falls © Nick Rains
- 03 Humpback whales are a common sight © Morgane Monneret
- 04 Montgomery Reef © Nick Rains



03



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6 Bird bonanza

The Kimberley boasts diverse waterways and habitats that support a thriving avian population. Keep your eyes peeled for species like white-bellied sea eagles, Brahminy kites and ospreys, as well as brown boobies, white-quilled rock pigeons and rare Gouldian finches.



7 Tidal phenomena

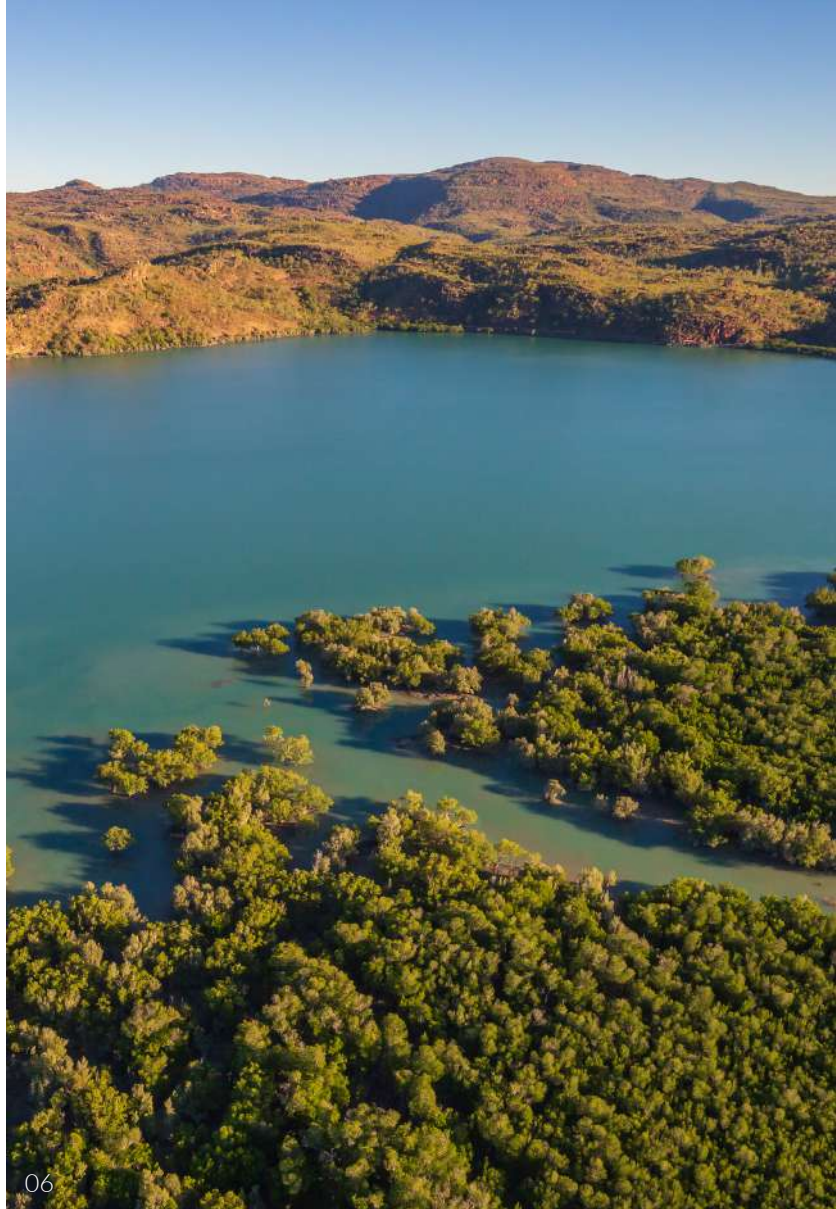
What do you get when you combine the Moon's gravitational pull, and the unique landscape of the Kimberley's coastal sea floor? An average tidal range of over 10 metres!

8 Diverse wildlife

In addition to whales, dolphins, crocs and birds, the Kimberley is home to an abundance of other wildlife. You might be lucky enough to spot a couple of rock wallabies along the way, so be sure to keep your eyes peeled.

9 Crocs galore

Spotting the world's largest reptile lazing in the sun is a thrilling experience, and one you're almost sure to have on a Kimberley expedition. Marvel at majestic saltwater crocodiles (they're bigger than you think!) as you explore the Hunter River on your Zodiac outing.



05 Kimberley birdlife © Morgane Monneret
06 The colours of the Hunter River © Philip Schubert
07 A saltwater croc, a common sight in the Kimberley



10 Ancient landscapes

Western Australia's Kimberley region formed more than two billion years ago, which is half the age of the Earth. That's pretty staggering. The region has spectacular mountain ranges, gorges with towering cliffs and waterfalls.

11 Gwion Gwion rock art

Discover some of the world's oldest Indigenous paintings hidden in caves and on rock walls. Characterised by fine brushstrokes, elegant figures and precise motifs, there are thought to be more than 100,000 ancient Gwion Gwion rock art sites scattered across the Kimberley region.



08



10

08 Ancient Kimberley rock art © Nick Rains
 09 The Buccaneer archipelago © Adobe Stock
 10 Exploring in a Zodiac © Cindy Miller Hopkins



09



12 Prince Frederick Harbour

This harbour is one of the largest and most scenic inlets of the Kimberley coastline, fed by rivers flanked by mangroves and rainforests. Our fleet of Zodiacs allow you to cruise through the meandering Hunter River and Porosus Creek alongside towering red sandstone cliffs and deep gorges.

13 Indigenous culture

As you sail through this ancient landscape, you will visit a range of significant sites, allowing you to gain an insight into the incredible culture and heritage of Australia's First Nations Peoples, the world's oldest continuing culture. Evidence shows they have lived here for more than 65,000 years.

14 Only accessible by sea

No roads lead to the Kimberley coast, paved roads that is. Meaning the only way to see this vast landscape is by sea.

15 Buccaneer archipelago

This cluster of 1,000 untouched islands is replete with pristine white-sand beaches, rugged coastlines and aquamarine waters. Be sure to be on one of the many outer decks at sunset when navigating through the archipelago.



16 Mangrove explorations

Board a state-of-the-art Zodiac to explore some of the most pristine tidal mangrove systems on the planet. Home to more than 16 types of mangroves, these crucial ecosystems that rim the Kimberley's rivers and coastal inlets support a rich and diverse wildlife population.

17 Lacepede Islands

The Lacepede Islands are home to Western Australia's most important breeding habitat for green turtles, and play host to a huge breeding colony of brown boobies. While landings are prohibited on these protected islands, you'll get to enjoy an up-close look at this remote and remarkable pocket of the Kimberley by Zodiac.

18 Mermaid Tree

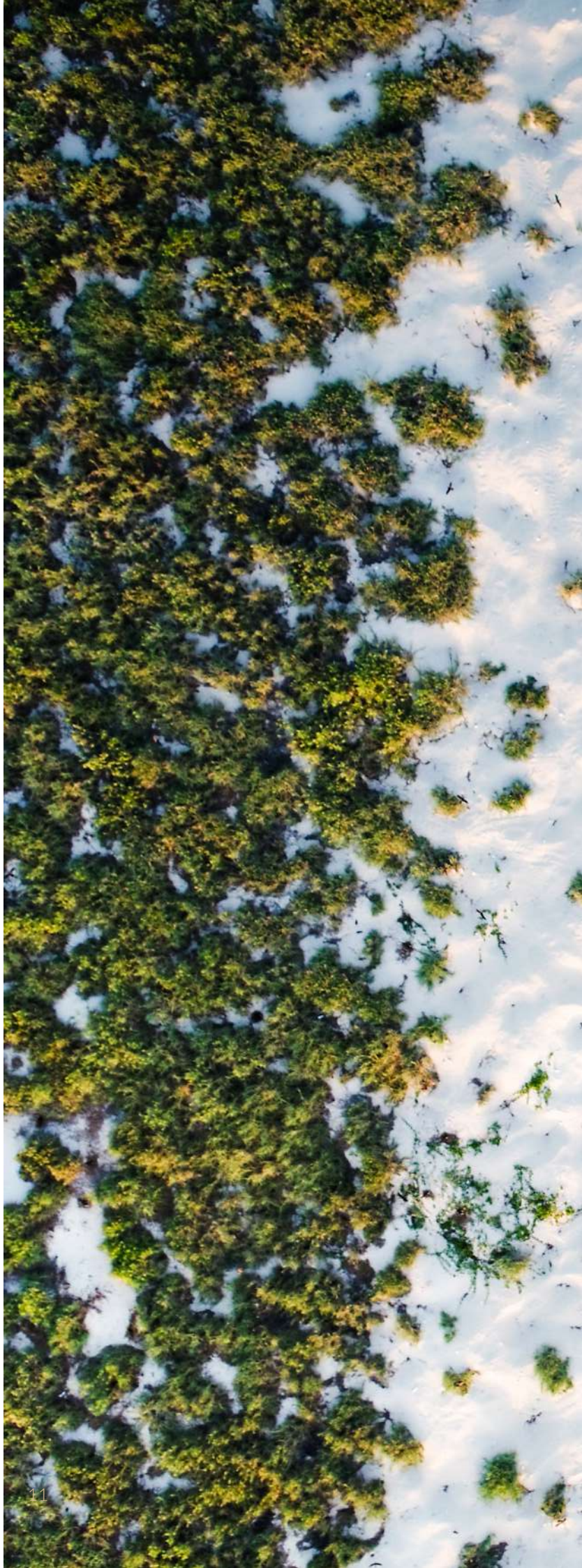
More than 200 years old, the 'Mermaid Boab Tree' in Careening Bay tells an enduring story of exploration. It's named after Phillip Parker King, who was mapping the coast in the 1800s. His ship, the HMC Mermaid, needed repairs here – while ashore, one of his crew engraved 'HMC Mermaid 1820' into the trunk. You can still see it today.

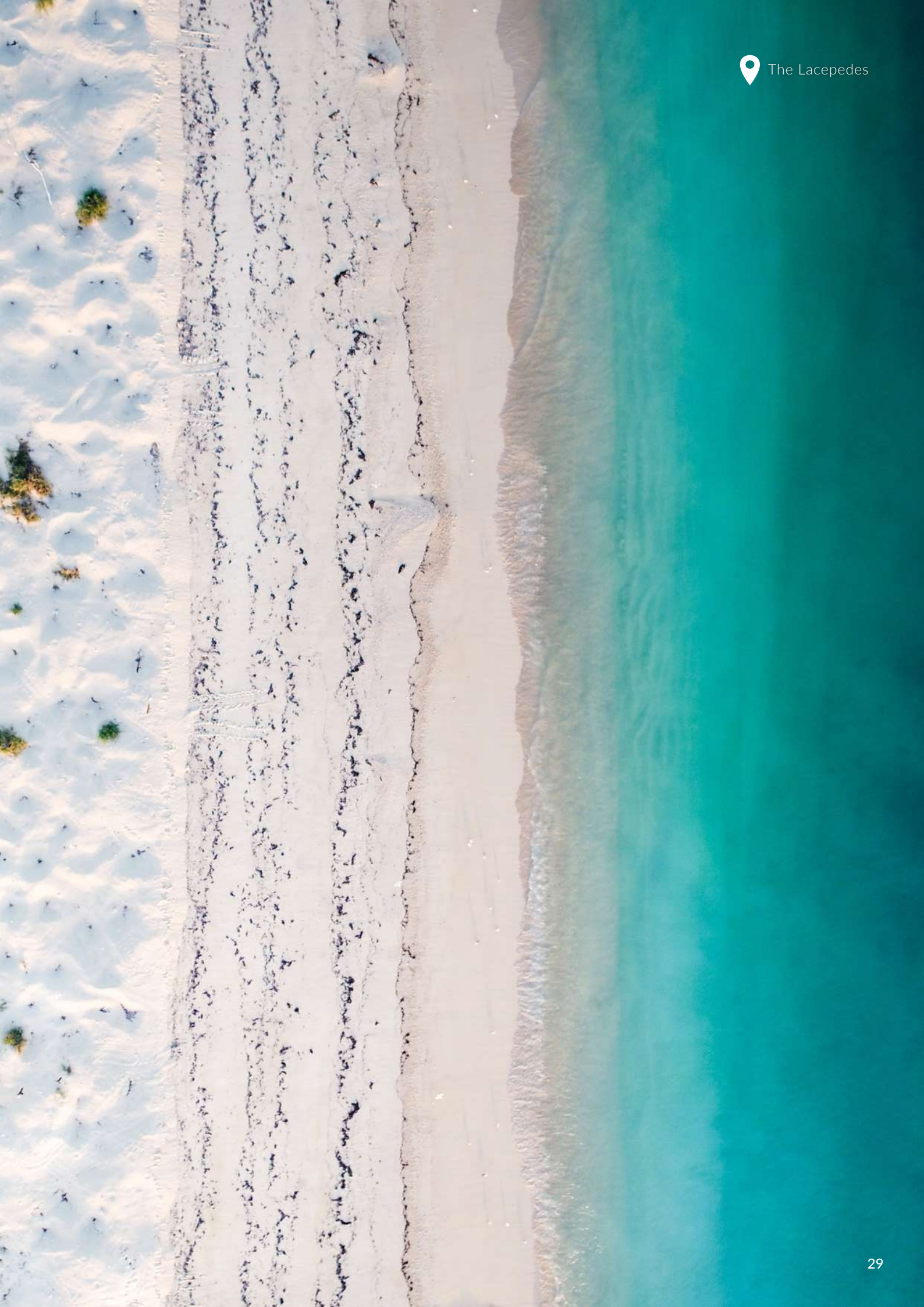
19 Broome

The former pearling capital of the world has a fascinating history that you can explore on pearl farm tours or a stroll through the Chinatown district and the famed Japanese Cemetery. Enjoy a camel ride along Cable Beach to the glow of dusk and witness the 'Staircase to the Moon' phenomenon once night falls over Roebuck Bay.

20 Zodiac bubbles

One of the highlights of a PONANT Kimberley expedition is reaching King George Falls. Upon arrival, you'll find a zodiac set up with flutes of champagne, so you can toast your voyage at the base of the falls. It's beyond spectacular.





EXPERIENCE COUNTS

Having visited the Kimberley on more than 130 voyages, PONANT's Director of Expeditions & Destination Development for Asia Pacific, Mick Fogg knows the region like few others.

I love that every day is different. It doesn't matter how many times you visit. The sunburnt lands, ancient culture, diversity of experiences... the quietness of the countryside. It never fails to impress.

And then there's the diversity of destinations. One minute you might be spotting enormous crocs in mangroves, the next day you're looking at rock art, thundering waterfalls, amazing tidal phenomenon, soaring gorges.

The Kimberley is a harsh landscape to eke out an existence. But Indigenous people did just that here for tens of thousands of years. There's art that dates back millennia across the world's largest collection of outdoor galleries.

Some art here is even thought to be at least five times older than the Egyptian hieroglyphs, making them the oldest anthropomorphic motifs on our planet and providing a window into how humans lived and thought on the Australian continent since their arrival between 65,000 and 80,000 years ago. And there are also middens - piles of shells and bones left behind by Aboriginal communities.

Wildlife in the Kimberley

is not in your face. It can sometimes be difficult to spot, but that's part of the allure. Of course during migration you'll likely spot some of the world's largest migrating population of humpback whales. Birders love the offshore islands, like the Lacepedes and Adele, where there are birds everywhere and hundreds of turtles.





I fail to find the words to describe Montgomery Reef. It's huge, covering 400 square kilometres. And during the tidal shift the cascading water reveals coral, fish, turtles, dugongs, rays... Everything is on a massive scale, including the noise of all that water.

The Kimberley is a very humbling destination. It's two billion years old; it's one of the first parts of the Earth. Its scale and age result in buckled and folded rocks... All you can do is wonder - How?!

PONANT stands out for the quality of its Kimberley expedition team. Yes, it's an international company, but all naturalists are local, and have incredible knowledge of the region and expertise

working here. Everyone who works in the region has a genuine passion for it, and that's contagious among guests as well. When your expedition team is excited, so are your guests.

Whenever I'm away from the Kimberley, I long to be back. This part of the world really gets under your skin.

01 Director of Expeditions & Destination Development, Asia Pacific, Mick Fogg, admiring ancient Aboriginal art © Cindy Miller Hopkins







ARRIVE IN AWE

Raw, rugged and wild, an expedition in the Kimberley isn't about what you see, it's about what you will feel long after visiting this vast wonderland, says PONANT's Expedition Operations Manager for Asia Pacific, Sandrine Erwin-Rose.

Sandrine Erwin-Rose grew up on the ocean. Born in France, her father was a sailing instructor, and when she moved to Australia as a six-year-old, she was always at her happiest on the water. Her love of nature led her to become a biologist, and then a teacher, before she turned her hand to expeditions – the perfect marriage, she says, where she gets to not only work on the water but educate people about herpetology (the study of amphibians and reptiles). Here, she explains what makes a trip to the Kimberley such an exceptional experience.

What sort of wildlife encounters can you have in the Kimberley?

"Many come here for the crocs. You're sitting in a Zodiac with no civilisation for hundreds of kilometres. There are no street signs, phone towers, buildings... nothing. It draws you into the wilderness, and that's what makes it so special.

"I never promise crocodiles, but I have never had a trip when we haven't seen one. They are inherently the laziest creature on the face of the Earth and people often say, 'is that alive'. I'm like, 'yeah it is, but it hasn't moved in three hours'. While crocs don't put on much of a show, the sky does and when we have a dropping tide and it's late afternoon, the light is spectacular. Many photographers come here just because of that light. It's even better when a croc is cruising along the riverbank catching fish, and you watch them living their lives completely oblivious to us – it's something else.



01

01 Shore landing with expedition team © Nick Rains
02 Sandrine Erwin-Rose © PONANT

"This season we were at King George under its 80-metre cliffs, and we saw crocs and dugongs and turtles. There were also two species of snakes hidden in the rocks. One was a Kimberley brown tree snake, and it was so pretty, speckled cream and orange, with big eyes, and it was just sitting in a rock crevice with a completely different species of snake. It's experiences like that you get to share with guests that are so lovely – although I'm not sure everyone else was as excited about the snakes as I was!"

What makes PONANT the best expedition in this region?

"PONANT has been sailing in the Kimberley for several years, and its captains have traced routes in waters previously uncharted. Needless to say, they know the best places to go. We have yachts that can go from port to port around Europe, but the difference here is that you see places you never knew existed.

"An example is Ashmore Reef, which is about as far out as you can get into Australian waters before Indonesia. It's incredibly remote and no one goes there, but because of our captains and ship technology, we are able to take guests out on Zodiacs to see turtles, sharks, whale sharks, sea snakes and birds flying everywhere."

02

What else can you expect when you travel through the Kimberley?

"Nothing prepares you for its scale, and it pays to visit with an open mind. Be prepared that things will change because of the weather. Everything is timed to the tides. At Montgomery Reef, we time when the reef will emerge and pick then to send Zodiacs in. And at Horizontal Falls, we can only go through certain tides.

"Regardless of where you venture in this vast landscape, there's a reason it's on most people's bucket lists. It's hard to put in words because it's an experience and a feeling. People remember how they felt after the experience. That's what stays with them long after their voyage."



WILD THINGS

One of the Earth's last wilderness frontiers, the Kimberley is a complex union of rugged coastlines, lush mangroves, grasslands, rainforest, savannahs, thundering waterfalls and sandstone gorges. This remote region is home to flora and fauna as diverse as its landscapes.





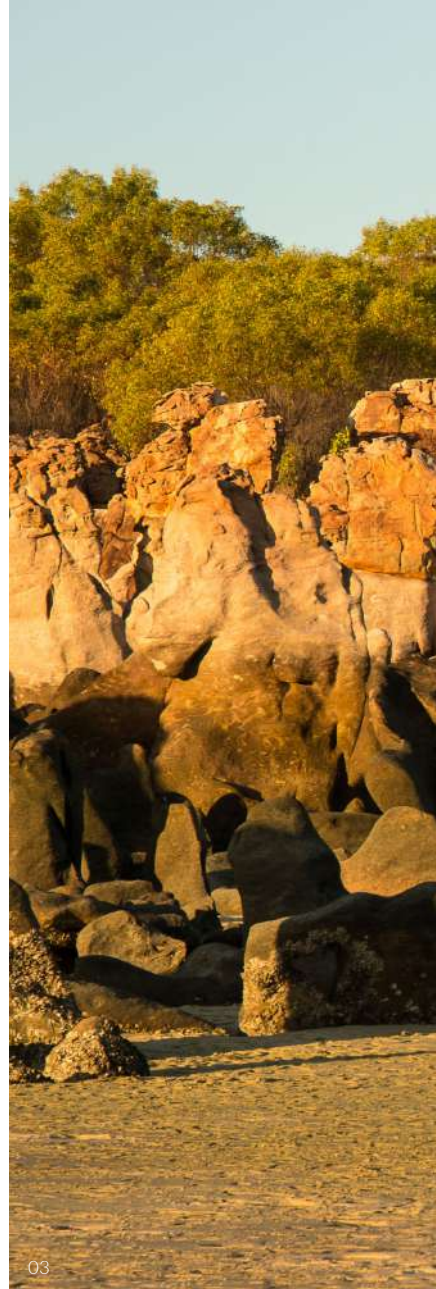
With such varying weather patterns and terrain, the Kimberley possesses uniquely adaptive and exceptionally beautiful flora. Venture to this rugged wilderness and you'll see hills covered in spinifex, ancient livistonia palms and cycads, hardy eucalyptus and labyrinthine mangrove systems.

The boab tree cuts a striking form against some of the Kimberley's harshest environments, its swollen base extending out to spindly branches. The Kakadu plum is another hardy species dotted throughout the region, its fruit used by Traditional Owners as a form of food and medicine for tens of thousands of years. First Nations communities have a deep connection to Country and rich generational knowledge of the plants and animals that inhabit it. They know, for instance, that the sap of native bloodwood trees can be used as antiseptic, and that the bark of a freshwater mangrove is an effective fish poison when crushed.

The estuaries in the Kimberley are some of the most pristine in the world, home to more than 16 species of mangroves and a cornucopia of wildlife. Silvery woollybutt eucalypts and weeping paperbarks soar above bright bauhinias and pindan wattles. Colour explodes across the Kimberley from July to September, leaving the landscape garlanded with vibrant blossoms, from yellow kapok flowers to silky grevilleas. The legendary sticky kurrajong – also known as the Kimberley rose – is another local deciduous species that produces a show-stopping display of red trumpet flowers during the dry season.

Animal instincts

When it comes to fauna, perhaps the most infamous (albeit most sought-after) Kimberley resident is the saltwater crocodile. Growing up to six metres in length and weighing more than a tonne, these mighty predators are at once mesmerising and humbling. These not-so-gentle giants inhabit estuaries, rivers and billabongs throughout the region; meanwhile, the slender-snouted (and significantly smaller) freshwater crocodiles keep to themselves in lakes, rivers and gorges. Lake Argyle is a prime location for spotting this shy species.





01 The Boab tree © Nick Rains

02 Osprey © Mick Fogg

03 Natural drama along the Kimberley coastline © Nick Rains

Cruise into the wild Indian Ocean to spot dugongs and playful bottlenose, spinner and endemic snubfin dolphins. Exploring the protected Lalang-gaddam (Camden Sound) Marine Park is a spiritual experience, especially when the area plays host to around 60,000 humpback whales. Each year, these majestic creatures migrate to the warm waters of the marine park to calve and raise their young.

The meandering waterways of the Kimberley and the ocean that surrounds are teeming with fish, from barramundi and mangrove jack to threadfin salmon, Spanish mackerel and tuna. Head deep

into pristine mangrove forests to see the crimson flashes of flame-backed fiddler crabs and red-headed honeyeaters as they scatter through the mudflats.

It comes as no surprise that birdlife abounds in this region, with keen twitchers visiting in search of vibrant parrots, rare finches and breeding brown boobies. As the light begins to fade, wallabies, dingoes and flying foxes emerge in search of food.

A trip to this truly unique region will offer you a front-row seat to some of nature's most captivating spectacles. Bring your stamina.

EMBRACING THE EARTH

The A-to-Z of ENVIRONMENTALISM

From small ships to using cutting-edge technologies, strict landing protocols and specially trained crew, our commitment to environmental sustainability guide each voyage.

For more than 35 years, PONANT has been taking guests to the planet's most secluded places, where nature reigns supreme. Because of this, we know our responsibilities toward the ecosystems and communities we visit.

To experience spectacular and unforgettable adventures, you have to understand the environment. Every port of call and unique location visited by our fleet must always be left the same way it was found, with minimal impact.

This can be partly achieved by the ship itself: the state-of-the-art technology employed to be as

environmentally conscious as possible. As well as the ethos of our company: a brand-wide awareness of, and regulations around, the use of plastics, for example, or a philosophy for investing in communities and projects that are dedicated to protecting the planet.

A large part of it comes down to the people that we employ: like-minded environmental advocates who are on a mission to educate guests on the ecosystems they visit and, in the process, create a passionate breed of environmental ambassadors.

Here's how PONANT continues to meet (and exceed) sustainability goals.





01 PONANT ships are small and sustainable © Nick Rains 02 Jumba performance on Jar Island © Morgane Monneret

A Assistance software

The modern vessels of the PONANT fleet are equipped with navigation assistance software, Eniram, which guides the best engine settings to limit fuel consumption. In other words, it makes it possible to navigate each ship for better energy efficiency.

B Biodiversity

Ships are equipped with seabed detectors with naturalist guides on the bridge alongside officers to monitor the presence of marine animals. We take great care to cause as little underwater disturbance to wildlife as possible and use an electronic dynamic positioning system so the anchor does not have to be dropped in sensitive marine areas.

C CO² Reduction

We have invested more than €1 billion in building our fleet of eco-friendly small capacity ships, and are dedicated to continuing to reduce CO² emissions across the entire fleet. The first zero emission PONANT vessel will enter service in 2030, with our aim to achieve net zero by 2050.

D Sustainable development

PONANT employs a bespoke Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility Department that promotes responsible tourism with a focus on respecting the environment and Indigenous people of the countries we visit, which is monitored by a steering committee.

E Emissions

PONANT was the first company in the world to have ceased using heavy fuel oil and move to 100 per cent lower-emission, high-grade Low Sulphur Marine Gas Oil. Our sulphur oxide emissions were at 0.05 per cent in 2019, which is 10 times lower than current maritime standards.

F Fountains

Water fountains are on board all common areas of our ships, with stainless-steel water bottles gifted to guests on expedition voyages to use throughout their journey. This is an effective measure to eliminate plastic bottles on all PONANT journeys and limit the presence of single-use plastics carried on board vessels.



03

G Guarantees

PONANT was the first European cruise company to receive the North American Green Marine certificate for our environmental practices. Other awards include Les Palmes du Tourisme Durable, a sustainable tourism prize awarded for the total elimination of heavy fuel oil.

H Hybrid

Le Commandant Charcot (the world's only luxury icebreaker) and *Le Ponant* (our iconic three-masted yacht) have hybrid propeller systems using electric batteries that do not produce emissions in protected areas, at ports or at the quayside.

I Innovation

We continue to explore innovative options for making tourism more sustainable such as developing a new eco-designed expedition ship that will have zero impact on the environment when sailing and navigating.

J Journey

A fleet of small ships, ranging from 16 to 166 staterooms, allows our ships to dock in towns and in ports inaccessible to larger vessels. This guarantees one-of-a-kind and immersive adventures both at sea and on land.

K Kilos

In 2019, PONANT reduced our consumption of single-use plastics by a staggering 10,000 kilograms.

L Liquefied Natural Gas

Le Commandant Charcot is powered by liquefied natural gas, which reduces carbon emissions by 25 per cent, nitrogen oxide emissions by 85 per cent and fine particle emissions by 95 per cent.

M Motors

Ships in our Explorer fleet are equipped with the latest electric engines, guaranteeing a smooth, energy-efficient journey.

N Nature

PONANT was founded by sailors passionate about oceans. They inspired the creation of the PONANT Foundation in 2018, to support initiatives protecting the oceans and seas and working with Indigenous peoples to conserve precious culture.

O Optimised speed

The annual average speed of our ships is lowered to 11 knots, which ensures each ship uses less fuel, reducing consumption in the process.

P Particles

In 2023, all PONANT ships will be fitted with SCR (Selective Catalytic Reduction) catalytic converters. These reduce fine particle emissions by 70 per cent and nitrogen oxide by 80 per cent.

03 Environmental Officer

© Julien Fabro

04 Reusable waterbottles are given to guests on all PONANT ships.

© Julien Fabro

05 Pristine Prince Frederick Harbour

© Morgane Monneret

05



“PONANT takes care to cause as little underwater disturbance to wildlife as possible.”

Q Quayside connections

Ships in our Explorers fleet, as well as *Le Ponant* and *Le Commandant Charcot*, are fitted with electrical quayside connections that allow them to use the electrical network in ports so as to not produce pollution when moored.

R Recycling

Some 60 per cent of waste produced onboard is recycled; the global rate is 20 per cent. We have our 2023 target set at 85 per cent for recycled waste.

S Sensitive areas

PONANT expedition specialists regularly receive environmental training, and host presentations to share their passion for the protection of sensitive environments with guests.

T Treatment of water

All water discharges generated by our fleet are processed to avoid contamination of the environment, with very low amounts of residual waste.

U Usage

Single use plastics including straws, cups, food containers and laundry bags are banned on all PONANT ships.

V Validate

An ‘environmental officer’ is part of the role of the second officer on board each ship, who is responsible for navigation, safety and the environment. They ensure that all rules and procedures are validated.

W Watts

Using LED bulbs on board our fleet saves 75 per cent in electrical power, consuming much less than the power returned.

X eXperience

With 35 years of experience and a focus on protocols to limit environmental impact, PONANT’s dedicated team ensures respect is paid to the destinations our fleet visits.

Y Young fleet

All PONANT ships have the most advanced equipment and technology to provide the highest levels of environmental sensitivity.

Z Zones

We are passionate about the environments and communities we visit. This appreciation for the world’s fragile and remote ecosystems, and minimising ships’ footprint at all levels, is at the forefront of each voyage.





THE KIMBERLEY IN FOCUS

PONANT Photo Ambassador Nick Rains reveals his favourite moments on assignment in the Kimberley.

“A lot of photography is sheer luck,” says Nick Rains, a highly awarded Queensland-based photographer specialising in landscapes and wildlife. “But it helps if you know where your luck has the best chance of succeeding.” Nick’s referring to the trials often associated with capturing the perfect photo in the Kimberley – or anywhere in the world for that matter. The snap of saltwater croc jaws over a barramundi; the wallop of a whale tail so powerful it casts sea spray metres into the air; the flutter of kingfisher wings; the delicate dance of dragonflies.

On their own, these wildlife moments require skill and patience to capture – and some of that luck Nick talks about. As a PONANT Photo Ambassador Nick is faced with the additional challenge of including ship guests in his images – in a way that is relaxed, natural and unstaged. “It requires you to be constantly ‘on’, and constantly have your wits about you, ready to make a move and press ‘click,’” says Nick.

“I’ve been to the Kimberley many times,” he says. “Both overland and along the coast by sea. While the advanced knowledge this repeat visitation gives me is helpful, as it

allows me to plan ahead, this part of the world is naturally full of unexpected moments. You never know what you’re going to see, or what’s around the corner. You just have to act really quickly when the opportunity arises.”

Nick recalls the time he was out scouting with crew and came across an enormous saltwater crocodile sunning itself on a rock. “We were near King George Falls on an afternoon recce, and cruised into a side canyon. The croc was perfectly positioned on a ledge – but there were no PONANT guests around. We turned our boat around as fast as we could and press-ganged a Zodiac of guests. Thankfully, the saltie was still in place when we got back, and we were able to take some amazing photos. From both a professional and personal perspective, it was very exciting. Everything aligned.”

And it’s not just Nick getting the amazing photos – guests also capture incredible images. “As a PONANT Photo Ambassador, I can add an extra layer to guest knowledge through onboard workshops and lectures, as well as one-on-one discussions,” says Nick.



02

Reason to sing

When it comes to Kimberley highlights, there have been too many to count says Nick. But there was one particular moment that was music to his ears. “On an early-season expedition, the PONANT team organised an opera singer to perform on the deck at dusk. The singing at sunset with those dramatic red rocks as the backdrop... it was epic. When you travel with PONANT there are always welcome surprises,” he says.

“There’s always this extra level of quality and attention to detail.” This also extends to the crew, whom Nick says are flawless. “The expedition staff are particularly amazing. They’re all scientists and full of beans. They’re genuinely interesting people, and love sharing their immense knowledge. This adds a huge level of substance to any expedition, as you’re always learning.”

Wild life

He says it doesn’t matter how many times he visits, he’ll never tire of the Kimberley. “I always look forward to seeing places like Rough Point, where there’s a phenomenal rock-art site and a huge open-air gallery, as well as Freshwater Cove, where the roof is covered in art. You can only reach these places by ship or helicopter, so they’re pretty special.

“I also have a particular fondness for the Hunter River. The ship can get right near the cliffs, so you get this amazing sense of scale from being near the looming red rocks. And of course there’s the King George Falls. Come here early in the season and they’re pumping – I’ve visited when you can’t get within 300 metres of the falls, the cascades are that roaring with power. Like the rest of the Kimberley, it blows you away.”

01 Nick on assignment © Cindy Miller Hopkins
02 Immense Kimberley cliffs © Nick Rains
03 Nick Rains in a Zodiac at Horizontal Falls.



03

Nick’s tips for budding photographers

1. Make sure you pack lots of memory cards, because you will always take more photos than you think.
2. Always carry a waterproof bag for your camera – one little splash can ruin your holiday.
3. Be aware of the Kimberley humidity. Your ship is air-conditioned, so when you take your camera outside, it will fog up... and take about 45 minutes to de-fog. There are solutions, like leaving your camera in a bag on your balcony when moored, or in your bathroom, or using a hair-dryer to help de-fog.

MONTGOMERY REEF

The world's largest in-shore reef system



There are few words that can capture the experience of watching the world's largest in-shore reef system, Montgomery Reef, emerge from the depths below. Some might liken it to a scene from a fantastical science fiction film, but this incredible tidal phenomenon takes place twice daily, during spring tides.

Formed some 1.8 billion years ago and spanning almost 400 square kilometres, Montgomery Reef is nestled in Collier Bay, part of Lalang-gaddam Marine Park.

An expression that resonates while journeying along the Kimberley Coast is "the tides rule unopposed," and this holds true here as well. When the high tide takes hold, Montgomery Reef is completely submerged, leaving just a handful of sand and rocky islets in view. However, when the tide turns, the sea level can decrease by as much as 10 meters in a span of 6 hours, unveiling the complete reef system previously concealed beneath the ocean.

Given that the water cannot drain away from the platform as rapidly as the receding sea levels, a multitude of waterfalls emerge, forming a spectacle of cascading beauty. These waterfalls create an incessant flow of water into the now exposed riverbed that meanders through the heart of the reef.

Montgomery Reef boasts a vibrant marine ecosystem teeming with an array of fish, sea snakes, sea turtles, and blacktip reef sharks, mostly visible

"However, when the tide turns, the sea level can decrease by as much as 10 meters in a span of 6 hours"

with the outgoing tide. As you embark on your exploration through this aquatic wonderland, keep a keen eye out for these fascinating creatures that grace the reef's intricate tapestry.

Bird enthusiasts also have a place in this oceanic haven. When the sea levels recede and the reef is revealed, marine creatures can become stranded, creating an ideal feeding opportunity. Among the prevalent bird species is the Eastern Reef Egret. Despite their different colours, both the grey and white variations belong to the same species and even interbreed. There's a chance you might be fortunate to observe an Eastern Pacific Osprey, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Pied Oystercatcher, or a Caspian Tern in the vicinity.

Your journey promises remarkable encounters with the abundant and diverse wildlife that call Montgomery Reef home.





INDIGENOUS *awakening*

While natural works of art are in no short supply throughout the Kimberley, its mystique lies in the ancient fragments of history etched upon its landscapes by the oldest continual culture in the world.



“These artworks reveal insights into the country’s Traditional Owners’ deep spiritual connection to the Kimberley region.”

The Kimberley is layered with natural wonders, from the mind-bending Horizontal Falls to Montgomery Reef, which rises from glittering seas as if it were the city of Atlantis itself. But a true highlight of any voyage to Australia’s wild northwest coast is the ancient rock art scattered throughout caves, grottos and escarpments.

There are thought to be more than 100,000 millennia-old rock art sites hidden throughout the Kimberley region. These revered artworks reveal insights into Australia’s rich history and the country’s First Nations Peoples’ deep spiritual connection to the region. Witnessing them on a PONANT expedition is a privilege not to be taken lightly.

Rock art in the Kimberley is characterised by two major traditions: Gwion Gwion, also known as Bradshaw, and Wandjina. While dating these artworks is incredibly difficult, Gwion Gwion-style rock art is thought to be around 12,000 years old. As dating techniques improve and more sites are sampled it is believed that this date may become even earlier.

For perspective, the Egyptian pyramids are just 4,600 years old.

The test of time

The fine brush strokes, earthy tones and precise motifs of these paintings are different to any other Indigenous rock art found in Australia. The Gwion Gwion style depicts graceful figures, adorned with tassels, hair ornaments and sashes. The Wandjina are more abstract in form, depicting the creation spirits marked in ochre.

They decorate significant spiritual sites belonging to the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal People, and represent the seasonal regeneration of the land. Both are a soul-stirring and hugely memorable sight to behold. And both are in abundance.

Guided by our knowledgeable expedition team, you’ll discover the secrets of the Kimberley coastline and bear witness to fascinating pieces of history carved throughout striking ancient landscapes.

After blissful days exploring the coastline punctuated by otherworldly sights, guests can venture ashore to discover rock shelters nestled between the sandstone fragments that line Swift Bay. Here, you’ll uncover perfectly preserved examples of both Wandjina and Gwion Gwion-style art.

Further south, Collier Bay showcases the massive tides that the region is renowned for, as well as many outdoor rock art galleries, including the Wijingarra Bard Bard, or Freshwater Cove. As part of your Kimberley experience, you’ll join a guided walk of this ancient site to observe the complex First Nations culture woven throughout.

Other ancient galleries are scattered throughout the Winyalkan region and across Jar Island. Set like jewels in the glittering Indian Ocean, their pale beaches give way to ochre formations and weathered sandstone, ripe with ancient galleries to explore.

On board a PONANT expedition, you’ll have the honour of beholding these usually inaccessible sites. Whatever remote and rugged corner of the Kimberley you explore, expect it to leave you breathless, spellbound and utterly inspired.

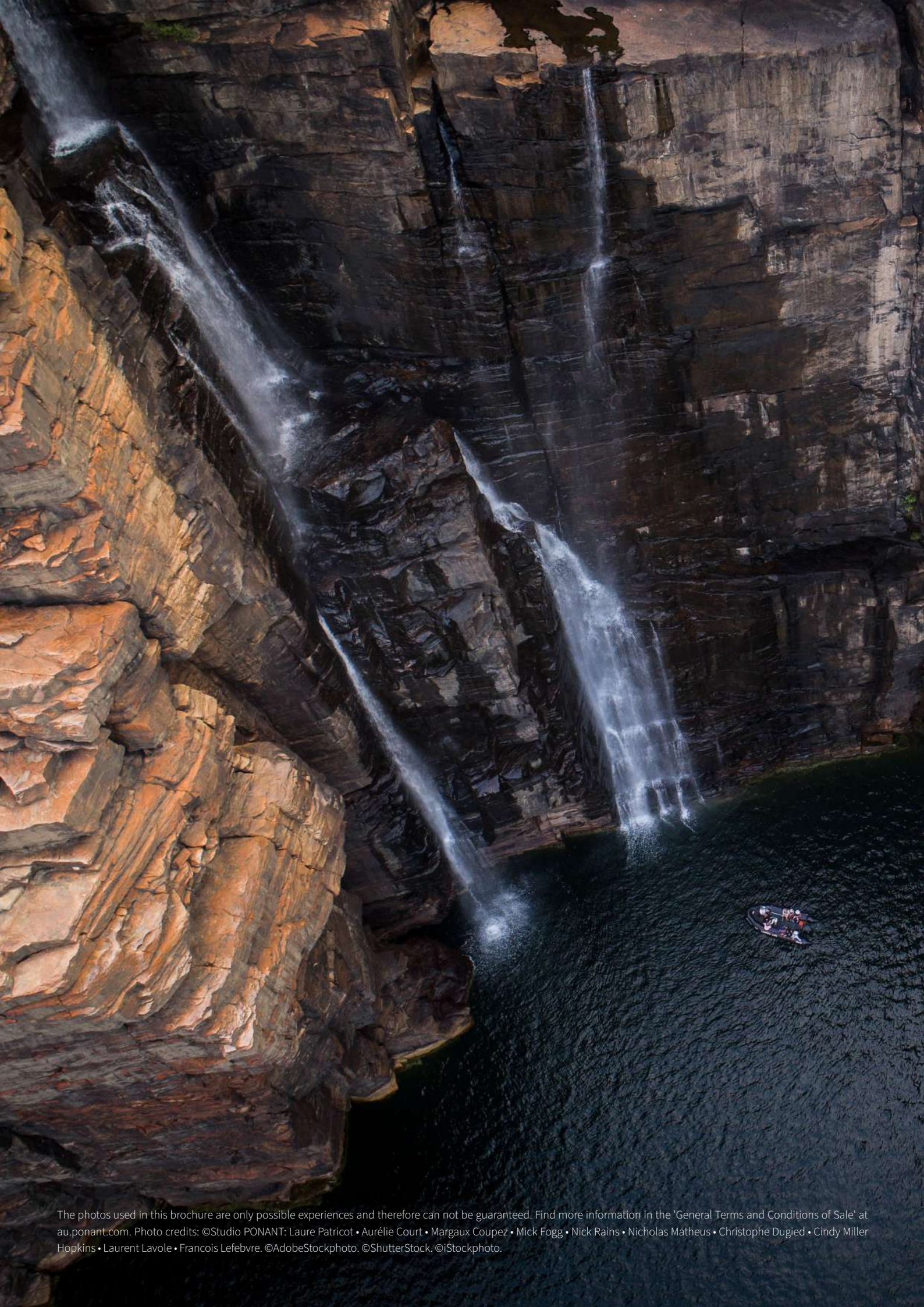
01 Ancient rock art at Freshwater Cove
© Nick Rains

IN THE BAG

Essentials to pack for your next PONANT Kimberley expedition.



- ☐ Small day pack (preferably waterproof) to carry water, photography equipment and other supplies for shore excursions
- ☐ Additional waterproof bag for photography equipment and phone
- ☐ Refillable water bottle
- ☐ Sunhat with brim
- ☐ Swimsuit
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Comfortable, broken-in walking shoes or light hiking boots
- ☐ Wet-landing shoes such as reef walkers
- ☐ Comfortable pants, shorts or fitness gear for walks in warm tropical conditions
- ☐ Long-sleeve shirt or rashie for sun protection. Short-sleeved shirts or tanks for on-board
- ☐ Jumper for cooler evenings on-board
- ☐ Sunscreen, insect repellent, lip balm, hand sanitiser and sunburn relief products
- ☐ Journal and pen
- ☐ Hiking sticks for navigating uneven surfaces on shore
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Camera with battery charger, spare battery and memory cards
- ☐ Lightweight rain jacket
- ☐ Formal attire for captain's evening
- ☐ A good book
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Personal toiletries



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