
WILLIS'S WALKABOUTS

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Willis's Walkabouts Guide Qualifications

Among other things, our guides must

- be good bush navigators – with and **without** GPS. Our walks are all **off-trail**. I cannot give a trip to anyone if I am not fully confident that he or she can navigate unfamiliar terrain with a map and compass. A GPS is a good back up, but you have to be able to navigate without it. Batteries go flat and a GPS can break. If you can't navigate without using a GPS, your navigation isn't good enough.
- You will need to lead walks on routes you haven't done before. We have good notes on some routes, mediocre on others. We need good notes for all trips. Part of every guide's job is to write up a brief report about their trip.
- be good cooks
- have good people skills
- be good at communicating with the clients and others
- have appropriate first aid qualifications – remote or wilderness. A basic first aid qualification is not enough.
- be flexible and happy to lead only one or two trips per year. The work is irregular. Until I have the bookings to say that a trip is a definite departure, I cannot say whether or not work is available. This may not be until two months prior to departure.
- be responsible for most of the organisation regarding their trip. This includes things like
 - preparing a menu and the meals, taking into account any special dietary requirements (We provide sample menus and assist with the first trip.)
 - reconfirming transport arrangements
 - shipping or transporting food to the departure point for trips not beginning in Darwin
 - reconfirming (and in some cases making) transport arrangements for the trip
 - preparing the hire gear and maps that the clients request and collecting the gear back at the end.
 - writing a post trip report that can be used by other guides. This should include any incidents of note which may have occurred on the trip.
- new guides must be willing to go out on their first trip as an unpaid assistant with one of the experienced guides so that they can learn the ropes and we can evaluate their potential.
- be good at driving four wheel drive vehicles.
- know or be willing to learn a lot about the flora, fauna, geology and Aboriginal culture of the areas in which we operate. Guides don't have to be experts, but they do need a good overall knowledge.
- We currently have eco-certification. Anyone leading a trip needs to operate in an eco-friendly way. We all have room to improve but the Willis's Walkabouts reputation could hardly be better in this regard.

Other things being equal, we give preference to guides who also

- have completed the **Kakadu On-Line Tour Guide Training Course**. No one, not even the local Aboriginal traditional owners is permitted to lead a tour in Kakadu unless they have completed the course. This was an initiative of the traditional owners who were tired of guides spreading misinformation and/or endangering their clients. (Think of the guide who got someone killed by a croc some years back.) I've done it. It's easy. It can be done online. For more information see <http://www.cdu.edu.au/cdu-vet/kakadu-knowledge-training>

- have an **H endorsed driver's license**. This goes by different names in different states, but they will all say that you are qualified to drive passengers for hire. In the NT, this requires a medical exam and a police criminal history check. It may take weeks so it needs to be obtained well in advance. Without it, it is illegal for you to drive any of our vehicles.
- A guide who doesn't have an H endorsement should NEVER drive any WW vehicle. The clients must do all of the driving.
- Under current regulations, they should never drive one of our hire cars in the NT with clients in it.
- Clients should never drive the vehicle which is registered as a Tourist Vehicle unless they are licensed to drive passengers for hire.

Still interested? I prepared a guide's information book some years ago. It needs revision (your suggestions would be welcome), but it is still very relevant. Please have a read, then, if you are still interested, get back to me with comments and/or questions.

If, after reading our Guides Information book, you feel that you are both qualified and interested in leading trips for us, please send us an email including your resume and scans of your first aid certificate and driver's license. Please make sure you give a good description of your off-trail bushwalking experience. If you have already done the Kakadu course, please send us your certificate of completion.

The rewards? When a trip goes well, it is almost like a paid holiday. Most trips go well, but sometimes you feel that you are really earning your money. You meet all sorts of interesting people. I've made many wonderful friendships over the years. So have most of the other guides. It's not something I can put into words, but it is very rewarding.