

# New Trip: Gulf to Gregory: 9 June - (1 to 18) July 2024

**List Price: \$TBA.** All our normal discounts apply.

**First Draft**

There are three different possibilities, that's why we can't yet give a definite end date. Read on for details. Those who book early can help choose the final itinerary.

**But ... No expenses are included.** Two sections, either can be done on its own.

You will have to pay camping and accommodation fees, a share of fuel, \$10 per evening meal cooked on the camping sections plus a share of 30 cents per km to cover some of the fuel plus wear and tear on the vehicle or vehicles. Depending on how many nights we spend in accommodation and on your choices on those nights, our estimate of the total expenses is somewhere between \$800 and \$1000 per person. It was about \$1000 on a version of this trip in 2023.

## 2024 Update.

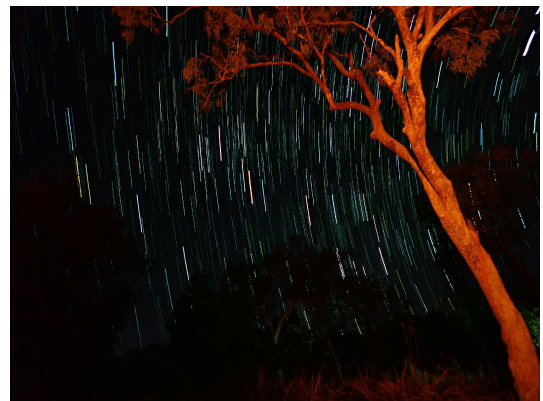
What follows is our original itinerary from 2023. Due to late rain, we had to make major modifications to the route. Those modifications added a lot of extra driving. That's why we changed it.



Lorella Springs 4WD track. It should be drier when we are there.

Lorella Springs has some amazing features on the property. It is now closed to the general public but tour operators are permitted. For us to get permission to visit, we need to spend at least 7 nights on the property, three nights in accommodation and four bush camping. Twin or double rooms are \$230 per night. Camping will be \$50 per person per night. We need to have dinner at their restaurant the nights we are in accommodation.

You can buy breakfast or bring your own.



Star trails & fire lit tree

Our 7 day walk in Limmen was amazing. Definitely will be repeated. **More photos coming.**

We are considering extending section one.

Our forced detour in 2023 got us to an area just inside the WA border that we hadn't visited in 20 years. It's worth going back. We are considering adding a third section that will get back there and add a couple of other special places. People who express an interest early will be able to help us with the final itinerary if they wish to do so.

In 2023, two people brought their own 4WD vehicle and got a huge discount. Depending on numbers, that should again be possible.

## DRAFT Itinerary: Gulf to Gregory

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

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

**Section 1** Limmen National Park and the Gulf Country

**Day 0** **Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Hilton Gardens, 122 The Esplanade.** There are two Hiltons next door to each other. The correct one is closer to Daly

Street and is the taller of the two. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

**Day 1** 7 to 8 a.m. pick up as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Mataranka. Campground or accom.

**Day 2** Short walks in Mataranka area.

**Day 3** Long drive into Limmen. Camp near a river, no swimming.

**Day 4** Visit Western Lost City

**Day 5** Drive to Butterfly Springs, begin overnight walk with full pack.

**Day 6** Return to vehicle. Visit Southern Lost City. Drive to Lorella Springs.

**Day 7-12** On Lorella Springs. Including day 6, Camp near 4WD 4 nights, at homestead 3 nights.

**Day 13** Drive to Tawallah Creek. Begin long walk, carrying full pack.

**Day 14-20** On Tawallah walk.

**Day 21** Return to vehicle, drive to Borroloola. Visit museum if in time

**Day 22** Visit museum if not done day before. Drive to Stuart Highway via Caranbirini & Cape Crawford. Overnight at Dunmarra or Daly Waters if no one is continuing.

**Day 23** If the trip continues to section two, those ending with this section catch a bus back to Darwin (or Alice Springs)

## **Section 2 Short Option: Judbarra/Gregory National Park**

**Day 22** Anyone beginning with this section will need to catch a bus to Dunmarra from Darwin or Alice Springs.

**Day 23** Drive to Judbarra/Gregory or as close as we can get.

**Day 24-30** Exploring the park. Day walks. Possibly short overnight walks as well. Depends on what we find and what is permitted.

**Day 31** Finish Gregory. Overnight at Victoria River or Katherine.

**Day 32** Return to Darwin.

## **Section 2 Lake Gregory, Halls Creek and Judbarra/Gregory National Park**

**Day 22** Anyone beginning with this section will need to catch a bus to Dunmarra from Darwin or Alice Springs.

**Day 23-29** Drive toward Alice Springs, cross to the Tanami Track & head north stopping to visit Lake Gregory. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake\\_Gregory\\_\(Western\\_Australia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Gregory_(Western_Australia))

Also see <https://www.hallscreektourism.com.au/see-do/tanami-road/lake-gregory>

Lake Gregory is on Aboriginal land. We's probably spend two nights there. Permits required.

We would then continue north stopping to visit Wolf Creek Meteorite Crater, then pass through Halls Creek heading back east toward Gregory, stopping to visit some of the places we went to on our 2023 trip.

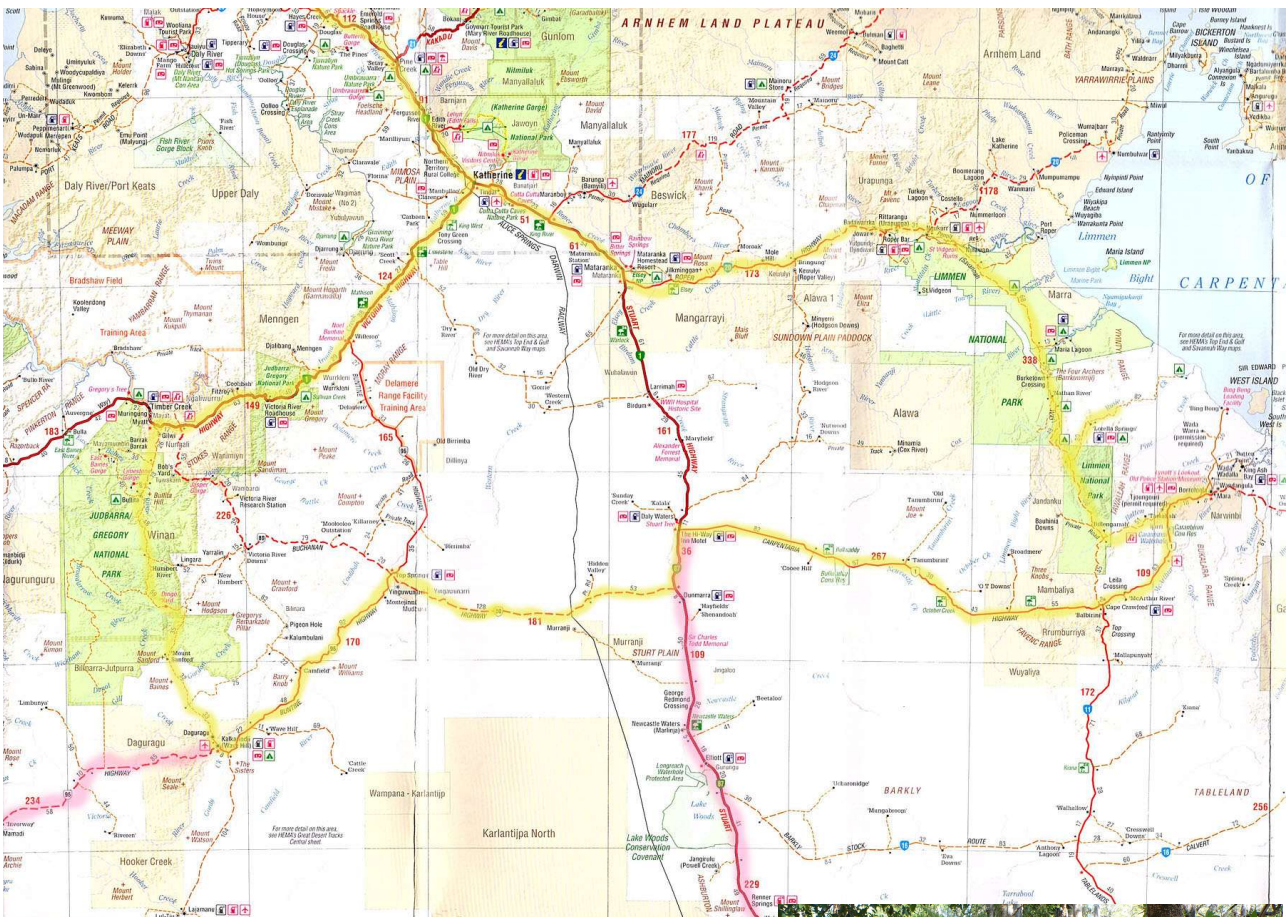


On the track in the southern Lost City



- Day 30** Drive to Judbarra/Gregory or as close as we can get.
- Day 31-37** Exploring the park. Day walks. Possibly short overnight walks as well. Depends on what we find and what is permitted.
- Day 38** Finish Gregory. Overnight at Victoria River or Katherine.
- Day 39** Return to Darwin.
- Note 1** Where it says days 23-29 above, we might need to add or subtract a day to make it work.
- Note 2** Depending on the wishes of those who book early, we may run section one on its own or we may continue to either of the options for section 2.
- 2023 Notes** The following has not been completely updated for 2024 but it should give you a good idea what to expect.

The yellow line on the map below shows our intended route for the shorter option. Darwin to Katherine is about 320 km. The pink line shows part of the longest option, going off the map to the south and coming back into the NT in the southwest corner of the map.



**Section 1: Gulf Country**

We leave Darwin and drive south to Mataranka Hot Springs and/or Elsey National Park for a bit of a look around. We did several short walks on our 2021 trip and found a longer one we had to miss. It looked interesting so we'll include it on this trip and spend a two nights in the area.

From Mataranka, we continue to Roper Bar and take the



On one of the Mataranka Trails



track south into Limmen National Park.

Our first night will be in one of the campgrounds. We had the a nice one to ourselves in 2021. Nice place, good river views but no swimming as there could be large crocodiles in the river.



Our private pool on Butterfly Creek

Limmen is noted for its ‘Lost City’ rock formations. There are two of these. We’ll visit both.

The only place in the park where swimming is recommended is Butterfly Springs. We can do better. A short distance above the campground is another waterfall and a larger pool which we can have all to ourselves.

Lorella Springs is a place we’d been meaning to visit for some years. We finally made it last year, when it was closed to the general public but open to rout operators. The same will be true this year so we’ll have much of the area to ourselves. More info at

<https://www.lorellasprings.com.au/>

On our 2021 trip, we did a three night walk along Tawallah and Fish Creeks. Here’s what I (Russell Willis) wrote at the end. “Everyone enjoyed the walk and agreed that the area deserved a longer exploration so we spent six nights there in 2023. That was so good, we’re going to do it again. Because it had been some time since most of the area had last been burnt, it seemed healthier than many other bushwalking areas. Definitely more birds.” We’re going to do that 7-8 day exploration. It should include one or day where we do a day walk from a two-night camp. The photos at right and below give you a taste of what it’s like.



Tawallah Camp 1



Paperbark forest, upper Fish Creek

For more information on Limmen, see

[https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/find-a-park/find-a-park-to-](https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/find-a-park/find-a-park-to-visit/limmen-national-park)

[visit/limmen-national-park](https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/find-a-park/find-a-park-to-visit/limmen-national-park)



Climb next to Tawallah Creek



Fish Creek gorge

After Limmen, we turn south and east to the small town of Borroloola. We weren’t in town when the museum was open in 2021, but we’d like to manage a visit this time. See <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/old-police-station-borroloola/>

Leaving Borroloola, we head west to Cape Crawford, stopping to have a look at the rock formations in the Caranbirini Reserve.

We continue west to the Stuart Highway, then south a short



On the track at Caranbirini

distance to Dunmarra where we spend the night. Camp or accommodation, your choice. This will almost certainly be the last chance of a bed until the second last day of the trip.

Those doing only the first section can catch a bus to Darwin or Alice Springs the next day.

## Section 2: Judbarra/Gregory National Park

*This section has not yet been updated to include the possible extension to Lake Gregory, etc.*

Anyone joining for section 2 will need to catch a bus to Dunmarra from Darwin or Alice Springs so they will be ready to leave first thing on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Judbarra/Gregory is one of the largest parks in the NT. Our only previous walk in the southern section of the park was in the 1990s.

From Dunmarra, it's back onto the Gravel west to Top Springs, then south west to Kalkarindji and the southern access to Judbarra / Gregory National Park. If we're more ambitious, we might go another 75 km and go in from there. There are definitely some long day walks possible and maybe some short overnight ones as well. For information on Gregory, see

<https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/find-a-park/find-a-park-to-visit/judbarra-gregory-national-park>

Judbarra/Gregory is one of the largest parks in the NT. Our only previous walk in the southern section of the park was in the 1990s. We don't have any photos from that trip but one of our guides stopped at the old Bulllita Homestead on a private trip. One of our day walks is likely to be from there.



Bulllita Homestead



Close up of boab at left. The '82 is 1882

Eventually we hit the Victoria Highway near the tiny town of Timber Creek. We turn and head for home, stopping for a final night somewhere along the way.

## Notes

**We've never done much of this before so there is a large exploratory component to this trip. What we find may be used to create a new trip in 2024. It is never possible for us to be 100% sure what we will find in a particular place until we get there.**

If you want to carry extra water, refillable wine bladders are a good way to carry it. They should be used as an addition to rather than as a replacement for your normal water bottles.

On the walks, you will need to carry only what you need for that walk. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks. Limited supplies are available at a few places along the way.

There are a number of places where you will have the choice of camping or accommodation. We'll need to know which you prefer well in advance.

**Doing either section on its own requires catching a Greyhound bus to or from Dunmarra.** Dunmarra is about 630 km south of Darwin, 860 km north of Alice Springs.

## Terrain and difficulty – General

**Overall** Overall we rate this as level 3.

**Climate** Level 2. The table below from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology gives you a good idea of the possible variation during the month of June.



Place	Avg Max	Highest ever	Avg Min	Lowest ever	Avg No. Rain days	Avg rain	Most rain	Avg 9 AM Humidity	Avg 3 PM Humidity
Borrooloola	30.5°C	35.6°C	13.0°C	2.7°C	1.4	1.7 mm	31.2 mm	52%	31%
Victoria River Downs	29.5°C	36.9°C	12.2°C	2.2°C	0.5	2.5 mm	86.0 mm	51%	28%
Timber Creek	30.4°C	36.1°C	15.4°C	5.0°C	0.3	2.2 mm	70.2 mm	48%	30%

This is as good as it gets.

**Terrain** Almost anything is possible. The photo at right shows one of the more difficult bits on the short walk we did in 2021.



Descent to Butterfly Springs

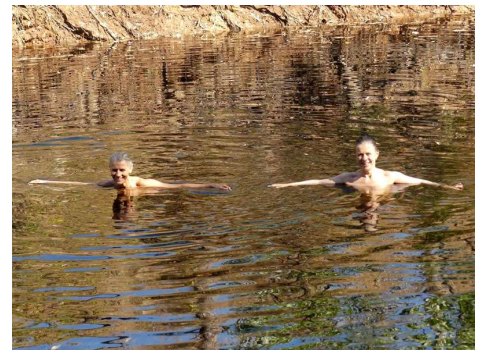
**Vegetation** We don't expect much thick scrub but we do expect at least one short section of it. As much is exploratory, we can't be 100% sure until it's over.

**Hours** Generally 4-6 hours on the days we are walking. A few days might be longer.

**Packs** **Pack weight** - level 3. You will need to carry 7-8 days food on the longest walk. Much less for the rest of the trip. You need to bring both a sleeping bag and a tent. Although rain is unlikely, it is possible and can be heavy. You should bring rain gear. You can always leave things in the vehicle if you don't want to carry them on the walks. If conditions are not too dry, we should be able to use **small** campfires for cooking.

**Art** Unknown. Photographing any art we might find along the Tawallah Creek walk is not permitted.

**Campsites** Often campgrounds, sometimes very primitive, sometimes well developed. What we find on parts of the overnight walks is unknown.



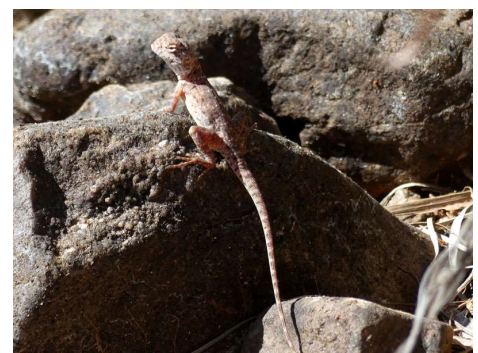
Fish Creek swim

**Swims** Swimming should be possible every day on the long walk. It will be possible some of the rest of the time but there are a few places where saltwater crocs can be a problem so listen to the guide if he says no swimming.

**Wildlife** Birds and lizards are always present but you are unlikely to see many large animals.

**Fishing** Might be good somewhere in Limmen or near Borrooloola. Little or none elsewhere.

**Final notes** We will be using a manual transmission 4WD (or two of them) with forward facing seats. It is important that there at least two people in each vehicle who can share the driving.



Small dragon lizard

There is a small but real chance we will get permission to do a 2-3 night walk on the edge of Gregory. It visits some spectacular gorges we haven't seen for close to 20 years. If that happens, we will adjust the rest of our time in Gregory accordingly.