

Kakadu Family Walk Special: 24 September - 3 October 2015

One of our guides, Rod Costigan, enjoyed the last family walk he did with his family so much that they decided to come back and do another, with or without clients. This is that trip.

This trip has been designed to run at a slower pace than our other trips to allow families with children to enjoy the Kakadu bush. It takes you into the greatest concentration of permanently flowing creeks we have yet found in Kakadu. You see a variety of landscapes, deep gorges, beautiful swimming pools and cascades as well as a number of little known Aboriginal art sites.



Three generations about to have dinner, first camp.

We begin with a four to six hour, 350 kilometre drive from Darwin. The last 45 kilometres is on a 4WD track which is so rough that it can take over two hours on its own. As there will be some last minute preparations in Darwin that morning, the group will probably arrive fairly late and camp near the vehicles that night.



Swim at first camp



Walking up one of the shady gorges.



The children can seldom resist jumping onto a pool. Their parents almost always join them.

From the parking area, we begin by walking 5km to a campsite within Graveside Gorge where we have our first of many swimming opportunities. The two main gorges at Graveside contain some of the nicest monsoon forest in Kakadu. We usually spend at least a day exploring the gorges, enjoying the shade and relaxing in and around the large pools below the waterfalls at the tops of the gorges. It's a bit of a scramble to get up the gorges but the large, deep pools at the top of the two gorges make it more than worth while. Swims are almost always too much to resist for any member of the family.

Next, we make our way up to the top of Graveside Gorge where a double waterfall drops 80 metres into a pool in the gorge below. From there, we head overland to another branch of Graveside Gorge then across the plateau to Cascades Creek. A short distance downstream we find a small waterfall and the first of many pools and art sites. The walk down the four kilometre gorge is a slow one. There are a few places where you have the choice of edging along narrow rock ledges (close to water level, no big drops), floating your pack through the creek or climbing up and around. (You can waterproof your pack by lining it with two garbage bags, one inside the other. On many trips, some people choose to swim while others choose to climb.)



The pool above the main falls isn't very wide, but it is very deep – and almost irresistible.



The climb out of the gorge is and looks hard, but he was only 8 and he did it unassisted.



As hard as it gets. On this trip an 8 year old had done the same step a few minutes earlier.

The last 500 metres alone often takes two hours or more as the deep pools and a natural water slide are much too inviting to pass by in a rush.

From the bottom of Cascades Creek, we head back down the main valley, camping on the sand near the main Graveside Creek. A relatively flat walk on the final full day brings us

back to the vehicle for the drive back to Darwin.



Age 8 or 80, almost no one we've taken past the slide can resist having at least one go. Most have several.

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after section three)

Overall Level 3.

Terrain Level 2-3. The terrain ranges from open woodland to narrow rainforest gorges. Parts are flat and easy. Other parts require scrambling over river stones of a variety of sizes. There are a few steep, but short climbs. You walk through almost every type of terrain that it is possible to encounter in Kakadu. The leisurely pace makes it easier than many of our other trips.

Little or none of the walking is on a marked trail. If you have never done any off-track walking through moderately rough terrain, nothing we can say can adequately describe the experience. The photos on our website, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au, can give you a partial picture, but they cannot substitute for the real thing. Most of those who have not had any off-track walking experience find it more difficult than those who have done it before.

Anyone who does not regularly (average twice a month) go bushwalking carrying a full pack would benefit from doing some pre-trip training. Do this and you will almost certainly enjoy the trip more than if you do not. The relatively easy nature means that this walk should suit almost anyone who meets our minimum level of fitness.

Climate Level 4. September-October is hot. The average daily maximum temperature is 36-37°C (about 97-99°F). Fortunately, the average nightly minimum is cooler at about 21-23°C (70-73°F). As the minimum temperatures have been known to drop below 15°C (about 60°F), we recommend bringing a lightweight sleeping bag. (Some people do, however, choose to replace their sleeping bag with thermals.) As long as we get an early start in the mornings, we should have plenty of time to rest during the hottest part of the day.

Although past records suggest less than a 50% chance of rain, you can get hit by an isolated storm. Bringing a lightweight tent fly will ensure you stay dry if it does happen to rain.

Vegetation	Level 2. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creek. There is likely to be one section of grass covered rocks on one short section.
Hours	4-6 hours most days.
Packs	Pack weight - level 3. You need to carry eight days food.
Art	There are a number of interesting sites along this route.
Campsites	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent sites near the water. We should have most or all of them to ourselves.
Swims	Swimming is excellent. Good pools at all campsites.
Lowlights	Very long drive from Darwin at the beginning, fairly long 4WD on the way out.
Highlights	The magical cascades and water slide on Cascades Creek. Spectacular Graveside Gorge.
Wildlife	Birds are always present and normally beginning to concentrate near the water holes at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.
Fishing	Not permitted on this walk.
Maps	1:50 000 Koolpin or 1:100 000 Jim Jim. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

Notes

The guide will try and spend more time with the little things which might be interesting and unusual for the children: insects, lizards, etc. (Young children can bring a sense of wonder to things older people take for granted.)

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives. It may not be possible to get into your pack until the vehicle is unloaded at the end.

Parents/guardians must keep an eye on their own children, especially on young children who may not be able to swim.

We plan to have more and longer breaks and do even more swimming than on our standard trips.

Although you will see some Aboriginal rock art, this may not be emphasised as much as on our standard trips.

If the children cannot carry their own food & equipment, their parents/guardians will have to do so.

Dehydration can be a major problem for young children. (See our *Bushwalking Guide*.) It is absolutely essential to make sure your children drink enough to need several "wee stops" during the day.

Family discounts 1/3 off for age 12-16
 ½ off for children under 12
 no discount for more than two children unless accompanied by two adults

Other discounts Our standard advance purchase and past client discounts apply.
 The other discounts listed in our brochure do not.
 We need the equivalent of six adult fares to run either of these trips.

Itinerary: Family Bushwalk Special

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Day 0 **We will not be able to run our normal pre-trip meeting.**

Day 1 Pick up time to be advised. Pick up is from your accommodation if you have notified us where you are staying at least a week before departure or have made alternate arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from Darwin Transit Centre at 69 Mitchell Street.

Drive to Kakadu. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc.
Begin the walk. Bush camp, probably near the vehicle. .

Day 2 Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 3-9 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 10 Return to vehicle. Drive to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation.

Want more info?

Our Graveside Family Walk photo gallery has more photos from a similar, but shorter, trip in the same area. www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/galleries/oldsite/g_famgal.shtml