

# Ode to Our Guide

By Thomas Gengenbach,  
dedicated with many heartfelt thanks to Patrick Barley after having participated in the  
Kimberley Highlights trip (1st – 28th June 2003)

For four weeks in Patrick our trust we placed  
to show us the Kimberleys in all their beauty.  
For four weeks we hiked and we scrambled and raced  
under Patrick's guidance, 'cause this was his duty.

Through gorges, over hills, across creeks and over boulders  
he led us on our winding and difficult way,  
and though this responsibility weighed heavily on his shoulders,  
his confidence and good humour would never falter nor sway.

In the middle of nowhere, no landmarks in sight,  
Anxious questions are asked: "Where are we, Pat, where?"  
But he calms us down, saying: "she'll be right,"  
and pulls out of his pocket the GPS with great care.

He activates the little unit which is black as fresh tar,  
he presses the keys, he juggles the numbers,  
then studies his map and says: "I know where we are,"  
and onwards in high spirits the whole party lumbers.

When the hiking is easy and we're walking on flat ground,  
and the land straight ahead's open, full of milk and honey,  
Pat's sure to take a sharp turn, for the dense scrub he's bound;  
he just wants to make sure we get value for our money.

We've been walking for hours, everyone's hot and sweaty,  
in the sky the sun has reached its highest point,  
everybody's stopped talking, even those known to be chatty,  
until eventually all our voices in a chorus are joined:

“Patrick, our beloved leader, we beg you, oh Pat,  
lead us to a shady place, comfortable and cool,”  
Pat walks around the next corner and, just look at that:  
in amongst the rocks awaits us the most refreshing pool.

Everybody strips quickly, there is no other choice,  
naked bodies race into the water at full throttle.  
Suddenly above the splashing can be heard an angry voice:  
“But I haven’t yet filled my water bottle!”

When the evening comes and the sun moves towards the horizon,  
and the rumbling of empty bellies rolls across the Kimberley range,  
and desperate calls can be heard: “I could eat a whole bison,”  
Patrick undergoes a most remarkable change:

From a guide he’s transformed into a five-star cook,  
moving effortlessly amongst his plastic bag treasures,  
and he conjures up without any advice or book  
for our discerning palates the most delectable pleasures.

We’re all moving closer to where the pots are boiling,  
tense with anticipation, our nerves are strung tautly.  
Someone asks: “Pat, will you need help with your toiling?”  
The answer comes swiftly: “Not yet, but I will shortly.”

Three wonderful courses emerge from the pot,  
and even those who’ve been tired are suddenly in top form.  
There is only one dessert that we never got,  
it’s still in Pat’s backpack, a bag of popcorn!

And now the time has come to say farewell to our guide,  
our hearts full of sorrow, our eyes full of tears,  
he surely is unique amongst guides far and wide,  
so here is to you, Patrick, **THREE TIMES CHEERS!**