

Kakadu Highlights No. 1: January 2-15, 2022

List price - \$2995

For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/discounts

Summary.

Section 1, list price \$1995, takes you into the greatest concentration of Aboriginal rock art we can visit in Kakadu. Good swimming, great views and amazing rock formations

Section 2, list price \$1795, takes you into least known part of Litchfield. Good swimming, great views in a place we should have all to ourselves.



Wet season camp, Baroalba Creek

Itinerary: Kakadu Highlights No. 1

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 All itineraries may be subject to change.

Section 1 Baroalba Creek

Day 0 Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Holiday Inn Darwin, 122 The Esplanade. **Note.** There are two Holiday Inns next to each other on the Esplanade. The meeting is in the taller one, closer to the roundabout at the end of the street. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up. Pick up as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Kakadu via Jabiru. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc. Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

Day 2-5 Bush camping, carrying full packs some days, day packs others.

Day 6 Return to vehicle, drive to Batchelor. Meet anyone doing only section two. Anyone doing only section one returns to Darwin.

Section 2 Litchfield

Day 6 Those beginning with this section will be transported to a place where they can join the group. Continue to Batchelor.

Day 7 Drive to start of Litchfield through walk. Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 8-13 Bush camping, carrying full packs every day.

Day 14 Return to vehicles. Drive to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.

Now for the details.

Section 1: Baroalba Creek: January 2-7

Baroalba Creek is the main drainage for Mount Brockman, a large, irregularly shaped massif sitting on the plains a few kilometres away from the edge of the Arnhem escarpment. Its maximum dimensions are about 11 kilometres east to west and 15 kilometres north to south. Its



Baroalba swim stop.

maximum height is about 300 metres above sea level, about 240 metres above the surrounding plain. While the edges of the massif are extremely rugged and steep, much of the centre consists of a large basin drained by Baroalba Creek. The best time to visit this area is during or immediately after the green season when every creek is flowing and the waterholes are all full as will be the case on this trip.

The rugged nature of the approaches prevented buffalo from reaching the basin, making this one of the few undisturbed areas in Kakadu. The area is full of rock shelters that were used by Aboriginal people over the millennia. It contains what may well be the greatest concentration of Aboriginal rock art in Australia, dating from the most ancient to the most recent.

You are likely to see more Aboriginal art in more different styles than on any of our other trips of a similar length. In deference to the wishes of the traditional owners, we have not included any art site photos in these notes.

The walk starts with an easy three kilometre stroll along an old four wheel drive track to Kubara (Baroalba Springs) where we can enjoy a refreshing swim. From here, we leave all tracks behind, beginning a somewhat strenuous scramble up a boulder strewn creek. Once inside the basin, the ground levels out and the walking becomes easier. There are a number of nice camp sites to tempt us as we work our way upstream, taking our time, stopping every so often to have a swim or just to enjoy the shade of a cool rock shelter or the sight of a particularly colourful patch of flowers.

The next few days are spent slowly working our way upstream, exploring the many wonderful rock shelters, art sites and pools. Some of the walking will be done with daypacks from base camps.

Sunrise and sunset from the Baroalba high points are among the nicest views in Kakadu. We may decide to carry water up and spend one or two nights camped on high points. We return via a slightly different route to the track we walked along on the first day.

We then drive to Batchelor where we spend the night before beginning the walk on section two.

Map. 1:50 000 Nourlangie Creek

Notes for section 1. You need to be prepared to carry up to six litres of water if we do a high point camp. Water containers can be filled just prior to the climbs so they will not have to be carried for more than about two hours. Wine bladders weigh little and make good collapsible water containers.



Climbing to a Baroalba high point, late December.



On a highpoint after the climb above.



Baroalba camp, February. Our group fly allows us to cook and eat comfortably even when it's raining.

Exceptionally severe flooding can mean that we have to walk a portion of the vehicle track leading to the Kubara car park. It could even mean we have to delay the start of the walk.

Section 2: Litchfield: January 7-15

Because of problems with feral animal control, Kakadu has closed all overnight walks other than Baroalba for the duration of the wet season. We have replaced the original Kakadu walk with the only other good extended wet season walk near Darwin.

Located less than 150 kilometres from Darwin, Litchfield National Park is a wonderful area full of permanent springs and waterfalls. Although the northern part of the park has been developed for intensive day use, most of the southern part remains an almost untouched wilderness. Few go anywhere near where we go. Not one in ten thousand goes into the great places where we go on our walk. Fewer still see it at this time of year, when the places we visit during the dry season will be at their best.



Tableland Falls



Tjaynera Falls, January

We begin near the Lost City, or possibly near a new campground. In either case, we camp at a beautiful spot not far above Tjaynera Falls. It's such a magnificent spot that we'll stop there no matter how early we arrive.

The serious walk begins the next morning as we do a short climb and head south toward a tributary of the East Reynolds. Some groups get there by lunch, but it's such a nice spot that we stop for the day.



Wet season campsite, Litchfield

From there, we continue south, crossing the main branch of the East Reynolds. Crossing will almost certainly require a wade, maybe a swim.

There are a number of ups and downs as we make our way from one creek to the next. We walk through gorges, patches of monsoon forest and open woodland. Swims are frequent as we stop to enjoy the many pools we find along the way.



Litchfield creek crossing

Finally there is Tableland Creek, the largest creek in the southern part of the park. Pool after pool, waterfall after waterfall, swim after swim, it is a magic spot. Most of the walking is fairly easy but there are likely to be a couple of ups and downs along the way. From our final camp, it is about two and a half hours, much on a 4WD track, to where we meet the vehicle that brings us back to Darwin.



One of the many swim stops

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 3+

Climate Level 5. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. 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.

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 3.

Section 1. Variable. Going up Baroalba Creek at the beginning is a slow scramble over rocks of a variety of sizes. Frequent rest and swim stops make it easier. Once in the central basin, the walking becomes fairly flat and relatively easy until you do the high point climbs. People who have never walked in this kind of terrain may find that this is one of the most physically demanding things they have ever done.

Baroalba Creek has many rock shelters if we wish to get out of any rain which may be occurring. Camping, however, is not permitted in the shelters.

If we camp on a high point, the climbs are relatively short but quite steep and rugged. A few short sections of most of the climbs are quite exposed and many people will need some assistance. Most people will need to pass packs in at least one point both on the ascent and descent. *People who have a severe fear of heights should not choose this trip unless they are certain we will not be going to one of the high points.*

Both sections. The creeks are likely to be low enough so that swimming across with packs will not be necessary. Exceptional rain could cause this to change.

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 in some areas..

Very little 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 in these notes 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.



Baroalba wade, February. This is the wet season. While your feet will be wet most of the time, they will not be cold.



At this time of year, the grass is still short enough so it's easy to walk through.

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.

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.



Wild tomato flower. The wet and very early dry season is the best time for wildflowers.

Hours

Generally 4-6 hours per day. A few days might be longer.

Packs

Pack weight - level 3. You need to carry a week's food. This will include about 2½-3½ kg of the evening meals. You do not need a sleeping bag but you do need a tent and fly.

Art

Section one includes some of the best in Kakadu. Little or none on section two.

Campsites

Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are good to excellent but we have to avoid some of our dry season campsites which could get flooded. You are unlikely to see anyone else anywhere along most of the routes.



Litchfield spa

Swims

This is the best time to see the Top End waterfalls. We will have good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot. You may have to float your pack across one or more flooded creeks.

Lowlights

Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can slow us down. Carrying a week's food.

Highlights

Wet season waterfalls. 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.

Fishing

Not permitted on section one, mediocre on section two.

Maps

Sec 1: 1: 50,000 Nourlangie Creek

Sec 2: 1:50,000 Prospect Hill covers most of the walk.

The 1:250,000 Kakadu map shows the whole park but is not suitable for navigation.

We still have these maps for sale.



Leichhardt grasshoppers, known to the local people as Alyurr (children of the lightning man, Namarrgon) are only seen during the Build Up and Wet seasons.

Notes — both sections.

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/the-wet-season

Rain is very likely at this time of year. It is very important that you pack well enough so that you can keep most things in your pack dry, even if you have to pack a wet tent or other wet items.

A pack liner is essential at this time of year. Garbages are not satisfactory.

It is a good idea to have a change of clothes for the night in Batchelor.

We will pass the Humpty Doo supermarket on the drive between sections so it should be possible to resupply.

Extreme wet season rains can close roads and cause delays. This is not likely but you need to be aware that it can happen.

Those doing both sections of the trip 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 should keep a water bottle, your lunch and some money with you in the car during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack before the end of the journey.

The cost of the accommodation between sections is included in the price for those doing both sections.

The driver who brings out anyone joining section two will need to assist with moving the vehicle after the drop off. This may mean that we can't get those finishing with section one back to Darwin that day. They are welcome to join us for the Litchfield drop off or we can drop them where they can find public transport back to Darwin.