

Kakadu Circle No. 3: July 19 - August 4, 2021

List price - \$3295 For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/discounts

Summary. On this trip you see wonderful creeks, gorges and Aboriginal art sites hidden deep within the heart of Kakadu. You visit spectacular waterfalls, many of which are unknown to the general public. You camp next to beautiful pools you share with no one but your walking companions. The trip is divided into two sections, either of which can be done on its own.

Itinerary

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Koolpin to Jim Jim

List price: \$1895

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 and the only one with a swimming pool. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Kakadu. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc.

Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs

Day 2-6 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 7 Walk to Jim Jim Falls via Twin Falls. Those finishing here will be driven to Cooina or Darwin in the late afternoon, their choice. If you would like to experience the Kakadu wetlands, we recommend booking a budget room at Cooina and doing the Yellow Waters cruise the following morning. We cannot take more than six people back to Darwin. If you want a ride back, please let us know well in advance, first come, first served.

Section 2 Jim Jim to Gunlom

List price: \$2295

Day 7 We can take up to six people out to Kakadu in the vehicle which brings out the food drop. If more than six are joining the trip, some of them will have to catch a bus from Darwin to Cooina. See the note at the end for details. If you go out a day early, this gives you a chance to experience the Kakadu wetlands with a Yellow Waters Cruise. Food drop meal, bush camp.

Day 8-16 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 17 Return to vehicles. Drive to Darwin via Pine Creek. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.

Now for the details.



Upper Koolpin campsite.



Amphitheatre Falls



Cascades Creek water slide.

Section 1: Koolpin to Jim Jim: July 19-25

List price: \$1895



Koolpin Gorge, looking back from above the first falls

The walk begins at Flying Fox Crossing on the South Alligator River in the southern part of Kakadu, about 330 kilometres and four to five hours from Darwin. A relatively flat eight kilometre walk along the banks of the river and across the plain brings us to the beginning of Koolpin Gorge.

Koolpin Gorge is beautiful. The pools are perfect for swimming, the waterfalls and views a photographers delight. Aboriginal art sites tell us that this has been a special place for thousands of years. Although the gorge is only four kilometres long, it is too good to rush through. We take at least a day to reach the top.

From the top of the gorge, there are a number of possible routes to Twin Falls Creek. Your guide will decide which one to take based on the availability of water and on the interests and energy of the group. All take about two days. None is particularly difficult. All offer the opportunity to view a number of Aboriginal art sites, either on the main route or as a side trip from it.



Upper Twin Falls Creek campsite, dawn.

Continuing downstream from where we first meet it, Twin Falls Creek passes through a mix of sandy and rocky areas for about six kilometres to the Amphitheatre Falls where the river drops 20 metres into the upper gorge. Few groups have ever been able to resist spending at least an hour here just admiring the views and enjoying the pool below the falls. Another seven kilometres past sandy beaches and more pools brings us to the top of Twin Falls. The last two km of this route is in a

restricted area where we have to stick to a marked trail.

Twin Falls consists of a series of drops of up to 20 metres and a final 80 metre plunge into the gorge below. Here we have a break and take time to enjoy the spectacular views. The route to the bottom of the lower gorge is follows the same marked trail that we first met above the falls. It is moderately rugged in places with a steep climb at the end.

As the track to Twin Falls is likely to be closed, we leave most of our gear at the car park and take near empty packs to meet our food drop at the Jim Jim car park. The return walk will take most of the day.



Walking through the grassy valley between Koolpin and Twin Falls Creeks.



Above Amphitheatre Falls, Twin Falls Creek.

Section 2: Twin to Gunlom: July 25 - August 3



Surprise Falls swim stop.

The day after the food drop is the longest of the entire trip as we make our way across the plains and climb up the escarpment to enjoy the views and pools at Surprise Falls. Those who are doing only this section need to be prepared for an exceptionally strenuous first day. Those doing the full trip will have had ample time to get used to carrying their packs.

From Surprise Falls, we continue across the plateau, passing through the largest patch of open country rainforest in the park, across the upper reaches of Koolpin Creek and over to the top of Graveside Gorge where a double waterfall drops 100 metres into a pool in the gorge below.

After taking time to have a good look at Graveside, we move along to Cascades Creek and the first of its many pools and art sites. The walk down the four kilometre gorge is a slow one. There are a few places where you have the choice of edging along narrow rock ledges (close to water level, no big drops), floating your pack through the creek, or climbing up and around.

The pools and art sites are too nice to pass by, so stops are frequent as we make our way down to the cascades for which the creek is named. The last 500 metres often takes two hours or more as the deep pools and a natural water slide are much too inviting to pass by in a rush.



Swim stop, top falls, Cascades Creek.



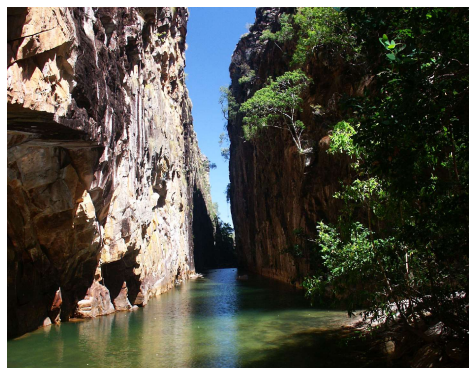
Gronophylum Creek campsite.

Next, we visit Gronophylum Creek with its unusual multi-trunked palms, beautiful, sandy camp sites and deep, clear pools. The rugged landscape away from the creek is reminiscent of central Australia with its red rock and spinifex covered hills. A short, steep climb to the top of one of the hills presents us with an incredible panorama. Following the creek, you might walk three kilometres in an hour. Following a straight-line compass bearing, the landscape is such a jumble of broken rock that walking three kilometres might take you three days.

From Gronophylum, we cross to the Barramundi system and its many waterfalls. Our final campsite in Barramundi Valley is on the banks of a huge, shady pool below a small waterfall. It is a beautiful spot, but there is more to come.

The next morning we follow Barramundi Creek to the top and cross a small pass and follow a

tributary of Koolpin Creek back toward where we began. We follow Koolpin downstream a short distance to where we leave the creek and rock hop through a series of gullies as we make our way to Freezing Gorge.



Freezing Gorge, it's a long way up and back if you don't float your pack

Freezing Creek is much smaller than Koolpin but it has carved a deep and narrow gorge where the sun seldom reaches the water, hence the name. The pools are just as inviting as those in Koolpin, perhaps more so since very few of the 4WD campers are aware that it exists so we seldom see anyone at any point along the creek. You need to be prepared for a short pack float as the alternative to a 30 metre swim is an hour or two of strenuous rock climbing. (You can waterproof your pack by lining it with 2 garbage bags, one inside the other, and sealing them carefully.) The walk down Freezing Creek below the gorge involves climbing over and scrambling around large boulders. A distance of about a kilometre may take two hours.

Although we do not rate this walk as difficult, the one km walk down Freezing Creek below the gorge can be a daunting experience for some people. People who have never done anything like this before may find it difficult. Progress down the creek may be quite slow.

A short walk from the bottom of Freezing Gorge brings us back to where we began and the vehicle which will bring us back to Darwin.



Upper Barramundi campsite pool

Terrain and difficulty

Overall Level 3

Climate Level 2. Although late July - early August is one of the coolest parts of the year, the maximum temperature on most days will still average 30-32°C. Although the average nightly minimum is about 16-18°C (65°F), it is not uncommon for the temperature to drop as low as 10°C (50°F). Occasionally it goes lower still. Sleeping bags are essential. Rain is highly unlikely.

Terrain Level 3. There are few steep climbs, none of which is over 200 m. As short as they are, these climbs are strenuous. Some may require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down. None are technically difficult. None require ropes or other special equipment. There will be some places where you have to step from stone to stone as you walk along the edge of a creek. The creeks are low enough so that swimming across with packs is unlikely to be necessary. However, many people coming down Cascades Creek on section two prefer to float packs than to climb around one pool. It may also be necessary to wade across slippery rocks. Your guide can help if you need assistance.



[Lower Freezing Creek](#)

None of the walking 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. 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.

Vegetation Level 2-3. 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.



At this time of year, the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out. There are always wildflowers in bloom. The photos here are two you might see at this time of year.

Hours Generally 4-6 hours. A few days might be longer. Section two rates as level four because of the long first day. Those who have already done section one seldom find it particularly difficult.

Packs **Pack weight** - level 2-3. You need to carry 6 days food on section one and 9 on section two. This will include about 2½-4 kg of the evening meals (more on sec 2 than sec 1). You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.

Art We visit a variety of art sites.

Campsites Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.

Swims Most creeks are still flowing well and the swimming is excellent. We will have good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot.

Lowlights The long walk between Twin Falls Creek and Surprise Falls. Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim and/or Twin Falls.

Highlights Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites.

Wildlife Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.

Fishing

Not permitted on this walk.

Maps

Section 1: 1:50,000 El Sherana (1st few km at beginning of walk), Koolpin & Jim Jim Falls.

Section 2: 1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls (short bit at beginning of walk), Koolpin & Goodparla

The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

Notes

Those doing the full trip will have to carry only what they need for the first section. Additional food and other items for the second section can be left in a package which will be brought out with the food drop.

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives. It may not be possible to get at your pack until the vehicle is unloaded at the end.

Those doing only section two will need to be prepared for a hard first full day walking. Those doing the full trip will have had plenty of time to get used to the walking.

Those doing only one section might want to consider a cruise and night at Cooinda.

Cooinda 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 attractions at Cooinda include the Yellow Waters cruises, the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre and a short dry season nature walk along a marked trail.

The Yellow Waters cruise provides the best way to see the wetlands and allows you approach the wildlife



Yellow Waters boat



Magpie geese flying over Yellow Waters

much closer than you could do on foot. The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park. The nature walk offers a pleasant way to spend an hour or two, especially early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

Both the cultural centre and the hotel 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.

At the time these notes were written, the only way to get to or from Cooinda is with AAT Kings, (08) 8923 6555. You need to use the local number as the national 1300 number can't sell a ticket other than as part of a tour.

If you are doing only section two and meeting us at Cooinda, wait in the open air pub and meet our vehicle there. If there are more than six people joining the trip, the vehicle will have to come from Darwin, drive to Jim Jim Falls and return to Cooinda to collect some of the group. This can make the pick up quite late.