

Kakadu Highlights No. 5: 21-29 June 2026

List price - \$3495 For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/discounts

Summary. This trip consists of a long walk in southern Kakadu. Lots of waterfalls, lots of swimming, an amazing gorge and a chance to see a number of rock art sites accessible only to overnight walkers. The trip finishes with a night at Cooinda and a Yellow Waters cruise.

See special note at the end.

Itinerary: Kakadu Highlights No. 5

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

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 2-7 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 8 Return to vehicles. Drive to Cooinda, book into campground. Opportunity to wash clothes and have hot shower.

Day 9 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise. Return to Darwin arriving mid to late afternoon.

Now for the details.

Koolpin Gorge (Jarrangbarnmi) is 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.

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.



Upper Koolpin campsite.

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.



Sunset, Koolpin camp



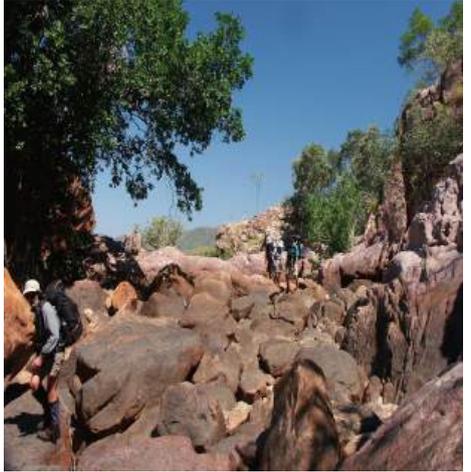
Looking back from above the first falls, Koolpin Gorge.



View from the top



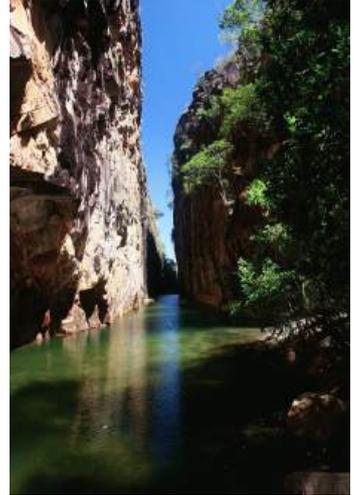
Upper Koolpin cascades



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

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.)

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

following morning. The cruise gives you the opportunity to see the wetlands wildlife at close range, far closer than you could on foot.

This section finishes with the 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise the

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

Overall Level 3

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 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. 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.

The creeks should be 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.



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

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 7 days food. This will include about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent. We do, however, recommend you bring something for shelter in case we fluke one of the rare dry season rains.

Art

We visit a variety of art sites.

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.

Highlights

Waterfalls, pools, Aboriginal rock art, spectacular views from high points.

Lowlights

Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim and Twin.

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.

Maps

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

Notes

You can leave clean clothing for Coinda in the vehicle during the walk.

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.

Coinda – Important Information

Coinda 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 Coinda 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.

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.

Special note. As of mid March, we had been having our wettest wet season in many years. We had the bookings to run one section of the original two section trip. The track to Jim Jim was more likely to be closed than the one to Jarrangbarnmi/Koolpin. Not only that, even if the Koolpin track remains closed it is possible to walk in from the main road. We added an extra day so that we would still be able to do the full walk. If the track is closed, the walk back to the vehicle on the last day will take long enough so that we won't arrive at Cooinda until mid to late afternoon.