

Litchfield Explorer: June 4-10, 2017

This trip is for adventurous people who wish to explore the unknown. Litchfield might not sound unknown, but the whole southern section remains almost unexplored.

Section 1: Litchfield National Park: June 4-10

Located less than 150 kilometres from Darwin, Litchfield National Park is a wonderful area full of permanent springs and waterfalls. Although the northern part of the park has been developed for intensive day use, the southern part remains an almost untouched wilderness. No more than one in a hundred park visitors goes anywhere near where we will be walking. Not one in ten thousand would go where we will do our walk. The tourist map at right shows what we mean. It doesn't even show the creeks we will walk along: Tableland Creek, surprise Creek, Mistake Creek, Red Rock Creek and perhaps the east branch of the Reynolds River.



Our final itinerary will depend on a variety of factors including, the fitness, interests and wishes of the group, the amount of water present, the state of the 4WD track through the southern part of the park and the number of participants. (With a large group using two vehicles we might be able to do a vehicle shuffle and a through walk. With a smaller group, we are restricted to loop routes.)

It has been a long time since we have been able to do this walk, so long that when we went to look for photos of the area, the best we could do was to scan old slides from the mid 1980s. (We have been in more recently but the guide on that trip didn't leave his photos.)



The three photos above show the main pool below Surprise Falls. This is the one place where we may meet other people. The photo at right shows a group heading off upstream en route to some of the other more interesting but less well known creeks. The three photos below are from Mistake and Red Rock Creeks. Sadly, our best photos used to be used in slide shows and could not be found. There are lots of wonderful pools and campsites we will have all to ourselves



Finally, there is Tableland Creek, the largest creek in the southern part of the park. Pool after pool, waterfall after waterfall, swim after swim, it is a magic spot. Most of the walking is fairly easy but there are likely to be a couple of wades as shown in the pictures at the top of the next page.



At the end of the walk, we return to the vehicles and drive back to Darwin.

Terrain and difficulty – both sections

- Overall** Level 3.
- Climate** Level 2. Average daytime max 30°C, average nighttime min 14-16°C. It can, however, drop below 5°C. Generally low humidity. Rain very unlikely.
- Terrain** Most of the walk is relatively flat. There are, however, a few moderate climbs and a fair amount of rock hopping. There may be sections of thick scrub. We cannot say for sure as this depends how recently the area has been burnt and on how much rain there has been since. As the trip is partly exploratory, we can't be 100% sure that we won't encounter some rougher terrain than expected.
- Vegetation** Level 2-4. Varies from year to year depending on when last burnt. In June, most of the spear grass has finished seeding and dried out. Based on past experience, we expect some sections of thick scrub and or spinifex which will make some days much harder than others. There are always flowers in bloom.
- 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. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.
- Art** We visit some art sites on both sections but the art we have found previously has not been as plentiful or as well preserved as much of what we have found in Kakadu and parts of the Kimberley.
- Campsites** Mix of sand, grassy areas and rock ledges. Most sites are good; some are excellent, some no more than average. You are unlikely to see anyone else at any of the campsites.

Swims	Good pools at most campsites and lunch spots.
Highlights	Beautiful gorges, walking on Aboriginal land which has remained virtually unchanged since before European settlement.
Lowlights	Carrying food for a week. We may encounter thick, sticky spinifex and/or ground hugging vines that make some of the walking difficult.
Wildlife	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.
Fishing	May be possible in some places
Maps	The 1:50 000 Prospect Hill map covers most of the route. A small part lies on the Mt Tolmer and/or Rum Jungle maps. The 1:100 000 Reynolds River map covers it all..

Notes The original Gregory section which followed this will not run this year.

Explorer trips are the least structured and most adventurous of those we offer during the dry season. They are not endurance tests. They are intended to be run at a reasonably leisurely pace so that we can have a really good look at the areas we choose. It is, however, possible that there will be some long days when it will be necessary to cover a considerable distance. Those taking part will need to be fit enough to do this.

If you wish to be among the first people to explore a particular area, possibly opening it up for future visits by others, then this could be the trip for you.

Although we intend to run this as a single long walk, conditions beyond our control might mean that we have to split one or both sections into two shorter walks.

The trip might include a day or half-day walk. You should either bring a day pack or be prepared to use a full size pack on day-walks.

Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack during the journey.

Crocodiles and swimming. Most of the creeks along which we walk present no problem. There are, however, a few places in the lower reaches of some creeks where large crocodiles could conceivably present a danger. Please ask the guide before you swim in any large waterhole.

Itinerary: Litchfield Explorer

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Litchfield National Park

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 the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.

Drive to Litchfield. 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 vehicles. Drive back to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation mid to late afternoon.

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