

Kakadu Circle Special: 29 June - 17 July 2020

List price: \$3595

4 month advance purchase discount price: \$2876

Note. This PDF is best viewed printed or on a large screen, the larger the better if you want to see the details in the photos.

This special trip was created at the request of two people who wanted to combine our best Kakadu Circle with a leisurely visit to the amazing Dinner Creek.

Itinerary

Section 1 Koolpin to Twin

Day 0 **Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Double Tree Hilton, 122 The Esplanade. This meeting is the day before departure. It is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up. Drive to Kakadu. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc.
Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

Day 2-6 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 7 Walk to Twin Falls. Those finishing here will be driven to Cooinda or Darwin, their choice.

Section 2 Twin to Gunlom

Day 6 Bus to Cooinda if joining the group there. If you go out a day early, this gives you a chance to experience the Kakadu wetlands with a Yellow Waters Cruise.

Day 7 Food drop vehicle leaves Darwin very early. Collects anyone at Cooinda and continues in to meet the group. Food drop meal, bush camp.

Day 8-15 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 17 Return to vehicles. Drive to Dinner Creek. Anyone finishing here returns to Darwin via Pine Creek. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.

Section 3 Dinner Creek

Day 17 Drive to track end. Start walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 18 Day walk from camp

Day 19 Return to vehicle, drive back to Darwin via Pine Creek. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.

Included

- The services of an experienced guide, on call 24 hours a day.
- All park entry and camping fees.
- Evening meals.
- All transport during the trip.

Not included

- Breakfasts & lunches. Bring your own. See details at the end.
- Camping equipment. If you don't have everything, we have a limited amount available for hire.
- Transport to and/or from connection points for those doing only part of the trip. Details in the notes that follow.



Looking back from above the first falls, Koolpin Gorge.



Waterfall in the main gorge at Graveside



Main falls & pool, Dinner Creek.

Now for the details.

Section 1: Koolpin to Twin: 29 June - 5 July



Upper Koolpin campsite.

possible routes to Twin Falls Creek. Your guide will decide which one to take based on the availability of water and on the interests and energy of the group. All take about two days. None is particularly difficult. All offer the opportunity to view a number of Aboriginal art sites, either on the main route or as a side trip from it.



Upper Twin Falls Creek campsite, dawn.



Happy swimmers above Twin Falls.

If we are lucky and the track is open, we will drive all the way to Koolpin gorge. If not, the walk begins at Flying Fox Crossing on the South Alligator River in the southern part of Kakadu, about 330 kilometres and four to five hours from Darwin. A relatively flat eight kilometre walk along the banks of the river and across the plain brings us to the beginning of Koolpin Gorge.

Koolpin Gorge is beautiful. The pools are perfect for swimming, the waterfalls and views a photographers delight. Aboriginal art sites tell us that this has been a special place for thousands of years. Although the gorge is only four kilometres long, it is too good to rush through. We take at least a day to reach the top.

From the top of the gorge, there are a number of



Walking through the grassy valley between Koolpin and Twin Falls Creeks.

Continuing downstream from where we first meet it, Twin Falls Creek passes through a mix of sandy and rocky areas for about six kilometres to the Amphitheatre Falls where the river drops 20 metres into the upper gorge. Few groups have ever been able to resist spending at least an hour here just admiring the views and enjoying the pool below the falls. Another seven kilometres past sandy beaches and more pools brings us to the top of Twin Falls. The last two km of this route is in a restricted

area where we have to stick to a marked trail.

Twin Falls consists of a series of drops of up to 20 metres and a final 80 metre plunge into the gorge below. Here we have a break and take time to enjoy the spectacular views. The route to the bottom of the lower gorge is follows the same marked trail that we first met above the falls. It is moderately rugged in places with a steep climb at the end.



Above Amphitheatre Falls, Twin Falls Creek.

We meet our food drop at the Twin Falls car and camp below Twin Falls in an area where swimming is neither safe nor permitted.

Note. If the track to Twin Falls is not open, we will have to meet the food drop at Jim Jim. The extra walk is about three hours in each direction.

Maps. 1: 50,000 El Sherana (1st few km at beginning of walk), Koolpin & Jim Jim Falls

Section 2: Twin to Gunlom: 5-15 July



This view of Twin Falls is one that people on day walks rarely, if ever, see.

The first day of this section is the longest of the entire trip as we make our way across the plains and climb up the escarpment to enjoy the views and pools at Surprise Falls. Those who are doing only this section need to be prepared for an exceptionally strenuous first day. Those doing the full trip will have had ample time to get used to carrying their packs.

From Surprise Falls, we continue across the plateau, passing through the largest patch of open country rainforest in the park, across the upper reaches of Koolpin Creek and over to the top of Graveside Gorge (Bilkbilkmi) where a double waterfall drops 100 metres into a pool in the gorge below. If we are moving well, we will spend two nights at a single camp and spend a day exploring the gorges below.



Surprise Falls swim stop.

From Graveside, we move along to Cascades Creek and the first of its 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.



Cascades Creek water slide.

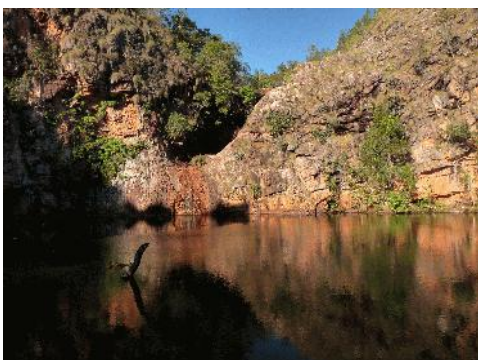
The pools and art sites are too nice to pass by, so stops are frequent as we make our way down to the cascades for which the creek is named. The last 500 metres often takes two hours or more as the deep pools and a natural water slide are much too inviting to pass by in a rush.



Swim stop, top falls, Cascades Creek.

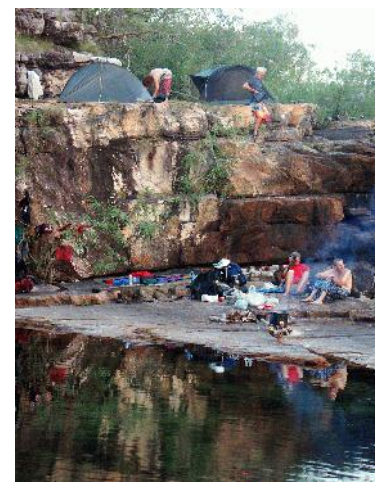
Next, we visit Gronophylum Creek with its unusual multi-trunked palms, beautiful, sandy camp sites and deep, clear pools. The rugged landscape

away from the creek is reminiscent of central Australia with its red rock and spinifex covered hills. A short, steep climb to the top of one of the hills presents us with an incredible panorama. Following the creek, you might walk three kilometres in an hour. Following a straight-line compass bearing, the landscape is such a jumble of broken rock that walking three kilometres might take you three days.



Upper Barramundi campsite pool

From Gronophylum, we cross to the Barramundi system and its many waterfalls. Our final campsite in Barramundi Valley is on the banks of a huge, shady pool below a small waterfall. It is a beautiful spot, but there is more to come.

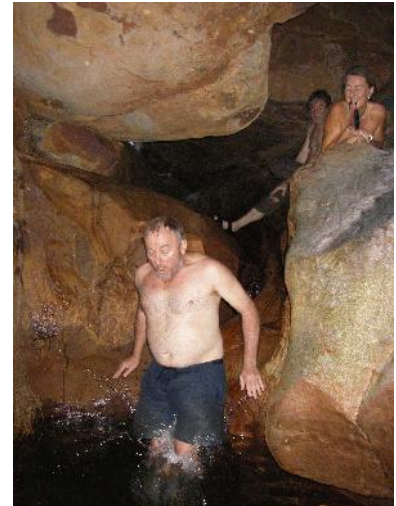


Gronophylum Creek campsite.



Enjoying the view from the highest point on the walk.

The next morning is strenuous. A one kilometre walk brings us to the steepest climb of the trip. From the spectacular vantage point at the top of the hill we enjoy a magnificent view out across the plateau and over the broken rock country that makes up the headwaters of Waterfall Creek. A climb down to a small rocky plateau brings us to a small cave which a number of people have said is their favourite place



In the cave



Waterfall Creek plateau termite mound

in all Kakadu. Water levels and light permitting, those who wish to do so can walk and swim through.

From this area, another climb takes us down past more Aboriginal art and onto the plain above Gunlom (UDP) Falls. A six kilometre walk brings us past the largest termite mounds we have found on the plateau to a rocky area with numerous pools and cascades. A further four kilometres gets us to the top of Gunlom Falls where we look out over the plains below — and the road which will lead us back to Darwin.



Leaving the cave area

Note. Anyone finishing the trip at the end of section two may be dropped in Pine Creek from where they will have to catch a Greyhound bus back to Darwin. We may not know for sure until shortly before departure.

Maps. 1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls (short bit at beginning of walk), Koolpin & Goodparla.

Section 3: Dinner Creek: 15-17 July



High view, Dinner Creek

The drive from Gunlom to the start of the walk is only about 40 km on a gravel road. To reach Dinner Creek from where we leave the vehicles, we have our choice of a five kilometre walk along an old 4WD track or a somewhat longer but shadier walk along the South Alligator River. Another easy two kilometres brings us to the first of the large pools on Dinner Creek.

Unlike the rest of the pools we find on this section, this first pool could conceivably be home to a large crocodile so we continue up the main gorge to a base camp, a

shady area next to another refreshing pool. No crocs here so swimming is fine.

Dinner Creek is an environmentally sensitive area so group size may be limited to a maximum of nine people. Traditional Aboriginal beliefs restrict visits to the period from April through September. It is also one of the very few areas in Kakadu where it is possible to do interesting one-day loop walks.



Side falls, Dinner Creek

One of these loops will bring us to a high point from which we get some excellent views. The other brings us to one of the most interesting geological features in Kakadu, for some, a truly special place. No photo can possibly do it justice, so we will not publish one, either in our trip notes or on our website.

Note. Anyone doing only this section will probably have to catch a Greyhound bus from Darwin to Pine Creek to meet the group. We may not know for sure until shortly before departure.

Maps. 1:50 000 El Sherana

Terrain and difficulty

- Overall** Level 3. Section 2 is rated level 4 because of the long first day. Those who have done the first section should not find this too difficult. Those starting with section two will not be as acclimatised and will almost certainly find it fairly difficult.
- Climate** Level 2. Late June - early July is normally the coolest time of the year. Even so, the maximum temperature on most days will still average 30-32°C. Although the average nightly minimum is about 16-18°C (65°F), it is not uncommon for the temperature to drop as low as 10°C (50°F). Occasionally it goes lower still. Sleeping bags are essential. Rain is highly unlikely. Highly unlikely but conceivable. We recommend you bring something you can use to cover yourself if we do get a fluke rain.
- Terrain** Level 3. There are few steep climbs, none of which is over 200 m. As short as they are, these climbs are strenuous. Some may require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down. None are technically difficult. None require ropes or other special equipment. There will be some places where you have to step from stone to stone as you walk along the edge of a creek.
- The creeks are low enough so that swimming across with packs is unlikely to be necessary. It may, however, be necessary to wade across slippery rocks. Your guide can help if you need assistance.
- 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. If you are not an experienced off-track bushwalker and you don't do any training or any other form of strenuous physical exercise, you might feel that the trip is more of an endurance test than the pleasure most people experience.
- Vegetation** Level 2-3. Much of the walking is through relatively flat, open woodland with a grassy understorey. Some short sections of grass may hide a broken rocky surface where you will have to be particularly careful. There may be some slow sections where you will have to pass through thick scrub. The vegetation can vary from year to year depending on when last burnt. At this time of year, the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out.
- Hours** Generally 4-6 hours. A few days might be longer. Section two rates as level four because of the long first day. Those who have already done section one seldom find it particularly difficult.
- Packs** **Pack weight** - level 2-3. You need to carry 6 days food on section one, 10 on section two and 2 on section three. This will include about 2-3½ kg of the evening meals. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.
- Art** We visit a variety of art sites.
- Campsites** Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.
- Swims** Most creeks are still flowing well and the swimming is excellent. We will have good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot.

- Lowlights** The long walk between Twin Falls Creek and Surprise Falls. Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim and/or Twin Falls.
- Highlights** Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites.
- Wildlife** Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.
- Fishing** Not permitted on this walk.
- Maps** To get a better idea where this walk goes see the links below.

The Top End showing Kakadu in relation to Darwin:

www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/top_end_map.jpg

Kakadu National Park: www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/maps/kakadu_350.jpg

Kakadu Circle routes: www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/maps/kakadu_circles_map1.jpg

Notes

If the track to Twin Falls is still closed, the food drop at the end of section one will be at Jim Jim. That would add about six hours of extra walking which would need to be made up over the few days before and after.

Those doing the full trip will have to carry only what they need for each section. Additional food and other items for the second section can be left in a package which will be brought out with the food drop or left in the car for section three.

The vehicle which is scheduled to bring in the food drop at the end of section one might be part of another tour and might not be returning to Darwin before this trip ends. If you think you might want to send something back, you **must** confirm that this will be possible prior to departure.

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

The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

Notes for those doing only one section

Those beginning with section two will need to be prepared for a hard first day walking. Those doing the full trip will have had plenty of time to get used to the walking.

The following itinerary has more information than the abbreviated one at the start.

Detailed Itinerary: Kakadu Circle Special

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Koolpin to Twin

Day 0 **Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Double Tree Hilton, 122 The Esplanade.** There are two Double Tree Hiltons next door to each other. The correct one is closer to Daly Street, the taller of the two and the only one with a swimming pool. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up. 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 Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct 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, carrying full packs.

Day 2-6 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 7 Walk to Twin or Jim Jim Falls. Those finishing here will be driven to Cooina or Darwin in the late afternoon, their choice. If you would like to experience the Kakadu wetlands, we recommend booking a budget room at Cooina and doing the Yellow Waters cruise the following morning.

We cannot take more than six people back to Darwin. If you want a ride back, please let us know well in advance, first come, first served.

Section 2

Twin to Gunlom

Day 7

We can take up to six people out to Kakadu in the vehicle which brings out the food drop. If more than six are joining the trip, some of them will have to catch a bus from Darwin to Cooinda. See the note below for details. If you go out a day early, this gives you a chance to experience the Kakadu wetlands with a Yellow Waters Cruise.

There is only one bus per day. Check the current timetable when you book. The cost of the bus is not included in the cost of the tour.

If you take the bus, wait in the open air pub and meet our vehicle there. If there are more than six people joining the trip, the vehicle will have to come from Darwin, drive to Twin Falls and return to Cooinda to collect some of the group. This can make the pick up quite late.

Food drop meal, bush camp.

Day 8-15

Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 17

Return to vehicles. Drive to Dinner Creek. Anyone finishing here will probably have to be dropped off at Pine Creek and will need to catch a Greyhound bus back to Darwin.

Section 3

Dinner Creek

Day 17

Anyone doing only this section will need to catch a Greyhound bus from Darwin to Pine Creek, arriving in time to meet the group about lunch time.

Drive to track end. Start walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 18

Day walk from camp

Day 19

Return to vehicle, drive back to Darwin via Pine Creek. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.

Note

Cooinda Bus. The cost of getting to or from Cooinda is not included in the cost of the tour for those who cannot go in our food drop vehicle. At the time these notes were written, the only way to do that was with a seat on an AAT Kings tour bus. If you need to do this, use their Darwin number, (08) 8923 6555, rather than the national 1300 number. Only the Darwin office can book the seat without the tour.