



Kakadu and Mary River National Parks Northern Territory, Australia

6 days - 5 nights

Wild Top End is our homage to the wildlife, landscape and cultural riches of one of the world's wildest places - in the tropical north of Australia.

This very special environmental experience explores both Kakadu and Mary River National Parks to the east of Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory.

This "tropical outback" region is home to some of Australia's rarest animals and birds; to vast, open landscapes intersected by massive, untamed rivers; to the oldest surviving culture on earth, dating back well over 50,000 years. **Kakadu National Park** is a World Heritage Area of enormous environmental and cultural significance - a land of multi-hued escarpments and majestic wooded floodplains. **Mary River National Park** contains a staggering array of wildlife including one of the highest populations of wild crocodiles on earth.

Wild Top End is for people who care about the natural environment, who wish to learn about how wildlife and people can continue to survive in a world impacted by climate change and exploitation by humans. If you are passionate about caring for wild places you will love being involved in our research project which aims at understanding and conserving this fabulous region by recording wildlife sightings. This simple task makes a huge difference to understanding and protecting natural areas - and it's lots of fun. You don't need to be a scientist or know a lot about wildlife to be involved - all you need is a sense of wonder and a keen eye!

Your Tour Leader will be Echidna Walkabout's senior Wildlife Guide and co-director, **Roger Smith**, who has guided wildlife experiences throughout Australia for over 20 years. Roger is passionate about Echidna Walkabout's message that tourism is not just about enjoyment, it is also about conservation; he believes that by giving back to the environment we will ensure the future of tourism in Australia. Roger's special interests include mammals (including people!), birds, trees, geology and Aboriginal Culture. He is also a Kakadu Guide - this means he has passed through the 'Kakadu Knowledge for Tour Guides' program.



Travel Style On most days we rise at first light (approx 6am) to begin activities in the early morning to avoid the heat of the day - this is also one of the best times for photography and wildlife. At the end of each day your guide will give you a departure time for the next day - please be ready!

Wild Top End Itinerary

NOTE: A detailed Birds and Mammals checklist will be supplied to all participants

Included meals are shown thus:

Breakfast- B (continental style - not cooked), Lunch -L (picnic style), Dinner - D

Optional Pre-tour orientation - introduction to the Top End

For those who are in Darwin on this day we'll provide an introduction to your Wild Top End experience. We'll pick you up from your accommodation mid-afternoon for an afternoon exploring Darwin's surrounds ending up at East Point looking over the entrance to Darwin's Fannie Bay. Here we'll take a short walk searching for local birds and animals before watching the sun set over the Timor Sea – during this time your guide will provide you with a trip briefing and answer any questions you may have about the upcoming adventure.

Accommodation: at your own expense

Meals: Dinner in Darwin will be at your own expense. We can suggest a place to eat. Early departure tomorrow

Day 1 - Darwin to Kakadu/Jabiru via Fogg Dam and Mamukala Wetlands

After an early pick up from your Darwin accommodation we'll head eastwards into the tropical outback. The road from Darwin to Jabiru is sealed for its entire length and makes for very easy traveling. On the way we'll stop at a number of beautiful locations including famous Fogg Dam (part of the Adelaide River floodplain) where we'll take our first walk into a monsoon forest and view some of the fantastic birdlife of the Northern Territory. Then we'll get on our way crossing a number of the huge rivers that drain the tropical wilderness including the mighty Mary River where we'll stop for lunch and possibly see our first crocodile. We enter Kakadu National Park and stop at Mamukala wetland and take a walk to get our first taste of the wonders of Kakadu. We'll end the day in the small town of Jabiru and move into our accommodation. (staying here 3 nights)

Accommodation: Anbinik Kakadu (tonight and 2 more nights = 3 nights total).

Our price includes Double or Twin Share Bush Bungalows with external bathrooms (personal use).

You can upgrade, at an additional cost, to a private cabin (en-suite) – see Accommodation on Tour (Page 5)

Meals: L,D

Day 2 - Nourlangie Kakadu - Aboriginal Heritage, Rare wildlife, Sunset at Nawurlandja

The Nourlangie region will be our first access to the magnificent Arnhem Land escarpment. It also helps us to understand the enormous importance of Kakadu to the Aboriginal People. Ancient sandstone ranges rise directly out of the Kakadu floodplains in a landscape that epitomises the Dreamtime in Australia. This morning we'll visit a number of places in this region including Nanguluwur Rock Art site, Anbangbang Billabong and Nourlangie Rock Art site - this site contains some of the most powerful Aboriginal paintings in Australia including a depiction of the Lightning Man. During the heat of the day we'll return to Anbinik for a rest then a refreshing swim in the pool before heading back out in the late afternoon to Nawurlandja lookout to watch the sun set over the Kakadu escarpment. All the names in Kakadu rise from Aboriginal languages. You will begin to feel the incredible power of this landscape. At the end of the day we'll return to Anbinik for dinner.

Accommodation: Anbinik Kakadu

Meals: B,L,D

Day 3 – Tropical Rivers: Ubirr Kakadu - East Alligator River. Iligadjarr Wetlands – South Alligator River

Many who visit Ubirr come away as different people. It is possibly the most beautiful place in Kakadu with some of the most compelling wilderness landscapes on earth. It has a presence that takes humans back to their beginnings. Nearby the tidal (saltwater) section of the East Alligator River bounds the vast Aboriginal lands of Arnhem Land – to go any further requires special permission. But on the Kakadu side there is a wide variety of activities to choose from including gentle walks near the river, views of elaborate Aboriginal Rock

Art sites or a climb to the top of Ubirr Rock with its stunning views across Kakadu. We'll also take the Bardedjilidji Sandstone walk which take us deep into some of Kakadu's most remarkable geological formations where we learn how the Kakadu Escarpment was formed millions of years ago. During the heat of the day we'll return to Jabiru followed by a rest then a refreshing swim in the pool before heading back out in the afternoon to the nearby Iligadjarr Wetlands for a walk in a tropical savannah woodland beside the freshwater floodplain of the South Alligator River.

Special add-on Touring Option today: 2.5 hour Aboriginal guided boat tour into the wilderness of the East Alligator River. For more information please check out [Guluyambi Cultural Cruise](#)

Accommodation: Anbinik Kakadu (last night here)

Meals: B,L,D

Day 4 - Jabiru to Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge - Mary River National Park

Today we backtrack westward out of Kakadu to Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge deep inside Mary River National Park. Our route takes us firstly along the paved Kakadu Highway then onto the dirt roads heading north into Mary River National Park. On route we'll stop at a number of special little places, visited by few, but very beautiful. We sometimes see Dingoes and the elusive Antilopine Kangaroo. We'll finish up at Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge, check in, cool off in the pool, then take a peaceful walk through Jimmy Creek rainforest right beside the Lodge. Here you'll see the huge nesting mounds of Scrub Fowl – a bird the size of a chicken that builds nests up to 3 metres high! The grounds of the Lodge abound in the beautiful little Agile Wallaby. Cockatoos and parrots of various species abound. Overnight at Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge (there is a swimming pool at the lodge and a saloon bar). In the afternoon you will experience some of the ultimate magic of the Top End with a special driving and walking tour beside two magnificent billabongs deep in the bush on the vast Opium Creek private reserve.

Accommodation: Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge (tonight and tomorrow night = 2 nights total)

Meals: B,L,D



Jimmy Creek Monsoon Rainforest - Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge

Day 5 - Mary River National Park - Crocodiles in the Wild in a wetland wilderness

The Mary River is famous for its abundant wildlife including some of the largest crocodiles in the world. These tough reptiles have outlived the dinosaurs. The Freshwater Crocodile is reclusive and will usually flee from humans. On the other hand the Estuarine (Saltwater) Crocodile can be an unpredictable and dangerous creature. Both are magnificent and regal animal and, if treated with respect, they can be seen at very close quarters. This morning we can see crocodiles in their natural environment as we travel in a specially constructed boat to view them – and lots of other wildlife – on the Mary River. With luck you will see numerous large Saltwater Crocodiles and some smaller Freshwater Crocodiles. You'll also see an

unbelievable variety of birds including White-bellied Sea Eagles - the Mary River is famed for its abundance of this raptor which is often seen nesting beside the waterways. Lunch will be a picnic on high land overlooking the vast Mary River catchment. Late today we head as far north as we can go where the mighty Mary River becomes a vast floodplain 15 kilometres from the sea. In this remote location - surrounded by wildlife of all kinds - we enjoy our final sunset looking out over the waters of the Mary River. Huge Saltwater crocodiles often swim lazily (and safely) nearby. As the night rises we head back to the Lodge for dinner.

Accommodation: Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge

Meals: B,L,D



Magnificent Jabiru - icon of the Top End

Day 6 - Point Stuart via Bird Billabong to Darwin

Today after an early breakfast breakfast we head out into the bush before sunrise for our last special wildlife walk at Bird Billabong in the Mary River National Park. This large wetland - unlike any others we have visited - is nestled beside Mt Bundy Range, an ancient granite outcrop in the middle of the Mary River catchment. Thousands of birds move to this billabong as the surrounding country dries after the monsoon season.

Every conceivable species of bird move across the water in huge multi-species skenes, fishing and squabbling. The surrounding savannah is home to hundreds of wallabies that appear at every turn of the walking track. Raptors regularly visit in search of prey, creating havoc as they fly over the wetland. This is one of the wildlife highlights of the Top End. After a relaxing morning walk we'll depart to Darwin having lunch on en-route. You will be dropped at your accommodation in Darwin OR we can arrange transfers to Darwin Airport if you are flying out today.

Accommodation: not included

Meals: B,L

Itinerary disclaimer – please read this carefully

This itinerary is subject to change without notice and is dependent on weather, road conditions, fire and on the requirements of Government and/or its Agencies eg, National Parks Service. Activities may also be modified or curtailed dependent on the health of participants and the ability or otherwise of sub-contractors to provide activities. We will not provide compensation to participants who are unable to undertake activities described in this itinerary or who become injured or sick during the journey. Nor will Echidna Walkabout reimburse monies for any activities that are modified or cancelled as a result of all or any of the above. The same proviso is in place if, due to vehicle breakdown or for any other reason, we are unable to meet your scheduled flights.

We highly recommend you have a total travel insurance package that covers any of these eventualities.

Pre-tour Accommodation Options

DARWIN

Our pricing does NOT include accommodation in Darwin however we can suggest two places that you may like to choose from as follows:

Darwin Central Hotel – high class, modern, slightly funky 4 star accommodation right in the middle of the city near restaurants, shops and pubs. Darwin Central has a good on-line booking engine direct from their website which offers great deals.

Website: www.darwincentral.com.au

Address: 21 Knuckey Street, Darwin, Northern Territory 0800, AUSTRALIA

tel: Intl +61 8 8944 9000 **e:** reservations@darwincentral.com.au **Internet:** yes (\$)

Paravista Motel – 3 star motel style accommodation in the Darwin suburb of Parap. Close to shops, restaurants and a good pub. Note this is a 4 story establishment and does NOT have lifts but the owners are happy to help out with luggage. They also have a lovely pool and BBQ facility. We use this place when we stay in Darwin.

Website: www.paravista.com.au

Address: 5 MacKillop St. Parap, Darwin, Northern Territory 0820, AUSTRALIA

tel: Intl +61 8 8981 9200 **e:** para@paravistamotel.com.au **Internet:** yes - free

We are happy to make bookings at either of these establishments for you – please request this option and we will add the price to your tour cost. There are many other accommodation options in Darwin that can be found on-line.

Accommodation on tour

JABIRU – Anbinik Kakadu, 3 nights

Our pricing includes accommodation in the township of Jabiru at Anbinik Kakadu. Anbinik has a range of modern architect designed accommodation very much suited to the tropics with lots of ventilation and screening.

Bush Bungalows

Our standard accommodation is Anbinik's "Bush Bungalows". These are high-end bungalows, shaped like a very large tent, set high above the ground with ventilated walls, ceiling fans and full bedding. Each bungalow has a personal bathroom (separated into shower, vanity and toilet) which is beside the bungalow – remember this is the tropics so stepping outside in the middle of the night is NOT a problem. Bungalows are carefully sited for maximum privacy. The reason we recommend these bungalows is they cool down quickly during the hot tropical nights.

Upgrade Options: En-suited cabin

If you would like your own en-suited accommodation you may like to upgrade Anbinik's brand new apartments. Price: AUD240 per twin share or AUD480 single supplement

There are a range of other accommodation types at Anbinik including Two Bedroom Cabins for families and Six Bedroom Cabins for larger groups – these can be priced according to your needs.

Website: www.kakadu.net.au

Address: 27 Lakeside Dr, Jabiru, Northern Territory 0866 AUSTRALIA

tel: Intl +61 8 8979 3144 **Internet:** no – however Telstra provides 3G access out of Jabiru. Also we can assist with Internet access for brief periods as required.

POINT STUART WILDERNESS LODGE - 2 nights

Our price also includes accommodation at this lodge on private property in the remote tropical outback. It sits on the edge of the vast Mary River flood plain, surrounded by Opium Creek cattle station and beside Jimmy Creek Monsoon Rainforest. The closest town is over 150 kilometres away! We have chosen this place because it is in the perfect location to explore the wetlands, rivers and billabongs of the Mary River National Park. Accommodation here is in well appointed rooming, with full en-suite, fridge and coffee and tea making facilities. There is a welcome pool, a restaurant and a bar.

There are no accommodation options at Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge

Website: www.pointstuart.com.au

Address: via Point Stuart Road, Northern Territory AUSTRALIA

tel: Intl +61 8 8978 8914 **Internet:** No .

Packing List & other information

****This list is not all inclusive - if you have any questions please ask****

Remote and Tropical. It is important to recognise the tour will run into remote areas with few hard surfaces for wheel-based luggage trolleys so please pack lightly and minimally as you may need to carry luggage short distances from the vehicle to your accommodation. Most of the time weather conditions will help you to keep things light and easy. The Darwin/Kakadu area is a hot, humid, tropical region only 12° from the equator; we will be near sea level during the entire trip.

Weather conditions and clothing. Most days will be fine and sunny with top day-time temperatures reaching up to 32°C and evening temperatures down to 15°C. Early morning, just before dawn, is often the coolest time of day and the only time you will need a light pullover - by 1pm temperatures will peak and remain hot for up to 2 hours. You will not need much in the way of warm clothing but you will need light, loose fitting clothing that can be easily washed and dried overnight. Most of our activities will be in the morning and afternoon with time to relax in the shade for the hottest part of the day. Swimming pools are available at both locations where we are staying.

What to bring:

Clothing: wash and wear is the best

There will be no occasion on this trip where you will need to get formally 'dressed up' for dinner but you may like to bring some 'nicer' clothing to wear in the evening

- light, loose shorts, skirts, dresses
- light, loose short sleeved (or roll-up long sleeved) tops, t-shirts, shirts - to avoid serious sunburn DO NOT wear bare shouldered tops during the day
- one pair of lightweight long trousers (or tracksuit pants) might come in handy if nights get unusually cold - or for protection against biting insects in the evening
- one warm outer layer in case it does get cool - light pullover or light fleece jacket
- **Primary foot-wear:** enclosed shoes - good quality and reliable for walking over rocks and rough terrain. You will use these every day - they can be running shoes but they MUST be well made, fully enclosed and offer good foot protection against banging and bumping sharp objects. *Ensure you have "worn in" your shoes before the trip to avoid blisters on soft feet - this particularly applies to children.*
- **Secondary foot-wear:** good quality sandals for any time you are relaxing (ie. not out in the "bush")
- Socks - good quality; make sure that your feet fit your boots with your socks on in hot weather - feet get bigger in the heat. You'll need a clean pair every day.
- Hat - this is your first protection against heat stroke and sunburn so bring a good quality, lightweight, wide-brimmed sunhat. The best type can be squashed in your luggage. (Simple peaked hats do not keep the sun off necks and ears)
- swimming outfits – DON'T FORGET as you'll need them
- lightweight nightwear - you will not need much, in fact the sheet on the bed may suffice!
- Clothes washing facilities are available at both locations where we are staying

Personal

Anbinik Kakadu and Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge both supply towels, soap and toilet paper to rooms plus some toiletries. There will be a fridge in your room and tea and coffee making facilities. Depending on your personal needs please bring the following:

- personal toiletry and hygiene products
- healthcare and medical products (we will have very limited access to shops)
- high factor sunscreen
- insect repellent (remember you will be in the tropics - there **will be** mosquitoes and flies). Malaria is NOT found in Australia
- 1 litre water bottle or similar (or you can buy a litre of water and refill as required). We urge you to drink LOTS of water on this trip.
- Daypack
- hand cleanser

- face washer
- spare towel (for swimming)
- sunglasses
- camera
- binoculars

Medical

- **Medical facilities in the Northern Territory are limited** to major towns of which there are very few - for all of this trip we will be *at least* 4 hours by road from significant medical services.
- **THINK BEFORE YOU ACT!** At all times please be very careful. Be aware that random actions - that may normally be tolerated in urban environments where you are close to medical care - must be carefully considered in remote regions.
- It is important that you bring enough **prescribed personal medication** for the entire trip. This applies especially to heart, diabetic and allergy conditions.
- You should also bring your **preferred general medication** for muscle soreness, headache and stomach ailments.
- In the event of **severe injury or sickness** there is a very good remote area medical service in Australia (Flying Doctor) but even this service takes some time to arrange and can be very expensive.
- **Water:** we will supply drinking water on all days of the trip. This water will be from local sources and will always be approved drinking water for humans. Never drink water from other sources without referring to your guide first. We do not support the bottled water industry as we feel that it wastes resources and causes litter problems that can impact on wildlife.
- Please bring a hand cleanser and use it before meals and after using toilet facilities.
- Stomach ailments are uncommon in the Northern Territory

Critters & Bugs

Like all tropical locations, the Northern Territory has some dangerous wildlife; here's a list of wildlife to look out for and how to deal with it:

- **Crocodiles:** There are two kinds of crocodiles both of which can harm you but the **Saltwater Crocodile** (a misnomer as it found in **both** fresh and saltwater) is by far the most dangerous. **They are extremely powerful and very fast, both on land and in water; an intelligent apex predators that will attack and kill without notice. NEVER swim or walk near water** unless you are with your guide. If you find yourself near water keep at least 10 metres from it and keep trees or scrub between you and the water. ALWAYS KEEP ALL PARTS OF YOUR BODY WITHIN ANY BOAT YOU TRAVEL IN. The other species is the **Freshwater Crocodile** – it is considered relatively harmless but can attack if cornered or frightened.
- **Snakes:** You may see snakes on this trip; they can be very beautiful, range in size from tiny to very large, and are mostly quite harmless. Surprisingly few can kill you (most deadly snakes are in southern Australia) although a bite can be very painful. Generally snakes will retreat but if you corner them - and it does not matter if you do this intentionally or not - they will protect themselves. To avoid a nasty confrontation: NEVER walk around by yourself especially in the proximity of dense grass or water, NB: this applies both in the bush AND whilst at your accommodation; **ALWAYS accompany children;** ALWAYS look where you put your feet **and your hands;** MOVE QUIETLY AWAY from any confrontation; **NEVER EVER attempt to handle or try to get closer to any snake** - it will always beat you! (most snake bites in Australia occur as a result of people attempting to get closer to a snake). Finally - just because a snake is small does not mean it is less dangerous.



- **Mosquitoes:** there is no Malaria in Australia however some mosquitoes do carry diseases which have the potential to cause fevers and sickness. You will get bitten but you can minimise this by preparing in advance for these pesky creatures. Mosquitoes can be annoying especially when they get active at dusk or in deep shade during the day. So prepare by covering as much of your skin as possible at these times. Roll down your sleeves, put on long pants, use insect repellent on all exposed skin, avoid areas where mosquitoes live. Always close flyscreen doors especially at dusk and into the night.
- **Sand Flies:** these are tiny, almost invisible insects that you will not know have bitten you until the next day when the bite site starts to itch. They have the same habits and can be treated in exactly the same way as mosquitoes. They do not carry diseases but their bites can become infected and may take some time to heal.
- **Ants and spiders:** many Australian ants can inflict a painful bite but very few are dangerous or deadly. Spiders can occur anywhere in the bush and are mostly non-threatening to human life. Do not handle spiders or ants. If you receive any painful bite please try and remember what bit you - if it is an ant you should generally not be too concerned but spider bites can get infected. Report the event to your guide immediately (even late at night).
- **Bush Flies:** are the most infamous of all Australian wildlife. They do not bite but hang around and are annoying. Use insect repellent or ask your guide to make a bush 'fly-whisk'. Or you could try perfecting the Australian laconic wave - the best way to get rid of flies!

First Aid: A first-aid kit will be carried by us at all times. There will be one in the vehicle and one in the guide's rucksack. Please ensure that you know where it is.



The Kakadu Escarpment at midday