

Gregory/Judbarra, Lake Gregory & More: 26 Aug - 4 or 7 September 2026

First Draft: 6 June 2026. A record or near record wet season makes this an exceptionally good year to visit. It's so good that Walkabouts owner Russell Willis decided to put on this special trip so that he can visit a number of places he's long wanted to see plus a few that he hasn't been to for a very long time.

Price - \$1795 plus expenses. Not including expenses in the base price, allows us to give you the lowest possible overall price. Details of the expenses at the end of these notes. If only one person books, Russell will run the trip for two people for \$2495 each.

Summary. This trip is a mix of four wheel driving and day walks. It cannot run unless at least one of those who book is willing to share the driving (manual transmission 4WD).



On a walk near Sawpit Gorge

Itinerary

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

- Day 0** Pre-trip meeting at 6.30 p.m., venue to be advised. **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 Giwining/Flora River Nature Park. Explore the short walks. Overnight in campground.
- Day 2** Short walks if not done the day before. Drive to Gregory/Judbarra. Overnight near Bullita Homestead.
- Day 3** Continue south through Gregory/Judbarra, camping somewhere along the way.
- Day 4** Exit the park onto the Buntine Highway, drive west into WA onto the Duncan Road, stopping at Sawpit Gorge.
- Day 5** Short to medium walk at Sawpit if not done the evening before. Continue to Halls Creek via historic Old Halls Creek. Overnight in Halls Creek. Chance to do laundry.
- Day 6** Drive to Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater. Camp overnight.
- Day 7** Drive to Lake Gregory. Camp overnight.
- Day 8** 2nd night at lake Gregory, same or different campground
- Day 9** On the Tanami Track toward Aileron and Alice Springs
- If the Finke-Watarrka trip is running,*
- Day 10** Drive to Alice Springs. Trip ends.
- If the Finke-Watarrka trip is not running,*
- Day 10** Drive to Aileron. Overnight in accom, camping available.
- Day 11-12** En route to Darwin. Choice of accom or camping.
- Day 13** Arrive in Darwin. Trip ends.



Aerial view, Wolfe Creek crater

Now for the details

I, Russell Willis, am writing these notes in the first person as I plan to lead the trip and visit a number of places I've long wanted to see as well as a few others I'd like to see again.

We begin with a 400+ km drive from Darwin to the Giwining /Flora River Nature Park. Here, many springs feed the Flora River before it merges with the Katherine River into the Daly River. These springs flow up through limestone, the source of minerals that give the Flora River its emerald colour and create its scenic tufa dams. I've long heard about the park but have never managed to visit it. We'll do the two short walks and stay in the campground.



Tufa dam, Flora River



Waterhole & 4WD track at Bullita

Next day, we drive to Judbarra/Gregory National park where we spend the night at the Bullita campground. The nearby restored homestead gives you a good feel for what life was like there. One of the events was a major flood which happened during my time in the Territory.

The park is criss-crossed with 4WD tracks. I've driven very few of them, nothing south of Bullita. The photo at left was taken early in the dry season & shows where one of those tracks goes – you can see the sign in the middle of the river. The photo was taken early in the season. Water levels should be lower when

we are there. The NT Parks page, <https://nt.gov.au/parks/find-a-park/judbarra-gregory-national-park> has links to a PDF describing the park and another which describes the 4WD tracks. Which ones we choose will depend on the condition of the tracks at the time and the interests of the group. In any case, we eventually hit the Buntine Highway which we follow across the WA border until we get to the Duncan Road which we follow toward Halls Creek.

Once across the border, the first point of interest is Sawpit Gorge. We used to stop there regularly, but we lost access to some of the places on that trip so our visit in 2023 was the first one in 20 years. It reminded me of just how nice a place it is. We did a good short walk through the gorge. Depending on when we arrive, we might do a longer one.

The following day we drive to Halls Creek, stopping to visit the ruins at Old Halls Creek, Caroline Pool and the China Wall. We arrive sometime in the afternoon and check into the accommodation where we will spend the night. It will give us a chance to replenish supplies and do some laundry.



Sawpit Gorge camp

On day 6, we head west, then south along the Tanami Track. I last drove this in the 1970s. It will be interesting to see what's changed. First stop the Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater. This is "the second largest meteorite crater in the world. It was formed by a massive meteorite smashing to earth around 300,000 years ago. Travelling at 15km a second, the huge chunk of space rock could have crossed Australia in five minutes. Mind boggling!" We'll do the short walk to the crater's edge and spend the night and so we can watch the sun rise over the crater rim. You can get more info and see a few more photos at <https://exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/wolfe-creek-meteorite-crater-national-park>

Next, Paruku (Lake Gregory). "The spectacular wetlands of Paruku lie on the northern edge of the Tanami and Great Sandy deserts. Paruku is renowned internationally as a bird watching site, and its remote location rewards the avid and adventurous birdwatcher."

The Australia's Northwest page describing the area also includes links to Caroline Pool and the China Wall which we visit on our way to Halls Creek.

<https://www.australiasnorthwest.com/explore/kimberley/halls-creek/paruku-lake-gregory/>

This will be the second year in a row for good rain in the area. Below is an ABC news story about last year's rain. More photos and some extra info.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-27/kimberley-channel-country-comes-to-life-after-wet-season-floods/103768530>



We'll spend two nights there so we can have a good look. We may spend both nights at one campground or we may shift. The image at left shows our choices. The table below gives more info.

Campsite Comparison: Paruku (Lake Gregory)

| Campsite Name | Location/Description | Features & Activities | Access & Significance |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| Handover | Eastern side of the lake, between Parnkupirti and Jalywarr creeks, 10 km from Mulan | Bough shelter, interpretive signage, bird watching, desert sunset views | Key site for native title history, good for birdwatching and sunsets a s |
| Yunpu | Western side of the lake, white sand, shady melaleuca trees, ~56 km from Mulan | Good for swimming, bird watching, shade, easy access to Canning Stock Route | Fresh, milky water lake, popular for swimming and birdwatching a |
| Nyarna (Lake Stretch) | Along Sturt Creek, permanent water, near Billiluna Community | Swimming, camping, permanent water source, significant for Traditional Owners | Important for local community, regular swimming hole for children a |

In more detail, the Perplexity search engine said, "each of the three main campsites at Paruku (Lake Gregory) offers unique views and experiences rooted in the landscape, wildlife, and cultural significance of the area:

Handover

- Positioned on the eastern side of the lake, Handover provides expansive desert sunset views and panoramic vistas across Lake Gregory's shimmering waters. The site offers a clear perspective of the surrounding desert and the changing colours of the sky at dawn and dusk.
- This site is notable for its connection to native title history and features interpretive signage about local Indigenous culture. Birdwatching is exceptional here, with opportunities to see a variety of waterbirds and migratory species in their natural habitat.

Yunpu

- Located on the western side with white sandy shores and shaded by melaleuca trees, Yunpu offers a striking contrast between the milky, turquoise water of Lake Gregory and the surrounding red desert. The site provides beautiful water reflections and shady spots for relaxation.
- Yunpu is popular for swimming in the fresh, milky water, which is a rare experience in the desert environment. It is also a prime spot for birdwatching and offers easy access to the Canning Stock Route, blending natural beauty with a sense of historic adventure.

Nyarna

- Situated along Sturt Creek with permanent water, Nyarna features lush, green surrounds and a reliable water source, which is unusual for this arid region. The campsite overlooks the creek and offers views of waterbirds and local wildlife.
- Nyarna is a significant site for the local community, serving as a regular swimming hole for children and families. The permanent water supports abundant wildlife, making it ideal for wildlife observation and a more verdant, riparian camping experience compared to the typical desert setting.

Each campsite provides a distinct way to connect with the natural and cultural heritage of Paruku Lake Gregory, from dramatic sunsets and birdwatching to swimming in unique waters and experiencing the rich traditions of the local Indigenous community.

From Paruku, we continue south along the Tanami Track to where it joins the Stuart Highway at Aileron. It's still 900+ km, so we'll stop somewhere along the way. For more info on the Tanami Road, see <https://www.australiasnorthwest.com/explore/kimberley/halls-creek/tanami-road/>

That site is from WA. Here's the NT version,

<https://www.discovercentralaustralia.com/things-to-do/4-wheel-driving/tanami-road>

We join the Stuart Highway near the tiny settlement of Aileron, 135 km north of Alice Springs. If the Finke-Watarrka trip which follows this is not running, we stop here and save 270 km of driving, spending two nights on the drive north.

If the Finke-Watarrka trip is running, the vehicle (or vehicles) will be needed for that so we continue to Alice Springs where the trip ends.

Notes.

Although rain is infrequent in the Centre, rains can close the Tanami track for weeks at a time. If we suddenly get a major unseasonable downpour, the trip could be cancelled. We recommend travel insurance.

Different parts of this itinerary can be closed with little notice so this itinerary is subject to change.

As we will be camping near the car most nights, you might want to bring something extra for car camping. If you can't bring a chair, let us know and we'll try to provide one. We'll have an esky but may not always be able to get ice.

Please keep your water bottle and day pack with you during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your main pack.

Water supplies should be excellent this year. We will, however, carry at least 20 litres per vehicle.

As this trip will include a number of day-walks, you should bring a day pack.

You will have to carry only what you need for each walk. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks. Limited supplies are available at Halls Creek.

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 during the day.

Terrain and difficulty

Overall Overall we rate this as level 0. No overnight packs.

Climate Level 2. We are going to be in so many different areas that we can't give averages. We expect the daytime max to be in the mid 20's to low 30s, the nighttime min in the low teens. It could go below 10°C. Rain very unlikely but possible. Be prepared for anything.

Terrain Level 1-3. Some of the day walks will be quite flat, some may be rocky and steep. It will be possible to opt out of the hardest ones.

Vegetation Level 1-2. Almost all of the walking will be on marked trails. One of the possible walks at Sawpit Gorge could be more challenging. Vegetation can change from year to year. If you want to be prepared, we recommend you bring gaiters.

Hours Lots of driving. The longest walk should be no more than two hours.

Packs **Pack weight** - level 0. Day packs only.

- Art** Minimal but there may be something.
- Campsites** Mostly campgrounds but we might simply pull off next to the road somewhere for one or two nights.
- Swims** Swimming is likely to be possible but very cold at some camp sites.
- Lowlights** Tourist crowds at some of the popular spots.
- Highlights** Great variety of landscapes and vegetation. Spectacular views.
- Fishing** Might be possible somewhere.
- Wildlife** Birds are always present. While you are unlikely to see many large animals, occasionally you get lucky as we were when we spotted the dingo shown at right.
- Map** Nothing specific. See below right for the route.



Special Price – \$1795 + expenses.

We will run it at the price above for two people or more. For two people, the cost would be \$2495 each. Our normal discounts do not apply.

Running the trip on a share expense basis allows us to charge the lowest possible price rather than budgeting for a worst case scenario.

In addition to the tour fee, you will have to pay camping and accommodation fees, park entry fees, \$15 per evening meal we cook plus a share of 50 cents per km to cover some of the wear and tear on the vehicle or vehicles.

Depending on how many nights we spend in accommodation and on your choices on those nights, our estimate of the total expenses is shown in the table at the end.

The costs are too variable to include everything.

Depending on numbers, the vehicle cost per person could be anywhere from about \$100 to a bit over \$500. Some people will need to pay park entry fees. Some may not. In Halls Creek and on the way back to Darwin if the Finke-Watarrka trip is not running, different rooms are available at different costs. Camping could be an option. One person's dinner might cost twice someone else's. We'd rather be fair and keep the price as low as we can.

Very Rough Estimated Costs

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 8 WW meals | 120 | 1-4 restaurant meals | \$40 to \$200 |
| NT Park Pass | 0 to \$20 | Vehicle (more people = cheaper) | \$250 to \$800 |
| 1 to 4 nights accom (twin share) | \$120 to \$500 | Camping fees | \$100 |
| | | Total | \$650 to \$1750 |

