

New Year in Kakadu Special: 27 December 2018 - 1 January 2019

List price - \$1700. This will drop to \$1550 for two more bookings or to \$1450 for three or more . See the notes at the end for additional information.

Summary. This is a special trip created for two people visiting from overseas. It combines a night at Cooinda and a Yellow Waters cruise with some truly spectacular scenery among one of the greatest concentrations of Aboriginal rock art in the park.



The two photos above were taken from the same rock shelter on two different wet season trips. They look out over part of the central basin when the main creek is running at its wet season best.

Itinerary

27 Dec Pick up from your accommodation between 10:30 and 11:00 AM. We then collect the last arrivals from the Darwin airport a bit before noon and head straight to Cooinda where we spend the night. If we have time, we'll visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

28 Dec 6:45 AM Yellow Waters Cruise. Not only do you get to see the Kakadu Wetlands when they are truly wet, we will probably have the boat almost to ourselves.



We have breakfast after the cruise then drive to the end of the Gubara track where we begin our walk. We carry full packs to our first campsite.

29 Dec We walk further up the creek to our final camp.

30 Dec We do a day walk from our campsite.

31 Dec We head back downstream along Baroalba Creek to a campsite near where we began.



1 Jan We return to the vehicle and drive back to Darwin, arriving in time for 6 PM flights.

Baroalba cascades wet season spa



Climbing to a Baroalba high point, late December.

Now the details

Baroalba Creek is the main drainage for Mount Brockman, a large, irregularly shaped massif sitting on the plains a few kilometres away from the edge of the Arnhem escarpment. Its maximum dimensions are about 11 kilometres east to west and 15 kilometres north to south. Its maximum height is about 300 metres above sea level, about 240 metres above the surrounding plain. While the edges of the massif are extremely rugged and steep, much of the centre consists of a large basin drained by Baroalba Creek. The best time to visit this area is during or immediately after the wet season when every creek is flowing and the waterholes are all full as should be the case on this trip.

The rugged nature of the approaches prevented buffalo from reaching

the basin, making this one of the few undisturbed areas in Kakadu. The area is full of rock shelters that were used by Aboriginal people over the millennia. It contains what may well be the greatest concentration of Aboriginal rock art in Australia, dating from the most ancient to the most recent.

You are likely to see more Aboriginal art in more different styles than on any of our other trips of a similar length. In deference to the



Baroalba wade. This is the wet season. While your feet will be wet most of the time, they will not be cold.

wishes of the traditional owners, we have not included any art site photos in these notes.

The walk starts with an easy three kilometre stroll along an old four wheel drive track to Gubara (Baroalba Springs) just above which we can enjoy a refreshing swim.

From here, we leave all tracks behind, beginning

a somewhat strenuous scramble up a boulder strewn creek.

Once inside the basin, the ground levels out and the walking becomes easier. There are a number of nice camp sites to tempt us as we work our way upstream, taking our time, stopping every so often to have a swim or just to enjoy the shade of a cool rock shelter or the sight of a particularly colourful patch of flowers.

The next few days are spent slowly working our way upstream, exploring the many wonderful rock shelters, art sites and pools. Some of the walking will be done with daypacks from base camps.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 3+

Climate Level 5. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid.

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.

On average it rains 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 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.

Terrain Level 3. Variable. Going up Baroalba Creek at the beginning is a slow scramble over rocks of a variety of sizes. Frequent rest and swim stops make it easier. Once in the central basin, the walking becomes fairly flat and relatively easy until you do the high point climbs. People who have never walked in this kind of terrain may find that this is one of the most physically demanding things they have ever done.



On a highpoint after the climb shown on the previous page.



Baroalba swim stop.



Baroalba camp, February 2012. Our group fly allows us to cook and eat comfortably even when it's raining.

Baroalba Creek has many rock shelters if we wish to get out of any rain which may be occurring. Camping, however, is not permitted in the shelters.

We may choose to climb to a high point for the views. The climbs are relatively short but quite steep and rugged. A few short sections of most of the climbs are quite exposed and some people may need assistance. People who have a severe fear of heights may stay back and relax near a pool if some are going to a high point.



Cascades, upper Baroalba.

The creeks are likely to be low enough so that swimming across with packs will not be necessary. Exceptional rain could cause this to change.

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 in some areas..

Very little 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.



Wild tomato flower. The wet and very early dry season is the best time for wildflowers.

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.

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. You need to carry food for four days. This will include about 2-3kg of the evening meals. You do not need a sleeping bag but you do need a tent and fly.

Art	Some of the best in Kakadu.
Campsites	Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are good to excellent but we have to avoid some of our dry season campsites which could get flooded. You are unlikely to see anyone else anywhere along most of the routes.
Swims	This is the best time to see Kakadu's waterfalls. We will have good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot. You will definitely have to float your pack across one or more flooded creeks. If you can't swim at least 100 m unaided, do not do this trip.
Lowlights	Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can slow us down. Carrying a week's food.
Highlights	Wet season waterfalls. 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 Yellow Waters cruise is excellent for birds, many of which you are unlikely to see on the walk. It also gives you a good chance to see large estuarine crocodiles.
Fishing	Not permitted on this walk.
Map	1:50 000 Nourlangie Creek.



Leichhardt grasshoppers, known to the local people as Alyurr (children of the lightning man, Namarrgon) are only seen during the Build Up and Wet seasons.

Notes

We strongly recommend that anyone interested in this trip have a good look at all three of our **Walking in the Wet** pages beginning with www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/wet.shtml

Rain is very likely at this time of year. It is very important that you pack well enough so that you can keep most things in your pack dry, even if you have to pack a wet tent or other wet items. A pack liner is essential at this time of year. Garbages are not satisfactory.

It is a good idea to have a change of clothes for the night at Coinda.

The Coinda store has a limited selection of foods. If you want anything even slightly out of the ordinary, plan to bring it with you from the start.

Extreme wet season rains can close roads and cause delays. This is not likely but you need to be aware that it can happen. If this were to happen before the trip, we might have to change the venue. If it were to happen during the trip, we might not be able to make flight connections.

Moderate flooding can mean that we have to walk a portion of the vehicle track leading to the Gubara car park.

You should keep a water bottle, your lunch and some money with you in the car during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack before the end of the journey.

The cost of the Yellow Waters cruise which includes a buffet breakfast is included in the price of the trip. The bistro dinner and accommodation is not as different people will want different things. We can, however, book the accommodation for you if you wish.

The price. In order to guarantee the departure, the two people who booked the trip have agreed to pay \$2100 each if we don't get other bookings. In order to be as fair as possible, we have made a sliding scale. If one more person books, each will pay only \$1700. If two more book, they will each pay only \$1550. If three or more additional people book, the price will drop to \$1450 each.

Because of this, our normal discounts do not apply to this trip.

Cooinda

Cooinda is a resort situated in the heart of the Kakadu wetlands. This is an area noted for its wildlife — and mosquitoes. The former make it a great place to visit, the latter make it an uncomfortable place for an overnight walk. The attractions at Cooinda include the Yellow Waters cruises, the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre and a short dry season nature walk along a marked trail.

The Yellow Waters cruise provides the best way to see the wetlands and allows you to approach the wildlife much closer than you could do on foot. The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and campground and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park. The nature walk is generally under water at this time of year.

Both the cultural centre and the shop offer a variety of souvenirs for sale. Bring extra cash or a credit card if you think that you might wish to purchase anything beyond the drinks, ice creams and lunches that most people purchase there.