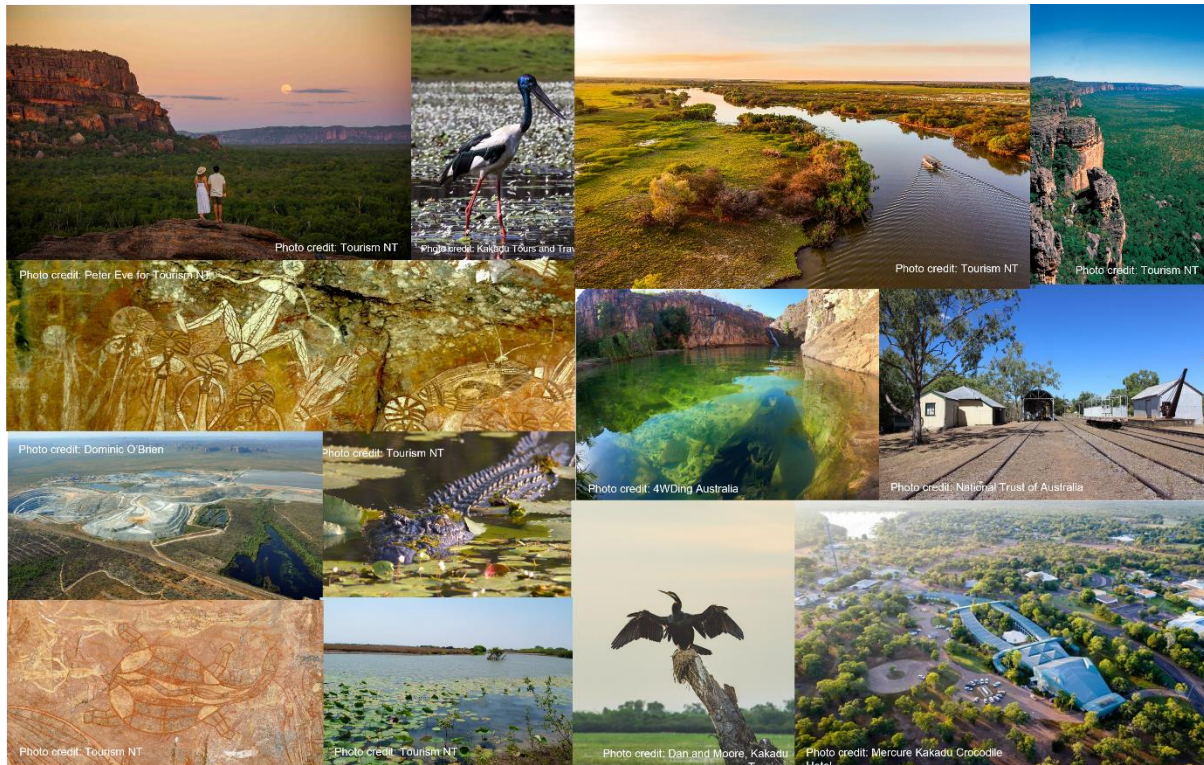


Multi-day field trip to Kakadu National Park (23–25 September 2023)



High level summary

Essentials for trip: long pants, long-sleeved shirts, sturdy closed-toed shoes, broad-brimmed hat, sunscreen, drinking water, insect repellent - Recommended: binoculars, snacks

This spectacular 3-day trip covers every aspect of the iconic World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park – environmental, cultural, and social. The trip includes 1) a visit to the former Ranger Uranium Mine site to learn about on-going closure and rehabilitation efforts by the NT government and the Traditional Owners of the land, 2) a half day tour with Traditional owners of Gunbalanya and East Alligator Region where participants will learn about their cultural practices and management of their land and wildlife, and 3) recreational activities in the Kakadu National Park including:

- a cruise along the Mary River Wetlands
- Rock art viewing at Ubirr
- a sunrise viewing across the Arnhem Land escarpment from the Nawurlanja lookout,
- a croc-free swim in the Maguk (Barramundi Gorge) Waterfall

The tour will take place in a spacious, air-conditioned touring vehicle and includes two-nights' accommodation in comfortable lodgings (with twin sharing), experienced and knowledgeable tour guides, and delicious, and healthy food to suit various dietary requirements.

Detailed description

The tour begins at 7:30 am on September 23. We depart from Darwin and head a 2-hour drive east to the Mary River Wetlands, a thriving microcosm of Top End wildlife, birds, and fish. The Mary River Floodplains teem with native birdlife and boast the largest concentration of saltwater crocodiles in the world. Here, we will set off on a two-hour boat cruise along the Mary River, where we will have the opportunity to see a huge variety of species. There will be plenty of opportunity for great wildlife and landscape shots of native birdlife and saltwater crocodiles set against a backdrop of paperbark swamp and lotus lilies. Following lunch, we set off again, 200 km east to Ubirr in the Kakadu National Park. This famous site contains among the world's oldest and most impressive rock art paintings that document life in the region from 20,000 years ago to the first contact with European explorers including depictions of European sailing ships. Here we will set off on a 1 km walk and will have the opportunity to admire its famous rock art, considered among the best in the world. Much of the art here features fish, turtles, goanna, and other important food animals. Stories about behaviour and law can be seen at the Mabuyu, Narmarrkan Sisters and Rainbow Serpent paintings. Contact art from the time when Indigenous people first encountered Europeans can also be seen. Wildlife may also be encountered on this walk including the chestnut-quilled rock pigeon, black wallaroo, helmeted friar birds, spangled drongos, and banded fruit-doves, among others. The track also includes a steep 250 m climb to a rocky lookout with spectacular 360-degree views of Arnhem Land and the Nadab floodplain. After spending a couple of hours at Ubirr admiring the rock art and the spectacular views of Arnhem Land, we head a short 30 minute drive away to our accommodation – the Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel in Jabiru, where we check in, rest, and meet for dinner at the hotel's Escarpment Restaurant. All lodging is on a twin-sharing basis.

Day 2 of the trip begins with breakfast at our accommodation. After breakfast, we head an hour's drive north for a half day tour with the Traditional owners of Gunbalanya and the East Alligator Region where we will learn about their culture and land management practices. Following lunch, we set off for a half day visit to the former Ranger mine site. The Ranger Mine was Australia's longest continually operating uranium mine, providing the global energy market with a reliable supply of uranium ore concentrate since mining operations commenced in 1981. Over its 41-year operating history, the mine exported over 133,000 tonnes of uranium ore concentrate. Mining operations ceased in January 2021 and the mine is currently being decommissioned. Here, we will tour some sections of the mine site together with NT government personnel and Indigenous rangers and hear about ongoing closure and rehabilitation efforts at this site and the challenges involved. After our visit to Ranger, we head back to our accommodation to rest for a while, and meet for dinner later in the evening.

The last day of the tour begins early. We check out of the hotel and head a short 25-minute drive south to the Nawurlandja lookout for breathtaking views from across the Anbangbang Billabong to Burrungkuy (Nourlangie). The endless vista from the top of the walk gives a fantastic taste of the grand scale of Kakadu. From Nawurlandja, we head an hour further south to one of Kakadu's lesser-known attractions – Maguk – a pristine natural waterfall and plunge pool at the base of steep gorge walls. A 1 km walk through monsoon forests, crossing Barramundi Creek leads to a plunge pool where we can enjoy a cool refreshing (croc-free!) swim. We then head back to Darwin via the historic town of Pine Creek, a former gold mining town which stumbled into existence when teams building the Overland Telegraph Line dug up some gold while digging holes for posts in 1870. It has had a variety of gold rushes since 1870. At the peak of the mining boom, over 2,000 Chinese miners worked in the area and over 15 mines were being dug in the hope of finding gold. Today Pine Creek is a quiet town that attracts tourists for its railway and mining relics. Of interest for our group will be the Pine Creek Museum and the Enterprise Pit – a former

open cut gold mine that is now filled with water. After out visiting Pine Creek and having lunch, we head back to Darwin – a 2.5-hour drive northwest, which we expect to arrive by 5 pm.