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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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# WINDJANA GORGE NATIONAL PARK

Windjana Gorge was gazetted as a national park in November 1971 because of the need to protect and preserve its natural attractions and to offer facilities to its many visitors.

The Park covers over 2,000 hectares, including the Lilimillura Police Station Ruins and is situated 145 kilometres east of Derby and 150 kilometres north west of Fitzroy Crossing.

The main attraction of Windjana is the scenic gorge carved by the Lennard River, through the Napier Range, which exposes the ancient reef system, regarded by geologists as a classic feature of world geology



## CAMPGROUNDS

There are two campgrounds. A campground for tour operators, and those who require generators. The Quiet Campground is for people without generators. Both campgrounds have showers, flushing toilets, drinking water and fireplaces. Firewood is provided by the National Park Rangers, except on days of **very high** or **extreme fire danger**. This information is available from the park ranger or the fire information boards situated at the entrance to the campgrounds.

## THINGS TO DO

A short walk of about 500 metres takes you to Bandingan Rock. As you make your way you will be able to see a fossil nautiloid, a type of prehistoric crustacean embedded in the limestone wall.

Green-tree ants build their nests in the canopies of the River Figs and Archer Fish wait along the river bank for insects on which they prey.

In the pool around Bandingan Rock there is a resident population of over 70 Freshwater Crocodiles. These animals **do bite** so swimming is **not recommended**, but if you choose to, **do so at your own risk**.

Continuing through the gorge you will pass a colony of Fruit Bats or Black Flying Foxes noisily roosting in the trees along the river banks. Passing the "classic face" you will eventually come to the end of the gorge opening onto the savannah plains, about 3.5 kilometres from the entrance.

The gorge is an ideal place for photography, birdwatching, walking or relaxing, particularly in the late afternoon when the gorge walls are reflected in the water.

To return you will need to retrace your steps.

The "Savannah Walk" takes you close to the southern side of the Napier Range and is also an alternative path from the Quiet Campground to the gorge.

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# WINDJANA GORGE NATIONAL PARK

## THE DEVONIAN REEF

Windjana Gorge, Tunnel Creek and Geikie Gorge cut through rugged limestone ranges which form part of Western Australia's Devonian 'Great Barrier Reef'. These areas have been made national parks because of their scientific importance and scenic beauty.

During the Devonian Period, over 350 million years ago, a shallow sea covered a large area southeast of present day Derby. A series of barrier reefs formed along the edge of this sea and extended up to 1,000 kilometres.

Today the reefs are exposed in a series of limestone ranges including the Napier Range, the Oscar Range and the Geikie Range extending for 300 kilometres along the northern rim of the Canning Basin.

## ANCIENT HISTORY

The reefs were built by various lime-secreting organisms such as algae and stromatopores, a group of extinct organisms, which resemble corals in their growth forms, but differ in their internal structure.

Around 250 million years ago the reef was uplifted above the sea level and eroded. The reef was then buried by younger sedimentary rocks. When the whole area began to be lifted and eroded about 20 million years ago, the limestone forming the reef was more resistant to erosion than the overlying rocks. This limestone reef, up to 100 metres high in places now stands above the surrounding plains.

## WINDJANA GORGE

Windjana Gorge is a narrow canyon eroded by the Lennard River which winds for about 3.5 kilometres through the Napier Range. The river flows for only short periods of the year and mainly consists of isolated pools which support Freshwater Crocodiles, fish and bird life.

The river has taken millions of years to erode out the gorge. At one stage river gravel containing the fossil remains of extinct crocodiles and turtles accumulated in a cave 40 metres above the present river level. One of the crocodiles represented among the fossil bones was a giant form about 7 metres long.

## MODERN HISTORY

Two Aboriginal tribes the Unggumi, who called the gorge "Windjana" and the Bunuba who called the gorge "Taley", lived in and around the gorge for thousands of years. Their history and mythology are recorded in art sites and artefacts, and in traditional stories, songs and dances handed down from generation to generation until the present day.

In the late 1800s explorers and pastoralists came to the area with their sheep and cattle. Conflicts developed over the traditional lands and hunting areas of the Aboriginal people. Sheep were speared and Aboriginal people were arrested, chained and walked to Derby, where they worked off their sentences.

Three kilometres east of Windjana are the ruins of Lillimillura Police outpost. In November 1894 this was the site of the beginning of a guerilla war, which lasted almost 3 years.

Jandamarra, or Pigeon as he was also known, was a Bunuba Aboriginal from the Napier and Oscar Ranges. During his early contact with Europeans he became a highly skilled horseman and marksman.

While working with the police as an Aboriginal tracker, Jandamarra was on patrol with Police Constable Richardson in the Napier Range. During this patrol 16 Bunuba people were captured. On the night of 9<sup>th</sup> November 1894, Jandamarra, persuaded by tribal associates shot and killed the Police Constable and set the prisoners free.

The next day Jandamarra and his followers attacked a party of five Europeans who were driving cattle to start a station on Bunuba land. Two of the men were killed in Windjana Gorge. This was the first time guns had been used against Europeans in an organized fashion.

In late 1894 a battle was fought between Jandamarra and his followers and about 30 armed police and settlers in Windjana. Jandamarra was seriously wounded and thought to have died.

The police then embarked on a military style campaign against Aboriginal camps around Fitzroy Crossing, killing many people.

For almost three years Jandamarra fought a guerilla war against the police and white settlers. Jandamarra was killed by another Aboriginal tracker near Tunnel Creek on April 1, 1897.