

Kakadu - Kimberley Special: 23 May - 12 June 2021 Update 30 Mar 21

List price: \$4995

4 month advance purchase price: \$3996

Note. This PDF is best viewed on a large screen, the larger the better if you want to see the details in the photos. This is our only trip which combines walks in both Kakadu and the Kimberley.

This trip was created on behalf of a group from New Zealand. Most are in their 70s; all are experienced bushwalkers and some have walked with us before. Anyone joining from outside the group needs to be aware of both the age and experience of those with whom they will be walking.

Itinerary: Kakadu-Kimberley Special

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Barramundi Creek: 23-29 May

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 and is the taller of the two. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 7 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. Drive to Kakadu. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp on Waterfall Creek



Waterfall at Piccaninny Pools.

Day 2-6 Bush camping, carrying full packs. We should have two nights at one camp and one very short day.

Day 7 Return to vehicles. Drive to Cooinda, arriving about lunch time. Book into campground. If we're early, opportunity to wash clothes and have hot shower. Bring towel and toiletries and money for drinks.

Animal Tracks tour starts at 1 PM and finishes about 8 PM.

Section 2 Kakadu to Kimberley: Kununurra and the Carr Boyd Range: 30 May - 5 June

Day 8 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise. Drive 450 km to Victoria River. Dinner at road house. Campground or accommodation, your choice. See notes for connection details.



Day 9 Drive to Kununurra. Visit Victoria River art site shortly after leaving. Other possible stops are Nackeroo site and Gregory Tree near Timber Creek. Arrive in time to resupply.

Gregory art site. This site is on a marked trail. In keeping with the wishes of the traditional owners, we do not publish photos of the sites not on tourist trails.

- Day 10** Boat or drive to start of Carr Boyd Walk. Begin walk.
- Day 11-13** Bush camping, carrying full packs.
- Day 14** Return to vehicles. Drive to Kununurra. Overnight at Kim Croc.
- Section 3 Purnululu National Park: 6-12 June**
- Day 15** Early morning departure. Drive to Purnululu (Bungle Bungles). Drive to the start of the walk. Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.
- Day 16-20** Bush camping. Carrying full packs some days, day packs at other times.
- Day 21** Return to vehicles. Helicopter flights if not already done. Drive back to Kununurra. Trip ends.

Now for the details.

Section 1: Barramundi Creek

Since these notes were first written, the walking track to the top of Gunlom (UDP) Falls was closed for cultural reasons. In addition, the route we would have taken between Waterfall and Barramundi Creeks has also been closed, also for cultural reasons. The walk will now take place entirely on Barramundi Creek.



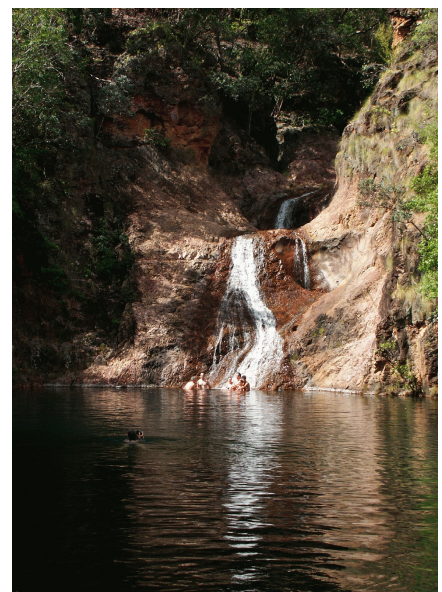
Lower Barramundi campsite



Walking at the top of Barramundi Gorge

The drive to the start at the Maguk car park is about 300 kilometres from Darwin. From there, we follow a marked trail for a few hundred metres to where we climb up into the Barramundi Valley. A walk of no more than about two hours brings us to our first camp, next to a pool. The short walk makes for an easy start after a long drive.

The next morning, we continue upstream through the lower Barramundi Gorge, turn off onto a side creek and the place we call Emerald Pool, an incredibly deep, clear, emerald-green pool below a waterfall. We then climb up above the pool to an area we call Piccaninny Pools. More views and swims before we move upstream a short distance to our camp for the night.



Having a swim at the Emerald Pool, Barramundi Creek.



Sunset, Packsaddle Creek camp, Carr Boyd Range



Looking down Piccaninny Gorge from near the top.

About an hours walk brings us to the next special place. In October 2020, we stopped to explore this creek from the bottom, something we hadn't done for many years. It was far nicer than we remembered. we hadn't visited in many years. In May, when there is still plenty of water, it should be magnificent. We plan to drop packs at the top of the gorge and spend at least half a day exploring the gorge and waterfalls below. We may decide to camp near the top or we may push on toward what many consider the nicest campsite in the valley. The last part of the walk includes a very steep descent. Later in the year, we have no choice but to push on. This early, we might decide to camp on the edge of a patch of monsoon forest. Water for drinking, but, unlike our other campsites, not enough for a swim.

We plan to spend two nights camp next to the pool shown at right. This is surrounded by huge, shady trees. We'll do a day walk without packs from here so we can experience a bit more of what the area has to offer.



Upper Barramundi campsite pool

On the final full day, we follow the main valley back to our first camp or another one close to it. On the final morning, we return to the vehicles, stopping to enjoy the Maguk plunge pool before the daily crowds arrive. We then drive to Cooinda where we check into the campground and set ourselves up. At 1:00 PM, we join the Animal Tracks Safari tour where you will have a chance to meet some of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park and enjoy a bush tucker dinner. For more information, see www.animaltracks.com.au

This section finishes with the 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise the following morning. The cruise gives you the opportunity to see the wetlands wildlife at close range, far closer than you could approach on foot. The early hour ensures you see more of the wildlife than those who do the midday cruises.

Note. If, for some reason, the Animal Tracks Safari is unavailable, we will replace it with a n afternoon Yellow Waters cruise and/or a visit to Burrunkuy (Nourlangie Rock) with it's many paintings.

Terrain and difficulty (see also the comments for all sections)

Overall Level 3

Terrain Level 3. Most of the walk is fairly flat and relatively easy. However, there is some rock hopping and a couple of fairly strenuous climbs. One climb might require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down. We have allowed two more days than we would allow for most groups to give those taking part extra time for rest stops, swimming and looking around.

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.

Packs **Pack weight** - level 3. You need to carry 6 days food. This will include about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.

Art We visit a number of interesting art sites.

Campsites Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at 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** Possible tourist crowds at Maguk.
- Highlights** Pool after beautiful pool, waterfalls that the day tourists never see, the Animal Tracks and Yellow Waters tours, the wonderful campsites you share with no one else.
- Maps** 1:50 000 Goodparla. The 1:250 000 Kakadu map shows the whole park.

Cooinda – Important Information

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 approach the wildlife (especially birds and crocodiles) much closer than you could do on foot. The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park. The nature walk offers a pleasant way to spend an hour or two, especially early in the morning or late afternoon.

Budget accommodation is no longer available so we plan to camp in the Cooinda camping area. If we arrive early, there will be time to do laundry.

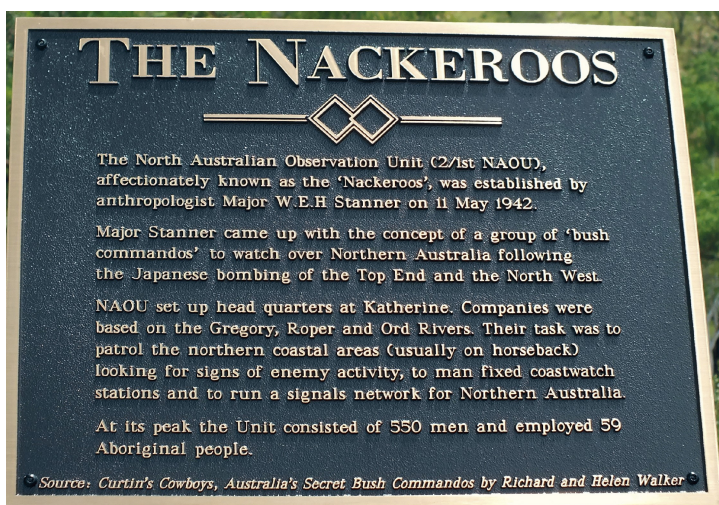
Make sure you bring a towel and clean clothes for the night at Cooinda.

Anyone who wishes to **upgrade to a motel room** may do so at their own cost. We are happy to make the booking for you and deduct the camping fee from the cost of your room.

The nearby Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre and the hotel sell a variety of souvenirs. 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 buy there.

For more information, please refer to our Cooinda and Yellow Waters page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/yellowtrs.shtml

Section 2: Kakadu to the Kimberley: Kununurra and the Carr Boyd Range



From Cooinda, we drive about 450 km to the Victoria River Roadhouse. We should get there early enough to do the short escarpment walk before dinner. We plan to stay in the campground. Those who want a bed can upgrade. (The price is much more reasonable than Cooinda.)

We'll spend the next day doing some short walks, visiting one of the largest Aboriginal art sites in Gregory National Park, and exploring some other bits of history.

95 km past Victoria River is the tiny town of Timber Creek where we can do a short trip to a lookout near town. Along with the views, we get some history. A series of signs tell the tale of one of the least known parts of Australia's WWII history.

We can continue our history lesson with a stop at Gregory's Tree. Augustus Gregory was one of Australia's most successful explorers. Maybe it's the combination of his success and the fact that his explorations were in the north that keeps him from being better known.

We continue to Kununurra across the border in the Kimberley. We spend the night at the Kimberley Croc Motel before moving on to our next walk in the Carr Boyd Range.

Located south of Kununurra, between Lake Argyle in the east and the Dunham River in the west, the peaks and cliffs of the Carr Boyds will be familiar to anyone who has visited the region. From the roads they present a forbidding face, dry and



Europeans have been carving trees in Australia for a long time.



Waterfall view. Look closely and you can see someone, centre left.

barren, rugged beyond belief. Up close, they can show a different nature. Even after the driest of seasons, spring fed creeks trickle through deep, cool gorges and lovely pools bounded by a lush vegetation which stands in stark contrast to the dry plains outside the range.

We begin with a boat ride up the Ord River to a drop off on Cooliman Creek. A relatively flat walk of about 4 km brings us to the first of the many waterfalls and pools we get to enjoy on this walk. One waterfall follows another as we make our way up one creek, then overland and down another. Along the way we will stop to enjoy numerous swims and take time out to simply relax and look at nature around us.



Swim stop above one of the many Carr Boyd waterfalls.

We exit the range near Packsaddle Creek where we are met by the pick up vehicle that brings us back to Kununurra for another night at the Kimberley Croc.

Terrain and difficulty

Overall Level 3.

Terrain Level 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 are few steep climbs, none of which is over 200 m. 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.

Vegetation	Level 3. This can vary dramatically from year to year. There are usually some sections of thick grass and/or spinifex which make for slow going. Gaiters essential, long trousers recommended.
Hours	You normally walk 4-6 hours per day.
Packs	Pack weight: level 2 = four night's food.
Art:	Very little. Some groups don't see any.
Campsites	Can be dry river bed, rock ledges, sandy patches or grassy open areas. Some sites have a mix.
Swims	Excellent. There are a many good pools and most camp sites will be next to a swimmable pool.
Lowlights	Thick grass (most years).
Highlights	Boat through the Ord Everglades just after dawn (if we use the boat). Great views from the top. Waterfalls, pools and gorges.
Wildlife	The boat trip at the start gives an excellent chance to see waterbirds and freshwater crocs. It also gives a good chance of seeing wallabies. There are birds on the rest of the walk but you are unlikely to see many large animals.
Maps	1:50 000 Deception Range.

Note. The Carr Boyd walk described above is the normal walk we do on our Kimberley Highlights No. 1 trip. If the group would prefer an easier walk, we could do a walk up and back from Packsaddle where the described walk finishes. This avoids a steep climb at the beginning but it also misses a series of amazing waterfalls. You get the view in the waterfall view photo above if you come in by boat and do the harder walk.

Section 3: Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park

In mid 2003, Purnululu joined the list of Australia's World Heritage locations. Here's what the Department of Environment and Heritage has to say. "Famous for the 45 000 hectare Bungle Bungle Range, with its huge expanse of striking banded beehive structures, sandstone cliffs and towers, Purnululu has been listed as an outstanding landscape that is a superlative natural phenomenon, revealing the history of its formation over hundreds of millions of years. Purnululu National Park has such outstanding universal natural values that it enriches the world and should be conserved for the benefit of all people. Before 1982, when aerial pictures were first released, it was virtually unknown except to pastoralists, scientists and the local Aboriginal community. It is now seen as one of the scenic jewels of outback Australia."



Where would you rather be – here with a small group or in a dusty campground with dozens of others?

There are many tours which will take you to Purnululu. No other tour will allow you to experience as much of the park in as intimate a fashion as ours.

The start of our walk is about 330 kilometres from Kununurra, the last 80 kilometres of which is a 4WD track. The drive takes most of the day but we should arrive in time to walk the first few kilometres up Piccaninny Creek.



Easy day walk.

The next day we continue upstream to a base camp about 12-13 kilometres up Piccaninny Gorge, where sheer red cliffs are silhouetted against the clear blue skies of the dry season. Piccaninny is by far the largest gorge in the Bungles. We spend three or four nights there using the days to explore the many fascinating side gorges. These gorges offer a variety of delights — some are palm filled, some are very narrow and require swimming, some have caves which require the use of a torch. There is at least one gorge that allows us to reach a high point. (We cannot climb to the actual top as climbing up the domes themselves is not permitted because of their exceptionally fragile nature. We can, however, follow watercourses as far as they will take us.) No words can do justice to the beauty of the area. The only way to appreciate it is to come and see it for yourself.

This section finishes with the drive back to Kununurra.

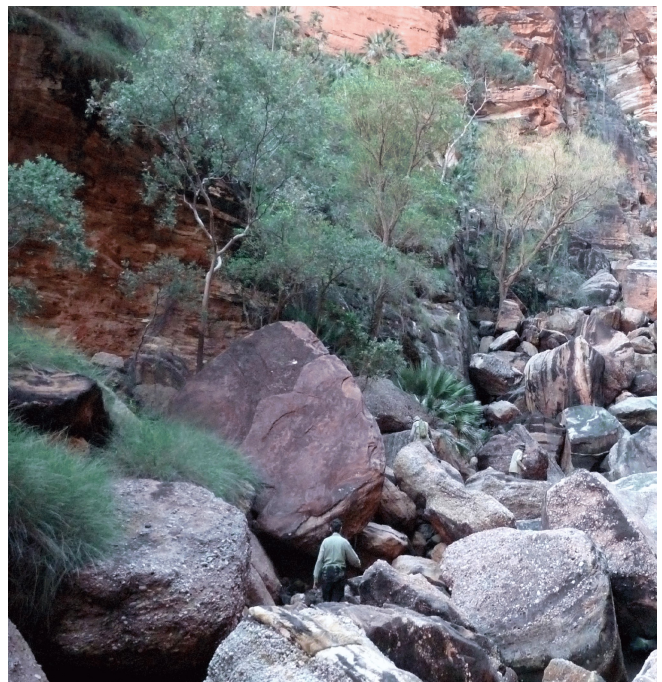
Terrain and difficulty

Overall Level 3.

Terrain **With packs** - level 2-3. The long walk up the Piccaninny Gorge, mainly over pebbles and sand can be quite tiring for many people. Walking through the upper reaches of the gorge requires some clambering over large rocks and includes edging along at least one narrow ledge several metres above the creek bed. On some trips we do this with day packs, on others we carry full packs and make our base camp beyond the first rough section. flat,

Daywalks without packs - level 4: includes serious boulder scrambling, steep climbs and at least one walk through a cave.

The climb up one gorge is particularly strenuous. Very few groups have had every member reach the top. If you don't wish to do the rock scrambling, you need to be prepared to relax and enjoy their surroundings while the others continue. Keen birdwatchers often find this especially pleasant. Some people become uncomfortable in the absence of the rest of the group. Please keep this in mind when choosing this trip.



This photo shows one of the more difficult rock scrambles on one of our day walks. Look closely and you can see two people.

Vegetation **With packs** - level 1: minimal vegetation

Without packs - level 2-4. Some walks include pushing through sharp and/or sticky spinifex, gaiters essential, long trousers recommended.

Hours You normally walk 4-6 hours per day.

Packs	Pack weight: level 3 = one week's worth of food plus stove fuel. However, you do not normally carry a full pack on three of the days.
Art:	Two minor sites, may not be seen by all groups.
Campsites	Mostly on sand, might include rock ledges on some nights.
Swims	Generally very cold and not much water but there are always some pools. If you get past the difficult part on one of the walks, there is a compulsory swim of about 30 metres through a small section of the gorge.
Lowlights	Helicopters intrusive most of day, aircraft early and late.
Highlights	Incredible and spectacular gorge scenery; each gorge very different from the others.
Wildlife	Birds are often a highlight for those who sit quietly and watch. You are unlikely to see large animals.
Map	1:50 000 Bungle Bungle.

Notes. Those who wish to do a helicopter flight over the Bungles will have an opportunity to do so either on arrival or just before departure from the park. Which time we choose depends on when we arrive. The 2021 advertised prices are \$299 for a 18 minute flight, \$449 for 30 minutes and \$549 for 42 minutes. For further information please see their website:

<https://www.helispirit.com.au/scenic-flights-and-tours/bungle-bungle-helicopter-tours-live/>

The track into the Bungles normally opens in early April. Exceptional weather can, however, close it at any time. If the road is closed, the group will have the choice of paying extra for a flight or going somewhere else.

Terrain and difficulty – General Information, all sections

Climate Level 3. Usually very dry, average daytime max 30-31°C, average nighttime minimum is about 18°C in Kakadu, about 14°C in the Kimberley. Occasionally it gets below 10°C in Kakadu and below 5°C in the Kimberley.

Rain is very unlikely, but it is possible. Since 1986, we have had moderately heavy rain in June on three or four occasions since 1986. If you wish to keep your pack as light as possible, leave your tent fly at home. If you wish to be absolutely certain that you won't get wet, bring it.

Off-trail Almost 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.

What's Included and What's Not

Included

- The services of an experienced guide, on call 24 hours a day.
- All park entry and camping fees.
- Evening meals on the walks
- All transport during the trip.
- Camping fees at Coinda and Victoria River.
- Budget accommodation in Kununurra.

Not included

- Breakfasts & lunches. Bring your own. It will be possible to resupply in Kununurra.
- Camping equipment. If you don't have everything, we have a limited amount available for hire.
- Transport to and/or from connection points for anyone doing only part of the trip.
- Evening meals at Kununurra and Victoria River.

Accommodation note. It should be possible to upgrade to a room at both Victoria River and Coinda. It should also be possible to upgrade to a better quality room in Kununurra (twin rather than four to a room). We can arrange these at an additional charge. Please ask if you are interested.

Our past client discount applies to this trip our normal membership discounts do not.

Final note. This trip begins in Darwin and finishes in Kununurra. **We will be able to provide transport back to Darwin at the end of the trip for no additional charge.** Please let us know if you are interested in this. Without major stops the drive takes a full day.

Special note for those doing only one or two sections.

Anyone doing only section one can choose to get dropped off at Coinda, Pine Creek or Katherine. At the time these notes were written, the only way to get from Coinda to Darwin was on an AAT Kings tour bus. (You could book the transport without the tour.) (08 8923 6555 – do not use the 1300 number).

Anyone beginning with section two can meet us in Pine Creek or Katherine. Greyhound serves both daily. It would be better to come down the day before as we might go through before the bus arrives on the 30th. Alternatively, there is a bus from Darwin to Victoria River which was scheduled to arrive at 10:15 PM.

Those finishing with section two will get dropped off in Kununurra. Anyone doing only section three will need to arrive in Kununurra the day before departure (5 June).