

Family Bushwalk No. 1: Waterfall Creek: April 8-14, 2012

This trip has been designed to run at a slower pace than our other trips to allow families with children to enjoy the Kakadu bush.

Gunlom (UDP) Falls is about 350 kilometres and four to five hours from Darwin. This is a beautiful spot, the location of the waterfall scene in the original Crocodile Dundee movie. Gunlom is extremely popular and has been developed for intensive day use so, after a brief look and a swim in the plunge pool, we shoulder our packs and move on into the wilderness where we will spend the week.



A short steep climb takes us to the top of the falls and more pools, less crowded than the one below, a good excuse for another swim. Another four kilometres brings us to the end of a rocky section and a number of good pools, next to one of which we will make our first camp.

Even the youngest children can carry a small pack.

The following day, we have a choice. Groups which are relatively strong will take option A, groups which might find the climb too difficult will take option B.

Option A. From the first campsite, a walk of about another six kilometres across a flat plain brings us to the base of the next escarpment where we find a good pool and a possible campsite. However, unless we have been moving exceptionally slowly, we move up to the first level above where we find some good views, an interesting little cave and pockets of monsoon forest where you can experience a very different environment.

We return the way we came. Slower groups will want to choose this option.

Option B. From the first campsite, we can take a different route across the plain and descend to the Barramundi Valley through a low pass. From here, we upstream to a beautiful, shady pool. If time permits, we may spend a second night here.



The optional swim through cave is a real high point for many.

The following day we would climb to the top of the ridge separating Waterfall and Barramundi Creeks. However, we have all day to go about two km, so there is no need to push. Along the way, we find interesting rock forms, more monsoon forest and some of the best ridgetop views in Kakadu. This brings us to the cave mentioned in Option A. We return by following Waterfall Creek down to where we first left it and then back to the cars.



City boy with stick insect. Watching city children get in touch with nature is a rewarding experience.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 2

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. This is one of the easiest trips we offer in Kakadu. We have allowed two more days than we would allow for most groups to give those taking part extra time for rest stops, swimming and looking around.
- There may be some slow sections where you will have to pass through thick scrub. There will be some places where you have to step from stone to stone as you walk along the edge of a creek.
- There are few steep climbs, none of which is over 200 m. As short as they are, these climbs are strenuous. One might require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down. (This can be avoided if the guide decides that it is not appropriate.) None of the climbs are technically difficult. None require ropes or other special equipment.
- 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. Inexperienced children generally have less trouble coping than inexperienced adults.
- 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. However, even without any training, the slow pace should allow anyone who meets our minimum fitness to relax and enjoy the walk.
- 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 4-5 hours carrying packs.
- Packs** **Pack weight** - level 3. It will be necessary to carry all your food for the full trip. In addition to your breakfasts and lunches, you will have to carry about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. The exact amount the adults will carry will depend on how much the children are likely to eat and how much they can carry. We recommend both a lightweight sleeping and a tent or mosquito net and fly.
- Art** There are a number of art sites we can visit during this walk.
- Campsites** Mix of sand, a pebble beach and possibly a rock ledge. 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. Pushing through thick grass.



- Highlights** April is a good month to see Kakadu's waterfalls. Most creeks are still flowing well and the swimming is excellent. 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. Small lizards (and occasionally large ones), a variety of insects.
- Fishing** Not permitted on this walk.
- Maps** 1:50 000 Goodparla or 1:100 000 Mundogie. The 1:250 000 Kakadu map shows the whole park but is not suitable for navigation.

Optional Extra

In order to keep the cost as reasonable as possible, we have not included a Yellow Waters wetlands cruise or a night at Cooina. We could organise the trip to include this or the Guluyambi Aboriginal Cruise on the East Alligator River for an additional charge.

Notes

The guide will try and spend more time with the little things which might be interesting and unusual for the children: insects, lizards, etc. (Young children can bring a sense of wonder to things older people take for granted.)

The vehicle which drops us off will return to Darwin until the pickup. Once the walk has been started, there is no way out until the finish.

Depending on the circumstances at the time, it may be necessary to do a somewhat easier walk up and back from Barramundi.

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

Parents/guardians must keep an eye on their own children, especially on young children who may not be able to swim.

We plan to have more and longer breaks and do even more swimming than on our standard trips.

Although you will see some Aboriginal rock art, this may not be emphasised as much as on our standard trips.

If the children cannot carry their own food and equipment, their parents/guardians will have to do so.

Dehydration can be a major problem for young children. (See our *Bushwalking Guide*.) It is absolutely essential to make sure your children drink enough to need several "wee stops" during the day.

Family discounts 1/3 off for age 12-16
1/2 off for children under 12
no discount for more than two children unless accompanied by two adults

Other discounts Our standard advance purchase and past client discounts apply.
The other discounts listed in our brochure do not.
We need the equivalent of six adult fares to run this trip.

Itinerary: Family Bushwalk No. 1

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, 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 the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct 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 2–6 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 7 Return to vehicle. Drive to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation.