

# Kakadu Light: 17-23 February 2025

List price - \$20 I, Russell Willis, want to do this trip. I need to charge something in order to run it as a commercial trip which makes it easier to get the permits. There will, however, be substantial additional expenses as set out at the end of this document.

**Summary. Enjoy the Top End in the Wet.** See spectacular waterfalls and wildflowers by day. Relax in comfortable accommodation most nights, camp next to secluded bush pools after short walks on the other.

**We walk, we know.** 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.

## Itinerary

- Day 0** This is the day **BEFORE** departure. Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Hilton Gardens, 122 The Esplanade.. This meeting is important. If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.
- Day 1** Acclimatisation day. Pick up is as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Fogg Dam, then to Kakadu. There will be stops on the way to do short walks and to buy cool drinks, etc. Visit Park Headquarters. Overnight at Aurora Resort, Jabiru. Bring money for drinks & dinner.
- Day 2** Weather permitting, optional flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls. Burrungkuy (Nourlangie) walk. How far we go will be determined by the group and the weather at the time. Overnight at Cooinda.
- Day 3** Optional early morning Yellow Waters cruise. Drive to Yurmikmik. 3 to 3½ km walk to campsite near Motorcar Falls.
- Day 4** Long day walk at Kurrundie and lower Motorcar Creeks. Drive to Pine Creek. If time permits, stopping for a swim at Ikoymarrwa on the way. Overnight in budget accommodation.
- Day 5** Drive to Litchfield. Stop to check the Depot Creek track on the way. (We've been told it's been closed but haven't yet been able to confirm this.) Buley to Florence walk. Overnight in accom at Litchfield Safari camp.
- Day 6** Tolmer & Stapleton Creek day walk. Good swimming. Return to Litchfield Safari Camp.
- Day 7** Visit more Litchfield waterfalls (Wangi, Cascades, Walker Creek if open), Return to Darwin.

*Now for the details....*

This trip is being run on an expense only basis so that Walkabouts owner Russell Willis can get out bush with some company. That tells you how much he enjoys it.



Birds at Fogg Dam, February; every time is different

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.

We begin with a short walk at Fogg Dam before continuing to Kakadu where we visit the Mamukala Billabong. We then drive to Jabiru. If people have booked in advance, it may be possible to do a scenic flight. Overnight at the Aurora Kakadu Lodge. See

<https://aurorakakadulodge.com.au/> for more information.



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



Looking out over the plains on the Barrk walk at Burrungkuy

Mornings are **usually** better for scenic flights than the afternoons, so if we didn't do a flight on day one, we can do it here. From Jabiru, we drive a relatively short distance to Burrungkuy (Nourlangie Rock), one of the most visited places 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. If people are interested, we can do the full 10 km loop. Shorter options are possible.

From Burrungkuy, we drive to Coinda where we spend the night. Next morning, we do the 6:45 AM Yellow Waters cruise before continuing to Yurmikmik and the Motorcar Falls walk. This walk takes us to the largest of the Kakadu waterfalls which are reasonably accessible during the monsoon season. We don our packs and follow the track to Motorcar



Never a crowd on a February Yellow Waters cruise



Motorcar Falls.

Creek Falls where we stop for the first of many swims. We camp a short distance away between the upper and lower falls on Motorcar Creek. The next day, we do a loop walk to and along Kurrundie Creek, then back to Motorcar Creek, upstream past the lower falls and back to where we camped. We collect our packs and drive to the small town of Pine Creek. If time permits, we stop for a swim at Ikoymarrwa on the way. We spend the night in Pine Creek accommodation.

The next day we head to Depot Creek, one of Russell's favourite wet season spots. Sadly, we have been told that the track has now been fenced off. We haven't seen this for ourselves so we will make a brief stop to see whether or not this is true. We then continue to Litchfield National Park with its incredible waterfalls. We should have time to do the short trail from Buley Rockhole to Florence Falls on the way to our accommodation at the Litchfield Safari Camp. On a week day in the wet season, we should have one of the most popular spots in the park almost to ourselves.



Lower Motorcar Falls - can you see the people? If not go to the end of these notes.



Lichfield cascades

The next day we visit a number of the other waterfalls in the park. The Darwin Bushwalking Club had their 2024 Christmas party in the area shown below. If water levels allow us to safely cross the creek, we will do a longish day walk visiting this area. Unlike the people in the photos, we'll start early in the day and carry only day packs and should have more water.



Walking along Tolmer Creek



Stapleton Falls and pool



Swim stop at Stapleton Falls



## Terrain and Difficulty

**Overall** Level 1 – you never carry more than one 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 most 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 1-4. Although some sections of these walks are fairly flat and straightforward, much of the walking is off-trail. There are some sections of rock scrambling and a couple of short but sharp climbs. If you have never done this before, you may find this fairly difficult. 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.

Much of the walking is off-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.

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



Wildflowers everywhere

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. This is the best time for wildflowers.

**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 one or more of the art sites at Burrungkuy (Nourlangie).

**Campsites**       Sandy beach or grassy area nearby if water levels are high.

**Swims**            This is the best time to see Kakadu and 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.

[Our own private spa](#)

**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 one of our February Kakadu Light trips. 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, <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/newpage>

Kakadu National Park: <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/kakadu-national-park>

## **Coinda and Jabiru**

Coinda 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 wet season attractions at Coinda are the Yellow Waters cruises and the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

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. Even if you have done a dry season cruise at Yellow Waters, it is well worth doing again so that you can gain an appreciation of just how much the landscape changes from season to season.

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.

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.

Jabiru is a small ex-mining town with very limited shops. The Aurora Resort is a resort and caravan park which has a variety of accommodation. We believe it is the best value in the town at this time of year.

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.

We will eat in local restaurants for the first three nights and will cook our own for the last three.

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.org/kaklight02.shtml](http://www.bushwalkingholidays.org/kaklight02.shtml) and [www.bushwalkingholidays.org/pdf/dixon-kak-light07.pdf](http://www.bushwalkingholidays.org/pdf/dixon-kak-light07.pdf)

## What Is and Is **Not Included** in the Price

**Included.** The services of the guide.

**Not included.** Everything else.

### Why not include everything?

Based on past experience, people have different preferences when it comes to accommodation. One person will have a dinner that costs twice as much as that for someone else. Some may not want to do the scenic flight. NT residents don't pay park entry fees, others do. The vehicle cost per person depends on the number in the vehicle. To encourage people to come, we are only charging their actual cost. We'll do the bookings for you but you'll need to pay us. Here are some approximate prices to give you an idea of the extra costs you'll be up for.

- Transport. Nil for those providing their own. Vehicle cost split among those travelling in our vehicle. This cost will include one month's registration (a bit under \$200) + 60 cents per km. Estimate \$150 to \$300 per person for those travelling in our vehicle.
- Park entry fees. Nil for NT residents. \$50 for those from interstate or overseas.
- Park camping fees. \$7 per person.
- Yellow Waters cruise. (About \$120, highly recommended but optional.)
- Optional scenic flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls. About \$250 per person.
- Accommodation (5 nights). Depends on who shares what. Our best estimate is between \$300 and \$500. Substantially more if you want your own room.
- Restaurant meals (3 nights). \$30 to \$50 each + drinks.
- Meals we cook (one on the walk and two at the Litchfield Safari Camp). \$15 each. People are welcome to help with preparing the two meals at the Litchfield Safari camp.
- Drinks and snacks at roadside stops.
- The Coinda Buffet breakfast costs \$35. Highly recommended. We should book this when we book your cruise or room. You will need to bring your other breakfasts.

**Estimated total cost** is between \$400 (own vehicle, no cruise or flight, cheap meals, cheapest accom) and \$1300 (everything but drinks as above).

**This itinerary is subject to change.** We can't book the accom and tours until we have people booked on the trip. We can't be sure what accom is available until we try and book it. Extreme weather can close roads.

### Final note for Darwin locals or short term visitors

If you don't want to take time off work, you can do the last 2½ days. Drive from Darwin to Litchfield and meet the group late Friday 21 Feb. Do the day walks and spend the night on 22 Feb. Visit one last waterfall on the 22<sup>nd</sup> on your way back to Darwin. It's all bitumen so any car can handle it. Not counting transport, sharing accom, this should cost no more \$250. **We can't take more than four people on the short trip until the main one has been available for two weeks.** Those people, if any, will need to bring down the food and drinks for the last two meals.

## Booking

You need to do steps 3 & 4 on our booking page, <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/bookings>

You also need to pay us \$400 which is the \$20 plus \$380 toward the expenses. If you cancel, you lose the trip cost, any non-refundable expense we've paid plus 25% of any remaining expense money.

You will also need to fill in a questionnaire about your preferences.

## Questions for those who book

1. Do you want to do a scenic flight?
  - a) If so for the full hour or less?
2. Do you want to do the Yellow Waters cruise?
3. Do you want to book the Cooinda buffet breakfast in advance?

Unless otherwise specified, we will assume couples would like to share a room and bed, singles might share a room but not a bed.

4. Are you happy to share a room with someone else?
  - a) If so, same sex only or doesn't matter?
  - b) Are you happy to share a room/cabin with more than one other person?
5. Aurora Lodge Kakadu has a variety of accommodation. One bedroom cabin, two bedroom cabin, queen room, and more. Please have a look at <https://aurorakakadulodge.com.au/> and let us know your preference.
6. Cooinda has lodge rooms and 'outback retreats' (air con tents). You only save \$20 per room for booking a non-refundable stay so I'll pay the extra unless advised other wise. See [https://kakadutourism.com/stay/cooinda-lodge?gad\\_source=1](https://kakadutourism.com/stay/cooinda-lodge?gad_source=1) (At \$795 per night, I don't think the Villas offer value for money, but if you want one, I'll book it.)
7. Do you have a tent suitable for our one night camping? I only have one spare that could be hired.)
8. In Pine Creek, we'll probably stay at the Lazy Lizard, <https://lazylizardpinecreek.com.au/accommodation/> They have a variety of cabins as well as budget doubles. Based on past experience, we prefer the cabins. Have a look and let us know which you prefer.
9. The Litchfield Safari Camp is the only place we can stay that doesn't require a fairly long drive to get to the places we want to visit. They have glamping tents (\$400 per night) and cabins. I believe they have only one family cabin and two en suite cabins. We need the indoor kitchen facilities & will book the family cabin as soon as we have at least two bookings. If you want privacy, you might need to go for the glamping tent. See <https://litchfieldsafaricamp.com.au/> Which type of accom would you prefer?
10. Food. We are doing three of our own meals. If you have any dietary restrictions, you need to let us know what they are. If it isn't noted on the registration form (step 4 on the booking page), we will assume you will eat it.  
Would you be willing to assist with cooking one of the meals we have at the Safari Camp?

It should be possible to keep drinks cool most of the time. Pre dinner drinks on the first three nights (restaurants are not BYO). Plus anything you want at Litchfield. Trying to keep something cool on the overnight walk is possible, but you'd need to carry a fair bit of extra weight to do it. If you want to put something in a group esky, we'll need to know in advance.

