

Kakadu Short Circle: 18 April - 1 May 2027

List price - \$4595 For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/prices.shtml

Summary. This is the only one of our trips that allows you to visit the upper reaches of Koolpin Creek, an area noted for its spectacular scenery and abundance of Aboriginal art sites. This trip provides most groups with more time for birdwatching, botanising and/or simply relaxing than is possible on most of our other circle trips.

Itinerary

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, Hilton Gardens, 122 The Esplanade.** There are two Hiltons next door to each other. The correct one is closer to Daly Street, the taller of the two. If you go to the Double Tree Hilton at 116 The Esplanade, you'll miss the meeting. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up. Pick up is from your accommodation if you have notified us where you are staying at least a week before departure or have made alternate arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from Darwin Transit Centre at 69 Mitchell Street.
Drive to Kakadu. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc.
Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

Day 2–12 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 13 Return to vehicles. Drive to Cooinda for lunch and a visit to the Warradjan Cultural Centre. Drive to Jabiru. Overnight at Anbinik. Dinner at BYO Anbinik restaurant.

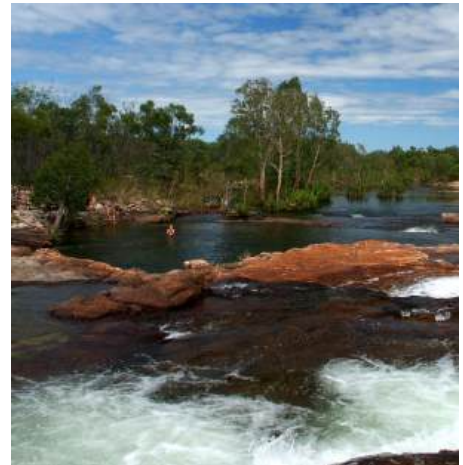
Day 14 9 AM Guluyambi Cruise. Visit Ubirr art site. Drive to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.

Now for the details.

The route described below is the longest of several possibilities. If the group feels like moving a bit more slowly, there are a variety of short cuts we can take.

The walk begins at Flying Fox Crossing on the South Alligator River in the southern part of Kakadu, about 330 kilometres and four to five hours from Darwin. A relatively flat eight kilometre walk along the banks of the river and across the plain brings us to the beginning of Koolpin Gorge.

Saltwater crocodiles have been making their way into lower Koolpin during the wet season in recent years. Unless park management has given the all clear, very unlikely this early, we will have to climb over a ridge and join the creek above the falls.



Cascades swim, upper Koolpin Creek



First two waterfalls at Koolpin



The views are fantastic, but it is strenuous. The photo at left shows the climb. Once we are above the first falls, crocs are no longer a worry and we can swim to our hearts content.

Koolpin Gorge is beautiful. The pools are perfect for swimming. The waterfalls and views are a photographer's delight and a memory to treasure. Aboriginal art sites tell us that this has been a special place for thousands of years. Although the gorge is only four kilometres long, it is too good to rush through. We take at least a day to reach the top.

From the top of the gorge, we follow Koolpin Creek to the area where it begins.

That short sentence doesn't do

[Climbing over the ridge at Koolpin](#)

justice to the walk. One pool follows another. There are small waterfalls and cascades. There are numerous Aboriginal art sites to be found along the way.

Most groups will take a relatively leisurely three or four days to do this. Faster groups might spend a day at a base camp allowing time to explore without full packs. It is often easier to walk some distance away from the bank of the creek so you will need to carry more water than when you are walking along the creek edge.

From Koolpin, we make our way to the top of Graveside Gorge where a double waterfall drops 100 metres into a pool in the gorge below. After taking time to have a good look at Graveside, we move along to Cascades Creek and the first of its many pools and art sites. The walk down the four kilometre gorge is a slow one. There are a few places where you have the choice of edging along narrow rock ledges (close to water level, no big drops), floating your pack through the creek, or climbing up and around.



[Cascades waterslide. We've had people from age 8 to 80 enjoy this slide.](#)

The pools and art sites are too nice to pass by, so stops are frequent as we make our way down to the cascades for which the creek is named. The last 500 metres often takes two hours or more as the deep pools and a natural water slide are much too inviting to rush past.

Next, we visit Gronophylum Creek with its unusual multi-trunked palms, beautiful, sandy camp sites and deep, clear pools. The

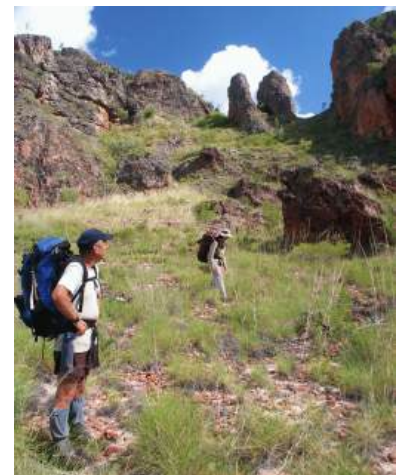
rugged landscape away from the creek is reminiscent of central Australia with its red rock and spinifex covered hills. A short, steep climb to the top of a nearby hill presents us with an incredible panorama. Following the creek, you might walk three kilometres in an hour. If you followed a compass bearing, the landscape is such a jumble of broken rock that walking three kilometres might take you several days.



[Relaxing at upper Koolpin campsite](#)



[Swim stop, upper Cascades Creek Falls](#)



[Spinifex covered landscape near Gronophylum Creek](#)



Upper Gronophylum campsite. Every single campsite on this trip is next to your own private pool.

From Gronophylum, we cross to the Barramundi system and its many waterfalls, too many for a photo of each so all we can do is give you a taste. We pass one branch, continue across the plateau and drop down to the largest pool in the area. After a night there, we head down Barramundi Valley, past more pools and into the lower gorge for our final camp. Next morning, we hike out to Maguk where we meet the vehicle that will bring us back to Darwin.

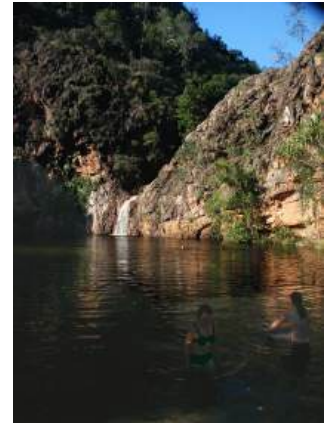


Flat rock walking, upper Koolpin tributary



Bush tucker lesson on the Guluyambi tour

The walk may be over, but our trip is not. We drive to Cooina. After a bistro lunch at the pub, we visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre before driving to Jabiru for a night in the Bush Bungalows at the Anbinik Resort. For more information about Anbinik, see <http://www.anbinik.com.au>



Big pool next to final camp, Barramundi Creek

Next morning, we do the Guluyambi Aboriginal Cultural cruise on the East Alligator River. The cruise gives you an insight into their culture as well as giving you a good view of

the Kakadu wetlands. After the cruise, we return to Darwin, arriving in time for people to catch flights that night.

For more information, see <https://www.kakaduculturaltours.com.au/index.php/guluyambi>

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 3

Climate Level 3-4. It will be hot. It will also be humid although the humidity normally drops substantially between March and May. The average daily maximum is 33-34°C (91-94°F). The average minimum is 22°C (71°F). It can, however, get much cooler. Rain is unlikely but possible. We recommend that you bring a tent or mosquito net with a fly.

Terrain Level 3.

Start to Koolpin Gorge. Fairly flat, relatively easy. The scrub varies dramatically from year to year so it is easier in some years than others.

Koolpin Gorge. One or two steep climbs. Considerable rock hopping, moderately difficult in places. If water levels are especially high, a pack float may allow you to avoid one extra very steep and rugged climb.

Koolpin Creek above gorge. Relatively flat, some long stretches between pools. Scrub varies from year to year so the walking can range from quite easy to moderately difficult.

Koolpin to Graveside to Cascades Creek. A mix. Flat easy stretches are interspersed with slow rocky ones.

Cascades Creek. Rock hopping all the way. Some sections are very slow.

Gronophylum Creek and traverse to Barramundi Creek. Flat and easy in places, slow rock hopping in others. Variations in scrub due to fires makes it much easier in some years than in others.

Barramundi Creek to end. Two steep descents, one steep climb. Flat and easy in most places. Most people consider the terrain on the crossing from Barramundi Creek to Waterfall Creek to be the most difficult on the trip.

Overall. 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. Most of those who have not had any off-track walking experience find it more difficult than those who have done it before.

The photos on our old "Terrain & Difficulty" page,

www.bushwalkingholidays.org/rockhop.shtml, are small but they should help you visualise exactly what is involved in some parts of the trip.

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.

Wildflowers are excellent.

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, but this late it is unlikely that there will be much.

Hours Generally 4-6 hours. A few days might be longer.

Packs **Pack weight** - level 4. You need to carry 13 days food. This will include about 3½-4½ kg of the evening meals. We recommend both a lightweight sleeping and a tent or mosquito net and fly.

Art Koolpin has one of the greatest concentrations of rock paintings in Kakadu. There are a number of good sites in other areas as well.

Campsites Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else anywhere along most of the route.

Swims Excellent. This is a good time to see the waterfalls on this route. We will have good pools at almost every campsite lunch spot as well as other pools along the way.

Lowlights Heat and humidity. Carrying food for 13 days. Pushing through thick grass.

Highlights Great swimming. Aboriginal art sites. A still fairly 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 Guluyambi cruise gives you a good chance to see large estuarine crocodiles.



Gomphrena



Swim stop, unnamed creek

Fishing Not permitted on this walk.
Maps 1:50 000 El Sherana (1st few km at beginning of walk), Koolpin & Goodparla. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

Notes

Slow groups will do a shorter version of this walk, possibly moving directly from one of the Koolpin tributaries to Cascades Creek.

Although most of the walking is *relatively* easy, you need to be prepared to carry your food for the full trip. There is no point on the route where you come anywhere near a road or 4WD track so a food drop is not possible.

You should prepare a package containing a change of clothes and anything else you might want for our night in Jabiru to come out with the pick up vehicle. The restaurant at Anbinik is BYO so you might also want to organise some sort of drink to come out with the pick up or be left with the vehicle if we drop it off at the start of the walk.

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives. It may not be possible to get at your pack until the vehicle is unloaded at the end.



Large estuarine crocodile, great to see from the boat. There are none of these in the areas where we swim on our walks.