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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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Points to Note

1. Camp fees are \$3.00 first two persons, 50c per person thereafter. Portable generators can be used in the prescribed area between 8.00 a.m. and 9.00 p.m.
2. The Department of Conservation and Land Management operates boat tours for the benefit of visitors to the Park. Boat tours depart twice daily, 9.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.
Fee, Adults \$3.00—Children \$1.00.
Tickets available 15 minutes before departure. Trip lasts 2 hours.
3. Launching fee for private boats \$2.00 Please check on boat restrictions before launching.
4. Petrol and provisions are available at Fitzroy Crossing (open 7 days a week but check on trading times locally).
5. "Portagas" is available from the Fitzroy Crossing Road House.
6. There are public mechanics at Fitzroy Crossing. The Ranger may be able to arrange assistance.
7. The campsite and boat trip are usually operated during the dry season from April to October.
8. To avoid causing inconvenience and discomfort to other visitors domestic animals are not permitted in National Parks.

Where to Stay

There is an attractive camping area in the National Park. On arrival please find your own camp site within this area. Caravans are welcome, but please do not expect normal caravan site facilities. Because of the annual flooding the facilities are temporary and are usually only available between the months of April to November each year.

Accommodation is available in motel units at the Crossing Inn, Fitzroy Crossing. It is advisable to book ahead (Tel: (091) 915080). Reservations can be made through the Western Australian Government Travel Centre, 772 Hay Street, Perth. Tel: 321 2471 Telex "Westour" AA93030.

The Sanctuary

Geikie Gorge is very special. We want you to enjoy all the activities appropriate to a National Park. At the same time we want to preserve the wild nature and pristine beauty of the area for all time. For this reason we have declared a sanctuary on both banks of the river. This means that it is not permissible for anyone to set foot within 200 m of either bank except the western bank from the southern boundary to the beginning of the west wall of the Gorge.

Swimming

This is an excellent way to cool off, but please remember that the eastern bank is a sanctuary.

Walking

The walk along the west bank to the west wall is most rewarding. Take your camera to catch the reflections as the sun is setting. Most of the rest of the park is rugged and inhospitable to walkers.

Please take particular note of the following points that apply to ALL NATIONAL PARKS in Western Australia.

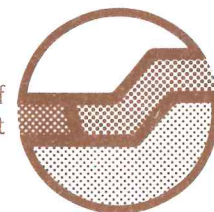
1. Please exercise caution in natural environments — your safety is your responsibility.
2. Fire should be confined to the use of portable stoves or the barbecues provided. Open fires are dangerous. Always keep an eye on any fire or stove when it is alight.
3. All vehicles are required to remain on approved tracks, as shown on this brochure, or indicated by directional signs. All vehicles in the park are required to be licensed and to comply with the requirements of the Road Traffic Act.
4. All native plants and wildlife are protected, and therefore no firearms or domestic animals are permitted in the park, so please, no dogs.

For further information

Ranger in charge
Geikie Gorge National Park
Fitzroy Crossing
W.A 6765
Tel: (091) 915030

Regional Manager
Department of Conservation and Land Management
Konkerberry Drive
Kununurra
W.A 6743
Tel: (091) 681211

Department of
Conservation and Land Management



Geikie Gorge National Park

Geikie Gorge



Geikie Gorge National Park

Geikie Gorge National Park is situated 21 km north-east of Fitzroy Crossing where the Fitzroy River has cut a gorge through the limestone formations of the Geikie and Oscar Ranges. These Ranges are part of a fossilised coral reef that once ran around what is now the Kimberley area in the north of Western Australia. The Park is relatively small, just 8 km long and 3.2 km wide (3136 ha). The Fitzroy River flows through its gorge down the centre of the Park.

The Fitzroy River beginning in the Hann Range and winding over 1000 km to the Indian Ocean just south of Derby, drains an area of 88 980 sq. km (slightly larger than half the State of Victoria). The average annual rainfall over the catchment area varies from 300 mm to 700 mm giving the Fitzroy a discharge rate of 29 000 cubic metres per second or the capacity to fill the Canning Dam in less than 20 minutes.

During the wet season the river rises in the gorge by approximately 16.5 m, inundating the camping area with 7 m of water (The high water line can be seen on the faces of the gorge). However, in the dry season the river ceases to flow and transforms itself into a series of beautiful water holes.

The best time to visit the Kimberley is during the 'dry' season, from April to November, when the days are clear but hot and the nights are cool.

Geology

Geikie Gorge was named in 1883 in honour of the renowned British geologist, Sir Archibald Geikie, by Edward Hardman, the first geologist to examine the Kimberley District. It is indeed appropriate that the gorge should bear the name of a geologist, as it is cut through a remarkable fossil barrier reef, which extends along the northern margin of the Canning Basin in front of the King Leopold Ranges. This reef complex grew during the Devonian Period, some 350 million years ago, and it ranks among the best-preserved fossil reefs in the world.

The limestone ranges forming the ancient barrier reef wind across the countryside for some 300 km between Napier Downs and Christmas Creek Stations. The ranges stand some 50 to 100 m above the surrounding plains, essentially reproducing the original reef topography of Devonian times.

The reefs were constructed by various lime-secreting and binding organisms that had the ability to build wave-resistant limestone platforms. The main reef builders were calcareous algae, stromatoporoids and corals in that order of importance. Modern reefs are constructed mainly by corals and calcareous algae, but in these Devonian reefs corals were subordinate to stromatoporoids, a group of colonial organisms (now extinct) which resemble corals in some of their growth forms, but differ in their skeletal structure.

The wave-resistant reef platforms grew close to sea level, rising 200 m or more above the surrounding sea floor. They ranged from small atolls, a few hectares in extent to extensive bodies covering hundreds of square kilometres. Each limestone platform has a narrow massive margin, which formed the original reef rim, and a more extensive well-bedded interior, which marked the shallow platform lagoon. The platforms are flanked by steeply dipping talus slope deposits, which were largely derived by wave and current erosion of the growing platforms. The steep bedding planes in these limestones mark successive talus slopes. The area was slowly subsiding during the Devonian Period, and the reef-building organisms were able to keep pace with this subsidence, thus forming very thick limestone deposits.

Vegetation and Flora

The dense fringe of the riverine forests through Geikie Gorge illustrates the effect of permanent water on the vegetation. In contrast, the surrounding hills are dry with an open savannah vegetation.

The trees along the gorge are mostly cadjeputs (tropical paperbarks) and river gums. Of three species of cadjeput here, the most common and the largest is *Melaleuca leucadendron* which has pendulous branches and long, bright green leaves. Smaller in size is the Silver Cadjeput *Melaleuca argentea* which has silvery foliage. The River Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* is one of the most widespread eucalypts occurring along river banks in the drier regions of all mainland Australian states. Native figs *Ficus*, with smooth, dark green foliage and small, round yellowish fruit also grow in the gorge.

The Freshwater Mangrove *Barringtonia acutangula* is a small tree or shrub along the banks, bearing pendulous sprays of small red flowers. There are also Leichardt Trees *Nauclea coadnata* with dark green shady crowns of large leaves borne in opposite pairs, and round heads of yellow flowers which are followed by rough, spherical fruit.

The common Screw Pine along the river is *Pandanus aquaticus*, a widespread species with clusters of fruit like small pineapples.

Scrambling over trees and shrubs is a passion flower, *Passiflora foetida* with bright green, furry leaves, white flowers with purple on the inner crown and dry but edible fruit. Clumps of a tall grass grow in open areas on the banks. This is the tropical reed *Phragmites karka*.

Fauna

Geikie Gorge abounds in wildlife of all sorts. The Johnston Crocodile (a freshwater species) is common and easily seen as it rests on sandbanks. It is normally a fish eater and is not a danger to man. Other reptiles include tortoises, lizards and snakes.

The fish of the Gorge are most interesting. Among the species present are Sawfish and Stingrays, both of which are usually marine or estuarine, but here they are cut off from the sea.

Another fascinating fish is the Archer Fish, which shoots down insects from foliage above the river with a jet of water. They may be seen in large numbers near the surface of the water where their silver colour, six or seven black marks on the upper side and tapered snout easily identifies them.

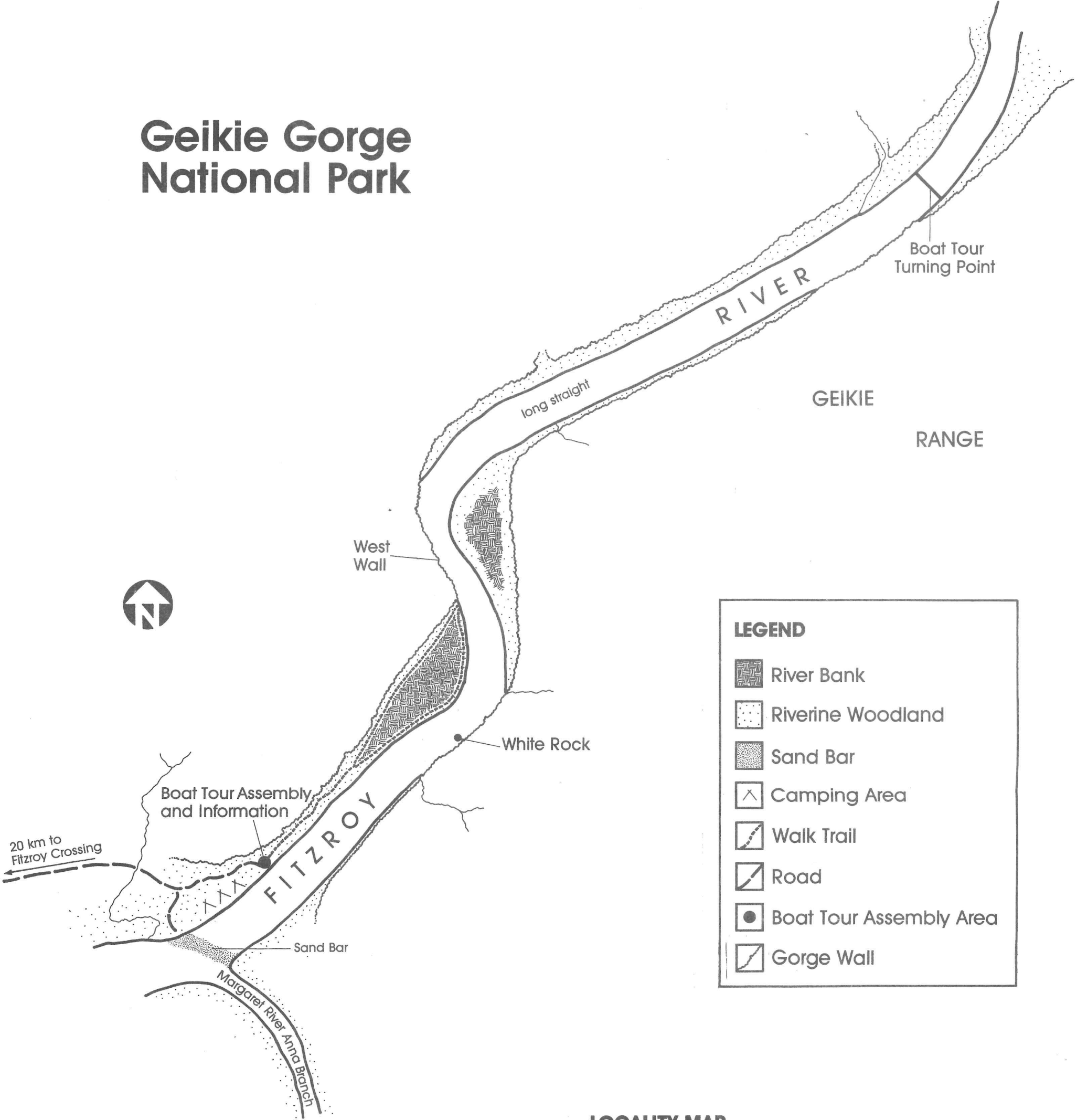
The most common kangaroos are the Agile (or Sandy) Wallabies, usually identifiable by a pale stripe on the flank, but you may see the more heavily built Euro or, if you are very lucky, a Rock Wallaby. There are many more mammals but they are mostly small, nocturnal and unobtrusive.

Birds abound and the Rangers have compiled a list of over 100 species. You can be sure to see Ibis, Herons, Sea Eagles, Darters, Cormorants and many more. Brolgas, Jabirus and Spoonbills have been recorded but to the avid birdwatcher the numerous smaller species will be most rewarding. Space does not permit a full list but these may whet the appetite — Lilac-crowned Wrens, Red-backed Kingfishers, Blue-winged Kookaburras, Great Bower Birds, Red-winged Parrots.

Boat Trips

Twice a day the Department of Conservation and Land Management conducts boat trips through the Gorge. The round trip lasts 2 hours and covers 13 km of one of Australia's most spectacular waterways. It is a highlight of any holiday in the Kimberleys. Because of the narrowness of the Gorge, the disturbance caused to wildlife, and to protect the safety of tourists, the use of private boats is strictly controlled. Privately owned boats may travel up the Gorge behind the tour boat in the afternoon, but may not go in front of it. AT ALL TIMES BOATS ARE RESTRICTED TO A SPEED OF 5 KNOTS. Boats may be launched only at the approved place and a fee is charged for launching. It has been found necessary to limit the number of boats in the water at any one time.

Geikie Gorge National Park



LEGEND

- River Bank
- Riverine Woodland
- Sand Bar
- Camping Area
- Walk Trail
- Road
- Boat Tour Assembly Area
- Gorge Wall

LOCALITY MAP

