

Durack River Fishing Special: April 23 - May 6, 2011

After three trips along the Durack, we decided that this was the best possible location for a trip which would appeal to keen fishermen (and women). This trip is the result. It combines the best walking we've found in the area with the best fishing we can offer. Barramundi are the most famous of the fish that you might catch, but they are far from the only ones.

Unfortunately, the boat we used to use for our drop offs has been sold. We haven't been able to find another, but the first two to book are so keen to do the trip that we'll go in by helicopter. That costs more but you get some spectacular views. Most, perhaps all, of the walk will be upstream of the tidal part of the Durack in an area where we've never seen any crocs other than freshies. This means that swimming is not a problem.

Exactly where we get dropped off will depend on where the pilot feels comfortable dropping us. We expect it to be a few km upstream of the tidal area.

Although this is a fishing trip, it is also a bushwalking trip. We will visit interesting small gorges and Aboriginal art sites along the way. There is a relatively short but quite interesting side gorge not too far from where we begin. that we'll do without packs as a half-day walk. It's slow going but there is a bit of Aboriginal art and it finishes at a large pool that doesn't show on the map

On day 3 or 4 we should reach Nyia Creek, a smaller version of the Durack itself. Having now done some exploration, we may be able to add a bit more time here. We didn't check many places but we did find the largest single Aboriginal art site any of us had ever seen – a 250 m rock wall covered in paintings, some very faded, some as clear as if they'd been done yesterday. In 2008, we discovered a magic spot – a large pool below a small flowing cascade. The surrounding flat rock ledges will make a perfect camp for two nights as we continue our explorations.

From Nyia, we will cut across the plateau taking a short cut back to the Durack. It is worth quoting from my notes from our first trip. "Almost straightforward to the top – but slow. Final zigzag just below the top to find the notch that took us all the way. As per the map, the 'top' wasn't the TOP. We walked along a flat, then climbed, then flat, then climb, eventually reaching the real plateau. We walked on to the edge of the plateau where we had a rest. Found an animal track of some sort that took us some distance. Had another rest, not long after which we came to an area swarming with birds. Lots of small 1-2m grevilleas, some in flower, some not. Many small acacias in bloom; a few larger 4-5 m trees I didn't recognise. It was too pleasant to miss, so we sat down for ten minutes and listened to and watched the birds before pressing on to the edge of the plateau, great views of the Durack. We dropped down a level to a small creek, joining it near where it dropped over a small waterfall. To here it had been easy. Dropping down was less so. We had to contour toward the downstream (north) edge and then zig zag our way down. Not too hard, but not easy either. A very short walk from where we reached the bottom brought us to some small to medium paperbarks next to a pool – good shade for lunch."

We will revisit the best places that we found on our first three trips. These include a number of Aboriginal art sites and a variety of landscapes. If the Gibb Road is open, we will walk out to the road for the final pick up. If not, we will call in the helicopter which will allow us to finish anywhere we choose.

Price. As this trip has been set up as a special charter, our normal discounts do not apply. The two people who booked have agreed to pay \$4700 each if no one else books. If a third person books, the price drops to \$3800 per person. If four or more book, the price drops to \$3000 per person. For seven or more it drops to \$2750. To confirm a place, you need to pay the \$3000 and agree to pay the extra \$800 if no one else books. If seven or more book, you will get a refund.

Transport. If only two book, they will fly to and from Kununurra by helicopter. If more than two book, some will bus to or from Wyndham and fly from or to there. That shorter flight is why we can lower the cost for additional people.

Fishing. In 2008, we ate fresh fish 12 out of 13 nights. We could have had fish on the other night but they decided that they wanted a break and released the day's catch. We recommend that you be prepared with a reasonably strong one. The fishermen on our previous trips had a number of fish snap their lines. You can lose lures to snags or fish. We recommend that you bring plenty.

Most of the pools are large enough so half a dozen or more people could be fishing without getting in each others' way.

There will be some side trips without packs. If someone would prefer to remain with the packs and do some more fishing that is not a problem.

The trip begins on Easter Saturday. You should be able to buy some lures in Kununurra on Good Friday, but the selection will be limited and expensive. If you plan to buy lures for barramundi, it would be safer to do so before you come or on the Thursday before the trip starts either in Darwin or in Kununurra.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall	Level 3-4
Climate	Level 2. Average daytime max 33-34°C (91-94°F), average nighttime min 18-20°C (65-68°F). It has, however, been known to drop to near freezing. Generally low humidity. Rain unlikely but possible, be prepared.
Terrain	Level 2-5. The Durack walk contains some of the most difficult terrain we traverse on any of our trips, short steep climbs and long stretches of rounded river stones where you needed to concentrate on every step for long distances. It also contains some of the easiest – huge flat rock ledges that go on for kilometres at a time.
Vegetation	Level 2-4. Can vary from year to year depending on when last burnt. It is likely that you will spend some time pushing through some fairly thick scrub or grass. At this time of year, the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out. It may be necessary to push through thick spinifex in some places.
Hours	Generally 4-6 hours. The first full day's walk is very long and may take 8 hours not counting breaks. On some days, you need carry your pack for only a couple of hours after which you can rest or explore without packs.
Packs	Pack weight - level 4. You need to carry two week's food. You can probably get away without a full sleeping bag, but you do need something warm for the nights. Rain is possible. We recommend something like a light weight mesh tent with a fly..
Art	A few minor and a couple of major sites. We may find more. The 2009 group found a major site we hadn't seen on our first two trips.
Campsites	We expect most to be on sand and rock ledges. We cannot be sure until we get there. You are very unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites. You may not see anyone else at any of them.
Swims	Many good pools. Many opportunities for swimming each day. Crocodiles could be a danger in some pools. Ask your guide before getting in the water.
Lowlights	Carrying two weeks food.
Highlights	Great scenery. Exploring the unknown.
Wildlife	You have a good chance of spotting freshwater crocodiles. You may see large crocs in the lower part of the Durack. There is a good variety of birds. Our 2009 group counted over 60 species including a square tailed kite and a purple crowned fairy wren.
Fishing	Excellent. See the write up above.

Maps The 1:100 000 Pentecost covers most of the trip; a short section at the end is on Beatrice.
The 1:50 000 Durack covers most of the trip but we expect to spend several days on the Warambur map as well. On our previous trips, we also did short sections on Mount Lawley, Mosquito Hills and Bindoola Creek.

Itinerary: Durack River Fishing Special

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Day 0 Travel to Kununurra. There are daily air and bus services between Kununurra and Perth and Darwin. Connections to the eastern states are normally made through Darwin.

Pre-trip meeting for everyone doing the first section, 6.00 p.m., outdoor area, Kimberley Croc Backpackers. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 Very early morning pick up from your accommodation in Kununurra provided you have given us the address at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. If you can't make the meeting and haven't made arrangements before hand, you won't get picked up.
Travel to the Durack via helicopter or bus and helicopter.

Day 2-13 Bush camping, carrying full packs most days. At least two chanced to do some fishing most days. Day walks without full packs are very likely. Depends on what we find.

Day 14 If the road is open, walk out to Gibb River Road for pick up. Drive back to Kununurra. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon or early evening.
If the road is closed, helicopter pick up and flight to Kununurra or Wyndham. Anyone flying to Wyndham will be taken back to Kununurra by bus from there.

Important Note **Air North** (part of Regional Link), the main airline currently operating into Kununurra uses some relatively small aircraft with an official baggage allowance of only 13 kg. See the Getting Here page on our website or contact Air North for more details. Phone: 1800 627474 or (08) 8920 4000; email: airnorth@regionallink.com.au
Skywest offers a limited number of flights between Kununurra and Darwin or Perth. Their aircraft are larger. Worth checking.
Virgin Blue offers daily flights from Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth to Darwin and a limited number of direct flights from Perth to Kununurra and others from Adelaide and Perth to Broome. If you can't get a good fare with Qantas, flying Virgin Blue to Darwin or Broome, then Air North or a bus to Kununurra might save you some money. See www.virginblue.com.au.