

Kakadu Highlights No. 5: 21 June - 4 July 2026

List price - \$5695 For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/discounts

Summary. This trip consists of two separate walks either of which can be done on its own. Lots of waterfalls, lots of swimming and a chance to see Twin Falls at a time when it is likely to be closed to the general public. You spend a night at Cooinda and, if available, do the Animal Tracks tour and a Yellow Waters cruise between walks.



Sunset, Koolpin camp

Itinerary: Kakadu Highlights No. 5

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Koolpin - Freezing

List price: \$3495

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

Day 1 7 a.m. pick up. Pick up is as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Kakadu. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2–6 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 7 Return to vehicles. Drive to Cooinda, arriving about lunch time. Book into campground. Opportunity to wash clothes and have hot shower. Animal Tracks tour begins at 1 PM and goes late. Includes food. Bring towel and toiletries and money for drinks.

Day 8 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise. End of section one. Those finishing here catch a bus back to Darwin. See the notes at the end or information about the buses.

Section 2 Twin to Jim Jim

List price: \$3495

Day 7 Those beginning with this section catch a bus from Darwin to Cooinda early in the morning. The cost of getting to Cooinda is not included in the cost of the tour. On arrival, you can wait in the open air pub and meet the group there or check into the campground and set yourself up. Due to the fact that the members of the group are finishing a walk that morning, we cannot be more specific about the arrival time than to say it will be about lunch time. Animal Tracks tour begins at 1 PM and goes late. Includes food. Make sure you bring towel and toiletries and money for drinks.



Getting ready to open the ground oven, Animal Tracks tour

Day 8 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise. Drive to Twin or Jim Jim Falls. Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 9-13 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: Koolpin-Freezing: 21-28 June

Koolpin Gorge about 350 kilometres from Darwin, the last 50 of which is on rough gravel tracks. 500 metres along a marked, but unformed trail brings us to the first waterfall and the last sign of civilisation we'll see until the end of the walk.

Koolpin Gorge is beautiful. The pools are perfect for swimming, the waterfalls and views a photographers delight. Aboriginal art sites tell us that this has been a special place for thousands of years. It's such a special place that it normally takes us two days to get to the campsite shown below, less than 8 km from where we began.



Upper Koolpin campsite.

From here, we head approximately east to the base of a tall hill. We drop our packs and climb to the top where we enjoy a magnificent view in all directions. The climb is relatively easy with a cool sort of labyrinth just below the top.



Looking back from above the first falls, Koolpin Gorge.

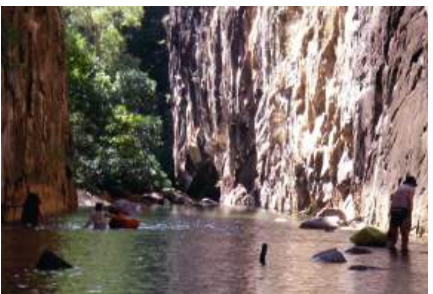


View from the top

Back on the plain, we continue up and over a low pass and back to Koolpin Creek where we camp near the cascades shown at right. From there we follow Koolpin back down past our second campsite to where the creek does a sharp bend. We camp on a sandy area near the bend.



Upper Koolpin cascades



Freezing Gorge pack float

Next day, we follow a fault line across two low passes and drop down into Freezing Gorge. Freezing Creek is much smaller than Koolpin but it has carved a deep and narrow gorge where the sun seldom reaches the water, hence the name. The pools are just as inviting as those in Koolpin, perhaps more so since very few of the 4WD campers are aware that it exists so we seldom see anyone at any point along

the creek. You need to be prepared for a short pack float as the alternative to a 30 metre swim is an hour or two of strenuous rock climbing. (You can waterproof your pack by lining it with 2 garbage bags, one inside the other, and sealing them carefully.)



Rock hopping up lower Freezing Creek. Some of the rocks are larger than these.

The walk down Freezing Creek below the gorge involves climbing over and scrambling around large boulders. A distance of about a kilometre may take two hours. Although we do not rate this walk as difficult, the one km walk down Freezing Creek below the gorge can be a daunting experience for some people. People who have never done anything like this before may find it difficult. Progress down the creek may be quite slow. We plan to camp near the bottom.



Looking back through Freezing Gorge

A relatively short walk the next morning brings us back to our vehicles. From there we drive to Cooinda where we meet anyone joining the trip for the second section and set up our camp.

At about 1 PM, we are picked up to do the Animal Tracks tour with one of the traditional owners. We first included this on one of our 2021 trips. Everyone who did it thought it was well worth while and gave an insight into the local culture in a way that no non-Aboriginal guide could ever do. The tour includes bush tucker. We return to Cooinda after dark. For more information about Animal Tracks, see <https://www.animaltracks.com.au/>

This section finishes with the 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise the following morning. The cruise gives you the opportunity to see the wetlands wildlife at close range, far closer than you could on foot.



On the Animal Tracks tour

Terrain and difficulty (see also the comments for both sections)

Overall	Level 3
Terrain	Level 3. Most of the walk is fairly flat and relatively easy. However, there is some rock hopping and a couple of fairly strenuous climbs. One climb might require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down.
Highlights	Waterfalls, pools, Aboriginal rock art, spectacular views from high points.
Maps	1:50 000 Koolpin The 1:250 000 Kakadu map shows the whole park but is not suitable for navigation.

Section 2: Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls Loop: 27 June - 4 July



Getting ready for a swim at Amphitheatre Falls.

This section overlaps the first and includes the night at Cooinda, the Animal Tracks tour and the Yellow Waters cruise. After the cruise we bid farewell to anyone not continuing and drive to the Jim Jim car park. The drive is less than 100 kilometres but may take up to two hours depending on the condition of the gravel road and 4WD tracks. If the track to Twin Falls is not yet open, we will walk from the Jim Jim car park, then climb up and camp at the top of Twin Falls. The extra walk

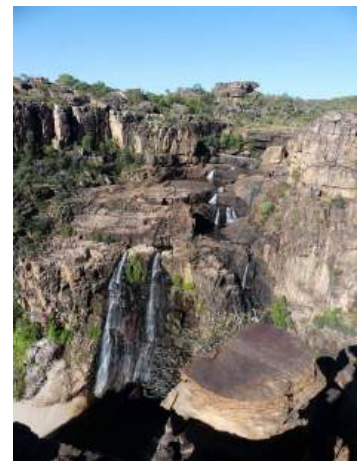
does have a positive. If the track remains closed, we can camp closer to the top of Twin Falls than if the road were open.

The walk from the Twin Falls car park to the top follows a marked trail up a fairly steep hill, through an interesting sandstone maze and out to the creek above Twin Falls. We must stay on this trail until we leave the restricted area about two km above the falls.



Relaxing below Anbadgoran Falls

From the top of Twin Falls, we make our way upstream, exploring and enjoying the shady rock ledges, sandy beaches and cool pools that we find in the seven kilometre long upper gorge which ends at the Amphitheatre Falls.



Twin Falls, July



Rock scramble en route from Twin Falls to Anbadgoran



Sunset, Jim Jim campsite.

The day we leave Twin Falls Creek is potentially the tough one. We head overland to the top of a rainforest filled gorge, known as Anbadjgoran to the local Aboriginal people. Along the way, we pass through some very rugged and broken sandstone country — so rugged that no two groups have ever picked the exact same route. Depending on how much time we spend working our way through the sandstone maze, we may camp on one of the creeks we cross en route or we may reach the gorge.



View from the top of Jim Jim Falls. This spot is less than 200 metres from the campsite pictured at left.

The camp site on the flat rock ledges at the top of Anbadjgoran is magnificent. Beautiful waterfalls cascade through a series of inviting pools under a shady rainforest canopy. If time permits, we will spend at least half a day here before pushing on across the plateau to Jim Jim Creek.

A lack of landmarks along the way means that we never take the exact same route. A lack of water means that we must reach the pools on Jim Jim Creek that day.

The area near Jim Jim Creek is fairly flat so the walking is relatively easy as we move downstream toward the falls, stopping to cool off with a swim or two along the way. From the top of Jim Jim Falls, over 200 metres from top to bottom with a final sheer drop of 160 metres, we enjoy spectacular views down the gorge and across the plains to the distant escarpment on the horizon.

On the final morning we follow the marked trail down to the bottom of the gorge below the falls, return to the vehicles and drive back to Darwin.

Terrain and difficulty (see also the comments for both sections)

Overall	Level 3+
Terrain	Level 3+. Short sharp climbs at the beginning and end on well defined walking tracks. Fairly flat and reasonably easy along the creeks and between the top of Rainforest Gorge and Jim Jim Creek. Some of the terrain between Twin Falls Creek and Rainforest Gorge is as broken stone country, as rugged as anything we encounter on any of our walks . A difference of 100 metres at one point can mean a difference of two or three hours walking time. It is this day that gives the trip its level 3+ rating.
Highlights	The two tallest waterfalls in Kakadu. The rock maze between Twin Falls Creek and the Rainforest Gorge.
Lowlights	The rock maze between Twin Falls Creek and the Rainforest Gorge. (This can be a highlight for some and a lowlight for others.)
Maps	1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls.

Terrain and Difficulty General for both sections

Climate	Level 2. Although June-July is the coolest time of the year, the maximum temperature on most days will still average 30-31°C. Although the average nightly minimum is about 16-18°C (65°F), it is not uncommon for the temperature to drop as low as 10°C (50°F). Occasionally it goes lower still. Sleeping bags are essential. Rain is highly unlikely.
----------------	---

Terrain	Both sections have a few steep climbs, none of which is over 200 m. As short as they are, these climbs are strenuous. Some may require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down. None are technically difficult. None require ropes or other special equipment. There will be some places where you have to step from stone to stone as you walk along the edge of a creek.
----------------	--



Crossing Koolpin Creek on the marked trail at the start of section one

The creeks are low enough so that swimming across with packs is unlikely to be necessary. It may, however, be necessary to wade across slippery rocks through waist deep water. Your guide can help if you need assistance.

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. 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.



Walking through open woodland

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. At this time of year, the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out.
Hours	Generally 4-6 hours. A few days might be longer.
Packs	Pack weight - level 3. You need to carry 6 days food on each section. This will include about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.
Art	We visit a variety of art sites on both sections.
Campsites	Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.
Swims	Most creeks are still flowing well and the swimming is excellent. We will have good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot.
Lowlights	Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim and Twin.
Highlights	Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites.
Wildlife	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals. The Yellow Waters cruise is excellent for birds, many of which you are unlikely to see on the walk. It also gives you a good chance to see large estuarine crocodiles.
Fishing	Not permitted on this walk.



Notes on both sections

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.

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives. It is unlikely that you will be able to easily get things out of your pack during the day.

A daypack might be useful on one or both sections.

If you are meeting us in Kakadu, you will have to purchase a park entrance ticket on your way into the park. Our guide(s) should reimburse you automatically. If not, please remind them.

The Animal Tracks tour depends on one person and could be closed for cultural reasons.

If we cannot include the Animal Tracks tour, we will organise whatever seems the best option at the time.

Cooinda – Important Information

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 attractions at Cooinda include the Yellow Waters cruises, the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre and a short dry season nature walk along a marked trail.

The Yellow Waters cruise provides the best way to see the wetlands and allows you approach the wildlife (especially birds and crocodiles) much closer than you could do on foot. The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park. The nature walk offers a pleasant way to spend an hour or two, especially early in the morning or late afternoon.



Pop up tents at Cooinda

If it is available, we will stay in the pop up tents, which have two single stretch beds with linen provided. Short walk to toilet & shower facilities. If they are booked out, we will camp. Those who book early are more likely to get the tents. If we arrive early, there will be time to do laundry.

Make sure you bring a towel and clean clothes for the night at Cooinda.

Anyone who wishes to **upgrade to a motel room or glamping tent** may do so at their own cost. We are happy to make the booking for you and deduct the tent or camping fee from the cost of your room.

Your drinks at Cooinda are not included in the price.

If you are doing only one section. At the time these notes were written, the only transport was a seat on an AAT Kings tour bus. Phone: 08 8923 6555. Do not use the national 1300 phone. Only the Darwin office can sell the transport without a tour.

If the two cruise special is still on offer and the Animal Tracks tour isn't running, you might be able to do it at a discount. Ask us for details.

There is a good \$38 buffet breakfast available after the cruise. Some will want it. Those with smaller appetites might prefer to use their own. Please let us know if you want us to book it for you.

The cultural centre and the hotel sell a variety of souvenirs. 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 buy there.



White breasted sea eagles seen on the Yellow Waters cruise