They call it the Top End. Encompassing Darwin, Kakadu National Park and Aboriginal-owned Arnhem Land, among other parks, it is one of the toughest destinations in the world. If there’s water, chances are a crocodile’s living in it – unless it’s the sea, in which case expect deadly box jellyfish. Outdoor toilets harbour venomous snakes. In the bush, if the heat doesn’t get you, the feral pigs or water buffalo might. And if, while driving at dusk, you catch a wallaby crossing the road at the wrong time, it’ll go through your windscreen and wind up in the car.

You want adventure? Go to the Top End.

Born and raised in Darwin, with a father who took me on fishing and hunting trips in the bush, I thought there would be little that could surprise me in the Northern Territory. But I have never been to Kakadu (Oz’s most famous national park) or Arnhem Land (three times the size of Belgium and home to beautiful ancient rock paintings), so given the chance to return with a group of friends – fellow Aussies living in the Big Smoke – I take it.

Even though I explored much of the Top End as a child, I know there is so much more my father has seen but never shown me.

My journey into the wild starts from Darwin, where we rent a 4WD and make for Corroboree Camp, part of the Mary River system, where we once went camping as a family. We’d fish in lily-strewn billabongs while crocodiles swam beneath the tin boat, thumping the bottom with their tails. We kids didn’t have to be told twice to stop trailing our hands in the water.

But it turned out that any thoughts of health and safety were fit only for the children: ‘You’ve got to imagine the sheer terror,’ Dad explained, ‘of sitting in a car with mud crabs, which scattered down the driveway in a break for freedom, sending our cattle dog into fits of hysteria. (A mud crab is a beast of a thing, bigger than your head, with claws that can – and often do – break clean the neck of a beer bottle, never mind a finger.)’

Northern exposure
Simone Baird grew up among the creepies, crawlies and crocs of the Northern Territory. But following in the footsteps of her adventurous dad, she realises nothing can prepare you for the Top End.
Wild times: clockwise from above, in the vast flood plain boasts the highest density of crocs in one of the Territory's most famous tourist destinations. The best way to get to Kakadu and Arnhem Land is by flights from Darwin, with a minimum two-night stay – price includes meals, drinks and tours. There are numerous camping sites in Kakadu, ranging in price from free to £6 per adult per night. For environment.gov.au, park KakaduLodges (adventures/camping/travelinfo) some don’t allow alcohol, while others don’t have drinking water. Kakadu Culture Camp (00 61 428 790 048, www.kakaduculturecamp.com) has permanent tent accommodation from £120 per adult child, including dinner.

**Gagudju Crocodile Holiday Inn** (00 61 8 8979 0145, www.gagudju-dreaming.com) in Jabiru shaped like a crocodile and offers double rooms from £101. (B&B. It also offers motel rooms from £100 in the nearby Gagudju Lodge Cooinda.

**TOTAL GUIDE**

**GO INDEPENDENT**

**LORDS SAFARIS**

Lords Safari (00 61 8 8948 2200, www.lords-safaris.com) offers great three- to four-day ‘peek’ tours of Kakadu National Park and Arnhem Land from Darwin, including most meals, camping and tours, from £3,254 for two people, or £3,550 for four. The company can arrange a day tour for small groups to Arnhem Land, in an air-conditioned minivan, for £125, including lunch and afternoon tea.

**WILDERNESS ADVENTURES**

(00 61 8 8912 8238, www.wildernessadventures.com.au) has three-day tours of Kakadu from £1,950 pp, including camping and meals.
Northern Exposure is an American comedy-drama Northern television series about the eccentric residents of a fictional small town in Alaska, that ran on CBS from 1990 to 1995, with a total of 110 episodes. It received a total of 57 award nominations during its five-year run and won 27, including the 1992 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series, two additional Primetime Emmy Awards, four Creative Arts Emmy Awards, and two Golden Globes. Critic John Leonard called Northern Exposure “the best of Northern Exposure. 11K likes. No nonsense quality music news, upcoming gigs and interviews with all your favourite indie mod rock n roll bands. Promotion...Â I am Rachel Brown (founder and owner) of Northern Exposure. A fearless, girl lead team hell-bent on See more.