

# Top End Light: 18-25 March 2022

*New Trip: 3 February 2022*

**Special price: \$995.** None of our normal discounts apply with this special discount price.

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



Southern Rockhole, Nitmiluk

**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.

## Itinerary

- Day 0** This is the day **BEFORE** departure. 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.
- Day 1** Drive South to Adelaide River. Turn off main Highway and drive to Burrells Creek. Day walk. Continue to Emerald Springs. Overnight in motel.
- Day 2** Drive to start of Depot Creek walk. We'll go as far as seems reasonable. But at this time of year, we could have a fair walk to get to a camp site midway along the gorge. Swim at camp. Possibly along the way as well.
- Day 3** Day walk from camp to the bottom of the gorge and back. The most spectacular part of the gorge is the very bottom. We need the two nights to be able to do this at a reasonable pace.
- Day 4** Walk back to car, drive to Katherine. Overnight in motel.
- Day 5** Day walk at Katherine Gorge. Flowers, views, swims and a boat back at the end. There is now a 3:30 PM boat, so we've got plenty of time. Overnight in Katherine.
- Day 6** Drive to Batchelor via Edith Falls. Overnight at Holiday Park if the bird feeding is still happening. Elsewhere if not.
- Day 7** Short walks and lots of swims in Litchfield. Drive to Berry Springs via new road. Overnight at AAOK Lakes Resort staying at the Lake House. The managers told us, "Where the Lake House is situated is between 2 lakes in a beautiful setting. There is a Paddle Boat for use at the Lake House along with a BBQ on the deck overlooking the lake. If you like birds this is a great location, we have a family of Burdekin ducks here at the moment that wander around. You can walk around the lake to spot wildlife and enjoy this lovely wet season we are having."
- Day 8** Visit the Territory Wildlife Park if open. Wander around Lakes if not. Return to Darwin in the afternoon. The Wildlife Park is currently closed for renovations. It's scheduled to re-open in mid March, but there may be delays due to covid and/or the weather.

## *Now for the details.*

We begin with a drive of about 140 km to Burrells Creek, a wet



Rest stop, Burrells Creek

season gem known only to a few local bushwalkers. The photo on the previous page was taken in April in a relatively dry year. We expect there to be a lot more water in March. The walk is about 5 km and takes us through a lovely little gorge. At the end of the walk, the guide will walk back and collect the vehicle. We then drive to the Emerald Springs Roadhouse where we spend the night.



Depot Creek swim stop

The next day we head to Depot Creek where 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 for the past few years. In a dry year, we might be able to drive all the way to the creek. In a wet one, we might need to do an extra 3 km in each direction.

The gorge is long enough so that none of our one night trips has ever made it all the way to most spectacular section near the downstream end. By walking in and setting up a base camp, we'll be able to do so.

After two nights camping, we return to the vehicle and drive to Katherine where we spend the night in motel accommodation.



Russell Willis & group at Depot, February



Waiting for the Katherine Gorge pick up boat

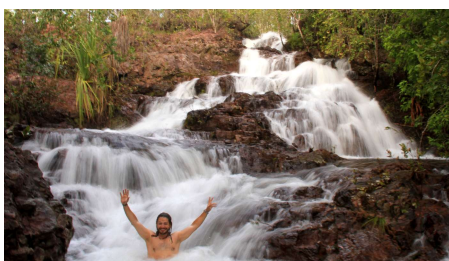
Next morning, we drive to the park and do a walk, first to a scenic lookout high over the river, then onto the main trail system to another lookout further upstream, then down to the southern rockhole and finally out to the river where we will be picked up by a boat and transported back to where we began. It will be a fairly long, but not too strenuous day. We finish back in the motel.

The next day we head north, stopping at Edith Falls in the

northern portion of Nitmiluk. Edith Falls is a series of drops over a distance of about a kilometre. Above the falls there are deep, inviting, croc-free pools where we will spend a great deal of the day before driving to Batchelor where we spend the night in accommodation. We hope to be able to include a cultural tour with a Jawoyn Aboriginal guide while at Edith Falls but it may not be operating at this time.



Upper Edith Falls, February



Our final full day will be spent visiting some of the many waterfalls in Litchfield National Park. While some are closed for swimming at this time of year, many remain open. Some of the waterfalls are

likely to be flowing strongly, others more gently as shown in the two photos above. There is a good chance we will have some of these to ourselves. The day finishes with a drive to Berry Springs where we spend our final night in accommodation.

If it is open, we will visit the Territory Wildlife Park on the final morning. At the time these notes were written, it was closed for renovations and it wasn't certain whether or not it would be open by the time the trip finishes. If not, we'll explore the area around the lake near where we spend the night before returning to Darwin.



Up close with a wedge-tailed eagle at the Wildlife Park

## Notes

**Exceptionally** severe flooding can close the roads to Katherine Gorge, Edith Falls and Litchfield. If we cannot do the intended walks, we will substitute something else appropriate to the conditions.

The road between the town of Katherine and Katherine Gorge can be closed by flooding at this time of year. When this happens, there is normally a boat which can take us across the water and a bus which can bring us into the park.

If a sudden flood catches the operator unaware, as happened in 2002 when exceptionally dry conditions suddenly turned into exceptionally wet ones (the depth of the Katherine River went from 4.5 to 17.4 metres while we were there), it may not be possible to do this.

**Maps.** The Nitmiluk and Litchfield park maps show all the areas where we walk.

Video

## Terrain and Difficulty

**Overall** Level 1 – you never carry more than two day's food and carry full packs only short distances.

**Climate** Level 4. It will be hot (although not as hot as you might think) and it will be humid. The only reason this is not rated as level 5 is that you spend most nights in air conditioning.

The average daily maximum is 33-34°C (91-94°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 two days out of three, 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 1-3. Most of the walking on this section is on marked trails or 4WD tracks. Some will be off-trail and may include a bit of rock-hopping. Most of the walking is through open woodland with a spear grass understorey.

Even in the boggiest of seasons, the Top End has 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 in some places.

The walk along Depot and Burrells Creeks is not 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. 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 1-4. 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.

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 there shouldn't be much.

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

**Packs** **Pack weight** - level 1. You never carry more than two day's food and carry full packs only short distances.

**Art** Little, if any.

**Campsites** Sandy beach or grassy area nearby if water levels are high.

**Swims** This is the best time to see Kakadu and the Top End waterfalls. There will be a chance for several swims per day. Many of these will be in pools we have all to ourselves. Ear infections are more likely at this time of year when you spend so much time swimming. If you have even the slightest symptom of an ear ache, make sure you tell the guide immediately. Prevention is easier than cure.



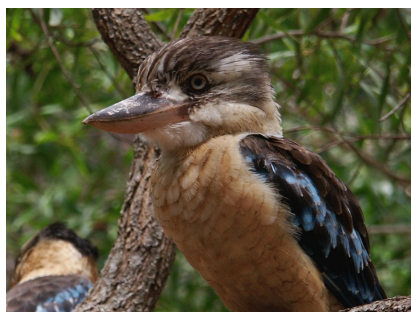
Depot Creek camp. Our group fly keeps us dry if it's raining.

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

**Highlights** Several waterfalls seen at their spectacular best. Great swimming. 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. The Kakadu cruises may give you a chance to see one or more large crocodiles but they are harder to spot at this time of the year than during the cooler months. The

two photos above were taken in Litchfield on one of our Kakadu Light trips. The blue winged kookaburra was unusually tame. The water monitor was about a metre long.



**Fishing** Not possible.

## What Is and Is **Not Included** in the Price

### Included

- All transport during the trip
- All park entry fees
- Evening meals on the overnight walk
- The services of the guide
- The boat pick up at Katherine Gorge
- The cultural tour at Edith Falls if it can be arranged

### Not Included

- Optional scenic flight at Nitmiluk
- Overnight accommodation
- Evening meals in restaurants
- Your breakfasts & lunches
- Your drinks

### Why not include everything?

Based on past experience, people have different preferences when it comes to accommodation; one person will have a dinner that costs twice as much as that for someone else. Given all that, it doesn't seem fair to charge everyone the same. We'll do the bookings for you but the cost will be in addition to the cost of the tour. Here are some approximate prices to give you an idea of the extra costs you'll be up for.

### Accommodation

- Katherine. Rooms where we often stay start at \$135 for a double or twin and include breakfast
- Emerald Springs. Under new management. Rooms (doubles only) used to cost \$80.
- Batchelor and near Litchfield. Many options. Begin at about \$40 per person and go up to about \$140 for a private room.
- Final night. House that sleeps six costs \$190.

### Meals

- Main meals begin at about \$25 and go up to about \$50
- Breakfast is likely to be included for the two nights in Katherine. Bring your own or buy it at Emerald Springs. Bring or buy in Batchelor. Bring it for the last morning.

**Want more info?** Have a look at our

- Katherine Gorge video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIL6oFCRG-Y>
- Litchfield-Depot Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ip9FuR5-63M>