



Trapped & helpless

Ashlee-jaide Cork's 4WD got stuck in the East Alligator River, where she was hunted by a 3.5-metre croc.



SA tourist Larry Turner and two others pull Ashlee-jaide from the jaws of death.



AUSSIE MUM'S CROC NIGHT

'I was just seconds from DEATH!'



This young mother was almost eaten alive in a horror NT river crossing reports **AMELIA SAW**

Ashlee-Jaide Cork had driven over this river crossing in Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory, hundreds of times without incident.

So when the mum of two drove into East Alligator River's murky waters that Friday, she had no idea she might not make it to the other side alive.

Roughly 230km east of Darwin, the spot known as Cahills Crossing is notorious as a crocodile feeding area, with locals regularly reporting sightings of deadly "salties" up to 5 metres long.

Ashlee-Jaide was on her way from her home in Jabiru to Gunbalanya, an Aboriginal community where she was

due to pick up some family, when she approached the croc-infested junction at around 10.30am.

She watched a truck safely make its way across the river, but her gut instinct told her to be wary.

"I saw there was a big tide, and I didn't want to cross, but I spoke to one of the guys in the car behind me and he said: 'You'll be right. Just follow the truck.'"

Panicked battle

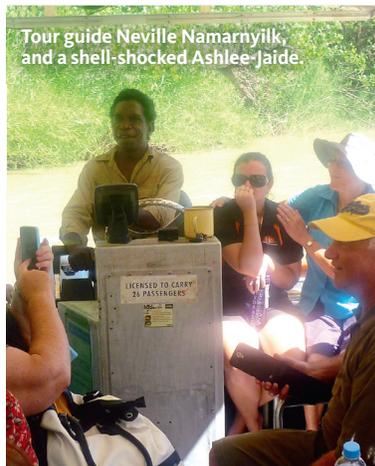
Ashlee-Jaide was about 20m into the 80m crossing when she lost control of the vehicle.

The current pushed her car sideways, leaving it dangling off the edge of the submerged road and the back wheel lodged on a rock.

She turned the wheel frantically, trying to regain

control, but the 4WD's tyres wouldn't grip, free-spinning through the murky torrent.

Soon, her car was filling with water. In a panic, Ashlee-Jaide turned to a group of people



Tour guide Neville Namarnyilk, and a shell-shocked Ashlee-Jaide.

watching on the river's edge.

"I wound my window down and I was making gestures to say 'I'm sinking!'"

But the onlookers had no way of reaching her without putting their own lives at risk. And it wasn't long before sinking was the least of her concerns.

"I'd been sitting there for five minutes when I saw the crocodile beside me. It was 3.5 metres, at least. I couldn't stop shaking. I was terrified."

Ashlee-Jaide knew the higher the water rose around her, the easier it would be for a crocodile

to attack her through the window.

"I was just watching that croc. At one point, it went under the car and I looked at the people on the shore and screamed, 'You need to get me out of here!'"

"I'm not religious, but I remember saying, 'Please, please, if there is a God, you need to get me out of here,'" reflects Ashlee-Jaide, who was terrified she might never see her girls A'leyah, 2, and 5-year-old Latisha again.

Infested with crocs

Local tour guide Neville Namarnyilk, 48, was leading a small boat cruise down the river when he saw Ashlee-Jaide's car, about 100m away.

Neville knew he had to act fast: **"It's a very dangerous spot - at this time of year, there's about 100-200 crocodiles in that river."**

"There's no way you could swim away and make it.

"There were two big crocodiles circling her car. I don't think she had longer than a minute."

Neville sped his boat up to Ashlee-Jaide's car and held it steady, while Larry Turner, 52,

'At one point a 3.5m croc went under the car... I screamed'