

Kakadu Highlights No. 4: May 7-14, 2017

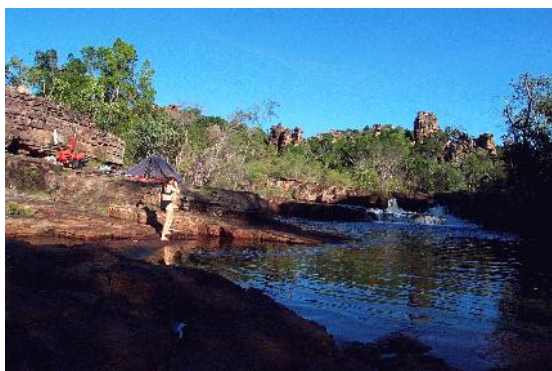
Baroalba Creek and Radon Gorge: May 7-14

The original section 2, 14-20 May, will not run this year.

Baroalba Creek is the main drainage for Mount Brockman, a large, irregularly shaped massif sitting on the plains a few kilometres away from the edge of the Arnhem escarpment. Its maximum dimensions are about 11 kilometres east to west and 15 kilometres north to south. Its maximum height is about 300 metres above sea level, about 240 metres above the surrounding plain. While the edges of the massif are extremely rugged and steep, much of the centre consists of a large basin drained by Baroalba Creek. The best time to visit this area is during or immediately after the green season when every creek is flowing and the waterholes are all full as will be the case on this trip.



On the marked trail. This is as easy as it gets.



Campsite and pool.

The rugged nature of the approaches prevented buffalo from reaching the basin, making this one of the few undisturbed areas in Kakadu. The area is full of rock shelters that were used by Aboriginal people over the millennia. It contains what may well be the greatest concentration of Aboriginal rock art in Australia, dating from the most ancient to the most recent.

We begin with a drive of almost 300 km from Darwin followed by an easy three kilometre stroll along an old four wheel drive track to Baroalba Springs where we can

enjoy a refreshing swim. From here, we leave all tracks behind. beginning a somewhat strenuous scramble up the boulder strewn creek. Once inside the basin, the ground levels out and the walking becomes easier. There are a number of nice camp sites to tempt us as we work our way upstream, taking our time, stopping every so often to have a swim or just to enjoy the shade of a cool rock shelter or the sight of a particularly colourful patch of flowers.

The next few days are spent slowly working our way upstream, exploring the many wonderful rock shelters, art sites and pools. Sunrise and sunset from the Baroalba high points are among the nicest views in Kakadu. We may decide to carry water up and spend a night camped on a high point. About nine kilometres above Baroalba Springs, we move into territory untouched on any of our other trips as we move toward the headwaters of the main branch of Baroalba Creek. A short climb over a pass brings us to Radon Creek, the largest in the northern part of the massif. Radon Gorge is steep, narrow, cool and beautiful. Toward the end of the gorge we have a choice: a strenuous climb up and around or a jump combined with lowering packs onto an airbed in the pool below.



Climbing to a high point for a view.

From the bottom of Radon Gorge, it is a 12 kilometre walk back along the western side of the massif to our vehicle. Camping is not normally permitted in this section so we have to do it in a single day.

Note. Radon Gorge is a particularly sensitive area. We may have to skip this and return the way we came.

Terrain and Difficulty

Overall	Level 3
Climate	<p>Level 3-4. It will be hot. It may also be humid although the humidity normally drops substantially by the end of April. The average daily maximum is 33-34°C (92-94°F). If we get extreme conditions, the temperature could reach 38°C (100°F). The average minimum is 20-23°C (70-72°F). Sleeping bags should not be needed. Rain is not very likely but definitely possible.</p> <p>Averages can be misleading. Occasionally, a monsoonal low associated with a late cyclone will cause it to rain for several days in a row. (This makes it somewhat harder to walk but it also makes the waterfalls more spectacular and keeps it relatively cool.) In other years, it may not rain a drop. On rare occasions it can get down as low as 10°C (59°F) overnight. You need to be prepared with something.</p>
Terrain	<p>Level 3.</p> <p>Going up Baroalba Creek at the beginning is a slow scramble over rocks of a variety of sizes. Frequent rest and swim stops make it easier. Once in the central basin, the walking becomes fairly flat and relatively easy until you do the high point climbs. The terrain in Radon Gorge is similar, fairly broken with some short but steep climbs. People who have never walked in this kind of terrain may find that this is one of the most physically demanding things they have ever done. The section along Baroalba Creek has many rock shelters if we wish to get out of any rain which may be occurring. The climbs are relatively short but quite steep and rugged. A few short sections of most of the climbs are quite exposed and many people will need some assistance. Most people will need to pass packs in at least one point both on the ascent and descent. <i>People who have a severe fear of heights should not choose this trip.</i></p> <p>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 the Terrain and Difficulty page on our website, http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/rockhop.shtml 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.</p>
Vegetation	Level 2-3. 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. Only a very slow group would take longer.
Packs	Pack weight - level 3. You need to carry a week's food. This will include about 2½-3½ kg of the evening meals. You should bring a light sleeping bag and some sort of light shelter.
Art	This is one of the best areas for Aboriginal art anywhere in Australia.
Campsites	Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.
Swims	Good pools at almost every campsite and lunch spot.
Lowlights	Some stretches of rough terrain. Upper reaches of some creeks may not be flowing.
Highlights	Incredible Aboriginal rock art. Rugged rock formations. Scenic views. Good weather. Great swimming holes.
Wildlife	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.
Fishing	Not permitted here.

Notes

Exceptionally severe flooding is unlikely but conceivable at this time of year. This can cause route changes and could conceivably cause a delay in the return to Darwin.

Map. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for navigation.

Itinerary: Kakadu Highlights No. 4 – Baroalba-Radon

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

Note 2 **This itinerary may be subject to change.**

Day 0 **Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Double Tree Hilton, 122 The Esplanade.** There are two Double Tree 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. Both Double Tree hotels were Holiday Inns until early 2013.

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 Darwin Transit Centre at 69 Mitchell Street.
Drive to Kakadu. There will be a stop along the way to buy drinks, etc.
Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

Day 2-7 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 8 Return to car. Drive back to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.