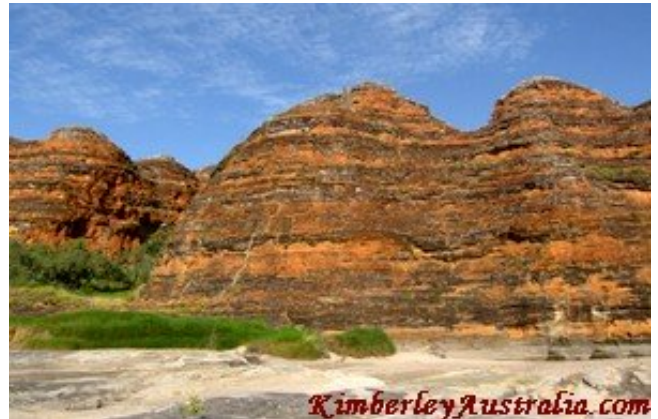


The Geology of the Bungle Bungle Ranges How the characteristic orange and black striped beehive domes of the Bungle Bungles were formed.

The full story of the geology of the [Bungle Bungle](#) range is a bit too much to cover here.

What people usually want to know is how the striped domes were formed, so here goes:

The sandstone formation of the Bungle Bungle ranges is estimated to be 350 million years old, give or take a few millions.



Like the reefs at the Geikie and Windjana gorges the range was formed during the Devonian period. But the Bungle Bungle range isn't part of a reef. It is the sediment of an old river bed. The sediment was laid down in layers, compressed into sandstone and eventually lifted up to form a mountain range.

Originally it was all one big block, with joints and weak areas as a result of the movement. Weathering caused more cracks and the edges wore away in the millions of years of torrential wet season rains, winds, combined with alternating winter freezes and 50 plus degree heat in summer.



The domes are located on the edge of the range. If you fly over the whole range you can see a new area of domes in the making as the erosion continues towards the centre of the massif. Not that we'll see it happen. That will be a few more million years...



[Photo by Brenda](#)

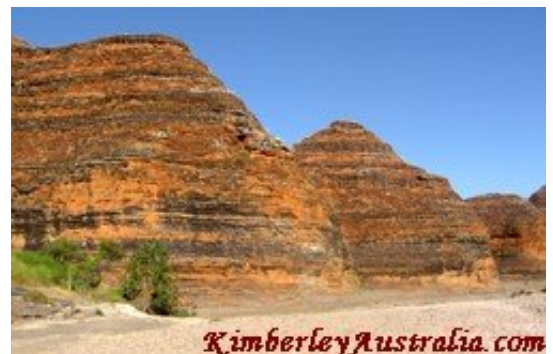
The dark layers in the sediment/rock have a higher clay content and hold the moisture better. They support cyanobacteria (primitive organisms, previously called blue-grey algae). The bacteria only grow on the surface, a few millimetres into the rock. But that's enough to form a protective outer layer and prevent erosion.

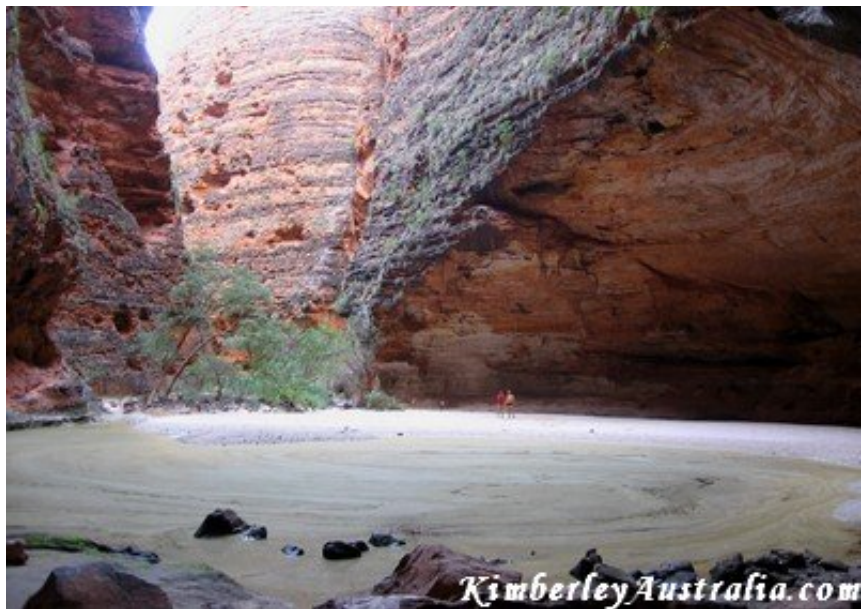
The lighter coloured layers have less clay, are more porous and dry out quickly.

Cyanobacteria can't grow here and without the protective coat the surface is exposed to "rusting".

Oxidisation of the iron in the sandstone gives the range the beautiful orange colour.

The sandstone is very soft and fragile. The raging waters of the wet seasons have washed out wide creeks and deep canyons, steep sided rifts and chasms, not to forget the astounding circular Cathedral Gorge, the result of a massive wet season whirl pool.





Erosion would continue at a much more rapid pace if it wasn't for the easily damaged cyanobacteria coat. This is a very fragile environment, hence you are not allowed to do any climbing or similar. In fact, there are only a few hikes through the range and you are not allowed to leave the paths.

Most of the range is protected from human feet trampling through it. A helicopter flight over it is the best way to understand the geology of the Bungle Bungle Range and to appreciate the sheer scale of it.

Nothing, however, beats walking through the Bungles. Spending a day hiking in Piccaninny Creek is like a day in a different, magical world, on another planet, in another sphere. It's impossible to compare the Bungle Bungle Range to anything you know.

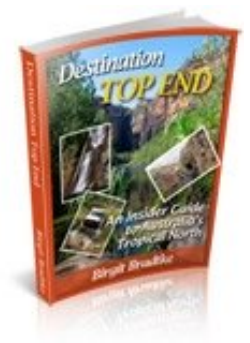
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