

Limmen, Lorella & Abner Range: 11 May - 4 June 2025

List Price: \$1995. Our advance purchase and past client discounts apply. The others do not.

Second Draft: 23/02/25 – Note: Walkabouts owner Russell Willis is so keen to do this trip that he won't pay himself the normal wage. This has kept the price as low as possible.

But No expenses are included. Details at the end of these notes.

Summary. The trip will consist of a series of walks, 6 nights on Lorella Springs, a 7 night walk in Limmen National Park and a 6 night walk in the Abner Range.



Landing in the Abner Range

DRAFT Itinerary: Gulf to Gregory

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

10 May **Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Hilton Gardens, 122 The Esplanade.** There are two Hiltons next door to each other. The correct one is closer to Daly Street and is the taller of the two. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

11 May Pick up as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. 4-5 hour drive to Mataranka. Campground or accom.

12 May Very early visit to Bitter Springs before the crowds arrive. Breakfast. Long 4-5 hour drive to Cape Crawford. Lunch there or en route. Continue to Caranbirini Nature reserve. (Lost city rock formations.) Short walk. Continue to Borroloola. Overnight in accom.

13 May Visit the Old Police Station museum in Borroloola. Anyone with any interest in history will find it as interesting as I (Russell) did when I last was there. Drive to Lorella Springs, stopping at Caranbirini if we were too late the day before. First night at the homestead. (Our 3rd night in accom will be on the 14th or 17th.)

14-18 May On Lorella Springs Station, last night in accom.

19 May Leave Lorella after breakfast. Drive to visit the Southern Lost City in Limmen if it's open. Relatively short walk to first camp on Tawallah walk.

20-25 May On Tawallah Walk

26 May Finish Tawallah walk. This should be the "hardest" day on the walk as there is no water from our last camp until nearly back at the car. Hard or not, we should be at the car by or just after lunch. Drive to Cape Crawford.

27 May Fly to start of Abner Range Walk. Camp somewhere near where we get dropped off.

28 May - 1 Jun On Abner Range walk.

2 Jun Fly back to Cape Crawford late afternoon. Accom or campground. Your choice.

3 Jun Drive to Daly Waters. Visit the motor museum. Anyone who has any interest in Australian motorcar history will find it fascinating. There is also the old aerodrome that's worth a visit. We can stop in Daly Waters or continue another 100 km to Larrimah or another 170 Mataranka and stay where we did on the first night. There is a small museum in Larrimah that might be open if we stop there.

4 Jun Drive back to Darwin, 400 km from Mataranka, 500 from Larrimah, 600 from Daly Waters. I (Russell) stayed in Maratanka and Daly Waters in recent years. Both are good. I last stayed in Larrimah in 1975 so I suspect it's changed.

Now for the details....

We leave Darwin and drive south to small town of Mataranka where we spend the night, accom or camping, your choice. First thing the next morning, we visit the warm Bitter Springs. When we did it first thing, before breakfast in 2024, we had it to ourselves. From Mataranka, we follow the Stuart Highway south to the Carpentaria Highway where we turn east and drive to Cape Crawford. We then turn onto a gravel track and drive to Lorella Springs.



Early morning swim in the mist at Bitter Springs.

Lorella Springs is a place we'd been meaning to visit for some years. We finally made it in 2023 and 2024, when it was closed to the general public but open to tour operators.

Lorella Springs has an incredible variety of walks and 4WD tracks. We'll do a mix of things we did in 2023 and 2024 and possibly some we didn't have time to do. I found it particularly interesting that they weren't burning as much as NT Parks so I thought the land looked healthier. The three pictures below give you a tiny taste of what it was like.



On our 2021 trip, we did a three night walk along Tawallah and Fish Creeks. Everyone enjoyed the walk and agreed that the area deserved a longer exploration so we spent six nights there in 2023 and seven in 2024. Having done that walk, there's no way we could leave it out. Because it had been some time since most of the area had last been burnt, it seemed healthier than many other bushwalking areas. Definitely more birds. We plan to spend two nights at the furthestmost camp and

do a day walk from there. The photos below and on the next page give you a taste of what it's like.



Tawallah Creek



Climb next to Tawallah Creek



Pool at our 2 night camp



One of many swim stops



Paperbark forest, upper Fish Creek



The two photos at left show our final campsite on Fish Creek. From there it is a few hours back to our vehicle, arriving in time for lunch or perhaps we'll drive to Cape Crawford and the Heartbreak Hotel.

When we stopped at Cape Crawford near the end of our 2024 trip, we found they had scenic helicopter flights over yet another 'Lost City'. Three of us tried it, opting to include a one hour explore on the ground. That one hour expanded to two. We were rapt. This 'Lost City' was different. There was water and lots of it. The photos below give you a taste of what it's like.



Our pilot thought that it would make a great walk, moving from waterhole to the next, stopping to explore without packs here and there along the way. He contacted the manager of the property where the formation is located. The manager said that it was owned by a mining company and he'd need to get permission. A month later, we were told that permission had been granted. We plan to spend a week there, including Russell's 80th birthday. While we hope to be able to offer this again, we can't be sure it will be possible.

We plan to get picked up in the afternoon to maximise our time in the area. Depending on the time (we should know well in advance), we may spend the night at Cape Crawford or we may drive back out to the Stuart Highway. If we have any old car enthusiasts in the group, we'll made a point of stopping at an incredible little museum in Daly Waters. Lots of old cars and motorcycles that have been restored. I suspect that if the collection went to auction, it would go for well over a million dollars, perhaps multiple millions. From there, we return to Darwin.

Notes

If you want to carry extra water, refillable wine bladders are a good way to carry it. They should be used as an addition to rather than as a replacement for your normal water bottles.

There are a few places where you will have the choice of camping or accommodation. We'll need to know which you prefer well in advance.

On the walks, you will need to carry only what you need for that walk. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks. Limited supplies are available at a few places along the way.

At the time these notes were written, there were still a lot of unknowns as explained in the body of these notes. Please do not book flights until we know what is possible.

It will be possible to do just the Abner Range section. There is a bus service from Palmerston to Cape Crawford on Mondays & Thursdays. Those doing only this section can catch the bus on 26 May. Alternatively, we **might** send a vehicle down on 25 May, stopping somewhere en route. See <https://katherinecoaches.com.au/service-location/borroloola/> anyone choosing to do this might need to spend a couple of nights at the Heartbreak Hotel at Cape Crawford, <https://heartbreakhotelnt.com/> The rooms we've stayed in were basic but comfortable.

Terrain and difficulty – General

Overall Overall we rate this as level 3.

Climate Level 2. The table on the following page from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology gives you a good idea of the possible variation during the month of May. (It tends to get cooler and less humid toward the end of the month.) Most of our trip is between Ngukurr, an Aboriginal community near the north of Limmen National Park and Borroloola, the closest town to where we'll be.

Place	Avg Max	Highest ever	Avg Min	Lowest ever	Avg No. Rain days	Avg rain	Most rain	Avg 9 AM Humidity	Avg 3 PM Humidity
Ngukurr	31.8°C	36.5°C	19.1°C	10.6°C	1.1	10.7 mm	132.0 mm	64%	39%
Borroloola	32.6°C	37.4°C	15.7°C	5.3°C	1.3	6.8 mm	50.0 mm	53%	31%

Given that there is more flowing water in May than later in the year, this is near as good as it gets.

Terrain Almost anything is possible. The photo at right shows one of the more difficult climbs on the long walk in Limmen. A lot is relatively flat and easy



Vegetation We don't expect much thick scrub but we do expect at least one short section of it. As the last section is exploratory, we can't be 100% sure until it's over.

Hours Generally 4-6 hours on the days we are walking. A few days might be longer.

Packs **Pack weight** - level 3. You will need to carry 7-8 days food on the longest walk. Much less for the Lorella section. You need to bring both a sleeping bag and a tent. Although rain is unlikely, it is possible and can be heavy. You should bring rain gear. You can always leave things in the vehicle if you don't want to carry them on the walks. If conditions are not too dry, we should be able to use **small** campfires for cooking.

Art We have been asked to keep away from the known sites on Lorella Springs. Taking photos of any art we might find along the Tawallah Creek walk is not permitted.



Fish Creek swim

Campsites Often sandy, sometimes flat rock or grassy. sometimes well developed. What we find on some parts of the overnight walks is unknown.

Swims Swimming should be possible every day on the long walks and at Lorella. It is unlikely that there will be places where saltwater crocs could be a problem.

Wildlife Birds and lizards are always present but you are unlikely to see many large animals.

Fishing Unknown. Might be good somewhere in Limmen or on Lorella Springs.

Final notes We will be using a manual transmission 4WD (or two of them) with forward facing seats. It is important that there at least two people in each vehicle who can share the driving.



Small dragon lizard

As stated at the beginning of these notes, expenses are not included.

You will have to pay camping and accommodation fees, a share of fuel, \$15 per evening meal cooked on the camping sections plus a share of 50 cents per km to cover some of the fuel plus wear and tear on the vehicle or vehicles. Depending on how many nights we spend in accommodation and on your choices on those nights, our estimate of the total expenses is somewhere between \$2800 and \$3800 per person. Accom is based on twin share. Single rooms will cost more.

We found some amazing places on Lorella Springs last year. It remains closed to the general public but tour operators are permitted. For us to get permission to visit, we need to spend at least 6 nights on the property, three nights in accommodation and three bush camping. Twin or double rooms are \$250 per night. Camping is \$99 per person per night. We need to have dinner and breakfast at their restaurant the nights we are in accommodation. Dinner costs \$60.50 for one course, \$80.50 for two, \$99 for three. Breakfasts vary according to what you have.

We do not have a definite quote on the helicopter flights. A 30 min scenic flight was about \$300 per person. We know we can fit two people and two packs into a single flight. We MIGHT be able to take three if people can carry their packs on their laps. We won't know what's possible until we know how big the people and their packs are.

As with all of our trips, you have to provide your own breakfasts and lunches (some of which can be purchased on the way) and your own equipment.

Very Rough Estimated Costs – Reality will probably be a bit higher.

16 WW meals	210	8 restaurant meals	400
Lorella Springs Camping	300	Vehicle (assumes 4 pax)	450
Lorella Springs Accom	375	NT Park pass	30
5 other nights accom	400	NT Park fees	55
Helicopter	600	Total	\$2920