

Kakadu Highlights No. 2: 8-21 March 2025

List price - \$4995. Additional expenses apply. See the end of these notes for details. For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/discounts

Summary. Experience the wonder of bushwalking in the Wet the easy way. Each part of this trip has been chosen to show you the best Kakadu has to offer at this time of year. We begin with a mix of relatively easy acclimatisation day walks and short overnight trips followed by a five-night expedition. But even here, we don't often carry packs long distances and may do a day walk from a base camp on one day.

Itinerary

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 All itineraries may be subject to change.

Section 1 Warming Up

List price: \$3495

Day 0 **Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Hilton Gardens, 122 The Esplanade.** There are two Hiltons next door to each other. The correct one is closer to Daly Street and the taller of the two. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 Acclimatisation day. 7 to 8 a.m. pick up. Pick up is as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Kakadu. Visit Fogg Dam and Mamukala on the way. Visit Park Headquarters. Overnight at Aurora, Jabiru. Bring drink money

Day 2 Day walk near Burrunkuy (Nourlangie) & art site visit. Overnight at Aurora

Day 3 Optional flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls if not already done. Carry packs to Kubara (Baroalba Springs) and up to a base camp above the springs.

Day 4 Day walk above the camp site.

Day 5 Return to vehicle. Return to Aurora.

Day 6 Guluyambi Aboriginal cultural tour & cruise. Tour finishes about 2 PM. Drive to Yurmikmik. Walk to two night camp.

Day 7 Day walk to Motorcar & Kurrundie Falls.

Day 8 Return to vehicle. Drive to Cooina. Visit to Warradjan Cultural Centre. Optional late afternoon cruise

Day 9 Early morning Yellow Waters cruise. Section 1 ends. Anyone doing only this section catches a bus back to Darwin.

Section 2 Barramundi Creek

List price: \$2695

Day 8 Anyone beginning with this section needs to catch a bus to Cooina to meet the group. Afternoon cruise at Yellow Waters if not. Overnight at Cooina.

Day 9 Early morning Yellow Waters cruise. Drive to the start of the walk and begin walk.

Day 10-13 Bush camping, carrying full packs most days. Depending on conditions, there might be a day where we carry only day packs.

Day 14 Return to vehicle, drive back to Darwin. Drop off at your accom late afternoon.



Lower falls, Motorcar Creek. Can you see the people in the photo?



Aerial view of Twin Falls



Near our Baroalba camp.

Now for the details....

Section 1: Warming Up: 8-16 March

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.

If time and conditions permit, we may also do a short nature walk at Fogg Dam and/or the Mamukala Billabong on the way. After lunch, we continue on to the Bowali Centre at Park Headquarters which contains a variety of interesting displays. We then continue to Jabiru where we spend the night at the Aurora Kakadu Lodge. See <https://aurorakakadulodge.com.au/> for more information about Aurora.

This is the time of year when Kakadu's waterfalls are at their most spectacular. However, unless you are prepared to do a three week walk, a scenic flight is the only way you can see them. We will make sure that those who wish to do a flight have the opportunity to do so sometime in the first three days. Morning is usually best, so this should be on day 2 or day 3.

On the second morning, we 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.



Rainy view on the Barrk walk at Burrungkuy

Please note: the only art site photos we are allowed to publish are those from the main public art sites at Burrungkuy, Ubirr and Nanguluwurr.



Hunting scene, Burrungkuy

We return to Aurora for the night.

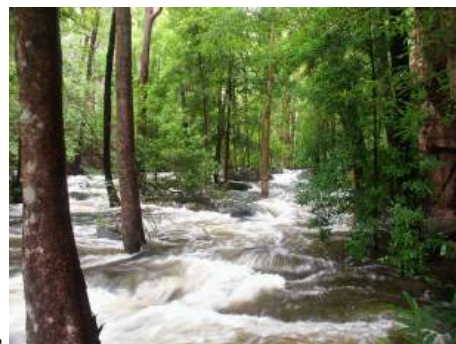
Next day, we head off to Kubara (Baroalba Springs).

We don our packs and do a short walk along an old 4WD

track (or a longer walk if the road is flooded) to Kubara and the first of our swims for the day.

After the swim, a short, steep climb brings us onto the plateau.

From there it usually takes about 1½ hours to get to our camp next to a pool which we should have to ourselves. **But**, this is the wet season. If water levels are as shown in the photo at right, we can wait for them to drop or move on and do something else. Fortunately, floods like this seldom last very long.



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



Rainy view on the Barrk walk at Nourlangie



Jim Jim Falls from the air



Twin Falls from the air



Gubara camp – a big pool, small sandy beach and plenty of high flat ground in case of a flood.

The following day, we leave our packs and do a walk upstream to enjoy more pools and have a look at a few of the many art sites for which the area is famous. In keeping with the wishes of the Aboriginal traditional owners, we do not publish photos of those sites in these notes.

The next day we return to the vehicle and return to Jabiru for another night at Aurora.

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 shows you the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land, their culture. This particular tour is only offered for about two months per



Guluyambi guide pointing out a bird



Bush tucker lesson on the Guluyambi tour

year when high water on the Magela floodplain gives access to a wetland seen by only a few. 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. 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.

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>

We should be back in time to drive to Yurmikmik and walk a short distance, mostly on a marked trail, to our campsite for the next two nights.



Lower Motorcar close up showing people

2023 was the first time in ten years that we'd been able to do the Motorcar-Kurrundie walk. Much too good not to repeat. We leave the marked trail near where it crosses Motorcar Creek and walk to our camp. Next dy, we do a longish loop walk that takes us to Kurrundie and lower Motorcar Falls. If you didn't spot the people in the photo at the beginning of these notes, you can see them at left.



Motorcar Falls.

The next day is again an easy one. We put on our packs and retrace our steps to the car. We then drive to Cooinda where we visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre. If we arrive in time, those who wish to do so can do the late afternoon Yellow Waters cruise.

We spend the night in accommodation at Cooinda. The next morning, we do the early Yellow Waters Cruise. This is the best way to experience Kakadu's wetlands – great to look at but not the best place for a bushwalk.

Maps: 1:50 000 Nourlangie & Callanan.



Yellow Waters cruise. In the dry season, every seat would be full.

Section 2: Barramundi Creek: 15-21 March

This section overlaps the first. After bidding farewell to anyone doing only the first section, we drive to the Maguk 4WD track, closed at this time of year. We drive in a short distance, park the vehicle and begin our walk. Large crocodiles move around at this time of year, so we have to leave the dry season walking track and follow our wet season route to get above the main falls. Crocs don't climb waterfalls so swimming is safe from here. We camp somewhere well above flood levels.

Dry season visitors see nothing like this. The two photos above show the same waterfall, wet season and dry. We'll camp somewhere above it on the second night then cross the plateau to camp near the pool shown at left. Along the way we stop to visit an amazing little gorge, at its spectacular best at this time of year. We might even choose to spend a night near it.



Barramundi side falls, January. The red x shows where the people in the August photo were standing.



Same waterfall as left, August.



Big pool at upper Barramundi. We camp under some huge shady *Allosyncarpia* trees near the pool.

Depending on how much time we've taken, we may spend two nights here and do a day walk visiting some of the smaller waterfalls that flow only at this time of year.

We follow the main valley back to where we first climbed up and return to the vehicle for the trip back to Darwin.

Maps: 1:50 000 Goodparla. The 1:250 000 Kakadu map shows the whole park but is not suitable for navigation.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall	Level 3 for those who do section 1. Level 4 for those who do not.
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

Section 1. Level 2-3. The first short sections of the overnight walks are on marked and maintained trails. On the first walk, this is followed by a short but steep climb after which it flattens out. The day walk will include a substantial amount of rock hopping as well as wading across the creek. Exceptionally heavy rain while we are on the walk could mean we have to swim our packs across a flooded creek on the way back. The second walk will be similar except that we carry our packs only a short distance off the marked trail.

Section 2. Level 3-4. The beginning follows a 4WD track. This is followed by a steep climb with no track at Maguk.

Most of the walk is relatively flat but there are a few steep climbs, all of which are less than 200 metres. 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.

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.

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 2-4. 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.

This is the best time of year for wildflowers.

The spear grass normally reaches its peak in March, often three or four metres tall in some areas (much shorter in others). We are likely to encounter short sections of partially collapsed and seeding spear grass during some portion of the trip.

Hours

Generally 4-6 hours. A few days might be longer, some shorter. Section two rates as level four because of the long first day. Those who have already done section one should not find it particularly difficult.

Packs

Pack weight - level 2 on section 1, level 3 on section 2. You need to carry up to five days food. This will include about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. You don't need a sleeping bag but you do need a tent and fly.

Art

We visit a number of excellent art sites.

Swims

This is the best time to see Kakadu's waterfalls. We should have good pools at every campsite and lunch spot.



[Walking through speargrass](#)



[Lunch spa, Kurrundie Creek](#)

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.
Lowlights	Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can slow us down. Carrying food for a week.
Highlights	The cruises, several waterfalls seen at their spectacular best. Great swimming. 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 but should see a variety of lizards.
Fishing	Not permitted.



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



Water monitor

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/wet.shtml

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.

Extreme wet season rains can close roads. There is a small chance that we might have to change one or both of the walks. There is even a small chance that our return to Darwin will be delayed. We recommend not booking a flight the night you are scheduled to return.

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.

You will need money for your drinks on the nights we are in accommodation.

Those doing only one section will need to catch a bus to or from Darwin. The only bus service to Cooinda is an AAT Kings tour. If booking transport on that is not possible, there is a bus between Jabiru and Palmerston (just outside Darwin) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There are regular buses between Palmerston and Darwin. If someone is using this service, we will provide transport to or from Jabiru.

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

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
- The Guluyambi cruise
- Your drinks

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.

In addition, we can't be sure the Guluyambi cruise will be running until close to the date. It doesn't seem fair to charge people for something they might not get to do.

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 \$60 to over \$200 per person.
- Cooina. Wet season rates start at about \$180 per room for a twin or double. Camping available.
- Katherine. Rooms where we usually stay start at \$130 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 Cooina Buffet breakfast costs \$35. Highly recommended. We should book this when we book your cruise or room.

Tours

- The Guluyambi tour lists for \$230.
<https://www.kakaduculturaltours.com.au/index.php/tours/ubirr-combo-tour>
- Scenic flights over Jim Jim & Twin began at \$259 when we last updated these notes.