

# Top End New Year: 27 December 2025 - 3 or 4 January 2026

*First Draft: 25 September 2025*

**List Price: \$595.** No discounts apply. There will be **additional expenses.** Details at the end of this document.

**Summary.** This trip will consist of a number of short wet season walks that Walkabouts owner Russell Willis really enjoys. Since we won't know what the Wet is like until the trip is about to happen, giving you an exact itinerary would almost certainly be less than the best. Russell wants the best so he will decide a basic itinerary shortly before departure. That itinerary will be subject to modification during the trip as roads can close at short notice and places that were dry a few days earlier can suddenly become spectacular. We will decide whether to finish on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> closer to the date. Here are some of the possibilities.



Upper Edith Falls

## Kakadu Loop

**Fogg Dam** is always worth a visit. If water levels are right, you get amazing numbers of birds as shown at right and we'll stay for a while. If not, our visit will be a quick one.

**Leaning Tree Lagoon** is a small nature park just off the Arnhem Highway. As with Fogg Dam, it may be worth only a brief stop or a much longer one.



Birds at Fogg Dam

**Wild Rice Sculptures.** Just off the Arnhem Highway. In the early 2000s, Japanese sculptor Mitsuika Tanabe began work on a series of sculptures to highlight the need to conserve wild rice to maintain the genetic diversity of this important crop. His sons completed the work after he passed away. The largest is something like 50 metres long.



Wild rice sculpture

**Scenic flights.** If we've had good rain, a scenic flight past Jim Jim & Twin Falls is well worth while. If there hasn't been good rain, I'd give it a miss.

The **Warradjan Cultural Centre** is always worth a visit, especially in the heat of the day.

**Burrungkuy (Nourlangie).** If you've never done it, the art site walk is well worth while. If we can get permission, adding on the first part of the Barrk walk gets us some great views. If we fluke an evening with little cloud, the Nawurlandja lookout walk at sunset is magnificent.

We might include a wet season **Yellow Waters cruise.** Cooina accommodation costs far less at this time of year than during the Dry and the cruise boats have lots of space.



Wet season cruise – almost empty



Twin Falls from the air

**Motorcar Falls, lower Motorcar and/or Kurrundie.** These are the only reasonably accessible large waterfalls in Kakadu at this time of year. We could do one or two of these on a day walk. To do all three, it would be better to camp overnight.



Motorcar Falls



Kurrundie Falls



Lower Motorcar Falls



Motorcar Creek campsite

**Ikoymarrwa**, also known as Moline Rock Pools, is a lovely little spot with safe swimming a short distance off the road.

## Katherine Loop

**Umbrawarra Gorge** is a small nature reserve just outside of the town of Pine Creek. If water levels are too high, the road gets cut. If we haven't had much rain, it could be too dry. But, if water levels are just right, I can't resist.

**Edith Falls** is a part of Nitmiluk National Park. Swimming in the pool below the bottom falls is unsafe because of currents and possible crocodiles. If water levels are not too high, there is a very scenic loop walk that takes you between the second and third falls where you can safely have a swim. The photo at the beginning of these notes was taken on that walk.



Ikoymarrwa

**Katherine Gorge** is another part of Nitmiluk Natinal Park. During the wet season, a small creek feeds the southern rockhole. Unless the rain hasn't started the waterfall, we will spend a night in Katherine, go out to the gorge early in the morning, do the walk getting some great views, and catch a boat back to where we began. A 5 year old did this walk with us in 2022.



On the track



Lookout gorge view



Southern rockhole swim



Our return transport arrives

Depending on conditions, there are a couple of other places we might visit on our way north toward Litchfield.

## Litchfield Loop

The walk from Buley Rockhole goes past pool after pool. Based on past experience, we are unlikely to see anyone except at the start & finish.



Buley Creek

Among the many other possibilities in Litchfield are a walk on Tolmer Creek and a visit to the Cascades. The two Cascades photos at right were both taken in February. Some years are wetter than others.



Lichfield cascades



Litchfield Cascades

If water levels permit, we may be able to visit Stapleton Falls, a small waterfall and pool completely off the beaten track. The photos below were taken on the Darwin Bushwalking Club 2024 Christmas walk.



Walking along Tolmer Creek



Stapleton Falls and pool



Swim stop at Stapleton Falls

We hope to be able to do something else as well, but until we get permission, we can't advertise exactly what.

## Terrain and Difficulty

**Overall** Level 1 – you never carry more than one day's food and carry full packs only short distances, if at all.

**Climate** Level 4. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. The only reason this is not rated as level 5 is that you spend most nights in air conditioning.

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** Level 1-4. Although some sections of these walks are fairly flat and straightforward, much of the walking is off-trail. There are some sections of rock scrambling and a couple of short but sharp climbs. If you have never done this before, you may find this fairly difficult. Most of the walking is through open woodland with a spear grass understorey.

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.

Some of the walking is off-trail. If you have never done any off-track walking through



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

moderately rough terrain, nothing we can say can adequately describe the experience. The photos on our website, [www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au](http://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.

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 1-4. 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. Much of section two is on trails where the vegetation is not much of a problem.

The spear grass normally reaches its peak in March, often three or four metres tall in some areas (much shorter in others). We may encounter short sections of partially collapsed and seeding spear grass during some portion of the trip, but this early it is unlikely that there will be much. This is the best time for wildflowers.



Wildflowers everywhere

## Hours

Generally 4-6 hours, not including breaks. A few days might be longer.

## Packs

**Pack weight** - level 1. You never carry more than one day's food and carry full packs only short distances.

## Art

We may visit one or more of the art sites at Burrungkuy (Nourlangie).

## Campsites

If we do an overnight walk, sandy beach or grassy area nearby if water levels are high.

## Swims

This is the best time to see Kakadu and the Top End waterfalls. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Many of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves. Ear infections are more likely at this time of year when you spend so much time swimming. If you have even the slightest symptom of an ear ache, make sure you tell the guide immediately. Prevention is easier than cure.



Our own private spa

## Lowlights

Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can force a change of itinerary.

## Highlights

Several waterfalls seen at their spectacular best. Great swimming. Aboriginal art sites. 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. The

Kakadu cruises may give you a chance to see one or more large crocodiles but they are harder to spot at this time of the year than during the cooler months. The two photos above were



taken in Litchfield on one of our February Kakadu Light trips. The blue winged kookaburra was unusually tame. The water monitor was about a metre long.

## Fishing

Not permitted in Kakadu and not good elsewhere.

## Maps

To get a better idea where these walks go see the links below.

The Top End showing Kakadu in relation to Darwin, <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/newpage>

Kakadu National Park: <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/kakadu-national-park>

## Cooinda and Jabiru

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 wet season attractions at Cooinda are the Yellow Waters cruises and the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

The Yellow Waters cruise provides the best way to see the wetlands and allows you to approach the wildlife much closer than you could do on foot. Even if you have done a dry season cruise at Yellow Waters, it is well worth doing again so that you can gain an appreciation of just how much the landscape changes from season to season.

The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and campground and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park.

Both the cultural centre and the shop offer a variety of souvenirs for sale. 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 purchase there.

Jabiru is a small ex-mining town with very limited shops. The Aurora Resort is a resort and caravan park which has a variety of accommodation. If we want to do some of our meals, it is the best value in the town at this time of year. If we are happy to eat in a restaurant, the Croc Hotel has great deals on wet season rooms.

The scenic flight past Jim Jim and Twin Falls costs about \$250 for a one hour. Shorter flights are available as are helicopter flights. As with the boats, bad weather can make the flights impossible.

We will eat in local restaurants some nights will cook our own on others.

## What Is and Is **Not Included** in the Price

**Included.** The services of the guide.

**Not included.** Everything else.

### Why not include everything?

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 may not want to do the scenic flight. NT residents don't pay park entry fees, others do. The vehicle cost per person depends on the number in the vehicle. To encourage people to come, we are only charging their actual cost. We'll do the bookings for you but you'll need to pay us. Here are some approximate prices to give you an idea of the extra costs you'll be up for.

- Transport. Nil for those providing their own. Vehicle cost split among those travelling in our vehicle. This cost will include one month's registration (a bit under \$200) + 60 cents per km. Estimate \$150 to \$300 per person for those travelling in our vehicle.
- Park entry fees. Nil for NT residents. \$50 for those from interstate or overseas.
- Park camping fees. \$7 per person if we camp.
- Yellow Waters cruise. (About \$120, highly recommended but optional.)
- Optional scenic flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls. About \$250 per person.
- Katherine Gorge boat at the end of the walk (about \$25).
- Accommodation. Depends on the number of nights and on who shares what. Our best estimate is between \$300 and \$500. Substantially more if you want your own room.
- Restaurant meals. \$30 to \$50 each + drinks. Not sure how many until we finalise the itinerary.
- Meals we cook (we won't know how many until we finalise the itinerary). \$15 each. People are welcome to help with preparing the meals we do.
- Drinks and snacks at roadside stops.
- Highly recommended. If we stay at Cooinda, the buffet breakfast is excellent. It costs \$38 but we can save a little bit by booking when we book the rooms.
- You will need to bring your other breakfasts for most of the time. Lunches as well. We'll have more details when we know exactly what we are doing.

**Estimated total cost** is between \$400 (own vehicle, no cruise or flight, cheap meals, cheapest accom) and \$1300 (everything but drinks as above).

**This itinerary is subject to change.** We can't book the accom and tours until we have people booked on the trip. We can't be sure what accom is available until we try and book it. Extreme weather can close roads.

## Booking

You need to do steps 3 & 4 on our booking page, <https://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/bookings>

You also need to pay us the full \$595 plus \$200 toward the expenses. If you cancel, you lose our normal cancellation fee plus any non-refundable expense we've paid on your behalf. You will also need to fill in a questionnaire about your preferences.

## Questions for those who book

1. If we go to Jabiru, do you want to do a scenic flight?
  - a) If so for the full hour or less?
2. If we go to Cooinda, do you want to do the Yellow Waters cruise?

Unless otherwise specified, we will assume couples would like to share a room and bed, singles might share a room but not a bed.

3. Are you happy to share a room with someone else?
  - a) If so, same sex only or doesn't matter?
  - b) Are you happy to share a room/cabin with more than one other person?
4. If we camp for one night, do you have a tent suitable for that. I MIGHT have one spare that could be hired.)
5. In Pine Creek, we'll probably stay at the Lazy Lizard, <https://lazylizardpinecreek.com.au/accommodation/>

They have a variety of cabins as well as budget doubles and singles. Based on past experience, we recommend the cabins or doubles. Have a look and let us know which you prefer.

9. The Litchfield Safari Camp is the only place we can stay that doesn't require a fairly long drive to get to the places we want to visit. They have glamping tents (\$400 per night) and cabins. I believe they have only one family cabin and two en suite cabins. We need the indoor kitchen facilities & will book the family cabin as soon as we have at least three bookings. If you want privacy, you might need to go for the glamping tent. See <https://litchfieldsafaricamp.com.au/>

Which type of accom would you prefer? **Note.** As of 24 September, some accom was already booked out so we may have to change to something further away.

10. Finish date. Are you OK if we finish on Sunday 4 January or do you need to finish in the 3<sup>rd</sup>.
11. Food. We are doing some of our own meals. If you have any dietary restrictions, you need to let us know what they are. If it isn't noted on the registration form (step 4 on the booking page), we will assume you will eat it.

Would you be willing to assist with cooking one of the meals we have at the Safari Camp?

It should be possible to keep drinks cool most of the time. Pre dinner drinks on the first three nights (restaurants are not BYO). Plus anything you want at Litchfield. Trying to keep something cool on the overnight walk is possible, but you'd need to carry a fair bit of extra weight to do it. If you want to put something in a group esky, we'll need to know in advance.