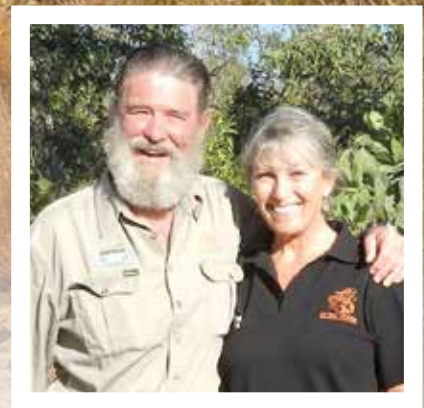
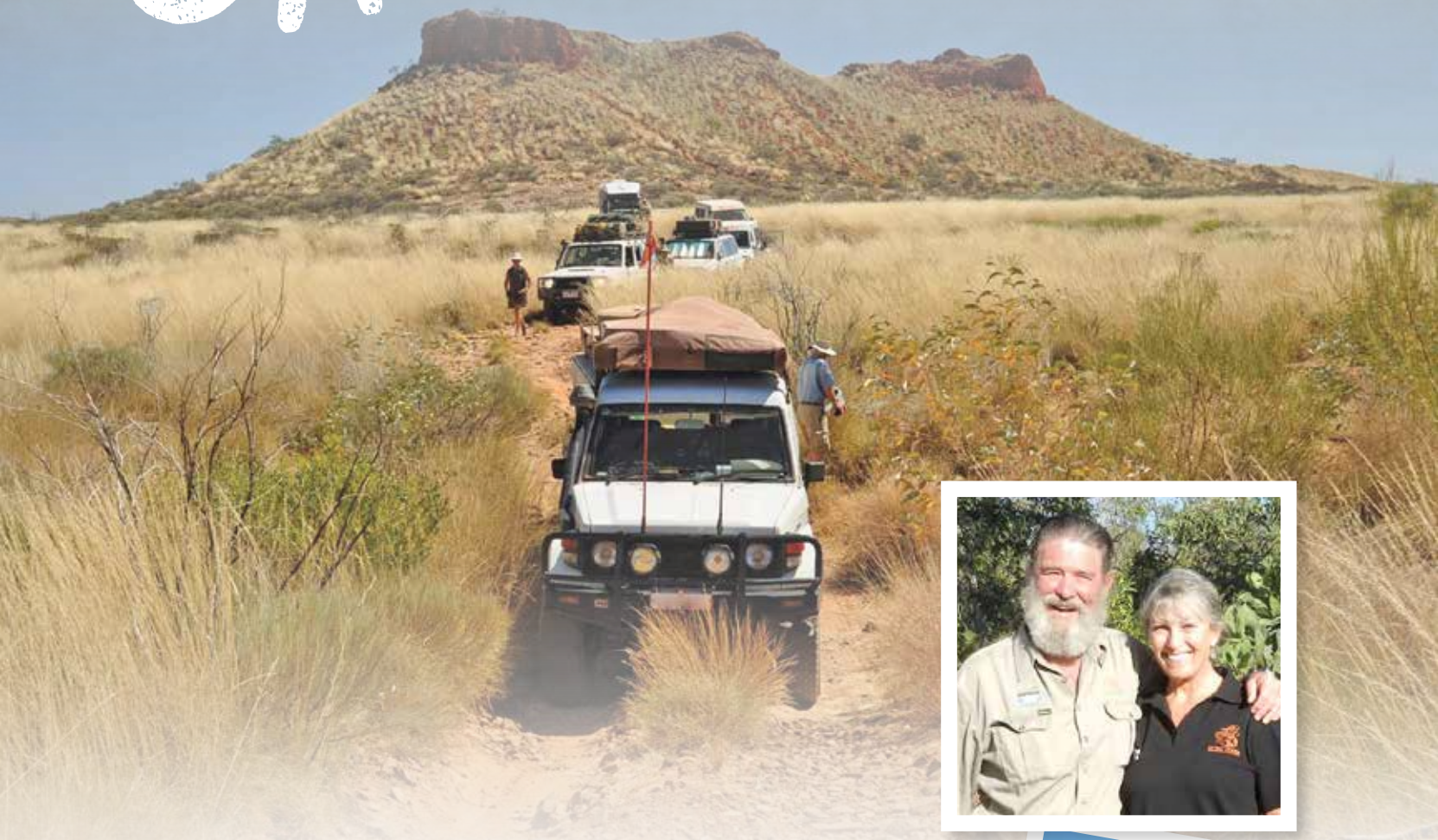


Touched by nature

Global Gypsies

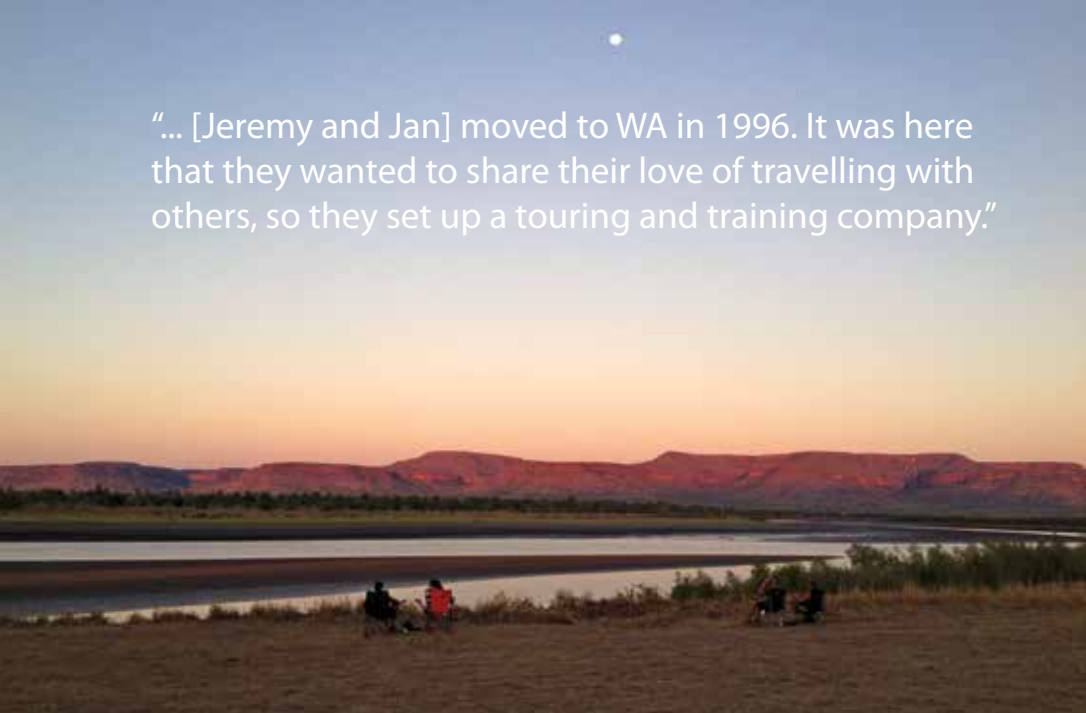


As a qualified mechanic, experienced four-wheel driver, hobby photographer and nature enthusiast, Jeremy Perks is just the type of person you want with you when you're out bush. A consummate bushman, Jeremy and his partner Jan Barrie design and run tours in Western Australia's rugged natural areas and also share their experience with other aspiring tour guides through training courses and a book. At the core of their work is a deep love for the natural environment, and a desire to share it with others in a safe, enriching and sustainable way.

story by Tracy Shea,
photos courtesy of Global Gypsies



“... [Jeremy and Jan] moved to WA in 1996. It was here that they wanted to share their love of travelling with others, so they set up a touring and training company.”



If you ask Jeremy Perks where his favourite place is, his answer will always be the same: “Here”. This is not because he’s indecisive, or not well-travelled, but because he chooses to live in the moment and enjoy the beauty of wherever he goes. And he has an abundance of opportunities to do this, as he leads tours to some of the most stunning and remote places in the world, including the Canning Stock Route and Kennedy Range, Dirk Hartog Island and Rudall River (Karlamilyi National Park) national parks in Western Australia.

GLOBAL GYPSIES

Jeremy and his partner Jan Barrie met in Africa in the 1990s and travelled together throughout the continent working as photojournalists. They led the lives of self-proclaimed ‘global gypsies’ until they moved to WA in 1996. It was here that they wanted to share their love of travelling with others, so they set up a touring and training company. When it came time to name the company, ‘Global Gypsies’ seemed the natural choice.

Since establishing their company, Jeremy and Jan have guided hundreds of clients on trips throughout remote regions of WA and overseas. Their tours are based on a ‘tag-along’ model where people can take their own four-wheel drive and follow in convoy. Jeremy says that people look to his tours for support and security, as some of the remote destinations they travel to

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Main Global Gypsies tours are based on a tag-along model where people take their own four-wheel drive and follow in convoy.

Inset (clockwise from top right) Jeremy Perks and Jan Barrie; exploring the Bungle Bungle Range; enjoying a campfire.

Above Global Gypsies tours travel through spectacular and remote areas of the State.

Above right Exploring the magnificent cave systems of the Kimberley.

Right Even for the well-travelled, WA roads can pose challenges and dangers.



can present challenges as well as dangers. He cites inexperience and unpreparedness as the biggest mistakes people make when they attempt journeys to the outback and says that situations can quickly turn serious. Being part of an organised tour can also provide certainty that the trip will go ahead, where some arrangements between friends and family groups can be less reliable.

Once on the tours, clients can also expect to receive insights and information that Jeremy has gathered over a lifetime of being a naturalist. It is a requirement that vehicles in the tour convoy are fitted with a two-way radio for ongoing communication and so that Jeremy can provide commentary along the way and share his love of, and interest in, the State’s unique plants and animals. Where possible, Global Gypsies also partners

with Aboriginal tour operators so clients receive cultural enrichment. Global Gypsies also partners with DBCA staff to help with fauna monitoring and recovery programs at sites such as Matuwa (ex-Lorna Glen), Perup Wilderness and Dirk Hartog Island.

TRAINING THE GUIDES

In the years since Jeremy and Jan established Global Gypsies, they have regularly been approached by tour guides who were interested in learning how to establish and run a successful business. Recognising an opportunity to contribute to strengthening and growing the tourism industry, Jeremy and Jan developed a training course designed to share the realities of the industry, as well as provide practical skills and tools, methods for



Above Jeremy has a life-long love of the natural world.

Above right Convoys offer people safety and security while travelling to remote areas.



handling group dynamics and ways to prevent and deal with emergencies.

The success of the courses and the feedback from the participants reinforced that tour guides were hungry for high-quality, WA-specific information that they could apply to their business to grow and improve their services. This spurred Jeremy and Jan to formally capture their insights and they wrote *How to be an Award-Winning Tour Guide*.

Since its publication in 2016 the book has received accolades by leading academics, tour operators, professional tour guides and tourism organisations. DBCA Parks and Visitor Services Director Peter Sharp credits the work of Global Gypsies for helping to lift the standard of tour guides who operate in WA's natural areas. In June this year, the department provided all of its licensed tour operators with a copy of the book.

"If the tourism industry continues to strive to provide high-quality services in WA's natural areas, then everybody wins," Peter said.

"In the past 30 years we've seen the industry mature from very humble

beginnings to one that is now delivering high-quality visitor experiences in a very professional and authentically Western Australian manner.

"There are now 413 DBCA-licensed tour operators throughout the State who provide a range of opportunities and experiences for local, interstate and overseas visitors."

According to Peter, tour guides add enormous value to the experiences visitors can have in WA's beautiful parks and reserves.

"Whether you're swimming with whale sharks or humpback whales in Ningaloo Marine Park, helping to count turtle hatchlings on the beach of Cape Range National Park, or discovering the best places to see WA's spectacular wildflowers, tour operators can take you there and show you things you may well miss, or not have the opportunity to see, if you go by yourself," he said.

In recognition of his tireless, and ground-breaking work, and excellence as a tour guide, Jeremy was awarded the 2004 Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism (FACET) Golden Guide Award at the Western Australian Tourism Awards.

Jeremy and Jan's tour guide course, run with assistance from Cherie Toovey, President of Tour Guides WA, has also recently been attended by a number of Aboriginal people who have set themselves up as professional guides delivering unique Aboriginal cultural experiences. Jeremy's

course has given them the confidence and skills they need to launch their own tour guiding business, and this is a great outcome for the tourism industry.

TOURING INTO THE FUTURE

Going forward, Jeremy and Jan will continue to run courses for tour guides and will continue to guide tours throughout WA and overseas. With a 70 to 80 per cent repeat rate among their clients, many who join them for tours become friends as well as clients, and the Global Gypsies acknowledge the unique role they play in guiding their clients through what is sometimes a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And, no doubt Jeremy will continue to make the most of 'here' – wherever that may be.

Tracy Shea is the DBCA Parks and Wildlife Service assistant director policy and planning. She can be contacted on (08) 9219 8755 or by email (tracy.shea@dbca.wa.gov.au).

For more information about *Global Gypsies*, and to buy a copy of *How to be an Award-Winning Tour Guide* visit www.globalgypsies.com.au. For more information about FACET visit www.facet.asn.au.

'Touched by nature' is a feature that tells the stories of people who have used their experiences in nature to enrich the lives of others.

