

Kakadu in the Wet

Dates: Wednesday, 8th February to Thursday, 16th February 2006 (9 days)
Cost: \$2,200 **Style:** Budget Accommodation **Start and Finish:** Darwin

Visit one of the Earth's greatest Living Edens and Australia's largest National Park at the height of the green season. World Heritage Kakadu blends some of Australia's richest wetlands with rugged, ancient sandstone topography and a great cultural heritage. Aboriginal occupation has been confirmed back to 60,000 years. Discover Kakadu's prodigious array of endemic plants and animals and its dynamic landscape. Fly into Arnhemland to appreciate Aboriginal art and culture and see Kakadu and the Arnhem plateau, wetlands and waterfalls from the air. Also discover Nitmuluk and Litchfield, other great Top End National Parks, and many natural and cultural wonders of the Territory's Top End at the height of the Gudjewg, the monsoon season when the landscape is green and its wildlife is most active.

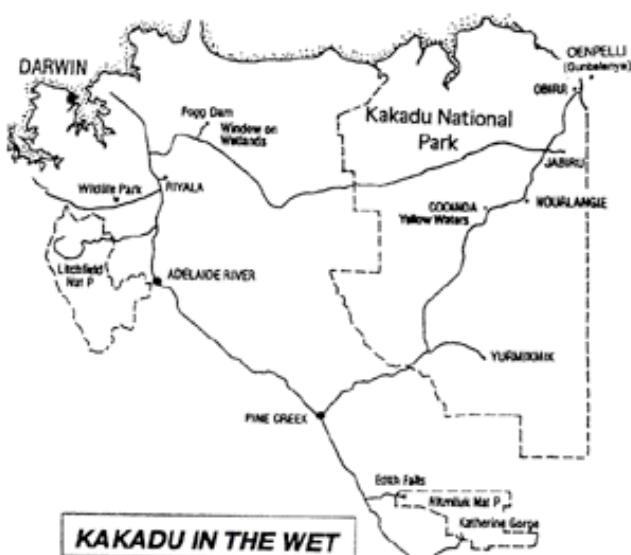
Guides: John Sinclair and Ian Morris, O.A.M., developed a friendship during John's first visit to Kakadu in 1984. Ian Morris is one of Australia's most acclaimed naturalists, with great knowledge of Aboriginal culture. He developed Australia's first Aboriginal Ranger Training Program in Kakadu. Known as "The Guru of Kakadu", Ian is author of *Kakadu National Park*. John Sinclair, an internationally recognized conservationist, has led eco-safaris throughout Australia for 37 years.

Style: A maximum of 20 safarists will travel in an air-conditioned Coaster bus and stay in air-conditioned shared accommodation. Meals will be prepared by John with group assistance.

The Season: *Gudjewg* is monsoon time in Kakadu, a great time for naturalists. Rivers flood, forcing floodplain wildlife to higher ground, yam vines festoon trees and the green spear grass reaches full height. Much wildlife breeding occurs. Intermittent monsoon events bring low blankets of cloud streaming in from the northwest. Alternatively, there are regular thunderstorms. It doesn't rain continuously. Cloudless skies and sunny days are not uncommon.

Price includes all transport, including a scenic flight into Arnhemland, access, accommodation and meals, and the Guliyambi and Yellow Waters boat cruises.

Kakadu National Park: With an area of 1,975,700 ha, Kakadu has more than 1275 plant species, 10,000 insect species, 25 frog species, 123 reptile species, 51 species of freshwater fish, 280 species of birds and 62 species of mammals. Kakadu is World Heritage listed on all four natural criteria, as well as cultural criteria. It adjoins the large Arnhemland wilderness in the east and the Nitmuluk National Park in the south.



Draft Itinerary

Because of the uncertainty and unpredictability of the monsoons, this itinerary may be varied. Some alternative activities may have to be substituted at times.

Day 1; Wednesday, 8th February: Depart Darwin Transit Centre at 8.30 am. At "Riyala" discover woodland ecology. At Territory Wildlife Park explore the wonderfully curated displays depicting the natural habitat regions of the Top End.

Accom: "Riyala", Noonamah.

Day 2; Thursday, 9th February: Visit the 65,700 ha Litchfield National Park, where many spectacular waterfalls pour off Tabletop Range. Discover remarkable termites, monsoon rainforest and cycads. Swim at Buley Rockholes before proceeding to Pine Creek. Accom: Kakadu Gateway.

Day 3; Friday, 10th February: Discover colourful Pine Creek history while panning for gold. Visit Nitmuluk National Park where the Edith River gushes over the edge of the Arnhemland Escarpment. See the swollen waterfalls. Swim and return to Pine Creek. Accom: Kakadu Gateway.

Day 4; Saturday, 11th February: Enter Kakadu National Park near the Mary River. Swim at the Rock Holes and if possible also explore Yurmikmik Falls and Bubukuluk. Accom: Gagadju Lodge, Cooinda.

Day 5; Sunday, 12th February: Learn more about the rhythm of Aboriginal life at Warradjan Cultural Centre. Take 11.30 am cruise on Yellow Waters — one of Kakadu's most renowned highlights. After lunch see Noulangie Rock and Anbangbang rock shelter. Accom: Lakeview Lodge.

Day 6; Monday, 13th February: Fly to Arnhemland, Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) over the rugged escarpment and flooded plains of the East Alligator River and Magela Creek. Visit Injaluk Art Centre and, conditions permitting, a nearby rock art site. Accom: Lakeview Lodge, Jabiru.

Day 7; Tuesday, 14th February: Visit Kakadu's Bowali Visitor Centre before exploring the flooded Magela Creek and Ubirr with Aboriginal guides. This has great rock art and grand wetlands panorama, without the usual large dry-season crowds. Accom: Lakeview Lodge.

Day 8; Wednesday, 15th February: Take in Nanguluwurr art site and walk to Gunbara for a swim in some waterfalls set in attractive monsoon rainforest.

Accom: Lakeview Lodge, Jabiru.

Day 9; Thursday, 16th February: Stop at Fogg Dam, formerly a rice growing experiment, now a wonderful wildlife habitat for birds and reptiles, and Window on the Wetlands Visitor Centre before returning to Darwin. Scheduled arrival at the Transit Centre is 5.00 pm.