



**Sunday Herald Sun  
(Melbourne)**

**Sunday 3/04/2016**

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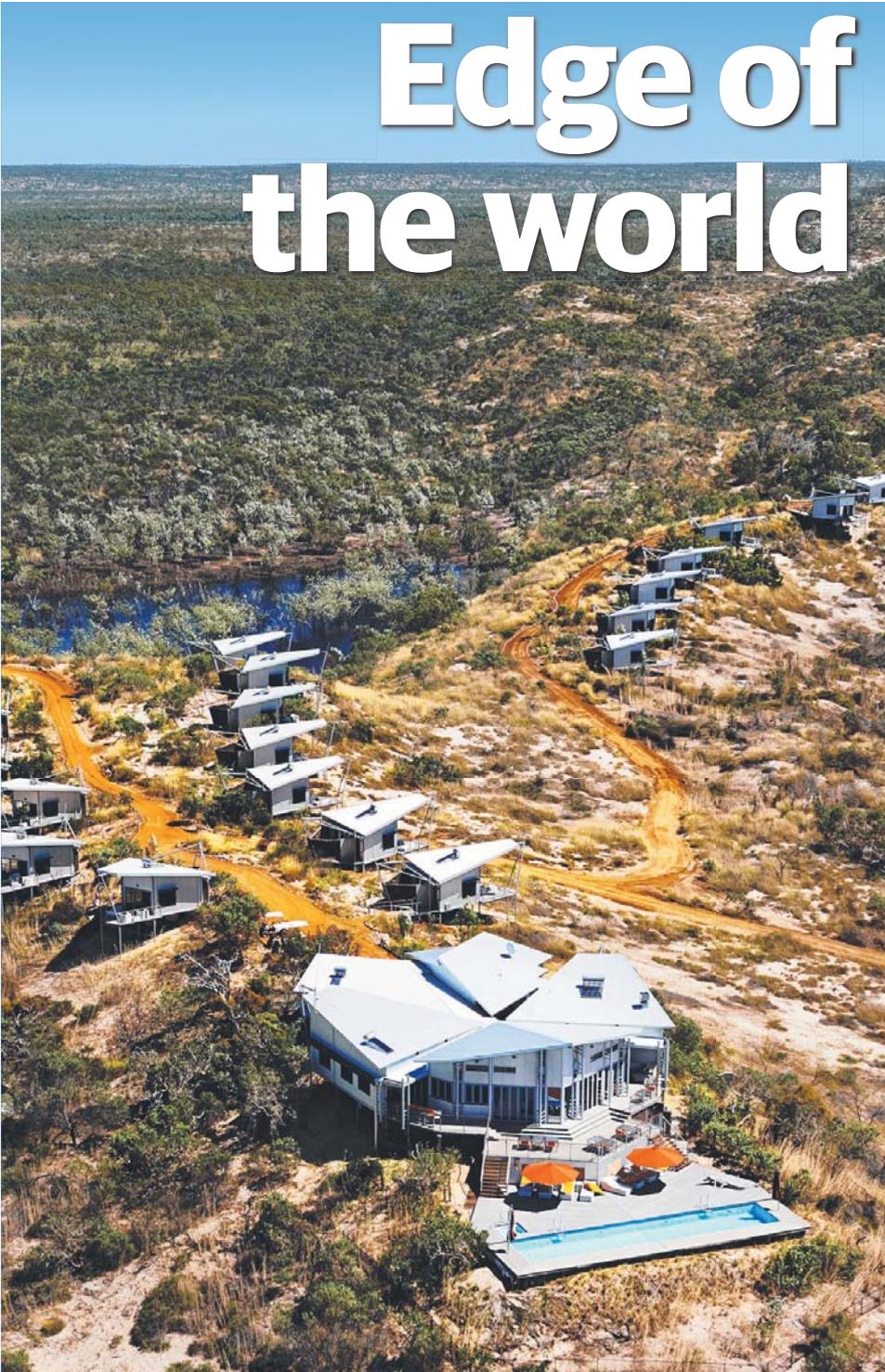
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## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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# Edge of the world



**RELAXING HIDEAWAY:** Berkeley River Lodge offers stunning views and welcome seclusion.



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### Luxury awaits in one of the last true wilderness areas on Earth, writes **Sarah Nicholson**

**T**HE eastern sky is touched by a subtle brush of pre-dawn pink when the first bird breaks the silence and sends a melody across Berkeley River Lodge.

It's as if this morning bird is a sentry – like the man in the mosque calling the faithful to prayer – with the duty of announcing dawn to the squadrons of native birds that live in the Kimberley's coastal dunes.

The call is abrupt, with the plea repeated to wake birds around Berkeley River Lodge's 20 hilltop villas, and in seconds I lose the sentinel in a chorus of chortling kookaburras that marks the start of a new day in this remote corner of northwest Australia.

The arrangement becomes frenzied as light stretches across the seared landscape, with the sun hauling itself above the horizon and throwing a golden glow on the scrawny shrubs and skeletal trees carpeting the sandy hills. There are now so many birds singing I forget the individual performance to appreciate the ensemble.

It's a daily recital, perfected by centuries of evolution and seclusion, but one I'm appreciating in glorious detail for the very first time thanks to this most isolated of Australian destinations.

I'm far from other people with the time to simply listen to nature at sunrise, and it's this inaccessibility and inactivity that lets me appreciate the subtleties of dawn when Mother Nature is at her most remarkable without the light and sound pollution that exists elsewhere.

Berkeley River Lodge sits on the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf where the rocky canyons of the Berkeley River meet the Timor Sea, 150km from Wyndham and a 60-minute flight in a light plane from Kununurra. It's so secluded that air and sea are the only routes into this place with no tracks to arrive by land.

Berkeley River Lodge manager Jennifer Fitzmaurice, who runs the seasonal property with partner Ross Penegar, explains that while "operating in such a remote location requires great organisation skills", the reward is showing guests a corner of Australia that most people never see.

"The chefs need to ensure they have everything ordered and on site as we can't just pop down the shop to collect supplies," she says.

"We produce an outstanding degustation-style menu requiring a lot of pre-planning, and flexibility and quick-thinking is also needed as plans do change ... and that same organisation is required in every department of the lodge. But our guides take guests to some of the most remote and spectacular places in the world and our scenery, the wildlife, and the location itself is the advantage of Berkeley River Lodge with only a select few walking where our guests go.

"The landscape is vivid and colourful, the sunrises and sunsets spectacular, the fishing and activities outstanding with each day better than the last, and you can't top eating your own freshly-caught barramundi for dinner the evening it was caught."

Berkeley River Lodge is a destination where guests can do as much or as little as they desire and activities stretch from soaking in the swimming pool with panoramic views to exploring the wild landscape.

During my visit, I join Ross and Jennifer for a day-long cruise along the Berkeley River that includes bird watching and crocodile spotting, a walk to explore rock pools, and a gourmet picnic in an amphitheatre that becomes a roaring waterfall during the wet season.

When I'm not busy exploring, I find myself standing on the red road to my suite staring at the sparkling blue of the Timor Sea and ochre of the landscape stretching inland, and listening to the sounds of the Outback in this most inaccessible of locations.

**The writer was a guest of Berkeley River Lodge and Tourism Western Australia.**

#### ESCAPE ROUTE

##### **BERKELEY RIVER LODGE**

The lodge is a seasonal property and is closed during the wet season from late October to early March.

See [berkeleyriver.com.au](http://berkeleyriver.com.au)

##### **GETTING THERE**

The property sits on the Kimberley coast with Airnorth flying to Kununurra from Perth, Broome and Darwin and a Kimberley Air Tours plane completing the journey to the Lodge's private airstrip.

See [airnorth.com.au](http://airnorth.com.au)

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