

# Gregory/Judbarra Explorer: 2-15 May 2021

List Price: \$2595; Sec 1: \$1595; Sec 2: \$1550

Gregory/Judbarra is one of the largest yet least known national parks in the NT. It lies about halfway between Katherine and Kununurra and contains several creek systems where large permanent pools and shady rock shelters can be found in the depths of sheer, red-walled gorges. The southern and western parts of the park area paradise for four wheel drivers. (They also have some interesting bushwalks.)

You can find more information about the park at [http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/gregory/#.VnJ5U7\\_EVtQ](http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/find/gregory/#.VnJ5U7_EVtQ)

We will do two separate walks of about equal length, spending a night in the campground at the Victoria River Roadhouse between sections. The first will be in the northeast corner of the park in the area with a bluish line around it in the map at right, the second just to the southwest of that in the small finger of the park coming south from the dot marked 'Victoria River'. This is the site of the Victoria River Roadhouse.



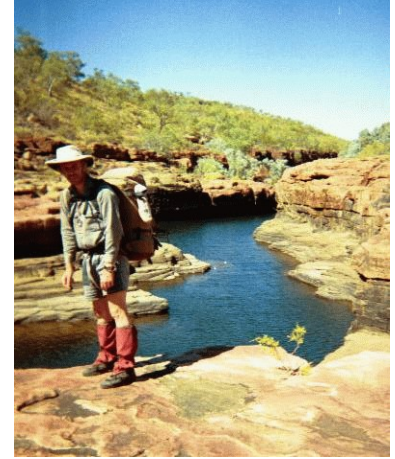
## Section 1: 2-10 May

For the first walk, we plan to do a loop along Matt Wilson and Ryan Creeks in the northeast section of the park, highlighted on the map above. It may look small, but you need to remember that the road distance from Katherine to Victoria river is 200 km. This area contains some of the most spectacular cliffs in the park. It's been a long time since we've done this walk so the photos here are mostly scans of slides taken on our trip in 1991 with a few more from the 2001 trip. The three photos below were taken near the beginning of Matt Wilson. They show that the terrain is fairly easy but that there may be an occasional wade.

The photo at near right shows how the valley around Matt Wilson Creek opens up in its upper reaches. The photo at far right shows a campsite – good shade with a big pool just visible through the trees.

We climb up out of the Matt Wilson Valley and cross the plateau heading west toward Ryan Creek. We find a number of high, shallow gorges on the small creeks that feed into Ryan.





As we continue downstream, the gorges get deeper as shown in the photos above. Walking on the top is fairly easy but some of the side gorges are deep enough so that we have to drop down to the main creek or contour well around. There isn't a lot of difficult terrain, but as the photos show, there is some.

Eventually, we get to a point where we climb up over a ridge and drop down into the Matt Wilson Valley again. From there it is a short walk back to the road and the roadhouse where we spend the night, either in the campground or accommodation (extra cost). Anyone finishing with this section can catch a bus back to Katherine or Darwin the next day.



**Terrain and difficulty.** The walk along Matt Wilson Creek is relatively flat and easy as is the lower portion of Ryan Creek. In between there are a few steep climbs and a fair amount of rock hopping. The amount of scrub varies depending on the recent history of bushfires and rainfall.

## Section 2: 9-15 May

Anyone beginning with this section will need to travel to the Victoria River Roadhouse on the 9<sup>th</sup> to meet the group and start the walk on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Greyhound has a daily bus service.



The second walk is based on a walk done by one of our former guides in April 2015. Parts of it overlap with walks we have done before. Parts will be new to us. It begins about ten km past the road house.

The first bit is fairly easy as shown in the

photo far left. After a few km we come to the pool shown near left. Depending on water levels and the time we arrive, we may camp just above the pool or we may push on. In either case, we will stop for a swim.

Most of the campsites will be on rock ledges as shown far right. And most, if not all, will have a place to swim. Water levels vary dramatically from year to year so we cannot be completely sure what we will find until we get there.



On the plateaus and in the gorges, most of the walking is relatively easy as shown in the three photos below.

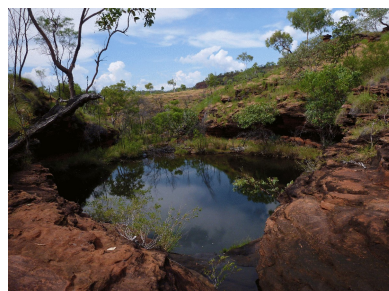


Some of the walking is rocky and somewhat rough as shown at the far right. The climbs up to and down from the plateau are where it gets properly rough.

The photo at near right shows the group relaxing at a view point before dropping down into the gorge below. These climbs plus the variability of water supplies is why we have to rate this as level 3+ rather than an ordinary level 3.



The images above and below give you a small taste of what you can expect. You should be able to spot a natural bridge in one of them.



## Terrain and difficulty

<b>Overall</b>	Level 3+.
<b>Climate</b>	Level 2. Average daytime max 33°C, average nighttime min 18°C. It can, however, drop below 8°C. Generally low humidity. Rain very unlikely but definitely possible.
<b>Terrain</b>	Level 3+. Most of the walking will be along relatively flat terrain on the top of the range or along creeks. There will be some of rock hopping. There will be a few relatively short but steep climbs. As the trip is partly exploratory, we can't be 100% sure that we won't encounter some rougher terrain than expected.
<b>Vegetation</b>	Level 2-4. Varies from year to year depending on when last burnt. In May, most of the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out. Based on past experience, we expect some sections of thick scrub and or spinifex which will make some days much harder than others. There are always flowers in bloom.
<b>Hours</b>	Generally 4-6 hours. A few days might be longer.
<b>Packs</b>	<b>Pack weight</b> - level 3. You need to carry 6-7 days food on each section. You need a light sleeping bag but you might be able to substitute a mosquito net and plastic sheet (insurance against rain) for a tent.
<b>Art</b>	We visit some art sites on both sections but the art we have found previously has not been as plentiful or as well preserved as much of what we have found in Kakadu and parts of the Kimberley. In deference to the wishes of the traditional owners, we have not included any art photos here.
<b>Campsites</b>	Mix of sand, grassy areas and rock ledges. Most sites are good; some are excellent, some no more than average. You are unlikely to see anyone else at any of the campsites.
<b>Swims</b>	Good pools at most campsites and lunch spots.
<b>Highlights</b>	Beautiful gorges, walking on Aboriginal land which has remained virtually unchanged since before European settlement.
<b>Lowlights</b>	Carrying food for a week. We may encounter thick, sticky spinifex and/or ground hugging vines that make some of the walking difficult.
<b>Wildlife</b>	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.
<b>Fishing</b>	Possible in some places.
<b>Maps</b>	1:50 000 Ryan Creek and Sullivan Creek.

## Notes

The drive from Darwin to the start of the walk is a bit over 500 km. Depending on the time we arrive, we may decide to camp or book accommodation the night before the walk.

Because of the long drive, if we cannot camp reasonably close to the vehicle on the final night, we will have to finish the day before and stay in a camping area at Victoria River or somewhere not far beyond it.

You will have to carry only what they need on each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks. You can even arrange for something fresh to be brought from Darwin for the start of section two.

We will spend the night between sections at Victoria River. The camping fee is covered in the cost of the trip. If you want a bed, we can organise that for an additional charge. Alternatively, you can book it yourself.

On our night at the roadhouse, we will have a meal at the pub. The cost of the meal and drinks is not included in the cost of the trip.

For more information about the roadhouse, see

[https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Hotel\\_Review-g494976-d1226374-Reviews-Victoria\\_River\\_Road\\_House-Victoria\\_River\\_Top\\_End\\_Northern\\_Territory.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Hotel_Review-g494976-d1226374-Reviews-Victoria_River_Road_House-Victoria_River_Top_End_Northern_Territory.html)

Explorer trips are the least structured and most adventurous of those we offer during the dry season. They are not endurance tests. They are intended to be run at a reasonably leisurely pace so that we can have a really good look at the areas we choose. It is, however, likely that there will be some long days when it will be necessary to cover a considerable distance. Those taking part will need to be fit enough to do this.

If you wish to be among the first people to explore a particular area, possibly opening it up for future visits by others, then this could be the trip for you.

The trip might include a day or half-day walk. You should either bring a day pack or be prepared to use a full size pack on day-walks.

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack during the journey.

**Crocodiles and swimming.** Most of the creeks along which we walk present no problem. There are, however, a few places in the lower reaches of some creeks where large crocodiles could conceivably present a danger. Please ask the guide before you swim in any large waterhole.

**Helicopter.** There is usually a helicopter based near the Vic River Roadhouse for scenic flights. Depending on cost, you might want to get a good overview before the trip.

## Itinerary: Gregory Explorer

**Note 1**            **Day 0 is the day before departure.**

**Note 2**            **This itinerary is subject to change.**

### **Section 1**        **Northeast Gregory**

**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, the taller of the two. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance. Both Double Tree hotels were Holiday Inns until early 2013.

**Day 1**            8 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 Gregory. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc.  
Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

**Day 2-7**        Bush camping, carrying full packs.

**Day 8**            Finish walk. Return to the Victoria River Roadhouse to replenish supplies, hot showers, etc. Overnight in accommodation or the camping area.

**Day 9**            Those finishing here return to Darwin after assisting with a car shuffle at the start.

### **Section 2**        **South of the Roadhouse**

**Day 8**            Those beginning with this section travel to Victoria River to meet the group.

**Day 9**            Short drive to the start of the walk. Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

**Day 10-13**      Bush camping, carrying full packs.

**Day 14**        Return to vehicles at the roadhouse. Drive to Darwin via Katherine. Anyone wishing to get dropped off in Katherine can be dropped there. Those continuing to Darwin will be dropped off at their accommodation fairly late that evening.