

Russell's Light Wet Special: 21 February - 1 March 2020

List price - \$1795

Special price, see details at end. For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page,

www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/prices.shtml

Summary. **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 secluded bush pools after short walks on the others.

I (Russell Willis) love walking in the wet season. This trip is designed to do some of the bits that I enjoy the most.

Itinerary

Day 0 This is the day **BEFORE** departure. Because of the special nature of this trip, we will skip our normal pre-trip meeting.

Day 1 Afternoon departure, overnight at the Emerald Springs roadhouse.

Day 2 Drive and walk a short distance to Depot Creek. If conditions are good, we'll camp the night. If not we'll return to Emerald Springs and a bed.

Day 3 Drive to Katherine via Edith Falls. We'll do a moderately long walk at Edith, stopping for a swim in a croc-free pool. Overnight in Katherine or at the gorge.

Day 4 Day trip to Katherine Gorge. If the weather allows it, we'll have a helicopter drop us off at the 8th gorge and walk back close to 20 km to where a boat will pick us up for the last leg to the parking area. Overnight in Katherine

Day 5 Drive to Moline Rock Pools for a swim. Drive to Cooina. If time, visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre. Afternoon Yellow Waters cruise.

Day 6 Early morning Yellow Waters cruise. Drive to Burrunkuy (Nourlangie Rock). Do the 12 km Bark walk. Drive to Jabiru.

Day 7 Lazy day. Option to do a scenic flight over Jim Jim & Twin Falls. Drive toward Darwin, short walks along the way. If time and conditions permit, we may include a short nature walk at Fogg Dam and/or the Mamukala Billabong on the way. Not yet sure where we'll spend the night.

Day 8 Drive toward Litchfield. Overnight at a caravan park.

Day 9 Litchfield sightseeing, short walks finishing with a short walk to the Walkers Creek camping area. This is normally closed during the wet season but I have been given special permission to camp there. Every campsite has its own private pool. We can take our pick, as long as we keep our tents well back from the water.

Day 10 After a final swim, we head back to Darwin.



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



Depot Creek swim stop

Now for the details.

I set the itinerary to allow some bushwalking friends from Darwin to join either or both of the two weekends. The bits where we carry packs will be substantially easier than the two long walks.

Our first overnight stop is the Emerald Springs roadhouse, chosen because of its location near Depot Creek as well as because it is one of the nicest overnight stops on the Stuart Highway.

Depot Creek flows through a wonderful small gorge unknown even to most locals. It's too

good to miss. Come along and see why I've been running February trips there for groups of Darwin locals for many years. In a dry year, we might be able to drive all the way to the creek. In a wet one, we might need to do an extra 3 km in each direction. It's worth it. If conditions are good, we'll camp near the top of the gorge. If not, back to Emerald Springs



Depot Creek campsite, February 2018

Depot Creek Falls, February 2018



Upper Edith Falls, February



Upper Edith swimming pool

The next day we continue south, stopping at Edith Falls in the northern portion of Nitmiluk. Edith Falls is a series of drops over a distance of about a kilometre. We follow the marked trail above the falls and up to a large pool, perfect for a swim. We then return to the vehicles and drive to Katherine or Katherine gorge where we spend the night.

Now comes what should be the most exciting – and most strenuous – day on the trip. If things go 100% to plan, we'll get a helicopter to the 8th gorge and walk back to the Southern Rockhole where we'll get picked up by a boat and taken back to where we began. NT Parks has said it should be OK, but as of the time I'm writing these notes, I haven't got final approval from the local operators.



Katherine Gorge in flood

Crocodiles move in the wet season. Swimming in the Katherine at this time of year is prohibited. However, there are many lovely pools on the side creeks which are perfectly safe, so we will have a few swims along the way.

After another night in Katherine, it's time for Kakadu.



Swimming in the Southern Rockhole



Motorcar Falls.

From Katherine, we drive to Cooinda via the Kakadu Highway. We'll stop at a place called Ikoymarrwa or Moline Rock Pools, a real gem hardly known to passing travellers. If we get very ambitious, we can do a detour to Yurmikmik (Motorcar Falls) as well. We get to Cooinda in time to do the 4:30 PM Yellow Waters cruise.

Cooinda offers a special deal for people doing two cruises. Too good to miss so we'll begin the next day with the 6:45 AM cruise before moving on to Burrunkuy (Nourlangie Rock), the site of the longest marked walking trail in Kakadu. Our walk will take us past

the main rock art gallery, up and over the top, down past the lesser known Nanguluwur art site and back to where we began. We spend the night at the Anbinik Resort in Kakadu. For more information see, <http://www.anbinik.com.au/>



Rainy view on the Barrk walk at Nourlangie



Unlike the dry season, plenty of seats on the wet season Yellow Waters cruises.

Having done the two longest walks in the previous three days, it's time for a more leisurely one. Anyone wishing to do a scenic flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls will have the chance to do so before we begin a slow drive back along the Arnhem Highway. If time and conditions permit, we may also do a short nature walk at the Mamukala Billabong on the way. There are also a couple of short walks in the Mary River National Park which might make a good stop. We haven't decided where we'll stop but the Corroboree Tavern is on the list of possibles.

Keen birdwatchers

always find Fogg Dam worth a stop so we'll stop there on our way south toward Litchfield. We plan to take our time and stop at the Litchfield Safari Camp just before the entry to the park,

<http://www.litchfieldsafaricamp.com.au/>.

The next day we do several short walks visiting the waterfalls which will be flowing in a way that dry season visitors never see. We finish with something I haven't been able to do this century – walk in to a campsite at Walker Creek. This is one of the nicest camping areas in Litchfield, 8 separate sites, each with its own private pool. It is normally closed at this time of year but I have been given special permission to camp there.



Litchfield wet season waterfall

After a final swim the next morning, we return to Darwin.

Notes

Everything depends on the weather. Extreme flooding can close every road that we might use. That kind of extreme doesn't happen more than one year in five and lasts for only a few days. But, it can happen.

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 everything, bad weather can make the flights impossible.

Terrain and Difficulty

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

Climate 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.



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.

With our group fly, you can stay dry even when it’s raining.

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.

Terrain 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.

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.

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 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 the walking is on trails where the vegetation is not much of a problem.

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, not including breaks. The Katherine Gorge day walk could easily be 9-10 hours, including breaks.

Packs **Pack weight** - level 1. You never carry more than one day’s food and carry full packs only short distances.

Art We visit some of the best known art sites in Kakadu.

Campsites Sandy beaches or grassy areas nearby if water levels are high.

Swims This is the best time to see Kakadu’s 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 Kakadu 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. The two photos above were taken in Litchfield on our 2005 Kakadu Light trip. The blue winged kookaburra was unusually tame. The water monitor was about a metre long.

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

What's included and What's not

This trip is relatively inexpensive for a reason. We can't be sure how much some things will cost until we get closer to the date. Rather than charge a high price that covers the most expensive possibilities, we'll leave the choice – and payment – to you.

Included

All transport except for scenic flights.

All park entry fees.

Meals on the two nights we camp.

The services of an experienced guide.

Not included

Accommodation – We will stay in accommodation most nights. Different rooms cost different amounts. We will book for you and give you the choice of the type of rooms you want.

Flights including the drop off at Katherine Gorge. The helicopter costs \$420 per flight and can take 2 or 3 people depending on their size. We'll average it among the group.

Restaurant meals. Everyone has different tastes. We'd rather let you choose for yourself than charge for the more expensive choices.

Drinks in restaurants. These are never covered on any of our trips.

Final note. To fit in with the first to book, we have put the start a week later than was originally advertised