

Kakadu Light: February 16 - March 1 2025

List price - \$4995 See the last page of these notes for a \$2200 discount offer.

Summary. Walk the wonder of Kakadu in the Wet. Enjoy the spectacular waterfalls and wildflowers by day. Relax in comfortable accommodation most nights, camp next to secluded bush pools after short walks on the others.

We walk, we know. While the weather can be somewhat unpredictable at this time of year, our knowledge of these areas means we can give you the very best for whatever conditions we experience.

Itinerary: Section 1: Kakadu: February 16-23

Day 0 This is the day **BEFORE** departure. Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Hilton Gardens, 122 The Esplanade.. This meeting is important. If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 Acclimatisation day. Pick up is as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Fogg Dam, then do the Pudukul tour if it's running.

Drive to Kakadu. There will be stops on the way to do short walks and to buy cool drinks, etc. Visit Park Headquarters. Optional scenic flight. Overnight at Aurora Resort, Jabiru. Bring money for drinks & dinner.

Day 2 Optional flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls if not already done. Walk to Kubara (Baroalba Springs) and, water levels permitting, Baroalba Creek above the Springs. This means carrying an overnight pack for about 3 km on a marked trail and another 2½ km off trail. Bush camp next to our own private pool.

Day 3 Day walk from bush camp.

Day 4 Return to vehicle. Burrungkuy (Nourlangie Rock) walk or walks. Return to Aurora.

Day 5 If it's running, Guluyambi Aboriginal cultural tour. Billabong boat cruise. If not, we will organise a different experience. Overnight at Cooina.

Day 6 Early morning Yellow Waters cruise. Drive to Yurmikmik. Possible short walks en route. Start Motorcar Creek walk.

Day 7 Finish Motorcar walk. Drive to Katherine, stopping for a swim at Ikoy marrwa on the way. Overnight in motel accommodation.

Day 8 Section one ends. Those ending here can catch the first Greyhound bus to Darwin that morning.



Aerial view of Twin Falls in the Wet – there's often more water than this.



Baroalba camp – sandy sites



Baroalba pool and rock ledge camp



Bush tucker lesson on the Guluyambi tour

Section 2 Nitmiluk, Litchfield and the Wildlife Park: February 22 - March 1

Day 7 Those beginning with this section will have to catch a bus from Darwin to Katherine where they will meet the rest of the group at the accommodation that evening.

Day 8 Bid farewell to those finishing with section one. Depart Katherine early morning. Drive to Katherine Gorge. Gorge walk and cruise. Return to Katherine accommodation.

Day 9 Drive to Pine Creek via walk at Edith Falls. Overnight at Pine Creek.

Day 10 Drive to Depot Creek walk, set up camp, rest of the day exploring the gorge.

Day 11 Drive to Batchelor, stopping to visit Robin Falls on the way. Overnight in Batchelor accommodation.

Day 12 Drive to Litchfield. Visit waterfalls. Return to Batchelor accom.

Day 13 Visit more Litchfield waterfalls, continue to Berry Springs or nearby. Overnight accom.

Day 14 Return to Darwin via the Territory Wildlife Park. You should be back in time to catch flights anytime after 6 pm.



Southern Rockhole, Nitmiluk

Now for the details.

Section 1: Kakadu: February 16-23



On the Pudukul tour

With maximum temperatures in the mid 30's and nightly minimum temperatures in the mid 20's, our first day will be an easy one to allow the group to acclimatise. We begin with the 300 km drive from Darwin to Kakadu which normally takes three to three and a half hours. We'll take longer because we'll be stopping.

We begin with a short walk at Fogg Dam followed by the Pudukul Aboriginal cultural tour. After the tour, we have lunch at a roadhouse before continuing to Kakadu where we visit the Mamukala Billabong. We then drive to Jabiru. If people have booked in advance, it will be possible to do a scenic flight.

Overnight at the Aurora Kakadu Lodge. See <https://aurorakakadulodge.com.au/> for more information about Aurora.

On the second day, we head off early to Kubara (Baroalba Springs). A 3 km walk along an old 4WD track brings us to Kubara and the first of our swims for the day. If water levels permit, we will carry overnight packs with us, then do another 2½ km to a two-night camp from which we can explore some of the many art sites, something which would be impossible on a day walk.



Kubara at normal wet season level – looks inviting



Kubara in full flood. Spectacular, but swimming not recommended.

Our camp is next to our own private pool (photos in the itinerary section above) where you have a choice of sleeping on the flat rock ledges or on the sandy spots between the grass. The photos here show that we might need to change plans at the last minute. Floods like the one shown at left don't last long, but they do happen.

We return to the vehicles and drive a short distance to Burrungkuy (Nourlangie Rock), one of the most visited places in Kakadu. Few of those who visit do so at this time of year when the land is lush and green and the billabongs are full. We visit a number of art sites and enjoy some magnificent views out across the surrounding plains.

If water levels permit, we will do the Guluyambi Aboriginal cultural tour the next day. This tour combines a wetland cruise and a visit to Ubirr. Guluyambi brings you the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land, their culture. This particular tour is only offered for about two months per year when high water on the Magela floodplain gives access to a wetland seen by only a few.



Rainy view on the Barrk walk at Nourlangie

The boat dodges and weaves past majestic paperbarks, then glides across shallow floodplains where grasses and lily pads stretch for the surface of the pandanus and mangrove lined wetland. Wildlife, often difficult to spot, is abundant in this rich, secluded environment. Normally, there are two crew, a skipper (who may or may not be Aboriginal) and an Aboriginal guide. The guide will talk of past and present traditional ways, describe bush tucker, demonstrate how hunting tools were made and tell tales of the dreamtime. The guides are proud of their heritage and welcome your questions.

From the boat, we continue by bus to Ubirr, arguably Kakadu's best Aboriginal occupation site. This area is rich in ecological variations and has inspiring panoramic views. Visiting Ubirr at this time of year gives a greater understanding of traditional Aboriginal life as this is the season that the shelters were occupied, the time when traditional food supplies were especially abundant. With tourist crowds and buses gone, we will have the site almost to ourselves. We return to Jabiru and Anbinik where you have the late afternoon free to relax and enjoy the pool or do a scenic flight.

You can see more photos from the Guluyambi tour on our Facebook album,

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150643707886928.437006.205216266927&type=3>



At the end of the tour, we drive to Coinda where we will spend the night. Next morning, we do the 6:45 AM Yellow Waters cruise before continuing to Yurmikmik and the Motorcar Falls walk. This walk takes us to the largest of the Kakadu waterfalls which are reasonably accessible during the monsoon season. We don our packs and follow the track to Motorcar Creek Falls where we stop for the first of many swims. We camp a short distance away between the upper and lower falls on Motorcar Creek. This will be the first time in many years that we've been able to visit the lower falls.

Motorcar Falls.

The next day, we do the 180 kilometre drive to Katherine, stopping for a swim at Ikoymarrwa on the way. We spend the night in Katherine accommodation.

The following morning those doing only the first section relax at the accommodation until the bus to Darwin arrives.

Notes — Section 1

Exceptionally severe flooding can mean that we have to walk a portion of the vehicle track leading to the Baroalba car park. It can also close the track to Yurmikmik. If that happens we will substitute a walk near the all weather road.

Exceptionally dry conditions such as we have had in some years could mean that the Guluyambi Cruise is not running. If this is the case, we will move on to a different walk.

The scenic flight past Jim Jim and Twin Falls costs about \$250 for a one hour. Shorter flights are available as are helicopter flights. As with the boats, bad weather can make the flights impossible.



Lower Motorcar Falls - can you see the people? If not go to the end of these notes.

Maps. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas. The 1:50 000 Nourlangie Creek shows the area at Baroalba Creek and Burrungkuy (Nourlangie Rock). The 1:50 000 Callanan map shows the Yurmikmik area.

Section 2: Nitmiluk, Depot Ck, Litchfield & Territory Wildlife Park: Feb 22 - Mar 1



High view, Katherine Gorge walk

Although Nitmiluk is nowhere near as large as Kakadu, the drive from one end to the other is still over 100 kilometres. We begin with an early morning drive to the park where we do a gorge cruise and a walk to explore the lower portion of Katherine Gorge.

We can choose from a variety of different walks to different parts of the gorge. Which one we choose will depend on the interests and abilities of the group as well as on the conditions at the time. Depending on conditions, we might walk one way and catch a boat back. Whatever we do, you will have seen far more than those who stick to the cruise or the marked trails.

The next day we head north, stopping at Edith Falls in the northern portion of Nitmiluk. Edith Falls is a series of drops over a distance of about a kilometre. Above the falls there are deep, inviting, croc-free pools where we will spend a great deal of the day before driving to Pine Creek where we spend the night in accommodation.



Upper Edith Falls, February

The next day we head to Depot Creek where we find a wonderful small gorge unknown even to most locals. You will learn why owner Russell



Depot Creek swim stop

Willis has run regular overnight wet season trips there for the Darwin Bushwalking club for the past few years. In a dry year, we might be able to drive all the way to the creek.

In a wet one, we might need to do an extra 3 km in each direction. It's worth it. If we can drive all the way, we camp by the car.

Next, Litchfield National Park with its incredible waterfalls. We'll have time to visit several of these and will spend two nights in accommodation in Batchelor. Our final night will be in accommodation near Berry Springs.

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On the final day, we drive to Darwin via the Territory Wildlife Park,

www.territorywildlifepark.com.au One of Litchfield's lesser known pools

This is a zoo with a difference as it highlights only the animals native to our region. You can see all of the animals, including the nocturnal ones, that have been unseen around you for most of the last 12 days. We spend half a day there before returning to Darwin where you are dropped off at your accommodation.



Up close with a wedge-tailed eagle at the Wildlife Park

Notes — Section 2

Exceptionally severe flooding can close the roads to Katherine Gorge, Edith Falls and Litchfield. If we cannot do the intended walks, we will substitute something else appropriate to the conditions.

The road between the town of Katherine and Katherine Gorge is often closed by flooding at this time of year. When this happens, there is normally a boat which can take us across the water and a bus which can bring us into the park.

If a sudden flood catches the operator unaware, as happened in 2002 when exceptionally dry conditions suddenly turned into exceptionally wet ones (the depth of the Katherine River went from 4.5 to 17.4 metres while we were there), it may not be possible to do this.

Maps. The Nitmiluk and Litchfield park maps show all the areas where we walk.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 1 – you never carry more than two day's food and carry full packs only short distances.

Climate Level 4. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. The only reason this is not rated as level 5 is that you spend most nights in air conditioning.

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.



With our group fly, you can stay dry even when it's raining.

Terrain **Section 1.** Level 3-4. Although some sections of these walks are fairly flat and straightforward, most of the walking is off-trail. There are some longish sections of rock scrambling and a couple of short but sharp climbs. If you have never done this before, you may find this fairly difficult. Most of the walking is through open woodland with a spear grass understorey.

Section 2. Level 1-3. Most of the walking on this section is on marked trails. Some will be off-trail and may include a bit of rock-hopping. As with section one, most of the walking is through open woodland with a spear grass understorey.

Both sections. 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 on some places.



On the trail above Edith Falls

Little of the walking on section one 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.

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 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 much. This is the best time for wildflowers.



Wildflowers everywhere

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

Packs **Pack weight** - level 1. You never carry more than two day's food and carry full packs only short distances.

Art We visit a variety of art sites, mostly on section one.

Campsites Sandy beaches or grassy areas nearby if water levels are high.

Swims This is the best time to see Kakadu and the Top End waterfalls. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Many of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves. Ear infections are more likely at this time of year when you spend so much time swimming. If you have even the slightest symptom of an ear ache, make sure you tell the guide immediately. Prevention is easier than cure.



Our own private spa

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.

Wildlife Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals. The Kakadu cruises may give you a chance to see one or more large crocodiles



but they are harder to spot at this time of the year than during the cooler months. The two photos above were taken in Litchfield on our 2005 Kakadu Light trip. The blue winged kookaburra was unusually tame. The water monitor was about a metre long.

Fishing Not permitted in Kakadu and not good elsewhere.

Maps To get a better idea where these walks go see the links below.

The Top End showing Kakadu in relation to Darwin, <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/newpage>

Kakadu National Park: <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/kakadu-national-park>

Cooinda and Jabiru

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 wet season attractions at Cooinda are the Yellow Waters cruises and the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

The Yellow Waters cruise provides the best way to see the wetlands and allows you to approach the wildlife much closer than you could do on foot. Even if you have done a dry season cruise at Yellow Waters, it is well worth doing again so that you can gain an appreciation of just how much the landscape changes from season to season.

The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and campground and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park.

Both the cultural centre and the shop 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.

Jabiru is a small ex-mining town with very limited shops. The Aurora Resort is a resort and caravan park which has a variety of accommodation. We believe it is the best value in the town at this time of year.

We will eat in local restaurants most of the time but we may cook one or more meals at our accommodation. Dinners and drinks in restaurants are not included in the price of the trip.

If you would like to find out more about what the trip is like, you can see two trip reports on our website. Kakadu Light 2002. www.bushwalkingholidays.org/kaklight02.shtml and www.bushwalkingholidays.org/pdf/dixon-kak-light07.pdf

What Is and Is **Not Included** in the Price

Included

- All transport during the trip
- All park entry fees & camping fees
- Evening meals on the overnight walks
- The services of the guide
- One Yellow Waters cruise
- Boat pick up on the Katherine Gorge walk

Not Included

- Transport to or from the walk for those doing only one section
- Optional scenic flight
- Overnight accommodation
- Evening meals in restaurants
- Your breakfasts & lunches
- A second Yellow Waters cruise
- Your drinks
- The Pudukul cultural tour if it can be arranged

Why not include everything?

Based on past experience, people have different preferences when it comes to accommodation; one person will have a dinner that costs twice as much as that for someone else; some would prefer to do only one Yellow Waters cruise. Given all that, it doesn't seem fair to charge everyone the same. We'll do the bookings for you but the cost will be in addition to the cost of the tour. Here are some approximate prices to give you an idea of the extra costs you'll be up for.

Accommodation

- Aurora Accom. Many choices ranging from about \$50 to over \$200 per person.
- Cooinda. Wet season rates start at about \$170 per room for a twin or double. Camping available.
- Katherine. Rooms where we usually stay start at \$120 for a double or twin, breakfast included.
- Pine Creek. We expect to pay between \$60 and \$100 per person.
- Batchelor and near Litchfield. Many options. Begin at about \$80 per person and go up to about \$200 for a private room.

Meals

- Main meals begin at about \$30 and go up to about \$60
- The Cooinda Buffet breakfast costs \$35. Highly recommended. We should book this when we book your cruise or room.



Lower Motorcar close up showing people

Transport

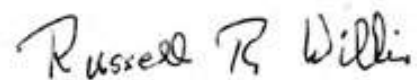
- For those doing only one section, a one way bus fare between Darwin and Katherine cost about \$100 at the time these notes were written.

\$2200 Discount - How and Why

I, Russell Willis, really enjoy this trip and want to do it myself. I don't have to pay myself a wage, superannuation or workers compensation so I can run this trip at a much lower cost than if I were paying another guide. The discount price is **\$2795**. No other discounts apply.

We have been told that the Guluyambi wet season cruise will not run in February. This means that we will need to adjust the itinerary, possibly taking a day off section one and adding it to section 2. Anyone booking will need to accept these changes.

Given the cost of paying another guide, if, for some reason, I cannot lead the trip, it will be cancelled and your money refunded in full. Travel insurance is essential.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell R Willis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.