



Flowers on the track at Baladjie Lake Nature Reserve.

There are moments in your life when you know you are somewhere special, and something special is happening, and you remind yourself to just drink it in and enjoy it. This is one of them. As the rain gets heavier, it starts to run down the rock and off the lip of the cave — a gentle waterfall to look out through. It starts to fall through cracks in the cave, causing curtains and percussion.

And then there's a screechy squawk and we look up to see, high in a wall of rocks tinted by many pastel colours, what looks

like an arched gothic window in a cathedral. And there, behind a curtain of raindrops, is a big bird chick on a ledge. And then another, and then a third — big, grey, fluffy bundles with a “don't mess” look in their eye and a sharp beak. They are hungry, and there's a lot of them to feed. We sit and watch a little and then leave, back out into the rain — we have been sitting near the mother peregrine falcon's “food prep” table, and as she spots us outside, she gives us a good, shrieking telling off, too.



Spotted near Marvel Loch, south of Southern Cross.



An echidna in Baladjie Nature Reserve.



An emu footprint in the salt lake.

fact file

- Drive itineraries and travel planning for the Goldfields and Wheatbelt: australiasgoldenoutback.com.au.
- Baladjie Lake Nature Reserve: dpaw.wa.gov.au.
- Merredin Plaza All Suites: 9041 1755.
- Other Merredin accommodation: merredin.com.

BACK TO MERREDIN

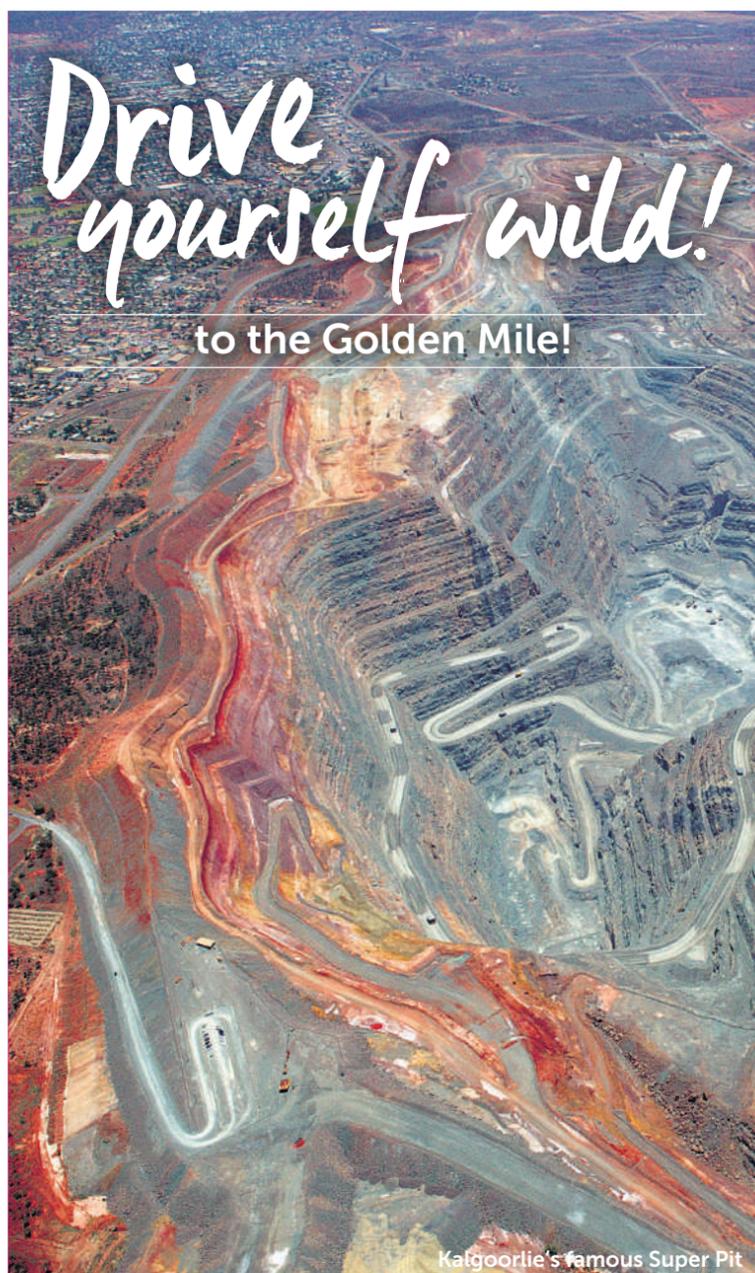
The adventure isn't over. We love camping and had a great camp last night, and we're not afraid of rain, but decide it really is time to go, and slither out of the access road just in time. Just over 100km away, back south and on to Great Eastern Highway, the red sign over the Merredin Plaza All Suites says “open” and we are offered a king-size bed at \$139 or a big suite at \$149. Merredin is within striking distance of rocks and nature reserves and a good base — and for non-campers the Plaza is a comfortable option.

We get up slowly, enjoy the morning drive, stop near Kellerberrin for a picnic, and enjoy the site of Lake Baandee full and turquoise.

By tea time on Sunday, we are home, packed away, and the mud has been washed off the car. But the adventure still isn't over. It's been just a couple of nights away, a mix of camping and country motel, of sun and rain, of wildflowers and granite rocks, and of a resonating half hour in a cave with the rain running off its lip, in the company of squealing peregrine falcons.

All that still shimmers inside me. I feel like I've just come back from the moon.

WestWHEELS Editor Sam Jeremic is always on the lookout for travel-related drive stories, and he's come up with a beauty. Is the new LandRover Discovery really the best SUV in the world — or has it gone soft? See his Travel Club Show video at sevenwesttravelclub.com.au then search Stories, View by Category.



The Goldfields, just waiting to be discovered!

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Drive highlights include

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- **MENZIES'** 51 Antony Gormley sculptures at Lake Ballard
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Purchase a copy of the Golden Quest Discovery Trail guidebook at www.goldenquesttrail.com

For more information contact **Kalgoorlie Boulder Visitor Centre**
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