

Draft Notes: Rock Art Special: April 21 - May 4, 2013

Note 1. We originally organised the first section of this trip with someone at the Jawoyn Association in 2005. As good as we believe it is, we have never had the bookings we need to run it. **Times change.** After more than six years, we can no longer be sure that our original agreement holds. We will try and renegotiate the agreement if and when we have enough interest to make the trip a likely departure.

Note 2. The dates here are flexible. If you are interested in the trip but would prefer a later departure, please let us know.

The Top End of the Northern Territory is home to some of the best preserved rock paintings in the world. Unlike the rock art found in other parts of the world, the culture which produced those paintings is still alive and well. Our trips have been visiting Aboriginal rock art sites since we began operations in 1986. This is, however, the first trip we have offered which specialises in rock art. It will be accompanied by Aboriginal guides who will be able to explain some of what you see. Some explanations are, however, restricted for cultural reasons. In this case, you can simply enjoy the art for its aesthetic appeal.

Section 1: Nipanjarm: April 22-28

We begin with the 400 km drive from Darwin to the small Aboriginal community of Manyallaluk where we meet our Jawoyn Aboriginal guides. From Manyallaluk, we continue to their camp at Nipanjarm where we spend a couple of nights at the camp, doing short walks in the area. This is followed by a longer walk carrying packs. At the end of the section we return to our vehicles and drive north toward Jabiru. Those leaving at the end of this section can choose to be dropped off in Katherine or Jabiru.

Section 2: Kakadu: April 28 - May 5

After a night in Jabiru, we plan to begin this section with the Aboriginal run Guluyambi cruise on the East Alligator River. This will give you a good introduction to the Aboriginal culture in this area. After the cruise we don our packs and head off on the walk.

If we are able to get an Aboriginal guide to accompany this section, our venue will be at their choice. If we are unable to get an Aboriginal guide, our walk will take place in the Baroalba area where we find the greatest concentration of Aboriginal paintings that we have encountered anywhere in more than 30 years of bushwalking in the Top End and Kimberley.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall	Level 2-3
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 20-22°C (68-71°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. 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. 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.
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 3-5 hours with packs. A few days might be longer. We will spend more time visiting art sites and less time carrying packs than on our other walks.
- Packs** **Pack weight** - level 3. You need to carry up to 7 days food. This will include about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. We recommend both a lightweight sleeping bag and a tent or mosquito net and fly.
- Art** Art, art and more art. That's what this trip is about.
- 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 a week. Pushing through thick grass.
- Highlights** Aboriginal art sites explained by Aboriginal guides. Waterfalls and swimming. 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 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** To be advised.

Notes

Bring a change of clothes and a towel for the nights in accommodation. You should have enough money to pay for your drinks in Jabiru. 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.

Manyallaluk is a dry community. No alcohol is permitted on this section.

Itinerary: Rock Art Special

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Nipanjarm

Day 0 Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Holiday Inn Darwin, 122 The Esplanade. **Note.** There are two Holiday Inns next to each other on the Esplanade. The meeting is in the taller one, closer to the roundabout at the end of the street. **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 Manyallaluk, then Nipanjarm. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc. Overnight at Nipanjarm.

Day 2–6 Possible second night at Nipanjarm. Then walking carrying full packs

Day 7 Return to vehicles. Drive to Jabiru arriving late afternoon. Book into accommodation. Opportunity to wash clothes and have hot shower. Bring towel and toiletries and money for drinks. Section 1 ends.

Section 2 Kakadu

Day 7 Anyone joining this section catches a bus from Darwin to meet the group in Jabiru. They can check into accommodaion (to be advised) while waiting.

Day 8 Guluyambi cruise. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 9-13 Bush camping. We are likely to spend 2 or 3 nights at one camp site. Possibly two, two-night camps.

Day 14 Return to vehicles. Drive to Darwin, stopping at park headquarters if time permits. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.