

## Kakadu Short Overnight Walks No. 2: September 6-12, 2020

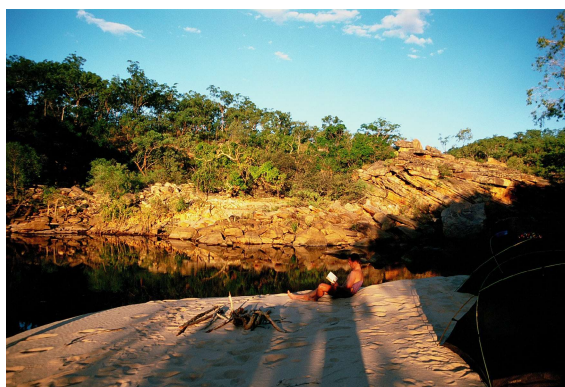
**Update 14 Aug 20.** With the NT borders closed to people from the Sydney and Brisbane metro areas until at least 28 August, we have delayed the original departure by a week.

**List price: \$2095. Save \$500.** Because of the covid border hassle, we have dropped the price to \$1595. No other discounts apply with this offer.

This trip will consist of two walks during which you will need to carry a full pack a total of less than 15 km. You will, however, need to carry a day pack for much more if you wish to do the full walk. On both of these walks, you camp next to a nice pool and have time for swimming during the day.

### Walk 1: Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin Gorge)

The area where we had intended to walk is currently closed for cultural reasons so we have moved to nearby Koolpin Gorge, known as Jarrangbarnmi to the local Aboriginal traditional owners of the area. Koolpin is a sensitive area. Even the 4WD drivers need a special permit to visit. Koolpin Gorge is beautiful. Although the waterfalls may be little more than a trickle at this time of year, the pools are always perfect for swimming. The views are a photographer's delight. Aboriginal art sites tell us that this has been a special place for thousands of years.



Koolpin Gorge campsite



High view of Koolpin Gorge. Look closely and you'll see three swimmers.

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. From the parking area, a relatively easy three kilometre walk ground brings us to a lovely pool and our campsite.

The next day, we put on our day packs and do a loop walk up visiting some of the Aboriginal art sites in the hills near the gorge, then following the gorge back to where we began. There will be plenty of time for relaxing and swimming.

On the third day, we walk back to the car and drive to Graveside.

### Walk 2: Graveside Gorge

To do this walk we need to travel about 160 km from Koolpin. About half is on slow 4WD tracks. 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 on the next page, you need to swim across a pool and climb up next to the falls. It's not easy but we did have a very fit 77 year old woman from New Zealand do it.

The second day is seriously energetic – and spectacular.



Wading through the side gorge

A short, steep climb gets us onto the plateau where we have a look at the upper reaches of the two creeks we explored the day before. At this time of year, the flow is down to a trickle but there are still plenty of pools where we can cool off and relax in the midday heat.

We continue with a loop along the top and descend via a small gully near our campsite. Anyone who thinks that this might be too much is welcome to relax in camp for the day.

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

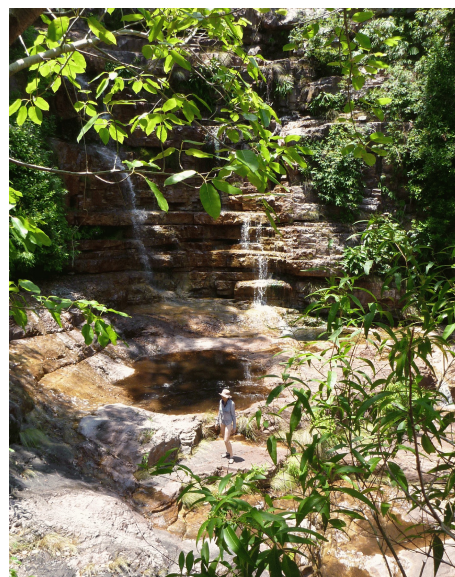
On the last day of the walk, we return to the vehicles and drive to the Aboriginal owned and operated Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp where we enjoy a cultural experience with the traditional owners before spending a night in their accommodation. For more information, see <https://kakadubillabongsafaricamp.com.au>

## Terrain and Difficulty

**Overall** Level 2+

**Climate** Level 4. By 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** Both of the walks have a steep climb, neither of which 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.



Below the middle falls in the main gorge

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.

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](http://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. If there has been an early rain, you may see the beginning of the greening of the land.
- Hours** Generally 4-6 hours, no more than three hours carrying a pack on one day.
- Packs** **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.
- Art** We visit a variety of art sites on the Koolpin walk. We don't see much, if any, at Graveside.
- Campsites** Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.
- Swims** Plenty of them. We should have good pools at every campsite and lunch spot.
- Lowlights** Possible tourist crowds at the beginning and end of the first two walks. Hot, possibly sticky weather.
- Highlights** Good weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites.
- Wildlife** 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.
- Fishing** Not permitted on this walk.
- Maps** The 1:50,000 Koolpin map shows Graveside and Koolpin; 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 that

**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 before deciding to try one of our trips.

For rock hopping, see our Terrain and Difficulty page,  
<https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/terrain-and-difficulty>

## General Notes

You can leave food and clothing for the second walk 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 both walks. If you don't have a day pack, you will need to use your big pack.

Accommodation at the Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp is in twin share cabins. If there are not enough available, those who book late may have to camp.

## **Itinerary: Kakadu Short Overnight No. 2**

**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** **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** 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. Bush camp.

**Day 3** Return to vehicle, drive to Graveside, walk to campsite.

**Day 4-5** Day walks.

**Day 6** Return to vehicle. Drive to Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp. Short cultural experience if time permits.

**Day 7** Cultural tour if not done the day before. Return to Darwin, arriving late morning or early afternoon.