

Kakadu Highlights No. 8: 6-19 September 2026

List price - \$5295

For information about our advance purchase and other discounts, see our discount page,

www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/discounts

Summary. Section one is as easy as it gets, three short walks including two day-walks without full packs. Section two is a longer walk with lots of swims. Section three includes a night on a houseboat. You spend a night at the Aboriginal owned and run Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp where we do a short cultural tour.

Itinerary

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Southern Litchfield & Koolpin List price: \$2595

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. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 7 to 8 a.m. pick up. Pick up is as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Tjaynera Falls day use area. Carry packs about 1 hour to a camp by a nice pool and small waterfall.

Day 2 Return to vehicle. Head south along the southern Litchfield 4WD track stopping to visit Surprise Falls. Park at the Sybel Springs parking area. Carry packs about 1½ hours to Tableland Falls.

Day 3 Day walk above camp site.

Day 4 Return to vehicles. Drive to Koolpin Gorge (Jarrangbarnmi). Follow marked trail to the first waterfall, then off the trail to our camp about 1½ to 2 hours from the car.

Day 5 Day walk upstream visiting art sites and enjoying the pools

Day 6 Return to vehicle. Drive to Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp. Short cultural tour. Overnight at the camp.

Day 7 Drive to Cooina. Drop off anyone finishing here and collect anyone joining.

Section 2 Barramundi Creek List price: \$2595

Day 6 Those beginning with this section catch a bus from Darwin to Cooina. See the note at the end for details. You will need to camp or book your own accommodation.

Day 7 Drive to Cooina if anyone is joining or leaving. Drive to Barramundi Gorge. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp. (Upper Gorge)

Day 8–11 Bush camping, mostly carrying full packs. Should include a day walk without full packs. (Piccaninny Pools, Buff



Beginning the day-walk from Tableland Falls



Sunset at Koolpin camp



Swim stop, Emerald Pool, Barramundi Creek.

Pool, visit top of intermediate gorge on the way). Final night in upper gorge above Maguk. Less than 3 km from the cars.

Day 12 Return to vehicle. Drive to Cooinda for lunch. Nourlangie art sites. Overnight at Anbinik in Jabiru. Drop off those finishing with this section at Cooinda or Jabiru.

Section 3 Ubirr and the Mary River List price: \$1395

Day 12 Those beginning with this section catch a bus from Darwin to Jabiru. Overnight with group.

Day 13 Early morning walk near Ubirr. Drive to Mary River and begin houseboat cruise.

Day 14 Finish houseboat cruise. Drive back to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation.



Mary River Houseboat

Now for the details

Section 1: Southern Litchfield & Koolpin: 6-12 September



Tjaynera Falls from top. Swimmer shows scale

This is one of the easiest tri sections we offer, minimal pack carrying combined with day walks and swim stops along two of the most scenic creeks in Litchfield.

The drive from Darwin to the Tjaynera Falls car park takes 2-2½ hours. Depending on what we decide to visit along the way, it could take longer. From the car park, we follow the marked trail to the plunge pool at the bottom of the falls. dropping our packs a few hundred metres before the end. After a swim, we return to our pack, leave the trail and walk about an hour to our secluded camp next to a pool below a smaller waterfall.

Next morning, we return to the vehicle and head south along the southern Litchfield 4WD track, stopping at Surprise Falls on the way. Once on the main road, a short drive brings us to the Sybel Springs 4WD track. Most visitors stop there and visit the springs below. We go a bit further, carrying our packs to Tableland Falls, where we find a magnificent pool and shady camp. The next day we leave our packs behind as we wander upstream. One pool follows another, small cascades along the way. Since it is only accessible on foot, it is one of the least known treasures in the park.

Now that we've seen the best that Litchfield has to offer, it's time for Kakadu. We return to the vehicles, drive out to the main road and into southern Kakadu. It's a long day. Getting to the start of our walk at Koolpin (Jarrangbarnmi) requires driving 100 km of bitumen followed by 40 km of gravel which is followed by 8 km on a rough 4WD track. We follow a rough marked trail to the first waterfall, leave the trail and continue another 2 km to our campsite on a sandy beach next to a large pool.

The hard work of getting to Koolpin is followed by an easy day as we leave our packs and explore the pools and rock art sites upstream.




Central Koolpin Gorge

From our camp, we return to the vehicle and drive to Cooinda. After lunch, we plan to visit the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre before driving to the Aboriginal owned and operated Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp where we get a traditional Welcome to Country.

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after section three)

Overall Mostly level 2. The day we go to Koolpin is level 3.

Terrain	Level 2. The climbs to the top of Tjaynera and at Koolpin are steep but short. Most of the rest is relatively flat. The marked trail at Koolpin is rougher than the off-trail walk. This is one of the easiest walks we offer.	
Vegetation	Level 1-2. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creek.	
Hours	You carry your full pack for only 1-3 hours on any given day. The two day-walks will be as long as you wish to make them.	
Packs	Pack weight - level 2. You need to carry only 2 days food. You might need a lightweight sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.	
Art	Little in Litchfield, amazing at Koolpin.	
Campsites	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent sites near the water. We should have them to ourselves.	
Swims	Swimming is excellent. Good pools all along the creek.	
Lowlights	The very long drive from Litchfield to Kakadu. Possible tourist crowds in some places.	
Highlights	The views, the art, good weather, great swimming holes, light packs.	
Map	1:50 000 Koolpin. There is or was a good map of Litchfield.	

On the marked trail at Koolpin

Section 2: Barramundi Creek: 11-17 September

Anyone joining this section will need to get themselves to Cooinda the day before the pick up.

If someone is joining or leaving the trip, we go to Cooinda for the drop off or pick up. If not, we drive straight to Maguk/Barramundi Gorge. A short walk from the car park brings us to the main falls and the climb to the upper gorge. A walk through the upper gorge takes us to a lovely camp site. The next good spot is about two hours away so we may decide to have a lazy day and stop here for the night or we may decide to push on so we can have a two night camp later.



Piccaninny pool swim

When we leave the gorge, we find ourselves in a broad sandy valley. The only visible water is in a few isolated pools. All the flow is through the sand below our feet. After about five kilometres, we turn off into a side valley and suddenly find flowing water. Another kilometre brings us to a beautiful, deep, clear, shady pool where we can relax and enjoy a swim. A short climb to the top brings us to more beautiful pools and waterfalls. We may camp near here or we may decide to push on across the plateau and down to the largest pool in the entire Barramundi system. Huge *Allosyncarpia* trees give deep shade on the wide sandy banks of the pool, another exceptional camp site.

If we have taken two days to get to this point, we will probably spend a second night there, doing another day walk without full packs. If we have taken three days, we will begin working our way back down the main valley, sometimes in the deep shade of a patch of monsoon forest, more often in the open woodland, stopping for the occasional swim along the way. Our final campsite is normally at a pool near the top of the upper gorge.



Top pool, Barramundi Creek.

The first part of the walk is along a marked track. The next several kilometres are quite well defined and generally easy going although there is a bit of scrambling over river stones. Most of the terrain up to the large pool mentioned in paragraph three is fairly flat and relatively easy. There are, however, a couple of short but steep climbs at the beginning and end. Once back at the vehicles, we drive to Jabiru where we spend the night in accommodation at the Anbinik Resort, <https://www.anbinik.com.au/>

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after section three)

Overall	Level 3
Terrain	Level 2-3. The climb to the top of Barramundi Creek and the climbs upstream are shorter than those at Jim Jim & Twin Falls. Most of the walking is relatively flat.
Vegetation	Level 2-3. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creek.
Hours	4-6 hours most days.
Packs	Pack weight - level 3. You need to carry four days food. You can probably leave your sleeping bag at home but we do recommend a well ventilated tent or mossie dome with fly.
Art	There are a few minor sites that we may visit.
Campsites	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent sites near the water. We should have them to ourselves.
Swims	Swimming is excellent. Good pools all along both creeks.
Lowlights	Possible tourist crowds at the start of the walk. Hot, sticky weather.
Highlights	Relaxing next to two of the most beautiful pools in Kakadu.
Map	1:50 000 Goodparla

Section 3: Ubirr and the Mary River: 17-19 September



View from the Ubirr lookout

On the second last day, we leave Anbinik and drive to Ubirr, site of one of the best collections of Aboriginal art in Kakadu. For most of the year, it is completely overrun with bus loads of tourists. By mid September, most of these are gone. We will time our visit for as early as possible when we will have it almost to ourselves. If time permits, we may do one of the short nature walks in the area. Perhaps we will be lucky enough to spot one of the large crocodiles which inhabit the East Alligator River. No swims here!

The area near the East Alligator River will have provided us with a taste of what the Top End wetlands have to offer. Our trip finishes with the most comfortable wetland experience we can offer — a day and night aboard a houseboat on the Mary River.

We cruise slowly along the Mary, watching the hundreds of birds that line the river banks and enjoying the changing scenery around us. Those who wish to try their hand at catching a barramundi have a chance to do so. We pull in to shore for the night and enjoy a relaxing final meal in the bush as we listen to the night sounds around us. The following morning, we cruise back to where we began and get into the vehicles for the drive back to Darwin. The trip is over, but the memories will linger on.



Relaxing on the houseboat, a perfect way to finish the trip.

Note. We cannot book the boat until we have bookings on the tour. If we do not get early bookings, we may not be able to do the cruise as scheduled.

Map. 1:100 000 Mary River

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after this section)

Overall	Level 0.
Terrain	Level 0. The only walking is getting on and off the houseboat.
Vegetation	Level 0. No vegetation on the river, but we pass through a variety of habitats on the shores.
Hours	4-6 hours most days.
Packs	None.
Art	None.
Campsites	A bed on the boat.
Swims	None. Large crocodiles inhabit this section of the Mary River.
Lowlights	Hot, sticky weather. Not being able to swim.
Highlights	Wildlife and a wonderfully relaxing way to finish two weeks in the bush.

General Terrain and Difficulty for all sections

- Terrain** Little or 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 more than if you do not. The relatively easy nature of sections one and three means that they should suit almost anyone who meets our minimum level of fitness. Anyone who has already done section two should find that section three is easier than it would have been if they were beginning with section three.
- Climate** September is one of the hotter months of the year with an average daily maximum of 36°C (97°F). Fortunately, the humidity is normally still fairly low. The average minimum is 21°C (70°F). Temperatures as low as 12°C (about 54°F) have been known to occur, but they are rare. You might want to leave your sleeping bag at home. If you do, bring thermals for insurance against a chilly night. We tailor our walking to the climate, starting early and having long breaks next to pools in the middle of the day. If you accept the climate, you should have a wonderfully relaxing holiday. If you want to march on regardless of the weather, you may find it frustrating. Thunderstorms are possible so that we recommend that you bring a lightweight tent or mossie dome with fly.
- Wildlife** Birds are concentrated near the waterholes at this time of year. You will see thousands at Yellow Waters and on the Mary River. The Mary River cruise gives you a good chance to see large estuarine crocodiles. Lots of lizards.
- Fishing** Not permitted on the first three sections. Fishing can be good from the houseboat. Barramundi can sometimes be caught from the boat.



Magpie geese flying over Yellow Waters

Notes

Those doing more than one section 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.

If you meet 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. Please remind them if this is not done soon after you meet.

Make sure you have your lunch, a water bottle, and some money with you in the vehicle during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack during the journey.

A day pack may be useful on all sections. .

Bring a book or two if you'd like to read during the long breaks. Flies can be a nuisance at this time of year so it's a good idea to bring a lightweight insect net for use during the breaks.

Those who book early may be able to get a bed at the Safari Camp. The cost of a bed is extra.; The cost of camping is included.

Cooinda Bus. The cost of getting to or from Cooinda is not included in the cost of the tour for those not doing the full trip. In recent years, the only way to get to Cooinda was on an AAT Kings tour bus.

As of the time these notes were written, Katherine Coaches offered a service between the Palmerston (edge of Darwin) bush interchange and Jabiru on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. See <https://katherinecoaches.com.au/service-location/jabiru-wet-season/>

Cooinda

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 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. Both the cultural centre and the hotel 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.

Houseboat

We cannot include the cost of the houseboat without having a good chance to seriously overcharge those taking part.

The houseboats cost \$740 per day plus fuel at the time these notes were written. Each boat has two cabins with a double bed in each and a main lounge with a double bunk.

If we priced it in, we would have to cover a worse case scenario where we had to cover the cost with only four people. By dividing the cost between those who actually take part, we can ensure you pay the lowest possible price.

When we know how many are coming, we will ask you for your share.

