

Kakadu Light Special: February 25 - March 4, 2018

Update 10 February. Walk the wonder of Kakadu in the Wet. Enjoy the spectacular waterfalls and wildflowers by day. Relax in comfortable accommodation most nights, camp next to a secluded bush pool after a short walks on the final one.

I, Russell Willis, love it. When I didn't get the bookings I needed to run the normal Kakadu Light trip, I decided to put on an 8-day special for myself and two other people. As we were all locals, we decided to postpone the trip when some super wet weather closed roads that are normally open during the wet season.

While the weather can be somewhat unpredictable at this time of year, our knowledge of these areas means we can give you the very best for whatever conditions we experience.

With maximum temperatures in the mid 30's and nightly minimum temperatures in the mid 20's, our first day will be an easy one to allow the group to acclimatise. We begin with the 300 km drive from Darwin to Kakadu which normally takes three to three and a half hours. We'll take longer because we'll be stopping.

If water levels permit, we'll show you some of the wetlands on a one hour air boat tour at Carmor Plains. To get an idea what it's like, have a look at their photo gallery,

<http://www.australiawidesafaris.com.au/photo-galleries/air-boat-tours/>

If time and conditions permit, we may also do a short nature walk at Fogg Dam and/or the Mamukala Billabong on the way. After lunch, we continue on to the Bowali Centre at Park Headquarters which contains a variety of interesting displays. We then continue to Jabiru where we spend the night at Anbinik. See www.kakadu.net.au for more information about Anbinik.

If water levels permit, we will do the Guluyambi Aboriginal cultural tour the next day. This tour combines a wetland cruise and a visit to Ubirr. Guluyambi brings you the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land, their culture. This particular tour is only offered for about two months per year when high water on the Magela floodplain gives access to a wetland seen by only a few. The boat dodges and weaves past majestic paperbarks, then glides across shallow floodplains where grasses and lily pads stretch for the surface of the pandanus and mangrove lined wetland. Wildlife, often difficult to spot, is abundant in this rich, secluded environment. Normally, there are two crew, a skipper (who may or may not be Aboriginal) and an Aboriginal guide. The guide will talk of past and present traditional ways, describe bush tucker, demonstrate how hunting tools were made and tell tales of the dreamtime. The guides are proud of their heritage and welcome your questions.

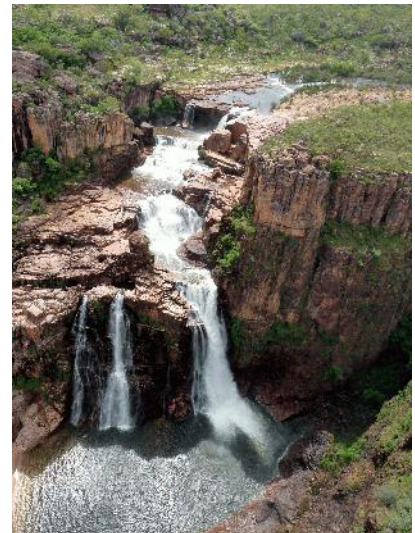
From the boat, we continue by bus to Ubirr, arguably Kakadu's best Aboriginal occupation site. This area is rich in ecological variations and has inspiring panoramic views. Visiting Ubirr at this time of year gives a greater understanding of traditional Aboriginal life as this is the season that the shelters were occupied, the time when traditional food supplies were especially abundant. With tourist crowds and buses gone, we will have the site almost to ourselves. We return to Jabiru and Anbinik where you have the late afternoon free to relax and enjoy the pool or do a scenic flight.



Rainy view on the Barrk walk at Nourlangie



Bush tucker lesson on the Guluyambi tour



Aerial view of Twin Falls in the Wet – there's often more water than this.

You can see more photos from the Guluyambi tour on our Facebook album,

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150643707886928.437006.205216266927&type=3>

The next day brings a short walk or two – or a single long walk – at Nourlangie Rock, the most visited area in Kakadu. Few of those who visit do so at this time of year when the land is lush and green and the billabongs are full. We visit a number of art sites and enjoy some magnificent views out across the surrounding plains. Return to Anbinik.

The next morning, weather permitting, if it hasn't been done already, you will have a chance to do a scenic flight over Jim Jim & Twin Falls. We then drive to Katherine via one of the waterfalls in southern Kakadu.

Although Nitmiluk is nowhere near as large as Kakadu, the drive from one end to the other is still over 100 kilometres. We begin with an early morning drive to the park where we do a gorge cruise and a walk to explore the lower portion of Katherine Gorge.



Motorcar Falls, southern Kakadu



Southern Rockhole, Nitmiluk

We can choose from a variety of different walks to different parts of the gorge. Which one we choose will depend on the interests and abilities of the group as well as on the conditions at the time. It may be possible to walk one way and catch a boat the other. Whatever we do, you will have seen far more than those who stick to the cruise or the marked trails.

The next day we head north, stopping at Edith Falls in the northern portion of Nitmiluk. Edith Falls is a series of drops over a distance of about a kilometre. Above and below the falls there are deep, inviting pools where we will spend a great deal of the day before driving on to Emerald

Springs where we spend the night in their accommodation.

Our original trip was going to finish with Depot Creek where we find a wonderful small gorge unknown even to most locals. So many locals had asked to come along that I will (or will have) run it as a weekend trip before this one.



Depot Creek swim stop

I've got three good choices: Burrells Creek as a day trip, Anniversary Creek day trip or overnight, Tjenya Falls via the Cascades in Litchfield, day or overnight. Some of the walks are one way so we'd need at least one other vehicle to do a car shuffle. We'll make the final decision in consultation with the group.



Upper Edith Falls, February

On the final day, we return to Darwin

Notes

The scenic flight past Jim Jim and Twin Falls costs about \$250 for a one hour. Shorter flights are available as are helicopter flights. As with the boats, bad weather can make the flights impossible.

Exceptionally severe flooding can mean that we cannot cross the Katherine River to do the cruise or walk in the main part of the park. It can also close the road to Edith Falls. If we cannot do the intended walks, we will substitute something else appropriate to the conditions.

Maps. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas in Kakadu. The 1:50 000 Nourlangie Creek and 1:100 000 Cahill map show the area at Baroalba Creek and Nourlangie Rock. The 1:50 000 Callanan map shows the Yurmikmik walk area. The Nitmiluk park map shows all the areas where we walk there.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 1 – you never carry more than one day's food and carry full packs only short distances.

Climate	<p>Level 4. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. The only reason this is not rated as level 5 is that you spend the nights in air conditioning.</p> <p>The average daily maximum is 33-34°C (91-94°F). If we get a spell of relatively dry weather, the temperature could reach 40°C (104°F). The average minimum is 24°C (75°F). Sleeping bags are not needed. Rain is almost certain.</p> <p>On average it will rain two days out of three, mostly in short, sharp bursts. Averages can, however, be misleading. Occasionally, it might rain for days at a time. (This makes it somewhat harder to walk but it also makes the waterfalls more spectacular and keeps it relatively cool.) Occasionally, it may rain very little. This makes it substantially hotter than normal. There will be many opportunities to swim and cool off, but you must be prepared for hot, humid conditions.</p>
Terrain	<p>Level 1-3. Most of the walking on this section is on marked trails. Some will be off-trail and may include a bit of rock-hopping. Most of the walking is through open woodland with a spear grass understorey.</p> <p>Both sections. Even in the boggiest of seasons, Kakadu has nothing that can compare with the mud of Tasmania. However, if you have a particularly wet year, you may find yourself sinking up to mid calf regularly on some places.</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 1-4. 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. Much of section two is on trails where the vegetation is not much of a problem.</p> <p>The spear grass normally reaches its peak in March, often three or four metres tall in some areas (much shorter in others). We may encounter short sections of partially collapsed and seeding spear grass during some portion of the trip, but this early it is unlikely that there will be much.</p>
Hours	Generally 4-6 hours, not including breaks. A few days might be longer.
Packs	Pack weight - level 1. You never carry more than one day's food and carry full packs only short distances.
Art	We visit a variety of art sites, mostly on section one.
Campsite	Sandy beaches or grassy areas nearby if water levels are high.
Swims	This is the best time to see the Top End waterfalls. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Many of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves. Ear infections are more likely at this time of year when you spend so much time swimming. If you have even the slightest symptom of an ear ache, make sure you tell the guide immediately. Prevention is easier than cure.
Lowlights	Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can force a change of itinerary.
Highlights	Several waterfalls seen at their spectacular best. Great swimming. Aboriginal art sites. The lush green landscape that dry season visitors can only imagine.
Wildlife	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals. The cruises may give you a chance to see one or more large crocodiles but they are harder to spot at this time of the year than during the cooler months.
Fishing	Not permitted in Kakadu and not good elsewhere.

Maps To get a better idea where these walks go 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

Jabiru

Jabiru is a small mining town with the kind of shops you would expect to find in a small country town anywhere in Australia. Anbinik is a caravan park which has a variety of accommodation. We believe it is the best value in the town.

We will eat in local restaurants most of the time but we may cook one or more meals at our accommodation.

If you would like to find out more about what the trip is like, you can see two trip reports on our website.

Kakadu Light 2002. www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/kaklight02.shtml and Kakadu Light 2007

www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/pdf/dixon-kak-light07.pdf

Itinerary: Kakadu Light Special

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Day 0 **Our normal pre-trip meeting will not be held as we will be in accommodation most of the time.**

Day 1 Acclimatisation day. 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 other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.
25 Feb Drive to Kakadu. If water levels permit, we'll do the Carmor Plains air boat tour on the way. There will be other stops on the way to do short walks and to buy cool drinks, etc. Visit Park Headquarters. Overnight at Anbinik, Jabiru. Bring money for drinks.

Day 2 - 26 Feb Guluyambi Aboriginal cultural tour. Billabong boat cruise. Return to Anbinik in Jabiru.

Day 3 - 27 Feb Nourlangie Rock walk or walks. Return to Anbinik. This is the longest and most challenging walk on the trip.

Day 4 - 28 Feb Optional flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls if not already done. Drive to Katherine via one of the waterfalls in southern Kakadu.

Day 5 - 1 Mar Depart Katherine early morning. Drive to Katherine Gorge. Gorge cruise and walk. Return to Katherine accommodation.

Day 6 - 2 Feb Drive to wherever via walk at Edith Falls. Overnight to be advised.
Those who are just doing the weekend can drive to wherever we are staying, have a meal at the pub and spend the night or they can come down first thing in the morning.

Day 7 - 3 Mar Depart accommodation about 9 am. Drive as far as we can and walk. Bush camp or return to Darwin depending on conditions.

Day 8 - 4 Mar Return to Darwin if we didn't do so the night before. You should be back in time to catch flights anytime after 6 pm.

Final Note To keep the cost as low as possible, this trip is being run on a share expense basis. The price covers the services of the guide, trip planning and preparation, vehicle transport, the evening meal on the overnight walk. You will need to pay your share of all cruise and flight expenses, accommodation and restaurant meals. Based on twin share, this should be somewhere between \$400 and \$600.

Rain. There has been an exceptional amount of widespread rain over the past few weeks. Roads have now reopened. Continued rain may or may not affect the trip.

If the Guluyambi cruise cannot run, we can replace it with a Yellow Waters cruise and change the itinerary to one night at Anbinik, one at Cooida and one in Pine Creek rather than three nights at Anbinik at the start. The cost should be similar.

Costs

Tour cost: \$350 per person. This includes the guide, 4WD transport and the final meal if we camp out on the last night.

Transport

Vehicle	included in trip cost	max of six plus driver
Carmor Plains Air Boat	\$100 to \$133	low price is for 4 or more
Guluyambi	\$156	website price; Ice water, fruit juice & healthy snack provided
Jim Jim flight	\$250 for one hour	optional extra, fixed wing
Katherine Gorge cruise	\$80 or \$89	senior discount available

Accommodation

Anbinik * - 3 nights	\$30 to \$105 per night	Bush bungalow, 1 double bed, 1 double bunk. Sost depends on number in room.
Anbinik * - 3 nights	\$50+ per night	Two bedroom cabin. If you want to cook instead of go out, this has a kitchen.
Katherine - 2 nights	\$0 to \$90 per night	We can get a twin for \$90. If you have a sleeping mat and pillow, a friend has two spare rooms we can use.
Last night		

* Both Anbinik accom types have external bathrooms. If it's raining, you get wet. Bring an umbrella.

Food

Camp meal	included in full trip cost	\$10 for those doing only the weekend
Pub meals (1 to 6)	\$15 to \$40 each	Excludes drinks. Low end is something like takeaway pizza in Katherine. High end probably includes entree or dessert. Meal 7 is only if we get rained out on walk.
Cook our own (1 to 3)	Est \$10 each	With the right choice of accommodation, it would be possible to cook our own in Jabiru and Katherine. The numbers assume we have at least one meal at a restaurant in each town and at least one cook our own. If we cook in Jabiru, you'll need to bring any alcohol from Darwin.

Not including the possible flight, the total cost should be somewhere between \$1000 and \$1200.