

## **What makes Willis's Walkabouts different/unique.**

WW has never been a serious money making venture. I had hoped that it would be but as long as it didn't lose money, it allowed me to spend time in country I loved and share that experience with lots of interesting people.

WW expects too much from its clients to charge enough to become a real money spinner. Having the clients bring their own breakfasts and lunches began as a way to let the clients save money. It turned out to be an excellent way to ensure that people actually thought about what they were letting themselves in for. Thinking about B&L makes it more likely that the relatively inexperienced people would think more about everything that they brought with them.

While we sometimes use trainees or assistant guides, we never have two fully trained guides on any trip. This means that the clients often have to do some of the driving which is why most of the vehicles are registered as self-drive hire cars. That is another thing that few tour companies allow. Some clients really enjoy the opportunity.

Doing the same trip over and over would inevitably have a negative impact on the environment. Having a huge variety of trips on offer allows the land to recover between trips, allows us to go to places which are better/accessible at different times of year, and it allows the guides to enjoy a variety of landscapes which keeps them interested.

From the very first, we offered some exploratory trips which none of the guides had done. These are among my personal favourites.

While no new guide goes out as a leader until he or she has done a trip as an unpaid assistant and has been assessed by the guide on that trip, the variety of trips on offer means that the guide on any particular trip may not have done that particular trip before. While everyone has to sign something saying that they understand this, some sign without reading what they are signing.

This means that we have to demand a high standard of bush navigation from potential guides. A GPS can fail so it should never be more than one extra too. Every guide needs to be competent in the use of map and compass. Many of the clients are as well.

Clients carry all their own gear plus a share of the group food and gear. They are responsible for either bringing their own gear or choosing some of the things we have available. Assuming that most of the clients have their own gear is another difference to most operators.

Our guides can't do it all. Clients are expected to help out in a variety of ways, from collecting firewood to assisting when one of the other clients has a problem.

If the guide is happy with their ability, clients are given more freedom than on other tours. If the group is walking along a watercourse, some people may be allowed to walk ahead or lag behind so they can have a better chance of doing things like seeing birds or photographing flowers. In some cases, if there is more than one who is interested, they may be given the freedom to go off and do a bit of exploring on their own. How many other tours allow something like this?

Off the beaten track. On most of our walks, both in Australia and overseas, you are unlikely to see many other people. In many cases, you will see no one other than the members of your group.