

# Kakadu Highlights No. 6: July 23 - August 6, 2017

The original itinerary has been modified to include a number of two night camps so you can explore without packs or simply relax and enjoy your surrounds.

## Section 1: Graveside Area: July 23-29

A large part of the first day is spent driving to the start of the walk. Which takes us into the greatest concentration of permanently flowing creeks we have yet found in Kakadu. You see a variety of landscapes, deep gorges, beautiful swimming pools and cascades as well as a number of little known Aboriginal art sites. Our first camp is only about a 4 km walk from the car park.

The two main gorges at Graveside contain some of the nicest monsoon forest in Kakadu. We plan spend the second day exploring the gorges, enjoying the shade and relaxing in and around the large pools.



We plan to spend two nights at this or another nearby campsite – a good pool below and another one with a small cascade just above.



The pool above the main Graveside falls isn't very wide, but it is very deep.

up and around. The last 500 metres alone often takes two hours or more as the deep pools and a natural water slide are much too inviting to pass by in a rush.

A short, steep climb the next morning gets us onto the plateau where we have a look at the upper reaches of the two creeks we explored the day before. At this time of year, the flow is often down to a trickle but there are still plenty of pools where we can cool off and relax in the midday heat. From here, a flat three kilometre walk through the open woodland of the plateau brings us to Cascades Creek.

Cascades Creek is well known among local bushwalkers for its many pools, cascades and Aboriginal art sites. It is so pleasant that our trip up or down the four kilometre gorge normally takes a full day. There are a few places where you have the choice of edging along narrow rock ledges (close to water level, no big drops), floating your pack through the creek, or climbing



As hard as it gets. On this trip an 8 year old had done the same step a few minutes earlier.



Age 8 or 80, almost no one we've taken past the slide can resist having at least one go. Most have several.

If we are moving particularly quickly, we may also visit Gronophylum Creek with its unusual multi-trunked palms, beautiful, sandy camp sites and deep, clear pools. The rugged landscape away from the creek is reminiscent of central Australia with its red rock and spinifex covered hills. A short, steep climb to the top of one of the hills presents you with an incredible panorama. Following the creek, you might walk three kilometres in an hour. Following a straight-line compass bearing, the landscape is such a jumble of broken rock that walking three kilometres might take you three days.

The loop described above may be done in either direction.

## **Terrain and Difficulty** (more info in the general description after section two)

<b>Overall</b>	Level 2.
<b>Terrain</b>	Level 2-3. The terrain ranges from open woodland to narrow rainforest gorges. Parts are flat and easy. Other parts require scrambling over river stones of a variety of sizes. There are a few steep, but short climbs. You walk through almost every type of terrain that it is possible to encounter in Kakadu. The leisurely pace makes it easier than many of our other trips.
<b>Vegetation</b>	Level 2. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creek. There is likely to be one section of grass covered rocks on one short section.
<b>Hours</b>	4-6 hours most days.
<b>Packs</b>	<b>Pack weight</b> - level 2-3. You need to carry six days food.
<b>Art</b>	There are a number of interesting sites along this route.
<b>Campsites</b>	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent sites near the water. We should have most or all of them to ourselves.
<b>Swims</b>	Swimming is excellent. Good pools at all campsites.
<b>Lowlights</b>	Rough drive from Coinda at the beginning, fairly long 4WD on the way out.
<b>Highlights</b>	The magical cascades and water slide on Cascades Creek. Spectacular Graveside Gorge.
<b>Maps</b>	1:50 000 Koolpin or 1:100 000 Jim Jim.

## **Section 2: Twin Falls to Jim Jim Falls: July 29 - August 6**

This walk takes you to the two largest and best known waterfalls in Kakadu plus many magical spots that will remain forever unknown to day walkers.

A large part of the first day is spent driving from section one to the start of the walk. If possible, we will climb up and camp at the top of Twin Falls as the camp below Twin Falls is in an area where swimming is neither safe nor permitted. The walk to the top follows a marked trail up a fairly steep hill, through an interesting sandstone maze and out to the creek above Twin Falls. We must stay on this trail until we leave the restricted area about two km above the falls. If we arrive early enough (not likely, but possible), 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.



Relaxing at a campsite, upper Twin Falls Creek, one of the many pools we have to ourselves.

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 which ends at the Amphitheatre Falls. We will spend two nights camping here to allow time to visit some interesting art sites in the area.



Getting ready for a swim at Amphitheatre Falls.



The day we leave Twin Falls Creek may be tough for some. We head overland to the top of a rainforest filled gorge, known as Anbadjgoran to the local Aboriginal people. Along the way, we pass through some very rugged and broken sandstone country. But it is well worth it. The camp



Relaxing below the falls at Anbadjgoran.

site on the flat rock ledges at the top of Anbadjgoran is magnificent. Beautiful waterfalls cascade through a series of inviting pools under a shady rainforest canopy. We will spend two nights here giving people time to relax and enjoy this special place and if anyone is feeling a bit more energetic we can also do a day walk from here.



Rock scramble on the way from Twin Falls to the Rainforest Gorge. Hopefully we won't have anything this difficult, but you need to be prepared.



Relaxing at the Jim Jim monolith campsite.

The following day we head across the plateau to Jim Jim Creek to camp next to a beautiful pool known as the monoliths. This is a unique and special area where sandstone boulders rise out of a large pool of clear water. If we arrive early, those who want to do so can spend the afternoon following the creek upstream, visiting art sites and swimming in the pools. From here we put our packs back on and head downstream towards our final camp site above Jim Jim Falls stopping to examine some more Aboriginal art and cool off with a swim or two along the way.



Sunset, Jim Jim campsite. Immediately behind us is our own private pool.

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. 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 on the morning of the last full walking day, we continue to Cooina to do Violet Lawson's cultural walk, then, after a night in Jabiru, we do the morning Guluyambi Cruise on the East Alligator River before returning to Darwin in time for late afternoon and evening flights..

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

**Overall** Level 3

**Terrain** Level 3-4. 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. Depending on the exact route we take, some of the terrain between Twin Falls Creek and Rainforest Gorge can be **as rugged as anything we encounter on any of our walks.**

**Highlights** The magnificent campsites, swimming, art sites.

**Lowlights** Walking between the Ampitheatre and Rainforest Gully (although this can be a highlight for some).

**Map** 1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls or 1:100 000 Jim Jim.

## Notes on Section 2.

This walk may be done in the reverse direction.

Slow groups may not have as many two-night camps.

Cultural reasons may make it impossible to include Violet Lawson's walk.

## **Terrain and Difficulty General for both sections**

- 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** Both sections have a few steep climbs, none of which is over 200 m. As short as they are, these climbs are strenuous. Some may require using your hands to hold on as you climb up or down. None are technically difficult. None require ropes or other special equipment. There will be some places where you have to step from stone to stone as you walk along the edge of a creek.
- The creeks are low enough so that swimming across with packs is unlikely to be necessary except in Freezing Gorge. It may, however, be necessary to wade across slippery rocks through waist deep water. Your guide can help if you need assistance.
- 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. On some days, there will be the option to relax in camp while the others do a day walk.
- Packs** **Pack weight** - level 3. You need to carry 6 days food on section one and 7 on section two. This will include about 2½-3½ 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.
- Lowlights** Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim and Twin Falls.

**Highlights** Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites.

**Wildlife** Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals but, for those who look, there are plenty of smaller ones.

**Fishing** Not permitted on this walk.

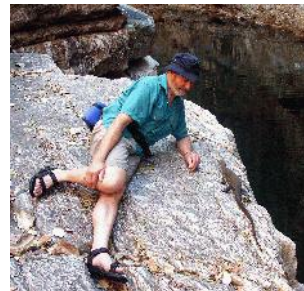
**Map.** The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not suitable for bush navigation. To get a better idea where these walks go see the links below.

The Top End showing Kakadu in relation to Darwin:

[www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/top\\_end\\_map.jpg](http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/top_end_map.jpg)

Kakadu National Park:

[www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/maps/kakadu\\_350.jpg](http://www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/images/maps/kakadu_350.jpg)



Up close with one of the locals, Graveside Gorge

## Notes on both sections

Those doing both sections of the trip will have to carry only what they need on each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks.

It will be possible to do some basic shopping at Cooina between sections. It should be possible to get lunch there, but given the length of the drives, we can't afford a long stop.

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.

A daypack would be useful on both sections.

If you are meeting us in Kakadu, you will have to purchase a park entrance ticket on your way into the park. Our guide(s) should reimburse you automatically. Please remind them if this is not done soon after you meet.

## The Last Two Days: August 5-6

Kakadu is Aboriginal Land. Most of the vegetation is part of a cultural landscape created by Aboriginal people over thousands of years. While we can show you a number of Aboriginal art sites during the walks, we cannot possibly give you the same insights as the traditional owners can. If we spend a final night in Kakadu, we can spend the final afternoon doing a bush talker and culture walk with senior traditional owner Violet Lawson.



Guluyambi cultural cruise



Violet Lawson explaining some of the uses of pandanus

After the walk we would drive to Jabiru and spend the night at the Aboriginal-owned Lakeview. On the final morning, we would do the half day Guluyambi Cultural cruise on the East Alligator River. This takes us into an environment which is not well suited for bushwalking but which was very important for the traditional owners.

The weekend Australian had a story about Guluyambi which is available online at [www.theaustralian.com.au/travel/culture-calls-in-kakadu/story-e6frg8rf-1226522257099](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/travel/culture-calls-in-kakadu/story-e6frg8rf-1226522257099)

If you truly want to understand Kakadu, we recommend including this option.

# Itinerary: Kakadu Special

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

**Note 2** This itinerary is subject to change.

## Section 1 Graveside

**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. **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 the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.

Drive to Kakadu. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

**Day 2–6** Bush camping, carrying full packs most days.

**Day 7** Return to vehicles. Drive to Cooina for cold drinks. Lunch there or continue straight to Twin Falls. Anyone doing only section one will be dropped off at Cooina.

## Section 2 Twin to Jim Jim

**Day 7** Those beginning with this section catch a bus from Darwin to Cooina early in the morning. The cost of getting to Cooina is not included in the cost of the tour. At the time these notes were written, the only way to get to Cooina was on an AAT Kings tour. (You could book the transport without the tour.) (08 8923 6555). If you are doing only section two, you may have to come out a day earlier to meet those continuing. Please contact us well in advance to make sure. On arrival, wait in the open air pub and meet the group there. Due to the fact that the members of the group are finishing a walk that morning, we cannot be more specific about the arrival time than to say it will be about lunch time. Drive to Twin Falls. Begin walk carrying full pack.

**Day 9-13** Bush camping, carrying full packs most days. At least two two-night camps, probably three.

**Day 14** Walk down to car. Drive to Cooina. Afternoon walk with Violet Lawson. Drive to Cooina. Overnight at Lakeview. Dinner at the Jabiru Social Club.

**Day 15** 9 am Guluyambi East Alligator River cultural cruise. Afternoon return to Darwin. Possible to catch late flights that evening or very early Monday morning (flights tend to leave at 1 or 2 am) to return south in time for work later Monday morning.