

Mine site rehabilitation – Rum Jungle and Woodcutters mines



High level summary

Participants on this field trip will have the opportunity to visit two former mine sites – the Rum Jungle mine and Woodcutters mine, both located about an hour south of Darwin. They will learn from NT government personnel, Indigenous rangers, and mining company employees about their efforts to rehabilitate these former mine sites.

Essentials for mine site visit: long pants, long-sleeved shirts, sturdy closed-toed shoes, broad-brimmed hat, sunscreen, drinking water – optional (but recommended): mosquito repellent

Detailed Description

The trip begins at 7:15 am on September 26 from the conference venue from where we first head to the Rum Jungle mine site located approximately 105 km south of Darwin. Rum Jungle is a former uranium mine. Its exploration began in 1949 with mining and mineral processing taking place between 1953 and 1971. In total about 3,530 tonnes of uranium oxide and 20,000 tonnes of copper concentrate were mined at Rum Jungle, making it an important mine during the early years of the Cold War. Mining activities at the site led to significant environmental impacts, primarily caused by acid and metalliferous drainage, resulting in pollution of the East Branch of the Finnis River. The NT Government is working in partnership with the Australian Government and Traditional Owners to rehabilitate the former Rum Jungle Mine. We will meet with NT government personnel and Indigenous rangers and hear about ongoing mine closure and ecological rehabilitation and revegetation efforts at this site and the challenges involved.

After spending about 1.5 hours at Rum Jungle and learning in detail about ongoing restoration efforts, we head to the Woodcutters mine. En route to Woodcutters, we stop for morning tea at the town of Batchelor.

The Woodcutters mine site is a former lead-zinc mine that was decommissioned in 1999. As the owner and operator of the non-operational site, the mining company Newmont has undertaken decommissioning, rehabilitation, and monitoring activities since acquiring the site in 2002. Under the “Woodcutters Agreement,” Newmont works with the traditional owners of the land – the Kungarakan and Warai people – to undertake closure activities that support the goal to hand over the land to the traditional owners once all agreed-upon closure criteria and objectives have been met. We will hear from Newmont employees about ongoing closure and rehabilitation efforts and challenges.

After about 1.5 hours at Woodcutters mine, we will head to the De Lago Resort on Lake Bennett for a sumptuous lunch, during which we will hear a presentation by Sharon Paulka, Closure Manager at Energy Australia Limited and her team. They will discuss ongoing closure and rehabilitation being carried out at the former Ranger uranium mine site. After spending 1.5 hours at De Lago, we board the bus around 3 pm for the drive back to Darwin, which we expect to reach by about 4 pm.