

## **Twin Falls Bushwalking Health Retreat: September 23-29, 2007**

*“The best way to get to know the land is through one’s feet”*, Unknown geographer

Due to the overwhelming response to our first Health Retreat in July, we decided to offer a second in September. The weather will be warmer, but the late rains in April this year mean that there will be much more water than normal for this time of year.

This trip has been specifically designed for people seeking to combine an exploration of nature’s wild, magnificent beauty with a healthy living experience that revitalises body, mind and spirit. The trip will be led by bushwalking guide Cassie Newnes and yoga teacher Jenny Devlin.

Cassie has been working as a guide in remote locations for over five years. She has also worked closely with indigenous traditional land owners as a seasonal ranger in Kakadu. This has given her a rich appreciation of the cultural traditions and environmental features particular to the region. In addition, she brings to this unique bush adventure her training and experience as a massage therapist and over a decade of actively seeking to develop a deep and thorough understanding of healthy living practices.

Jenny will be assisting Cassie with the healing aspects of this expedition. A keen bushwalker of many years and a Territorian who spent most of her childhood in Aboriginal communities, Jenny has a deep love and respect for the power and healing inherent in nature. Trained as a yoga teacher in the Sivananda tradition and a danskinetics teacher in the Kripalu tradition, as well as being a practitioner of Iyengar yoga for over ten years, Jenny brings to this retreat a compassionate and welcoming teaching style aimed at rendering the gifts of yoga accessible to all.

This trip will be run at a more leisurely pace than any of our other bushwalking trips as it will combine our normal bush experience with a health retreat in a beautiful natural setting. Accessible only on foot and with a permit, this region will remain forever unknown to vehicle-based travellers. It is this stunning location that makes the retreat so special.

The start of our walk is approximately 400 km from Darwin. However, as portions of this are on dirt roads, the drive can take 5-6 hours. This drive offers the chance to see a diversity of landscapes, as it takes us through woodlands, wetlands and floodplains.

For most of the journey, we will be following the crystal clear waters of Twin Falls creek with its numerous beautiful swimming holes. Before climbing up onto the escarpment, we will take a short boat trip, run by local indigenous people, up Twin Falls gorge which is one of Kakadu’s most well known attractions. Once we are up on the escarpment, we will be away from the tourist crowds and in areas that are inaccessible to saltwater crocodiles and therefore safe to swim in. We will begin by following the creek upstream and will spend the first night on a beautiful white sandy beach next to a series of waterholes. On Day two, a short walk in the morning brings us to a waterfall and a large swimming hole, where we spend the rest of that day and all of the following one.

On Day four, we follow the creek upstream for approximately 10 kms to another gorgeous spot where we spend two nights. During this time, we will do short walks with day packs into rocky country that is rich in ancient art sites, some of which are very intricate and detailed. This is a great opportunity to appreciate the rich cultural history in Kakadu in a way that many people never have an opportunity to experience. On Day 6 we walk back to the waterfall. Then on Day 7 we return to the vehicles and drive back to Darwin.

The daily program provides time both to nurture yourself with healthful practices and to appreciate nature’s beauty. The program will include daily yoga sessions, meditation and breathing exercises.

People are free to join in as much or as little as they feel on any given day, as in many respects just being in this natural environment promotes good health. The ability to listen to one's individual needs is essential. There will also be plenty of time to learn about the flora, fauna and history of the landscape that we will be moving through and, of course, plenty of time for swimming in the beautiful water we will be walking and camping alongside.

As is the case on our other trips, participants are asked to bring their own breakfasts and lunches. On this occasion however, participants are encouraged to exercise healthy choices in the food they bring in order to maximise the health benefits of the retreat. Dinner will be provided and will be based on the principles of an organic whole food diet. The majority of the ingredients will be sourced locally and dried just prior to the trip to retain vitality.

## **Terrain and difficulty**

**Overall** Level 2

**Climate** Level 3+. Although September is one of the hottest months of the year, it is substantially cooler and less humid than October-December. The average maximum temperature for September is 36°C (98°F) and the average nightly minimum is about 20-21°C (68-70°F). It is not uncommon for the temperature to drop as low as 15°C (59°F). Occasionally it goes lower still. You need to be prepared for chilly nights. It is reasonably likely that you will get at least one rain storm, but the warm weather means that this isn't particularly uncomfortable as long as you have a fly to put over your tent or mosquito net.

**Terrain** Level 3. Overall the terrain on this trip is among the flattest on any of our trips. There are, however, 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. 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, you may find it more difficult than those who have done it before. However, nothing we can say can adequately describe the pleasure and satisfaction an experience such as this can give you. 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.

Anyone who does not regularly go bushwalking (ie. on average twice a month) 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 Most of the walking follows the creek or passes 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. By this time of year, the vegetation is generally as easy as it gets.

<b>Hours</b>	Generally 3-6 hours. It is unlikely that you will walk more than six hours with packs on even the longest day.
<b>Packs</b>	<b>Pack weight</b> - level 3. You need to carry 6 days food. This will include about 2-2½ kg of the evening meals. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.
<b>Art</b>	We visit a variety of art sites along the route. We respect the wishes of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the area and do not visit certain sites of significance.
<b>Campsites</b>	Mix of sand and rock ledges. Most sites are excellent. You are unlikely to see anyone else at most of the campsites.
<b>Swims</b>	Twin Falls Creek should still be flowing well and the swimming is excellent. We will have good pools at every campsite and lunch spot.
<b>Lowlights</b>	Possible tourist crowds at Twin Falls.
<b>Highlights</b>	Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Aboriginal art sites. A wilderness retreat like no other.
<b>Wildlife</b>	Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.
<b>Fishing</b>	Not permitted on this walk.
<b>Maps.</b>	1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls or 1:100 000 Jim Jim or 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas.

## Itinerary: Twin Falls Bushwalking Health Retreat

<b>Note 1</b>	<b>Day 0 is the day before departure.</b>
<b>Note 2</b>	<b>This itinerary may be subject to change</b>
<b>Day 0</b>	Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Holiday Inn, 122 The Esplanade. <b>This meeting is important.</b> If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.
<b>Day 1</b>	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 alternate arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.  Drive to Kakadu. There will be a stop to have a break along the way.  Twin Falls cruise. Begin the walk. Bush camp.
<b>Day 2–6</b>	Bush camping, carrying full packs. Two, two-night camps with optional day walks.
<b>Day 7</b>	Return to vehicles. Drive to Darwin via Jabiru. Drop off at your accommodation.
<b>Final Note</b>	<b>This is a Health Retreat with some bushwalking. It is not one of our normal bushwalking trips.</b> Although you will be walking and carrying a full pack which makes it more strenuous than most health retreats, you will be spending more time relaxing in one place than on our other trips.