

Roaming Remote Rudall River

Article & Images by Phil Bianchi (unless stated otherwise)

Karlamilyi National Park with its ancient ranges, bluffs, peaks and gum-lined water holes is a 4WDriver's heaven. Formerly known as Rudall River National Park, it is located in Western Australia, east of Newman, with the main access route being the north-south track between Telfer and Len Beadell's Talawana Track. For the serious 4WDriver there is so much to see and do.





On the Telfer track, but actually outside the northern end of the park, is Christmas Pool (Wantamata). This gem was found by explorer/surveyor H. Trotman (of Canning Stock Route fame) on Christmas Day in 1896. On a rock face on the northern side of the picturesque pool are the inscribed names of Trotman and others such as HWBT (geologist), Chudleigh (surveyor) and Turcaud, the discoverer of Telfers' gold. On the southern side you'll find faint rock art and petroglyphs, remnants from even earlier inhabitants and explorers. Above the pool are numerous grinding depressions.

Further south on the main track is the 500 metre long impressive Coolbro Pool. This permanent waterhole is a great place to camp and chill out. A few kilometres north of the hand pump (don't rely on it being functional) is a track to the east; taking you through some

of the most breathtaking scenery you could ever imagine. You'll see a maze of buttes, conical hills, breakaways; you'll cross picturesque creek lines and drive along ridge lines and valleys. Returning along the same route will provide you a second chance to again take in the stunning vistas.

Without doubt one of the most visited and picturesque sites in the whole park are Desert Queen Baths. To get here, turn east off the main north-south track at the park boundary, and make your way along a windy and dippy, but pleasant drive of 18 kilometres to the Baths. As this track takes you southeast, through the Broadhurst Range, you'll be spoilt by more breakaways, mesas and conical hills. You'll also have to contend with some sandy and rocky areas and patches of scratchy grevillea that will add 'character lines' to your vehicle.

Clockwise from far left: Hanging Rock | Coolbro Pool



Clockwise from top left: Dinner is served | There are many great tracks to explore in the park | Map of Rudall River | Pool at Desert Queen Baths

A walk up the Baths, past the various waterholes is well worth the effort. As you follow the gorge, the mirror-like pools, flitting birds, red bluffs and towering white gums provide spectacular sights. Allow a minimum of two hours return to complete this rocky and scrambly walk. Once you're back on the north-south track, head south and again you'll be greeted by the ever changing scenery of breakaways and distant purple ranges. When you reach the usually dry, sandy and stoney Rudall River crossing, you're now on your way out of the park.

However, before you reach the river and some three kilometres north, take a westward track and the first part of this track will spoil you by taking you through breathtaking range country. Your first stop is Tjingulatjatjarra Pool; yep that's

its name, some of us call it 'T'-Pool. This is as pretty a pool as you could ever wish to see, with white gums and glass-like refreshing water.

Further west along the track, in the Throssell Range, is Currun Currun Rock Hole. If you're feeling energetic, climb up behind the rock hole and you'll be rewarded with extensive views to the south. Hanging Rock, further to the west, is another spectacular spot. This lone pinnacle rises out of the spinifex plain like an ancient monument, and is just awe inspiring! Returning to the main north-south track, travel south and when meeting the Talawana Track you can exit westward to Newman or eastward to Well 23 on the Canning Stock Route.

If you are planning a trip to the area, please plan thoroughly and have a HF

radio, SPOT, EPIRB or satellite phone for emergencies. A high clearance 4WD is an absolute must. You just can't be under prepared; so plan, plan and plan. The best times to travel are the cooler months from late April to September.

Note distances are vast, and there is nowhere to buy supplies in the park. The nearest places for fuel and basic food stuffs are Panngurr, Jigalong (permit for entry needed). Other options are Newman at the southern end, and Marble Bar, Punmu and Kunawarritji at the northern end. Be aware Telfer, Woddie Woodie and Nifty are closed mining towns, and access is not permitted.

KNP, as we like to call it, is a fantastic place to visit, and I definitely recommend putting it on your bucket list.