

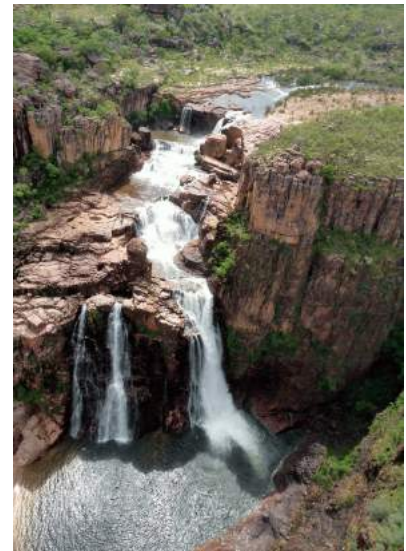
Russell's 40th Anniversary Wet Season Special: 4-25 February 2024

List price - \$1495 No discounts apply. There will be additional expenses. Details in the notes at the end.

Summary. This trip is composed of the parts of the Kakadu Light and Green Kimberley trips that Russell Willis most wanted to do to celebrate the 40th anniversary of his first paying customer in February 1984. It will be possible to do only part of the trip.

Walk the wonder of the North in the Wet. Enjoy the spectacular waterfalls and wildflowers by day. Relax in comfortable accommodation most nights, camp next to secluded bush pools after on the others.

We walk, we know. While the weather can be somewhat unpredictable at this time of year, our knowledge of these areas means we can give you the very best for whatever conditions we experience.



Aerial view of Twin Falls in the Wet – there's often more water than this.

Itinerary: Section 1: Darwin to Kununurra: February 4-9

List price - \$595

- 3 Feb** This is the day **BEFORE** departure. 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, the taller of the two. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.
- 4 Feb** Acclimatisation day. Pick up is as arranged at the pre-trip meeting. Drive to Fogg Dam, then do the Pudukul tour. Return to Stuart Highway and drive to Depot Creek, stopping for lunch along the way. Camp near the car.
- 5 Feb** Day walk at Depot Creek, lots of swims along the way. Camp near the car.
- 6 Feb** Drive to Cooina. Short walks & a swim en route. Visit the Burringkuy (Nourlangie) art sites and do part of the Barrk Walk. Return to Cooina. 4:30 PM Yellow Waters cruise. Overnight in accom.
- 7 Feb** Drive to Jabiru. Russell goes to meeting 10 AM to 2 PM. Rest of group has optional flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls (or anything else in driving distance). Visit Park Headquarters. Drive to Katherine, stopping for a swim (same place as the 6th or nearby).
- 8 Feb** Depart Katherine early morning. Drive to Katherine Gorge. Gorge walk and cruise. Return to Katherine accommodation.
- 9 Feb** Drive to Kununurra (500 km), stopping to do short walks on the way. Overnight in accom. Section 1 ends.



Southern Rockhole, Nitmiluk

Section 2: Kununurra & Keep River: February 10-17

List price - \$595

- 10 Feb** Drive to a Hidden Valley. Walk to art site. Swim stop.
- 11 Feb** Black Rock to Middle Springs walk. Good swimming but some challenging climbs. Our first test.
- 12 Feb** Helicopter to Keep River National Park. If we can land near our camp, we will do so and do a day walk from the camp. If not, we will carry full packs to the camp.
- 13-16 Feb** In Keep River. Bush camping. We will carry full packs some days but should have at least one two night camp with a long day walk.
- 17 Feb** Helicopter flight back to Kununurra. Overnight in accom.



Upper falls, Middle Springs

Section 3: Northern Carr Boyd Range: February 18-24

List price - \$595

- 18 Feb** Helicopter or Boat to Carr Boyd Range. If we fly in, we'll do a day walk from where we get dropped off. Bush camp.
- 19-23 Feb** Walking in the Carr Boyd. Full packs most days with a day walk somewhere or shorter days carrying full packs every day.
- 24 Feb** Walk out to road and along road to where the pick up vehicle can reach us. Trip ends.
- 25 Feb** The day after the trip ends. Free ride to Darwin for anyone who wants it.



Packsaddle Falls panorama

Now for the details.

Section 1: Darwin to Kununurra: February 4-9



On the Pudukul tour

With maximum temperatures in the mid 30's and nightly minimum temperatures in the mid 20's, our first day will be an easy one to allow the group to acclimatise. We begin with the 50 km drive from Darwin to Fogg Dam where we do a short nature walk before a short drive to the Pudukul Aboriginal cultural tour. After the tour, we return to the Stuart Highway and have lunch at a roadhouse on our way to Depot Creek.

At Depot Creek we find a wonderful small gorge unknown even to most locals. You will learn why

Walkabouts owner Russell Willis has run regular overnight wet season trips there for the Darwin Bushwalking Club and other locals for the past ten years. We should be able to drive all the way in, but if it is exceptionally wet, we might need to do an extra 3 km in each direction. If that happens, we will see only a part of the gorge.



Depot Creek swim stop

If people want to do it and if the weather permits, we begin with an optional scenic flight over Jim Jim and Twin Falls. Unless you want to take part in a three week expedition, this is the only way you can see Kakadu's two biggest waterfalls in the wet season.

We then drive a short distance to Burrungkuy (Nourlangie Rock), one of the most visited places in Kakadu. Few of those who visit do so at this time of year when the land is lush and green and the billabongs are full. We visit a number of art sites and enjoy some magnificent views out across the surrounding plains when we do the first part of the Barrk Walk, the longest marked trail in Kakadu.

From there, we drive to Cooina where we will do the 4:30 PM Yellow Waters cruise and spend the night in their accommodation. The next morning we drive to Depot Creek via some short walks and another waterfall. We camp near the car.

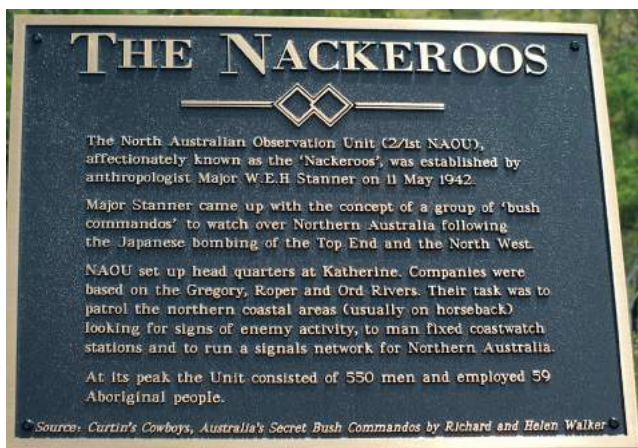
At Depot Creek we find a wonderful small gorge unknown even to most locals. You will learn why Walkabouts owner Russell Willis has run regular overnight wet season trips there for the Darwin Bushwalking Club and other locals for the past ten years. We should be able to drive all the way in, but if it is exceptionally wet, we might need to do an extra 3 km in each direction. If that happens, we will see only a part of the gorge. The day finishes with a drive to Katherine and a night in accommodation. We'll have dinner at one of the best, and least expensive, restaurants in town.

The next morning we drive to Nitmiluk/Katherine Gorge National Park where we do a half day walk to the Southern Rockhole where we get picked up by a boat and cruise back through the lower gorge to where we began.

On the final day of this section, we drive just over 500 km to Kununurra in the Kimberley. Along the way we'll do a short walk or two and visit a lookout near the community of Timber Creek. Along with the views, we get some history. A series of signs tell the tale of one of the least known parts of Australia's WWII history.



High view, Katherine Gorge walk



If the road is open, we'll continue our history lesson with a stop at Gregory's Tree. Augustus Gregory was one of Australia's most successful explorers. Maybe it's the combination of his success and the fact that his explorations were in the north that keeps him from being better known.



Europeans have been carving trees in Australia for a long time.

This section finishes with a night in accommodation.

Section 2: Kununurra and Keep River: February 10-17

A relatively short drive and a one to five kilometre walk (depends on how boggy the track is) brings us to a pool in an area which bears a striking resemblance to the Bungle Bungles.

We spend the rest of the day and the following morning exploring the gorge, looking at a wealth of Aboriginal art and enjoying the pool. It's a magic spot. The photo on the previous page gives you a small hint of what it is like. We return to Kununurra.

The next day, we do a more strenuous walk than those which have come before. Local people often visit places like Black Rock Falls and Middle Springs just to the west of the town. On our 2013 trip, we did our first loop walk across the top joining the two. Local bushwalkers had told us about it. It was just as good as they



Looking at one of the art sites



Hidden Valley swim

said. The climb at the beginning is fairly steep as is the descent to the creek above Middle Springs. Once on top, except for short stretch between creeks there are plenty of pools so, although conditions vary from year to year, we can definitely say that there will be plenty of time for swim stops.

If time permits, we'll spend one afternoon exploring our own Hidden Valley near town, stopping to view some Aboriginal paintings and enjoy swimming in a lovely pool, well used by the locals on the weekends. On a weekday we may have it to ourselves.

The next day, we take a helicopter to the northern part of the man range in Keep River National Park, just inside the NT border. From here, we explore some of the beautiful gorges and other parts of the rugged massif as we wander through the area visiting art sites, taking refuge from the heat of the day in the same rock shelters and pools that the Aboriginal people have used for thousands of years.

Keep River is one of the least known jewels of the N.T. Parks system. Geologically part of the Kimberley, the orange and grey banding on the rocks cause some to compare it to a smaller version of the Bungles. It is an area of spectacularly rugged rock formations, so rugged that the map makers simply drew a dotted line around the main massif and labelled it "dissected rock outcrops." It was impossible to indicate most of the contour lines.



We often camp next to another pool a short distance above this waterfall.

For most of the year, much of the park is nearly a desert. The palms and boabs which add to the interest of the area are adapted to a climate in which rain is unlikely for six to eight months at a time. We will, however, be there when the land is at its lush, green best.

Keep contains more rock arches than anywhere else we walk.

The Aboriginal art is particularly interesting. Within a three km radius of our base camp, you have everything from stone petroglyphs which are so old that the local Aboriginal people do not recognise them as having been created by their ancestors to paintings depicting the arrival of the first white men and their animals. In another, there is a single painting about 25 metres long. In yet another, there are some rare beeswax figures. No group is likely to be able to visit all the sites we know of. Perhaps your group will find more.

Our explorations will be leisurely ones. This ancient land demands time. Every turn brings a new vista, a new opportunity for a photograph, or perhaps a broad panorama of spectacularly contrasting light which no camera can ever hope to capture. All too soon, our time is over and a helicopter arrives to bring us back to where we began. This section finishes a night at the Kimberley Croc for those continuing on to section 4.

This will be the first time in 20 years that we've been able to visit Keep River in the Wet. That's why we only have dry season photos to show.

Section 3: The Northern Carr Boyd Range: 18-24 February

Located south of Kununurra and west of Lake Argyle, the peaks and cliffs of the Carr Boyds will be familiar to anyone who has visited the region. From the roads they present a forbidding face, dry and barren, rugged beyond belief. But up close they can show a different nature. Local bushwalkers love the range for the numerous deep cool gorges, lovely waterfalls and beautiful fern lined pools, just waiting for someone to stop



View of the central falls on the climb up.

and have a swim. We plan to take the easy way and take a helicopter to near our first camp so we can avoid a very steep climb. If so, we'll spend the rest of the day exploring some of the waterfalls on the creek we call "Many Falls" as there are eight different waterfalls in a relatively short distance. From there, it gets a bit more strenuous but the spectacular views and swims make it all worth while.



Climbing up near past the first falls. We'll miss the climb and enjoy the view from the top.

Once at the top, we set up a base camp and spend a day exploring with only a day pack before continuing north toward Packsaddle Creek, the largest in the range.

From here we hope to do a loop over to a spectacular waterfall we haven't been able to visit for many years.

When it's flowing, as it should be at this time of year, it could be the most spectacular waterfall in the range. Should be as shown at right, the last time we were there at this time of year, it wasn't flowing but we did get to enjoy one of the prettiest campsites on the trip.



Dry waterfall – will this year be better? Campsite and pool above the dry waterfall.

We return to Packsaddle and continue downstream, dropping our packs and stopping to visit one or more of the interesting tributaries. We continue downstream where we find the biggest waterfalls and pools of the trip. Just how spectacular they will be depends on the weather.

The photo at the top of page 2 and the one at left show the same waterfall from slightly different vantage points on two different wet season trips.



Packsaddle Falls

We finish the walk on a 4WD track that comes into the base of Packsaddle Gorge. If it hasn't been very wet, our transport may be able to come all the way in for the pick up. But, if as is often the case, the road is flooded, we will have a 4-5 km walk on the track to get to the vehicle which will take us back to Kununurra



Leafy boab on the Packsaddle track.

where the trip finishes.

For those who want to save money, the day after the trip ends, you can choose to join us for the long drive back to Darwin. No extra charge. We expect to arrive sometime after 7 pm, but it could be earlier if we make good time.

Terrain and Difficulty:

Overall Level 1 on section 3; level 3 on section 2; level 4 on section 3

Climate Level 5. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. There will be some nights in air conditioned accommodation.

The average daily maximum is 35°C (95°F). If we get a spell of relatively dry weather, the temperature could reach 40°C (104°F). The average minimum is 24°C (75°F). Sleeping bags are not needed. Rain is almost certain.

On average it will rain every second day, mostly in short, sharp bursts. Averages can, however, be misleading. Occasionally, it might rain for days at a time. (This makes it somewhat harder to walk but it also makes the waterfalls more spectacular and keeps it relatively cool.) Occasionally, it may rain very little. This makes it substantially hotter than normal. There will be many opportunities to swim and cool off, but you must be prepared for hot, humid conditions.

Terrain Level 2-4. This walk includes a substantial amount of rock hopping as well as a number of relatively steep climbs and several smaller ones. If water levels are normal, it will also include some fairly flat walking through open woodland. None of the climbs are more than about 200 metres so they are over and done fairly quickly. There is likely to be one section where you need to float your pack on section two. Exceptionally heavy rains could make this necessary on section one as well.

Even in the boggiest of seasons, the Top End and Kimberley have nothing that can compare with the mud of Tasmania. However, if you have a particularly wet year, you may find yourself sinking up to mid calf regularly on some places.

Little of the walking on any section 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.



Wading across flooded creeks is unavoidable

The photos on our website, 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 2-4. 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. Much of section two is on trails where the vegetation is not much of a problem.



This grevillea is one of many flowers you only see during the wet season

The spear grass normally reaches its peak in March, often three or four metres tall in some areas (much shorter in others). We may encounter short sections of partially collapsed and seeding spear grass during some portion of the trip, but this early it is unlikely that there will be very much.

Wildflowers are plentiful.

Hours Generally 4-6 hours, not including breaks. A few days might be longer.

Packs **Pack weight** - Section 1 - level 0, day pack only; sections 2&3 - level 3 food for up to six 4 nights. Your share of the evening meals will weigh 2½ to 3½ kg on the final section, a bit less on section 2.

Art Very good on sections 1 & 2; very little on section 3.

Campsites Mix of flat rock ledges, sandy beaches (if not flooded) and grassy ground.



Carr Boyd campsite

Swims This is the best time to see the local waterfalls, many of which flow only during the Wet. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Almost all of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves.

Lowlights Heat and humidity. Possible lack of rain can make it more uncomfortable than normal. Exceptional rain can force a change of itinerary.

Highlights Wet season waterfalls. Great swimming. Spectacular views. The lush green landscape that dry season visitors can only imagine.

Wildlife Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals.

Fishing Permitted on section 3 but unlikely to be very good

Maps 1:50,000 Beasley Knob (Keep River) & Deception Range (Carr Boyd)

Notes.



Pied cormorants



White quilled rock pigeon

We strongly recommend that anyone interested in this trip have a good look at all three of our **Walking in the Wet** pages beginning with www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au/wet.shtml

Level of Difficulty. On the national bushwalking rating scale, our tours begin at about level 3. Almost all are higher. Please read our Level of Difficulty sheet to make sure you understand how we rate the trips, www.bushwalkingholidays.org/pdf/GenInfo-Level2020.pdf

In spite of the new bridge over the Victoria River, exceptionally severe flooding could mean that we can't get through the highway between Darwin and Kununurra. It's very unlikely but you need to be prepared, just in case.

Single section price: \$595 each or \$995 for sections 1 & 2.

If the group chooses to walk in from the boat drop off instead of using a helicopter, we will **try** and have a second guide.

Why so cheap?

Expenses are not included. The only expense we can be sure of is the cost of the meals we prepare on overnight walks so these are included in the price. The other expenses can vary dramatically depending on how many people take part. If we included the expenses, we would have to charge enough to cover the worst case scenario. By not including them, we can give you the best possible price.

Accommodation

- Cooina. Wet season rates start at about \$200 per room for a twin, double or triple. Camping available.
- Katherine. Rooms where we usually stay start at \$180 for a double or twin, breakfast included.
- Kununurra. Rooms start at about \$180 for a twin or double.

Meals

- Main meals begin at about \$25 and go up to about \$50
- The Cooina Buffet breakfast costs \$35. Highly recommended. We should book this when we book your cruise or room.

Transport

- All up, our vehicles cost us over \$1 per km. We will charge \$.50 per km for this trip. The vehicles take up to 7 passengers so the cost depends on how many in each vehicle. The total km will be from Darwin to Darwin even if some prefer to fly home from Kununurra.
- The Yellow Waters cruise costs about \$120 per person.

- Keep River Helicopter. Depending on numbers, the total cost of the two flights should be between \$1000 and \$1800 per person.
- Carr Boyd Helicopter. Estimated cost between \$400 and \$800 per person.
- Carr Boyd boat drop off - \$450-\$550 total.
- Carr Boyd vehicle pick up - \$400-\$500 total.

Estimated Costs

Item	Estimated Minimum	Estimated Maximum
Vehicle	250	500
Accom (9 nights)	700	1200
Yellow Waters	120	120
Town Meals	270	450
Keep Helicopter	1000	1800
Katherine Gorge boat		
Carr Boyd Transport	500	900
Total	2840	4970

Final note. On a trip like this, we are always at the mercy of extreme weather conditions. If roads get closed, we could be delayed somewhere, or maybe not even be able to get to somewhere we intended to visit.