



## Purnululu National Park

*The towering rocky domes of the Bungle Bungle Range in Purnululu National Park have enchanted humans with their majestic beauty for tens of thousands of years.*

Jaru, Gija and Malngin people of the East Kimberley were recognised as native title holders during an on-Country ceremony in May 2023. They have lived near and among the soaring rock formations for thousands of years, thriving in the surrounding plains and living as one with the ancient landscape.

It wasn't until as recently as the 1980s that this now well-known icon of the outback shot to national fame with its first significant media coverage. This coverage sparked an avalanche of interest—where was this remarkable landform, people asked, and just how did Mother Nature come up with its stunning design?

Main Bungle Bungle Range, Purnululu National Park.

Photo – David Bettini

### GEOLOGICAL ATTRACTION

Today, about 30,000 people travel to this remote part of Australia every year to experience the national park's astounding natural beauty. They are drawn by the wild assortment of gorges, canyons and towering rocky domes.

Still more people visit the area on a scenic flight from within the park, or from Kununurra or Warmun. From the air, you can truly appreciate the beauty and vastness of the range. The beehive-shaped domes soar more than 250 metres into the air and reach up to the horizon in an intricate maze of rusty red rocks. The towering domes change colour, from brown to red, orange and gold, as the sun progresses across the sky. All around, majestic palms grow in striking green contrast to the deep orange of the range's rocks.

The sandstone, which makes up the range's rocky domes, was deposited some 360 million years ago. Over the past 20 million years, the natural forces of rain and

water sculpted the range to the intricate network of domes seen today.

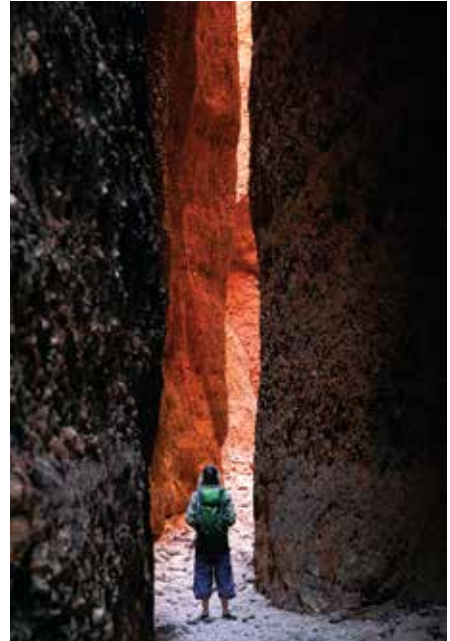
The banded nature of the rocks came about thanks to bacteria known as cyanobacteria or blue-green algae. This dark 'algae' grows on layers of sandstone where moisture accumulates. The orange bands of colour come from different layers of rock, which dry out too quickly for the cyanobacteria to grow.

### WORLD HERITAGE

Purnululu National Park was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2003, meaning 2023 marks 20 years since it was elevated to this distinguished list. Purnululu was listed for its exceptional natural beauty and scientific importance.

The Bungle Bungle beehive-shaped towers are unrivalled in their scale, extent, grandeur and diversity anywhere in the world. The intricate maze of towers is accentuated by sinuous, narrow, sheer-sided gorges lined with majestic *Livistona* palms (*Livistona victoriae*).






 Discover more about Purnululu National Park

Scan this QR code or visit Parks and Wildlife Service's 'LANDSCOPE' playlist on YouTube.



The diversity of landforms and ecosystems throughout the park is representative of the semi-arid landscape and provide a beautiful visual buffer for the Bungle Bungle Range.

The sandstone formations of Purnululu National Park are of great scientific importance as they display, to an exceptional degree, evidence of geomorphic processes of dissolution, weathering and erosion of landforms under a savannah climatic regime.

## EXPERIENCING THE WONDERS

Flying above the range in a plane or helicopter provides a unique perspective of the range's size and beauty.

Alternatively, setting out on foot on one of the park's many hiking trails provides the chance to spot some elusive animal life.

Charming western ring-tailed dragons (*Ctenophorus caudicinctus*) regularly sunbake along the trails and northern nailtail wallabies (*Onychogalea unguifera*) may bound across the rocks. Ghost bats (*Macroderma gigas*) and rockhole frogs (*Litoria meiriana*) are often seen hiding deep within crevices in the rocks.

There is a wide variety of bird life—more than 130 bird species occur here, including rainbow bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) and flocks of budgerigars (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).

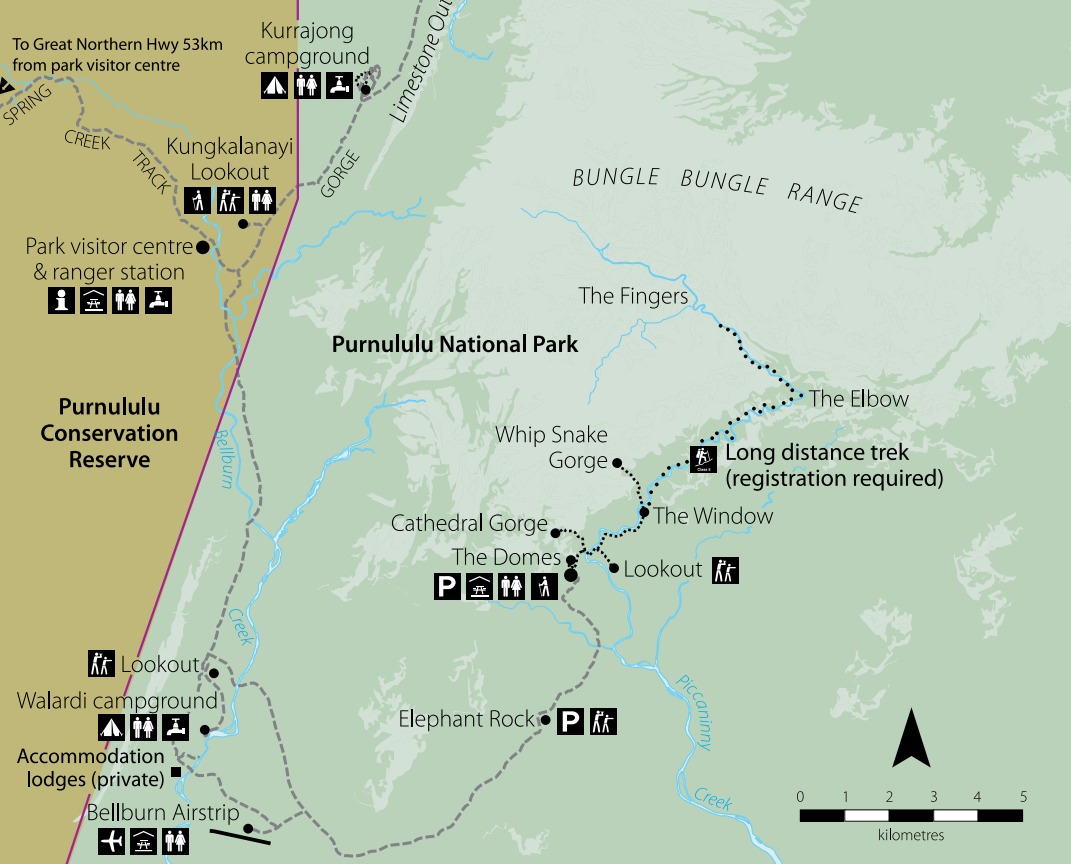
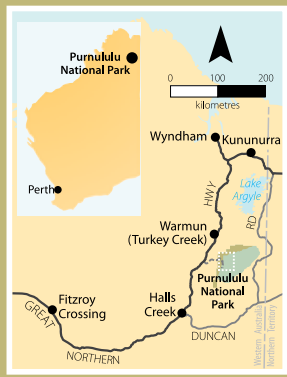
**Top left** Star gazing, Purnululu National Park. Photo – Tourism WA

**Top right** Mini Palms Gorge. Photo – Cliff Winfield

**Above** Walking in Echidna Chasm. Photo – Janine Guenther

**Centre (clockwise from top left)** Purnululu helicopter tours. Photo – HeliSpirit; Guests at the Purnululu Visitor Centre opening. Purnululu Visitor Centre at dusk. Photos – DBCA; Northern nailtail wallaby (*Onychogalea unguifera*). Photo – Marie Lochman; Rainbow bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*). Photo – Sallyanne Cousans

# Parks for people Purnululu National Park



### Legend

- |                         |                        |              |                            |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Bungle Bungle Range     | Four wheel drive track | Airstrip     | Sheltered picnic area      |
| National park           | Walk path              | Parking area | Toilets                    |
| Conservation reserve    | Negotiable route       | Bore water   | Walk trail                 |
| World Heritage boundary | Visitor centre         | Camping area | Long distance trek class 5 |
|                         |                        | Lookout      |                            |

When visiting by vehicle, it's important to take into account the vastness of the landscape and travel times on unsealed roads. It's recommended to stay at least one night in order to travel safely and truly soak up the spirit of this enchanting place. There are two public campgrounds and some private lodges to stay at within the park, though booking ahead is a necessity.

In April 2023, a new state-of-the-art visitor centre was opened thanks to WA and Australian government funding.

The new, larger building was constructed to accommodate growing visitation. It includes a tropical verandah and large, east-facing windows that showcase the spectacular view to the Bungle Bungle Range.

The new visitor centre features innovative ways of interacting and learning about the park, including augmented reality where animals come to life out of artwork and an interactive touchscreen to delve into topics that interest the visitor, like the fauna, flora, geology or history of Purnululu.

## Do it yourself

**Where is it?** The turn-off to the park is 250 kilometres south of Kununurra or 109 kilometres north of Halls Creek.

**Access** via a 53-kilometre, unsealed track. High clearance four-wheel drive vehicles and single axle caravans/campers only.

**Open** only between April and November (weather permitting—always check during shoulder seasons).

**Total area** 239,723 hectares of national park and 79,602 hectares of conservation reserve.

**What to do** Hiking, photography, camping, nature observation, scenic flights.

**Must see sights** Cathedral Gorge, Echidna Chasm.

**Facilities** Camping at Walardi or Kurrajong camps (both sites have toilets). Fuel and supplies available from Warmun, on Great Northern Highway.

**Nearest Parks and Wildlife Service office** Ivanhoe Road, Kununurra (08) 9168 4200.

**Right** Kurrajong Campground.  
Photo – Roxanne Pendreigh/DBCA

**Opposite page**  
**Main** Hikers in Purnululu National Park.  
Photo – Janine Guenther  
**Far right** Walking at Echidna Chasm.  
Photo – Ann Storie





## For your safety



- Walk in the early morning or late afternoon to avoid the hottest part of the day.
- Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, loose clothing, sturdy footwear and apply sunscreen.
- Sip plenty of water—one litre per person, per hour is a good guide.
- Take regular rest stops in the shade to cool down.
- Do not wave at helicopters unless there is an emergency.
- Drones are not permitted in the park.

Purnululu National Park is blessed with an abundance of amazing walk trails that range from short Class 2 walks to more difficult Class 5 trails. Here's a sample of what's on offer.

For more information and to help plan your adventure, visit [exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au)

## Northern walks

### Stonehenge

**Class 2, 520 metres return. Allow 15 minutes.**

A short, leisurely trail over a natural surface with stunning views of the Bungle Bungle Range in the distance. This walk introduces the traditional Aboriginal use of trees, shrubs and grasses.

### Mini Palms

**Class 5, 4.4 kilometres return. Allow 2 hours.**

A moderately challenging walk that follows the Escarpment Trail for one kilometre to the Mini Palms junction. The trail continues with steep slopes, narrow edges and large boulders to climb under, over or squeeze between. Climb the stairs to reach two viewing platforms that are surrounded by Livistona palms and the soaring cliff face of the gorge.

### Echidna Chasm

**Class 4/5, 2 kilometres return. Allow 1 hour.**

The start of the walk is exposed to the sun, along an uneven, dry creek bed lined with Livistona palms. Within the shaded chasm, the gorge walls extend up to 200 metres high and contain narrow sections barely a metre wide in some places. Between 11am and 1pm, Echidna Chasm lights up in brilliant shades of oranges and reds, creating the perfect photo opportunity. Once you reach the boulders, which require three points of contact to scramble over, the trail becomes a Class 5.

## Southern walks

### The Domes

**Class 3, 700 metre loop. Allow 30 minutes.**

This short, uneven loop takes you up close among the beehive domes, where you can clearly see the different layers of the sediment and the protective banding of the (orange-red) iron oxide and (dark grey) cyanobacteria. The trail is ideal for people who are not keen hikers but want to get an insight into this unique landscape.

### Cathedral Gorge

**Class 4, 2 kilometres return. Allow over an hour.**

Follow this meandering, sandy creek bed amongst the towering beehive domes and honeycomb rocks to the iconic natural amphitheatre, Cathedral Gorge. There are some steep steps, a ladder and narrow ledges along the trail.

### The Window

**Class 4, 6 kilometres return. Allow 2 hours.**

Walk along the creek bed amongst the beehive domes and large potholes made by the tumbling stones in the fast-flowing flood waters to a natural window in a sandstone structure, which provides another interesting feature of the Bungle Bungle Range. **Be aware:** the trail is uneven, eroded and exposed to the sun. Please do not climb on the fragile window structure.

