

Kakadu Easy Overnight Walks No. 2: September 29 - October 5, 2015

Note. This is the second of our special trips with short overnight pack carries advertised in our December newsletter. Instead of six days, we've gone to seven and raised the price to \$400.

The price is so cheap because this trip is an experiment. We have never tried a trip like this before. Please bear that in mind if you are interested. If it works and we offer similar trips next year, the list price will be over \$1000.

This trip will consist of three walks during which you will need to carry a full pack a total of about 25 km. You will, however, need to carry a day pack for much more. On all of these walks, you camp next to a nice pool and have time for swimming during the day.

Koolpin Gorge

We begin with a drive of close to 350 km from Darwin to a car park near the Koolpin camping area. We will walk from the car park to a campsite only about two km upstream. While this is the shortest of the possible walks, it is also the most



Koolpin campsite at sunset.



The steep climb at Koolpin

rugged. We will need to do some fairly serious rock scrambling to get above the waterfalls which provide a barrier to the large crocodiles which have been known to visit the pools below. If the water levels are very low, it won't be as steep as in the photo at right above, but it will still be fairly steep and rugged. The following day we will do a day walk exploring the art sites and enjoying the pools and views along the upper gorge. On the third day, we return to our cars and drive about 25 km to Gunlom.

Waterfall Creek above Gunlom



Shady campsite under the trees, our private pool is just 20 metres away

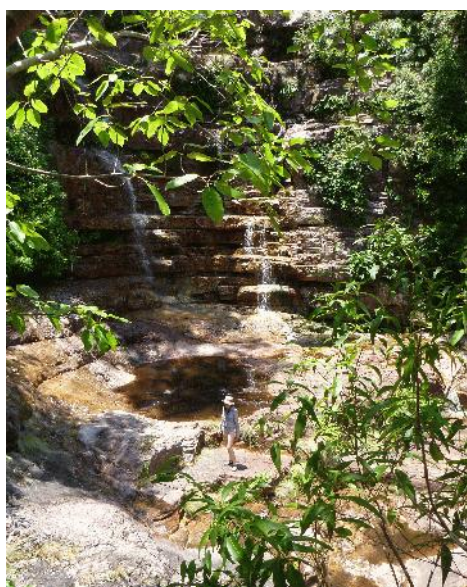


This amazing rock formation marks the end of the rocky area and the furthest we are likely to go

From the Gunlom car park, we follow the marked trail to the top of the falls, then walk upstream about two km to a campsite. We spend the rest of the afternoon doing a leisurely walk upstream and back. The next day, we return to the vehicles and drive to Graveside.

Graveside Gorge

To do this walk we need to travel about 150 km from Gunlom, the last 44 km of which is a very slow 4WD track. From the parking area, we carry our packs about 5 km to a shady spot next to a nice pool. We spend the following day exploring the two branches of Graveside. In some places on our day walk, the water is wall to wall so we have to wade – or if you prefer, swim. You can make this day as easy or as hard as you'd like. To get to the middle falls shown in the photo above, you need to swim across a pool and climb up next the falls. It's not easy but we did have a very fit 77 year old woman from New Zealand do it.



Below the middle falls in the main gorge



Wading through the side gorge

For more information, see our Graveside Gorge page, but note, Cascades Creek is too far for a trip of this nature. <http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/graveside.shtml>

Mary River Houseboat



Mary River Houseboat

This is a personal favourite so I felt I had to include it. This is the most comfortable wetland experience we can offer — a day and night aboard a houseboat on the Mary River.

We cruise slowly along the Mary, watching the hundreds of birds that line the river banks and enjoying the changing scenery around us. Those who wish to try their hand at catching a barramundi have a chance to do so. We pull in to shore for the night and enjoy a relaxing final meal in the bush as we listen to the night sounds around us. The following morning, we cruise back to where we began and get into the vehicles for the drive back to Darwin. The trip is over, but the memories

will linger on.

To get a better idea what it is like, please have a look at our Mary river Houseboat Gallery page, <http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/galleries/oldsite/houseboat07gal.shtml>

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 2+

Climate Level 4. By late September it is always starting to heat up again. The humidity is beginning to build up, but both the temperatures and humidity will increase in the weeks to follow. The maximum temperature on most days will be 35-38°C. The average nightly minimum is about 23-24°C, but it once dropped all the way down to 11°C in Katherine, about 100 km to the south. You may not need a sleeping bag but you should be prepared and bring a light one. Rain is unlikely but possible so you should have something to use as shelter if we do get rain.

Terrain	<p>The first two of the walks have a steep climb, neither of which is over 100 m. As short as they are, these climbs are strenuous. They 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.</p> <p>The creeks are low enough so that swimming across with packs will not be necessary. It may, however, be necessary to wade across slippery rocks through waist deep water. Your guide can help if you need assistance.</p> <p>Little of the walking is on a marked trail. On some of the walks, 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Vegetation	<p>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. If there has been an early rain, you may see the beginning of the greening of the land.</p>
Hours	<p>Generally 4-6 hours, no more than three hours carrying a pack on one day.</p>
Packs	<p>Pack weight - level 2. You need to carry no more than 3 days food. This will include about 1 kg of the evening meals. At this time of year, whether you bring a sleeping bag and/or tent is a matter of personal choice. But, if you don't bring a sleeping bag, you should bring something like a set of thermals in case we do get a cool night. Similarly if you don't bring a tent, you should bring something you can put over yourself to keep yourself dry in case we get a storm.</p>
Art	<p>We visit a variety of art sites on the Koolpin walk. We may see some minor sites on the Waterfall Creek walk. We don't see much, if any, at Graveside.</p>
Campsites	<p>Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.</p>
Swims	<p>Plenty of them. We should have good pools at every campsite and lunch spot.</p>
Lowlights	<p>Possible tourist crowds at the beginning and end of the first two walks. Hot, possibly sticky weather.</p>
Highlights	<p>Good weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites.</p>
Wildlife	<p>Birds are always present and are beginning to concentrate near the waterholes as the land dries out. This would be an excellent walk for keen birdwatchers. You are unlikely to see many large animals.</p>
Fishing	<p>Not permitted on this walk.</p>

Maps The 1:50,000 Koolpin map shows Graveside and Koolpin; the 1:50,000 Goodparla map shows Waterfall Creek. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

Fitness Note

While this trip is easier than any of our other pack-carrying trips, we must emphasise some of the points made on our How Hard page, <http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/howhard.shtml>

The absolute minimum level of fitness required for our easiest trips is to be able to comfortably walk 10 km in 2½ hours on level ground while carrying a small pack.

You will not have to walk this fast on any of our trips but your ability to do so is a good indicator of whether or not you are fit enough to cope with the conditions you will encounter.

This test is not enough. If you have done little or no off-track walking in rough conditions or you have not done extended walks in hot conditions, you need to study our information on rock hopping and climate before deciding to try one of our trips. Links to this information are on our How Hard page, <http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/howhard.shtml>

General Notes

To keep our price down, the cost of the houseboat is not included in the price of the trip. The boats all sleep six (one or two double beds and one or two double bunks) and cost \$650 or \$700 plus fuel. The final cost will be split among all those taking part, including the guide. Depending on numbers, we may need two boats.

We will try and organise someone to come out from Darwin with fresh food and cold drinks for the houseboat trip. He or she will get a free cruise in exchange for bringing out the food & drink. The cost of the boat meal and drinks is not included in the price of the tour. You put in an order and pay for the drinks individually. We all split the cost of the dinner and some fresh fruit for breakfast.

We can't book the boat until we have the bookings we need to run the trip. If it is unavailable the trip will finish a day early but the price will remain the same.

You can leave food and clothing for the second and/or third walk and for the houseboat in the vehicle during the first one.

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives. It is unlikely that you will be able to easily get things out of your pack during the day.

A daypack will be useful on all walks. If you don't have a day pack, you will need to use your big pack.

None of our normal discounts apply at this price.

Itinerary: Kakadu Easy No. 1

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change. The description below assumes three nights at the first campsite and two at the second. Depending on which walks we do, this may change.

Day 0 We will be unable to have our normal pre-trip meeting. You must be fully packed with space for the group food parcel and ready to go the next morning.

Day 1 7-8 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. Otherwise, pick up is from the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.
Drive to Koolpin. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2 Day walk visiting Aboriginal art sites and swimming holes.

Day 3 Return to vehicle, drive to Gunlom, walk to the top, then upstream to a camp.
Afternoon walk without full pack.

Day 4 Return to vehicle, drive to Graveside. Walk about 5 km to a bush camp.

Day 5 Day walk.

Day 6 Return to vehicle. Drive to Mary River and get onto a houseboat. Overnight on the houseboat.

Day 7 Return to vehicles. Return to Darwin, arriving mid to late afternoon.