

Green Kimberley: January 4-22, 2022

The Top End wet season is **spectacular** and, more importantly, **enjoyable**. This trip is designed to give you a taste of the best that the Kimberley has to offer at this amazing time of year. It starts with an easy acclimatisation and builds to a serious walk.

Section 1: Introduction to the Wet: January 4-8

We begin with the 500+ km drive to Victoria River. We should get there early enough to do the short escarpment walk before dinner and a bed at the roadhouse.

We'll spend the next day doing some short walks, seeing some of the waterfalls that only flow at this time of year and visiting one of the largest Aboriginal art sites in Gregory National Park.



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 In keeping with the wishes of the traditional owners, we do not publish photos of the sites not on tourist trails.



Late afternoon view from the Gregory escarpment walk

We then move on to Timber Creek where we 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.

If the road is open, we'll continue our history lesson with a stop at Gregory's Tree. Augustus Gregory



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

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. If we arrive early, we'll spend the afternoon of the day we arrive exploring our own Hidden Valley near town, stopping to view some Aboriginal paintings and enjoy swimming in a lovely pool, well used by the locals on the weekends. On a weekday we may have it to ourselves. We spend the night in accommodation as we continue our acclimatisation.

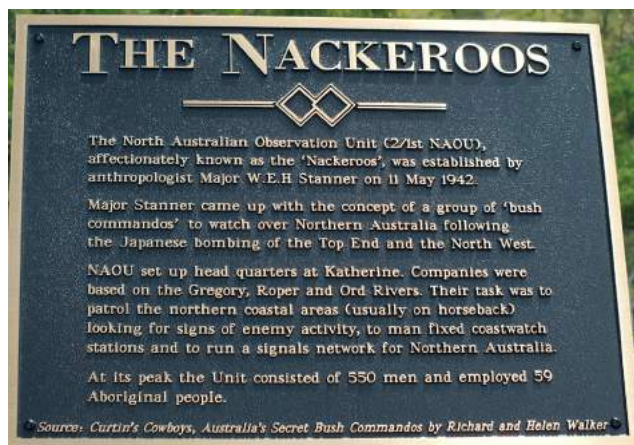
Local people often visit places like Black Rock Falls and Middle Springs just to the west of the town. On our 2013 trip, we did our first



Upper falls, Middle Springs

loop walk across the top joining the two. Local bushwalkers had told us about it. It was just as good as they said. The climb at the beginning is fairly steep as is the descent to the creek above Middle Springs. Once on top, except for short stretch between creeks there are plenty of pools so, although conditions vary from year to year, we can definitely say that there will be plenty of time for swim stops.

The following day, a relatively short drive and a three to five kilometre walk bring us to a pool in an area which bears a striking resemblance to the Bungle Bungles.



Hidden Valley swim



Looking at one of the Middle Creek art sites

We spend the rest of the day and the following morning exploring the gorges, looking at a wealth of Aboriginal art and enjoying the pools. It's a magic spot. The photo on the previous page gives you a small hint of what it is like.

Section 2: Ord River Canoe: January 9-12

From Kununurra we are driven to Lake Argyle where we put the canoes in the river just below the main dam. The next four days are spent doing a leisurely paddle back to Kununurra, stopping to do a few day



On the Ord near the start of the canoe trip

walks up into the hills through which we are passing. Every one of the side walks has one or more waterfalls and plenty of time for swimming. We may make one camp in a bush spot and the other two in formed camps with some shelter or we may spend all three nights in the formed camps.

Above Spillway Creek, the water level is virtually constant through the entire year. Below Spillway, the water should be fast flowing but manageable at this time of year. As we will be going downstream, less effort is required than at other times.

Previous canoeing experience is not necessary. If the Ord is flowing too fast below Spillway Creek, we can arrange for a larger boat to pick us up at that point.



Gently paddling along one of the more open sections.



Russell Willis on one of the side walks on the canoe trip, January 2010

We plan to get picked up about ten km before the normal pull out point, avoiding the hottest and hardest part of the paddle. We spend that night in budget accommodation in Kununurra.

With a big walk coming up, we have the next day to do some sightseeing and relaxing. Possibilities include a flight over the Bungles, a visit to Wyndham and a visit to the old Argyle homestead near Lake Argyle.

Terrain and Difficulty – Sections 1 & 2

Additional information which applies to all sections can be found at the end.

Overall Level 2 – you don't need to carry a full pack except for very short distances from the canoe to the campsites on the Ord section.

Terrain Level 1-4. This trip has it all, from easy marked trails to off-trail rock scrambling and a couple of short but sharp climbs. If you have never done this before, you may find this fairly difficult. Much of the walking is through open woodland with a spear grass understorey.

The waterfalls on the side creeks that flow into the Ord are at their best at this time of year. Our walks include steep climbs, rock hopping and some scrub bashing. The rewards are beautiful pools and waterfalls which we will almost certainly have to ourselves. These walks are optional. You may relax in the shade near the canoes if you prefer.

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.



Hibiscus



Grevillea

The vegetation can vary from year to year depending on when it was last burnt. 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.

Wildflowers are particularly abundant at this time of year.

Hours	Generally 4-6 hours, not including breaks. A few days might be longer.
Packs	Pack weight - level 1 – your only overnight carries are canoe to campsite and a short walk near Middle Creek.
Art	We visit several art sites, including some major ones.
Campsites	Three canoe camps plus one bush camp. The other nights are in accommodation.
Swims	This is the best time to see the local waterfalls, many of which flow only during the Wet. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Many of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves.
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. Lack of the tourist hordes of the dry season.
Wildlife	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals. The Ord canoe trip may give you a chance to see one or more freshwater crocodiles but they are harder to spot at this time of the year than during the cooler months.
Fishing	Possible in the Ord River on the canoe section. Not possible elsewhere.
Maps	The 1:50 000 Sullivan Creek map shows our full day Gregory walk near Victoria River. 1:50 000 Burt Range (the first hidden valley) 1:50 000 Burt Range, Carlton Gorge & Deception Range for the canoe trip.

Section 3: The Northern Carr Boyd Range: January 13-22

Located south of Kununurra and west of Lake Argyle, 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 barren, rugged beyond belief. But up close they can show a different nature. Local bushwalkers love the range for the numerous deep cool gorges, lovely waterfalls and beautiful fern lined pools, just waiting for someone to stop and have a swim.

We begin with a cruise up the Ord River to a drop off point on Cooliman Creek. From there, a relatively short, flat walk takes us to the lower falls at a creek we call “Many Falls” as there are eight different waterfalls in a relatively short distance. From there, it gets a bit more strenuous but the rewards are worth it.

Once at the top, we set up a base camp and spend a day exploring with only a day pack before continuing north toward Packsaddle Creek, the largest in the range.



Climbing up near past the first falls.



View of the central falls on the climb up.



Dry waterfall – will this year be better?



Campsite and pool above the dry waterfall.

From here we hope to do a loop over to a spectacular waterfall we found in on our May 2003 trip. When it's flowing, as it should be at this time of year, it could be the most spectacular waterfall in the range. Should be the last time we were there it wasn't flowing but we did get to enjoy one of the prettiest campsites on the trip.

We return to Packsaddle and continue downstream, dropping our packs and stopping to visit one or more of the interesting tributaries. We continue downstream where we find the biggest waterfalls and pools of the trip. Just how spectacular they will be depends on the weather.



Packsaddle Falls



Day walk along a Packsaddle tributary.

The two photos on the near right and the one below show the same waterfall from slightly different vantage points on two different wet season trips.

We finish the walk on a 4WD track that comes into the base of Packsaddle Gorge. If it hasn't been very wet, our transport may be able to come all the way in for the pick up. But, if as is often the case, the road is flooded, we will have a 4-5 km walk on the track to get to the vehicle which will take us back to Kununurra.



Packsaddle Falls panorama



Leafy boab on the Packsaddle track.

On the final day, you can choose to fly back to Darwin or join us for the long drive. We expect to arrive in Darwin sometime after 7 pm on the last day.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall

Level 4.

Terrain

Level 2-4. This walk includes a substantial amount of rock hopping as well as a number of relatively steep climbs and several smaller ones. If water levels are normal, it will also include some fairly flat walking through open woodland. None of the climbs are more than about 200 metres so they are over and done fairly quickly. There is likely to be one section where you need to float your pack on section two. Exceptionally heavy rains could make this necessary on section one as well.

Even in the boggiest of seasons, the Kimberley 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.

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.

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 very much.

Hours

Generally 4-6 hours, not including breaks. A few days might be longer.

Packs

Pack weight - level 3 you carry food for a week at a time. Your share of the evening meals will weigh 2½ to 3½ kg.

Art	You will see little art in this section.
Campsites	Mix of flat rock ledges, sandy beaches (if not flooded) and grassy ground.
Swims	This is the best time to see the local waterfalls, many of which flow only during the Wet. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Almost all of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves.
Lowlights	Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can force a change of itinerary.
Highlights	Wet season waterfalls. Great swimming. Spectacular views. 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.
Fishing	Permitted but unlikely to be very good.
Maps	1:50,000 Deception Range.

Notes. Incredibly severe flooding could close the Ord below Spillway Creek even to power boats. If this were to happen, we would be unable to do the canoe trip.



Pied cormorants

White quilled rock pigeon

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

In spite of the new bridge over the Victoria River, exceptionally severe flooding could mean that we can't get through the highway between Darwin and Kununurra. It's very unlikely but you need to be prepared, just in case.

Terrain and Difficulty –all sections

Climate	<p>Level 5. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. There will be some nights in air conditioned accommodation.</p> <p>The average daily maximum is 35°C (95°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.</p> <p>On average it will rain every second day, 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.</p>
Terrain	<p>Little of the walking on any section 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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Itinerary: Green Kimberley

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change if weather conditions are extreme.

Section 1 Introduction to the Wet

Day 0 Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Double Tree Hilton Darwin, 122 The Esplanade. **Note.** There are two Double Tree Hiltons next to each other on the Esplanade. The meeting is in the taller one, closer to the roundabout at the end of the street. If you can't find the swimming pool, you are probably in the wrong one. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 Drive to Victoria River. Short walk in the late afternoon if time permits. Overnight at the Victoria River Roadhouse motel.

Day 2 Exploring the area near Victoria River & Timber Creek. Drive to Kununurra. Overnight at the Kimberley Croc.

Day 3 Black Rock to Middle Springs walk. Overnight at the Kimberley Croc.

Day 4 Visit another Hidden Valley. Overnight camp.

Day 5 Return to Kununurra. If we haven't already done so, visit the hidden Hidden Valley near Kununurra

Section 2 Ord River Canoe

Day 6 Bus to Lake Argyle, begin canoe trip down the Ord. Bush camp.

Day 7-8 On the Ord, overnight at fixed bush camps. Side walks to waterfalls.

Day 9 Pick up from Zebra Rock Gallery, return to Kununurra. Overnight in Kununurra.

Section 3 Carr Boyd Range

Day 10 Boat to the start of our Carr Boyd Walk

Day 11-17 On the walk, bush camps carrying full packs most days.

Day 18 Finish walk, return to Kununurra.

Day 19 Drive back to Darwin, arriving sometime that evening.

Important Note If section one does not run, we may not use our vehicle and the trip will finish in Kununurra on day 18. If that happens, participants will need to make their own arrangements to get to and from Kununurra.