

Draft Notes: Green Kimberley: January 31 - February 13, 2009

This trip begins and ends in Kununurra. Those who do not have the time to do the full trip may choose to do either section. Those taking part will see an abundance of wild flowers and waterfalls in places which for most of the year are dry rock. The final night of each of the first section is spent in budget accommodation in Kununurra. Section two is slightly more difficult than section one.

Section 1: Northern Carr Boyd Range: January 31 - February 6

Located south of Kununurra and west of Lake Argyle, the peaks and cliffs of the Carr Boyds will be familiar to anyone who has visited the region. From the roads they present a forbidding face, dry and barren, rugged beyond belief. But up close they can show a different nature. Local bushwalkers love the range for the numerous deep cool gorges, lovely waterfalls and beautiful fern lined pools, just waiting for someone to stop and have a swim.

We begin with a cruise up the Ord River to a drop off point on Cooliman Creek. From there, a relatively short walk takes us to the creek we call "Many Falls" as there are eight different waterfalls in a relatively short distance. We spend the first two or three days exploring Many Falls Creek and its surrounds, then move north to Packsaddle Creek, the largest creek in the range. From here we will do a loop over to a spectacular waterfall we found in on our May 2003 trip. When it's flowing, as it will be at this time of year, it should be the most spectacular waterfall in the Range.

We finish by following Packsaddle down past large pools and waterfalls, finally reaching a 4WD track at the base. The lower reaches of the track are unlikely to be passable at this time of year, so we will have to follow the track for a few km to where a vehicle can get in to meet us. There will almost certainly be one or more days of half days where we walk without full packs.

Maps. 1:50 000 Deception Range or 1:100 000 Kununurra.

Section 2: The Cockburn Range: February 7-13

Bounded by the King and Pentecost Rivers, the Cockburn Range is a relatively small plateau surrounded by massive cliffs. The view from the road has been described as the "most hauntingly beautiful" in the Kimberley. The interior is even better. The heavily dissected plateau hides deep gorges, waterfalls and shady pools, perfect for swimming.

Depending on the state of the road, we may drive or fly the 90 km from Kununurra to Emma Gorge, a beautifully cool and shady spot, so cool we could hardly believe it really was February on our last two green season visits. After a look at the gorge, we climb up and begin our exploration of the central portion of the range. The climb is relatively short but quite steep and is rewarded with spectacular views back over the plains below.

From here, we work our way into the heart of the Cockburns where a massive gorge dominates the landscape. On one of our green season trips, we camped at the top of one of the many waterfalls and watched a cooling afternoon storm blow past. Then, as the setting sun lit up the mist and the cliffs around us, we sat down to dinner around the campfire. On another, we sat in a rock shelter and watched a spectacular lightning show. Both were magical evenings.

We may choose to do one or more day walks to scenic places which lie hidden deep within the range or we may decide to do a loop walk past some of these and follow a completely different route back to Emma Gorge where we will be met by the 4WD or aircraft which will take us back to Kununurra.

Maps. 1:50 000 Mt Cockburn or 1:100 000 Erskine.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall Level 4.

Climate Level 5. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. There will be some nights in air conditioned accommodation.

The average daily maximum is 35°C (95°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 every second day, 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	<p>Level 2-4. Both walks include a substantial amount of rock hopping as well as a number of relatively steep climbs and several smaller ones. If water levels are normal, both will also include some fairly flat walking through open woodland. None of the climbs are more than about 200 metres so they are over and done fairly quickly. There is likely to be one section where you need to float your pack on section two. Exceptionally heavy rains could make this necessary on section one as well.</p> <p>Even in the boggiest of seasons, the Kimberley 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.</p> <p>Little of the walking on any section 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Vegetation	<p>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.</p> <p>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 very much.</p>
Hours	Generally 4-6 hours, not including breaks. A few days might be longer.
Packs	Pack weight - level 3 you carry food for a week at a time. Your share of the evening meals will weigh 2½ to 3½ kg.
Art	You will see little or no art in the Carr Boyds. There are many good sites in the Cockburns. How many of these we visit will depend on the conditions at the time as well as on the interests and abilities of the group.
Campsites	Mix of flat rock ledges, sandy beaches (if not flooded) and grassy ground.
Swims	This is the best time to see the local waterfalls, many of which flow only during the Wet. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Almost all of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves.
Lowlights	Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can force a change of itinerary.
Highlights	Wet season waterfalls. Great swimming. Spectacular views. 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 boat up the Ord trip may give you a chance to see one or more freshwater crocodiles but they are harder to spot at this time of the year than during the cooler months.
Fishing	Permitted but unlikely to be very good.

Notes

Day packs are useful on both sections.

Those doing more than one section will have a chance to do some shopping in Kununurra between sections. They should allow extra money for this. (Cold drinks are almost irresistible.)

Those doing both sections will have to carry only what they need for each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in Kununurra between sections.

To take advantage of the hot showers in Kununurra between sections, you should bring a towel and some clean clothes.

Motel type accommodation may be substituted for the budget accommodation provided between sections for an extra charge.

We cannot be certain what time we will depart for each section until the night before. It is absolutely essential that everyone contacts the guide the night before their first section departs. Kununurra Backpackers will be able to inform you where to meet the guide between sections.

Bringing fresh fruit, vegetables or honey into WA is illegal whether you come by road or plane. (You cannot even bring in boxes or other containers that once contained fruit or vegetables.) Bags are checked both on the highway and at the airport. There will be time to do some shopping in Kununurra.

Itinerary: Green Kimberley

Note 1 **Day 0 is the day before departure.**

Note 2 **This itinerary is subject to change.** Exceptionally severe flooding can cause route changes and could conceivably cause a delay in the return to Kununurra at the end of any section. If you can afford the time, try not to book a flight on the day after the trip finishes.

Section 1 **Northern Carr Boyds**

Day 0 Travel to Kununurra. There are daily air and bus services between Kununurra and Perth and Darwin. Connections to the eastern states are normally made through Darwin. Pre-trip meeting for everyone doing the first section, 6 p.m., outdoor area, Kimberley Croc Backpackers. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 7 a.m. pick up from your accommodation in Kununurra provided you have given us the address at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. If you are unable to notify us where you are staying, the pick up is from in front of the Kununurra Visitors Centre.

Boat to beginning of walk. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2-6 Carrying full packs some days, day packs at other times, bush camps.

Day 7 Finish walk. Return to Kununurra. End of section one. Overnight in budget accommodation for those continuing to section two.

Section 2 **Cockburn Range**

Day 7 Those beginning with this section need to meet the group the night before. Unless other arrangements have been made, meet them at 6 p.m. at the Kununurra Backpackers.

Day 8 7 a.m. pick up for trip to Cockburn Range.
Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 9-13 Bush camps, carrying full packs some days, day packs others.

Day 14 Return to Emma Gorge to meet transport. Return to Kununurra. Drop off at your accommodation.

Final Note We may have a vehicle returning to Darwin at the end of the trip. If so, transport will be available at no additional cost. Please let us know if you are interested in this option.

Important Note **Regional Link** (formerly Air North), the only airline currently operating into Kununurra sometimes uses relatively small aircraft which have a baggage allowance of only 13 kg. Unless special arrangements have been made, if you are flying to Kununurra and your baggage weighs more than 13 kg, it may not get on the plane with you. (This would be very unusual but it is possible.) Contact Regional Link for more details. Phone: 1800 627474 or (08) 8920 4000; Fax: (08) 8920 4095; email: airnorth@regionallink.com.au
Qantas Link cancelled their peak season direct flights to and from Perth in late 2006. Call 131313 to see if they are running again.