

Expedition Cruising

In Style

WELCOME ABOARD ORION EXPEDITION CRUISES KIMBERLEY EXPEDITION

On board ORION 26 April — 07 May 2006

BROOME - DARWIN

26 April	Broome
27 April	Broome
28 April	Broome
29 April	Raft Point/Montgomery Reef
30 April	Talbot Bay
01 April	Kuri Bay
02 May	Hunter River
03 May	Bigge Island
04 May	Vansittart Bay
05 May	King George River
06 May	At Sea
07 May	Darwin



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CRUISING NEWS

Master:	Sven Gaertner
Staff Captain:	Nikolaos Konoupakis
Chief Engineer:	Yuri Rudenko
Hotel Manager:	Tracy Greiner
Chief Purser:	Cathy Desalvo
Executive Chef:	Marco Bijl
Maitre d':	Ben Wirz
Chief Steward:	Loueven Guevara
Doctor:	Rebecca De Asis
Expedition Leader:	Robin West
Asst. Expedition Leader:	Jarda Versloot
Expedition Lecturer:	Tony Roberts
Fishing Master:	Travis Bailey

Our expedition cruise was replanned because of the possibility of Cyclone Monica hitting Darwin. Instead of joining the Orion in Darwin we had to travel to Broome. It meant long plane flights, leaving home for Brisbane airport shortly after 7am and travelling via Melbourne and Perth to Broome where we arrived at the ship around 8.30pm local time (10.30pm in Brisbane) – it was a long day. But once on board we settled in very quickly. On our first day in Broome we were set to join the Hovercraft scenic tour of the Broome town coastline – but just as we were getting ready an announcement was made that the Hovercraft tour was off. Later we found out that it was cancelled due to mechanical problems.

Instead we settled for an orientation tour of Broome on the shuttle bus. On the way we visited Cable Beach and saw the Camel Train arriving for the Camel Safari rides. Next day we joined the official Broome Discovery Tour which took in the historic Gantheaume Point famous for its ancient dinosaur footprints, the spectacular Cable Beach, the open air cinema, the Japanese Cemetery and stopped for a beer at Maso's Brewery. It was a most interesting and informative tour. The tour operator was well prepared with videos and commentary to supplement this tour to Broome's major attractions. Broome is an interesting and enjoyable place to visit.

A Ladies viewpoint

On reading the brochures of this cruise I knew it would be a little different- even challenging I thought. The size of the vessel is very small, but has to be because of the nature of expedition cruising. "Orion" may be small, but is all class.

I had never envisaged myself sitting on the side of a zodiac and travelling to world heritage listings, or climbing over rocks. A degree of fitness is required for some of the adventures ashore, but the decision to take part or not is up to the individual.

The expedition team were a great bunch! Robin the leader, Jarda the assistant leader, Tony the expedition lecturer and Travis the fisherman were always on hand with information and a friendly smile.

We commenced our cruise in Broome instead of Darwin due to Cyclone Monica. All places visited were marvellous. Broome I especially loved and would return any day. Montgomery Reef was also a magical experience. We spent hours in the zodiacs with our mouths open in excitement and fingers pointing in all directions at another find.

There are many facts to be learnt regarding the places of call and are as diverse as identifying trees that line the mangroves, the age of the rocks in the various areas and interpreting the aboriginal art.

The beauty of the area is spectacular. Life on board the ship is different as compared to 'larger cruise ships'. No big glitzy stage shows and

days full of on board activities, instead you are out and about taking in nature in all her glory and learning at the same time. One hour before the evening meal a recap of the days adventure and a briefing for the following day took place.

The food is sumptuous, everything you come to expect from a five star rating ship. At dinner an alternative menu is offered from Serge Dansereau from the "Bathers' Pavilion Restaurant at Bondi.

The stateroom was large, comfortable and extremely well appointed.

"Special Surprises" are arranged during or on arrival back at the ship after most outings. The Captain also waits on the Marina Deck for his flock to return.

I went fishing for the first time and almost landed a big one – a queen fish. GT (giant trevally), queen fish, baby sharks and sweet lip were prevalent in the area. Two tours are arranged most days on the Bee Kay with the very patient Travis in charge. Four guests participate each time.

The cruise was a real experience. I loved the area so much I purchased a number of books on the pearling industry and history of the region. I would revisit anytime – the sooner the better!

KT



Cable Beach



Camel Train



The fishing boat "Bee Kay"



Executive Chef and Captain

Morning - Raft Point

Today we were introduced to travel by zodiac. From 9.30am a continuous zodiac shuttle journeyed to Raft Island for a wet landing – that meant getting your feet wet as you leave the zodiac. As we joined the “rubber duckie” and started our journey I exclaimed to myself as I moved and jerked sideways and backwards and forwards – “Bugger! What am I doing here?” But quickly those thoughts passed as I grooved my rear end into the side of the zodiac and found a thick rope by which to balance. The journey became quiet entrancing and enjoyable with splashes of cool water and a fresh breeze. In no time we were at Raft Point. The reason for the visit was to see rock art. It meant a fairly strenuous climb of one hour uphill over rocky uneven ground with several locations that involve scrambling over rocks up to a saddle of rock which formed an outdoor Aboriginal art gallery. The rock art presented an account of the mythical Wandjinas on a ‘Great Fish Chase’. One of

the Wandjina galleries was easily accessed once you reached the top of the hill; another was a little more difficult to access. Images of the Wandjina spirits with their distinctive haloes and dugong, crocodiles, fish and snakes were seen.

A number of the guests stayed on the beach and were able to return to the ship when they wanted to.



Orion Expedition Cruising In Style

Raft Point and its 188 metre high bluff juts out into the entrance of Doubtful Bay. It was so named because the local Aboriginals were observed using rafts.



Whilst we lunched on deck the Orion sailed for Montgomery Reef.

Afternoon – Montgomery Reef

The tidal movements in the Kimberley are massive, in fact the Kimberley has the third largest tidal range of anywhere on the planet. Montgomery Reef is a spectacular example of the impact of these tides, with ranges up to 12 metres.

Our afternoon journey took us to the reef to witness this great phenomenon. This time we rode in style with seats in the zodiac. Arriving at high tide, there is very little evidence, however as the tide drops, a raging torrent of water, cascading off the top of the reef, erupts as miles of surrounding reef appears to slowly rise out of the ocean. This happens because the tide drops faster than the water trapped on the broad, flat top of the reef can escape. We journeyed around the

reef and moved into a channel in the reef as the water cascaded down on either side. The waters around the reef edge are rich in marine life. We saw a large turtle on the reef, estimated to be some 80 years old.

On our journey back to the ship at dusk we came across a sandy island that had been covered by water on our outward journey. We could see an umbrella, table and people. It was a surprise for us as we stopped by and were greeted with a special cocktail by ship’s crew, who waded out to us with flutes on a silver tray. A magnificent sunset accompanied us as on our trip back to the Orion.



Morning - Talbot Bay

Talbot Bay is located within the King Leopold Mobile Zone. Approximately 1,800million years ago the Kimberley continent collided with the Australian land mass. The ensuing collision caused a massive heating along the boundaries of contact — in effect, the Kimberley land mass became welded to Australia and thus the Kimberley region of Australia was created. This caused a great deal of folding and buckling of the sedimentary rocks along the welded boundaries (including the King Leopold and Halls Creek Mobile Zones). These geological movements have created some of the most stunning scenery along the whole of the Kimberley coast. Talbot Bay is the site of the Horizontal Waterfalls, which lie about 32 km to the east of Cockatoo Island in the Buccaneer Archipelago. The effect of the waterfalls is created by the rapid tidal fall on the ocean-side of gaps in the sandstone cliffs. Waters on the inland side of the gaps cannot escape fast enough and so a

“horizontal waterfall” is created by the cascades, with water levels differing sometimes by several meters on either side of the gaps. The gaps themselves were once layers of siltstone in the strata of the sedimentary rock. Turned vertically during the geological movements mentioned above, the soft layers of siltstone eroded away between harder layers of rock, leaving narrow gaps in the sandstone walls. It is through these gaps that tide movements push sea water to create the Horizontal Waterfalls. Talbot Bay is also home to another of the Paspaley group’s pearl farming operations and the floating lines holding hundreds of pearl shells are visible.



This morning we travelled by Zodiac for three hours to witness the tidal phenomena of the Horizontal Waterfalls. During our adventure we were surrounded by the stunning sandstone canyons of the nearby gorges as we travelled along the Bay. The Zodiac excursion was timed to coincide with the



tidal movement through the gaps where the horizontal waterfalls are created. We were able to zoom through the gap and return before the current became too strong.

Afternoon - Kuri Bay

The pristine waters of the Kimberley not only support a rich diversity of wildlife and corals, but are also a perfect cultivating ground for pearls. The Paspaley family have been involved in the pearling industry in this part of Australia for over 70 years and are justifiably proud of the treasures they produce. Orion anchored close to the Paspaley pearling base in Kuri Bay so that the guests could venture ashore for an intriguing look at this fascinating industry. Kuri Bay is named after Mr Kuribayashi who was the principal of the first pearl farm in the Kimberley, a joint venture between Australia and Japan, which eventually became part of the Paspaley operation. Today the Paspaley name is known around the world as the producers of the world’s finest quality pearls. The mother-of-pearl shell initially drove Western Australia’s pearling industry which supplied up to 70 per cent of global demand for the shell, mostly for use as

buttons. Following the boom years in the 1930’s, the invention of the plastic button changed Australia’s pearling industry forever, the pearling fleets were abandoned with many of the traditional luggers simply left to rot on beaches up and down the coast. Nicholas Paspaley, however, was determined to secure the future of his growing pearling business and inspired by the success that the Japanese had enjoyed with culturing pearls, he began producing South Sea pearls that could match, if not exceed the quality of the rare natural pearls.



A lesser known feature of Kuri Bay is a large school of Tawny Nurse Sharks, also known as Sleepy Sharks, who greet the Orion on each visit.



After an enjoyable lunch on deck we journeyed ashore for a unique opportunity to visit this working pearl farm and to learn more about this secretive industry. We listened to an informative talk on the venture and witnessed an exclusive pearl shell opening, plus the opportunity to touch and feel the pearl extracted from the shell plus taste the meat from the oyster shell.



2 May

Morning - Mitchell Falls

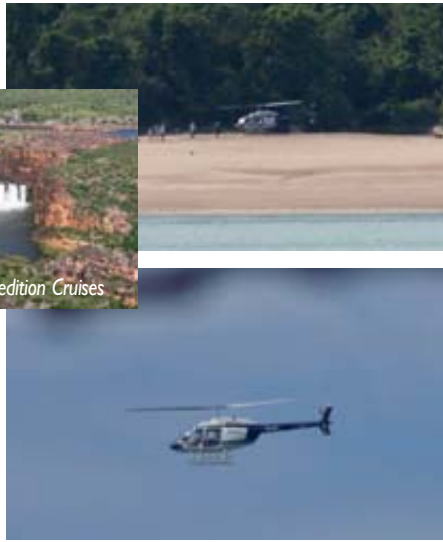
Mitchell River National Park is one of the Kimberley's two newest national parks. The park lies in some of the most remote and inaccessible country in Australia. It is about 350 km north-east of Derby, 270 km north-west of Wyndham. The park of 115,300 hectares lies in a remote part of the Kimberley and contains some of the region's scenic jewels. The Mitchell River, flowing northwards, drains into Walmsley Bay and Admiralty Gulf, carving gorges and waterfalls into the underlying sandstone, particularly along the margins of the Mitchell Plateau. The fan palm is a conspicuous feature of the vegetation of some parts of the plateau, an elevated laterite-capped plain. This is one of the few places in WA where palms are such a dominant feature. The Mitchell Plateau is one of the most scenic and biologically important areas of the State of Western Australia. Small patches of rainforest grow around the margins of the plateau, where they are protected from fire

and receive additional moisture. Open woodlands of grey box, white gum and other trees and shrubs grow around the valleys and creeks. Pandanus and paperbarks line the watercourses. Up to 50 mammal species, 220 bird species and 86 kinds of reptiles and amphibians may occur in the area, including the saltwater crocodile, death adder, king brown and taipan. The national park is part of the traditional lands of three groups of Aboriginal people. The groups are Worrorra, Wunambal-Gaambera and Ngarinyin.

A number of guests signed up for this optional flight by helicopter to the Mitchell Falls. They were transported to Naturalist's Island to join the chopper for the scenic flight to the falls where they had about an hour for a swim and guided walk.



Photo: Orion Expedition Cruises



Morning & Afternoon - Hunter River

We undertook a three hour Zodiac expedition into the mangrove environment of the Hunter River and its tributaries. The expedition team shared their knowledge as we explored the area keeping a constant lookout for wildlife.

The Hunter River is a dynamic mangrove environment teeming with life. Sea eagles & waders are amongst the regular bird types and there is always a good chance of spotting the Salt Water Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) sunning on the river banks. In fact early explorers spotted so many crocodiles that

one of the main tributaries of the Hunter River was named Porosus Creek after the ancient reptile.



3 May

Data quoted on the places visited came from the information printed in the daily program of events.

Morning - Bigge Island

Bigge Island has a significant place in the Aboriginal culture of the Kimberley region. The island has many art galleries including both the older Gwion Gwion and the more contemporary Wandjina styles of rock art. There are meeting sites and burial caves on the island. However, what sets the Bigge Island art apart from other sites in the Kimberley is the unusual depictions of sailing ships and men with European features, who appear to be smoking pipes, sitting in small row boats. The landing site on Bigge concentrates on the area depicting these controversial images. There has been, and will no doubt continue to be, significant debate as to what these images actually depict. It has been suggested that the ship images and those of its crew and row boats may be Dutch sailors who sailed along Australia's west coast long before Captain Cook landed on the east coast. Others have suggested the images may depict the arrival of Chinese ships on our shores. The Wandjina is the Rain Spirit of the Wunambal, Wororra and Ngarinyin language people — the controller of the "Seasons", the bringer of rain which equals water which equals "life". She is the Woongurr — the Leader — she commands respect and she has great powers. To please her is to thrive — to insult or do wrong is to bring wrath and recompense to the offenders. This is very apparent in the contemporary



Wandjina artwork which is painted today from stories which have been handed down from generation to generation

It was a short zodiac ride to the beach. There were tracks in the sand from crocodiles and

turtles and we saw areas where the turtles had laid and buried their eggs. It was a short walk to the caves, the home to Wandjina and ship art galleries. We walked over some rocky uneven terrain to reach the site of the ancient Aboriginal rock meeting circle.



Late Afternoon Sunset Zodiac Tour

At 3.45pm we left to undertake a Zodiac expedition of approximately 1.5 hours around Bigge Island before landing on a beach to witness the setting of the sun.



Life On Board

Once onboard and settled in you quickly felt that you were on your own special super yacht. The staff were magnificent. At all times you were greeted, usually by name and made to feel at home. The wait staff were always by your side at meal times. They quickly remembered your needs and coffee order — the coffee on board was first class. Kerry asked for a light salad dressing at her first salad order and every time she chose salad the dressing appeared. Top marks.

The selection at meal time was excellent and always a great choice. Dinner on a number of evenings on deck under the stars was so enjoyable and relaxing. After dinner you could adjourn to the lounge to listen to the



fine music of entertainers Hal Weary and Simon York. A highlight of the tour was an evening concert presented by the crew

and hosted by the Hotel Manager Tracy Greiner. The accommodation was spacious, the bathroom of a good size and the bed very comfortable.

It was sad to say farewell as the Captain, Hotel Manager, expedition staff and members of the crew were at the gangway for the shaking of hands and that final goodbye.

It was definitely an expedition cruise in style.

4 May

Morning - Vansittart Bay

Vansittart Bay is a small remote bay of about 30km synonymous with the Truscott air base that was operational during the Second World War. The bay features beaches and aircraft wrecks. The reason for the visit is to view the Gwion Gwion or Bradshaw art found on Jar Island. Jar Island was named by an early survey team who found clay jars on the island. These jars were the same type as those used by the Macassans who would travel down from (what today we know as) Indonesia to the top end of Australia in search of sea cucumbers. According to Aboriginal legend, the art was created by birds. It was said that these birds pecked the rocks until their beaks bled, and then created these fine paintings by using a tail feather and their own blood. The bird said responsible was known as Gwion. The Gwion Gwion art is often called Bradshaw art after Joseph Bradshaw, the first European person to record the style of painting in 1891. Dating the rock art images has proved difficult and controversial. The paintings are so old that no pigment actually remains on the rock surface, so carbon dating is impossible. The composition of the original paints can't be determined, and whatever pigments were used have been locked into the rock itself as shades of Mulberry red, and have become impervious to the elements. In 1996 Grahame Walsh discovered a Bradshaw Painting partly covered by a fossilised Mud Wasp nest, which scientists removed and analysed using a new technique of dating, determining it to be 17,000 + years old. This meant that the painting

underneath the wasp's nest must be older than the nest itself. Some experts are prepared to go even further and say the works are over 50,000 years old, potentially making them some of the oldest depictions of the human form known to man. The Bradshaw figures are symmetrical, mystical & beautifully depicted often with body decorations such as tassels hanging from the arms, legs and waist.

We went ashore by Zodiac to a beach landing on Jar Island. It was a short walk past some fascinating rock formations to the site of the Gwion Gwion art gallery. The walk to the art site was over uneven ground and was relatively easy with only one small rock ledge to negotiate, however the access to the majority of the art was a little difficult and meant scrambling over large boulders and crawling under rock overhangs. The reward was a stunning gallery of this ancient and mystical art form.



Orion

Expedition Cruising In Style



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JUNE 2006

5 May

Morning King George River & Falls

The geologic history of the Kimberley has been turbulent, from volcanic eruptions to major extinction events to ice ages. The Kimberley Craton was formed by the deposition of 1,800 million year old sand and silt onto the floor of a shallow sea on top of an inferred Archean basement. In the northern Kimberley, the Charley, Drysdale, Mitchell, Prince Regent, and other rivers cut deep gorges and waterfalls in the sandstone and volcanic rocks. Around 515 million years ago (Ma), there was a huge outpouring of lava, Antrim basalts, covering 400,000 sq km of the Kimberley and Northern Territory, nearly all, of which, has been eroded. At the edge of the Great Sandy Desert lies the world's second largest meteorite crater from which

meteorite fragments have been recovered. Wolfe Creek meteorite crater was identified in 1947 by geologist Frank Reeves during an aerial survey.



Today was a special highlight of this expedition cruise on the Orion. We journeyed up the King George River in one of the ship's tenders and were spellbound by some of the world's most



spectacular scenery. The King George Falls are the highest single-drop falls in the whole of the Kimberley (80m or 260ft). The spectacular gorges displayed varying degrees of weathering of the sandstone. Some of the guests went by zodiac and took a guided walk up the cliff side to view the falls.



On Board

Each evening around 6.30 guests gathered to meet with the expedition team to review the day's activities, preview the next day, catch up with the latest fishing report (the usual fish stories) and hear interesting news and facts about the region. The presentations were well prepared and supported by digital photos. Other information was posted on the bulletin board to keep you up to date.

Top marks go to the team for their leadership and the way they conducted themselves in looking after the guests and providing that little extra to make our journey so enjoyable.

On the few occasions we had some spare time special lectures were arranged - the captain presented a photo show on the building of the Orion (Captain Gaertner

was in charge of the construction of the vessel), tours were arranged of the Galley, with Executive Chef Marco Bijl, and the Bridge. As well there was a presentation on 'the World of Paspaley Pearls', beauty and fashion talks and a presentation 'From the Grapevine' on food and wine. Tony Roberts presented informative lectures on "What's for Lunch - he explained where our plant food came from and the relationship between the groups of plants that provide us with food and "Herbs, Healing, Hallucination and Hocus Pocus" explaining about plants' secondary metabolites and how humans use them. On our final evening Jarda took us for a trip down memory lane as we watched a digital photo recap of our voyage.

It was first class all the way - It was Expedition Cruising in style. **JT & KT**



On the afternoon of 5 May the Orion sailed for Darwin arriving on the morning of 7 May at 8am.

Our luggage was quickly offloaded and shortly after 9am we disembarked.

Some eight hours later we watched as the Orion sailed out of Darwin bound for Broome.

