

## **Kakadu Highlights Special: June 30-July 7, 2007**

This trip replaces the second section of Kakadu Circle No. 2. Two people booked this trip back in July 2006. In late April 2007, we had no other bookings. We hate to disappoint people who book well in advance so we are offering this as a special.

We begin with an acclimatisation day. We drive the 350 kilometres from Darwin to Cooina, stopping to visit the park Visitor Centre and the Aboriginal art sites at Nourlangie Rock on the way. In the late afternoon, we do the late afternoon cruise on Yellow Waters. The cruise gives you the opportunity to see the wetlands wildlife at close range, far closer than you could approach on foot. The early hour ensures you see more of the wildlife than those who do the midday cruises. We spend the night in budget accommodation.

Early the following morning, we drive to Jim Jim or Twin Falls and head for the top while it is still cool. Both walks follow marked trails up fairly steep hills, pass through an interesting sandstone maze and out to the creek above the falls. We must stay on this trail until we leave the restricted area about two km above the falls.

If we arrive at Twin early enough, it may be possible to take a boat up the gorge and visit the base of the falls with an Aboriginal guide. There will be an extra charge for this. The description below assumes we start from Twin Falls. Circumstances may dictate that we do the walk in the opposite direction.

After a look around the top of Twin Falls, we put on our packs and continue to the end of the marked trail where we leave all signs of civilisation behind as we make our way upstream, exploring and enjoying the shady rock ledges, sandy beaches and cool pools that we find in the seven kilometre long upper gorge.

The day we leave Twin Falls Creek is the tough one. We head overland to the top of a rainforest filled gorge through some very rugged and broken sandstone country — so rugged that no two groups have ever picked the exact same route. Depending on which route is chosen and how much time we spend working our way through the sandstone maze, we may camp on one of the creeks we cross en route or we may reach the gorge.

The camp site on the flat rock ledges at the top of the rainforest gorge is magnificent. Beautiful waterfalls cascade through a series of inviting pools under a shady rainforest canopy. If time permits, we will spend at least half a day here before pushing on across the plateau to Jim Jim Creek. A lack of landmarks along the way means that we never take the exact same route. A lack of water means that we must reach the pools on Jim Jim Creek that day.

The area near Jim Jim Creek is fairly flat so the walking is relatively easy as we move downstream toward the falls, stopping to examine some Aboriginal art and cool off with a swim or two along the way. From the top of Jim Jim Falls, over 200 metres from top to bottom with a final sheer drop of 160 metres, we enjoy spectacular views down the gorge and across the plains to the distant escarpment on the horizon. If time permits, we climb down to the top of the main drop so that we can enjoy another pool and experience what it feels like to look over a sheer 160 metre drop.

On the final morning we follow the marked trail down to the bottom of the gorge below the falls. After one last swim, we return to the vehicles for the long drive back to Darwin.

**Terrain and difficulty** (see also the comments for both sections)

**Overall** Level 4

**Climate** Level 2. Although June-July is the coolest time of the year, the maximum temperature on most days will still average 30-31°C. Although the average nightly minimum is about 16-18°C (65°F), it is not uncommon for the temperature to drop as low as 10°C (50°F). Occasionally it goes lower still. Sleeping bags are essential. Rain is highly

unlikely.

## **Terrain**

Level 4. Short sharp climbs at the beginning and end, both on well defined walking tracks. Fairly flat and reasonably easy along Twin Falls and Jim Jim Creeks. Similarly flat and relatively easy between the top of Rainforest Gorge and Jim Jim Creek. Some of the terrain between Twin Falls Creek and Rainforest Gorge is as broken stone country, **as rugged as anything we encounter on any of our walks**. A difference of 100 metres at one point can mean a difference of two or three hours walking time. It is this day that gives the trip its level 4 rating.

Except for short sections at the beginning and end, 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](http://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 2-3. 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. At this time of year, the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out.

## **Hours**

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

## **Packs**

**Pack weight** - level 3. You need to carry 6 days food on each section. This will include about 2-3 kg of the evening meals. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.

## **Art**

We visit a variety of art sites on both sections.

## **Campsites**

Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.

## **Swims**

Most creeks are still flowing well and the swimming is excellent. We will have good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot.

## **Highlights**

Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites. The rock maze between Twin Falls Creek and the Rainforest Gorge.

## **Lowlights**

Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim, Twin Falls, Gunlom and/or Barramundi. The rock maze between Twin Falls Creek and the Rainforest Gorge. (This can be a highlight for some and a lowlight for others.)

## **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.**

1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls or 1:100 000 Jim Jim. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

## **Notes**

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives. It is unlikely that you will be able to easily get things out of your pack during the day.

## 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 Yellow Waters cruise provides the best way to see the wetlands and allows you approach the wildlife (especially birds and crocodiles) much closer than you could do on foot. 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. The nature walk offers a pleasant way to spend an hour or two, especially early in the morning or late afternoon.

The cultural centre and the hotel sell a variety of souvenirs. 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 buy there.

## Itinerary: Kakadu Highlights Special

**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 other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.  
Drive to Kakadu. Late afternoon Yellow Waters Cruise. Overnight in budget accommodation.

**Day 2**      Drive to Twin Falls. Begin Walk. Bush camping, carrying full packs.

**Day 3-7**      Bush camping, carrying full packs.

**Day 8**      Return to vehicles. Drive to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.