

## The life aquatic

What better place to escape the madding crowd than this quiet, croc-infested corner of the Indian Ocean?

### Destination:

**KIMBERLEY COAST**

**USP:** Unparalleled luxury and privacy in uncharted waters.

**Ideal For:** Lovers of fish, sun and blessed seclusion.

**Cons:** Deadly sea monsters.

## Into the blue.

Ever considered becoming an international narcotics kingpin? Sam Tinson did, following a week cruising the idyllic Kimberley coast aboard the luxury Red Sky At Night yacht.

When your holiday begins with a seaplane flight out to a yacht anchored smack in the middle of a remote island paradise, two things immediately spring to mind: firstly, when you get back to the office your holiday snaps are going to trump everyone else's; secondly, once you're finished gloating, you're going to have to quit your job and become a drugs baron so you can do this sort of thing all the time.

Having said that, it's a pretty safe bet that even Pablo Escobar in his prime didn't have as much fun as we did during our six-day cruise on Red Sky At Night. Forty-two feet of twin-hulled heaven, Red Sky is the five-star boutique hotel of Kimberley Cruises. She carries only four guests at a time (other boats in the region take up to 100), and operates in areas so remote that a flight from Broome in a funky float-equipped Cessna is the only way to get aboard.

The price of the cruise is worth paying for the flight alone. Marvel at the island-studded coast unfolding beneath you; gawp at pods of migrating humpbacks; soil yourself when the smart-arsed pilot says, "Please be sure to wear your lifejackets when we

crash-land in the shark- and crocodile-infested water." And finally, gloat like a bastard when the plane drops you off at Red Sky and all the other passengers get the hump because you're going to spend a week quaffing champers on a luxury yacht, and all they're doing is flying off to look at some waterfalls.

The feeling of utter smugness increases when you get on board to find a spacious carpeted interior, leather upholstery, queen-sized beds and a big swoopy deck that will have you up on the bows doing ridiculous Leonardo DiCaprio *Titanic* poses in no time. No icebergs here, though — just eye-poppingly blue sea, uninhabited islands, reefs, gorges, deserted beaches... and a shed-load of crocodiles. The size of small

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cars, these mud-caked monsters eye you from the bank as you go by like you're a plate of sushi on a restaurant conveyor belt.

Hosts Gay and Graham are the cheeriest couple imaginable (who wouldn't be, with a backyard like theirs?), and after a mango daiquiri or two you'll be wanting them to adopt you. They've spent over six years exploring the Kimberley coast, which is good to know as 80 per cent of the region where Red Sky sails — from the southern limits of the Buccaneer Archipelago to Faraway Bay in the north — is still marked 'Unsurveyed' on marine charts. Compared to this place, the Whitsundays are like an international shipping lane.

Luxury, however, is never far away. If you like world-class gourmet cuisine with your croc-infested wilderness, Gay can do such heavenly things with a fresh mud crab, it makes you wonder why God didn't save time and just make the buggers that way in the first place. Fishing for your supper is par for the course here, and whatever you haul in — be it crab, golden snapper, giant trevally or a prized coral trout — will be on menu that evening. And don't worry if, like yours truly, you've never caught so much as a cold in your life. This is one of the best sea fishing

spots in the world and, short of actually garnishing themselves with lemon and jumping under the grill, the critters couldn't be easier to catch.

Of course, good food is nothing without good wine, and Gay has a knack of whipping out a well-chosen bottle at surprising locations. Be prepared, for instance, to find yourself on the sun-baked shores of a deserted island, prising fresh oysters from the rocks and guzzling them on the spot with a squeeze of lemon and a frosty glass of South Australian Riesling. Or perhaps, as you lounge in a waterfall in a rainforest clearing with kingfishers flitting over your head, she might reach into her cool bag with the magical words, "This is where we find a nice bottle of champagne always goes down well..." Eat your heart out, Escobar. Which reminds me, how much do seaplanes cost these days? **GG**

### Essentials...

**Getting there** | Red Sky At Night (+61 (0) 407 739738; [www.redsky.com.au](http://www.redsky.com.au)) sails from mid-March to early October. Cruises range from the Exploration Cruise (six nights, \$6,940, including transit with Horizontal Falls Adventure Tours to and from Broome) to the Northern Adventure Cruise (12-nights, \$13,125, including transit to and from Kununurra), which includes two nights' accommodation at Bush Camp, Faraway Bay.

Virgin Blue (13 67 89; [www.virginblue.com.au](http://www.virginblue.com.au)) offers regular flights to Broome from Sydney (\$355), Perth (\$215) and Brisbane (\$425).

Alternatively, a Cessna Caravan 605 seaplane ([www.caravan.cessna.com](http://www.caravan.cessna.com)) will set you back around \$2.5m, including floats.

**Where to stay** | In Broome, the Cable Beach Club Resort (08 9192 0400; [www.cablebeachclub.com](http://www.cablebeachclub.com)) offers luxurious suites with flawless decor and furnished verandas that are big enough to land a chopper on, giving this Asian-themed resort the edge over its rivals. Its location, right on Cable Beach, is unbeatable.