

Piccaninny Creek, Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park: April 18-25, 2009

This trip was originally the middle section of a three week trip. Sections one and three did not get the bookings we needed to run them, so we are running this as a stand alone.

Special Offer. As we have a vehicle going from Darwin to Kununurra before the trip and returning to Darwin afterwards, we are offering free transport in both directions to anyone who wants it.

In mid 2003, Purnululu joined the list of Australia's World Heritage locations. Here's what the Department of Environment and Heritage has to say. "Famous for the 45 000 hectare Bungle Bungle Range, with its huge expanse of striking banded beehive structures, sandstone cliffs and towers, Purnululu has been listed as an outstanding landscape that is a superlative natural phenomenon, revealing the history of its formation over hundreds of millions of years. Purnululu National Park has such outstanding universal natural values that it enriches the world and should be conserved for the benefit of all people. Before 1982, when aerial pictures were first released, it was virtually unknown except to pastoralists, scientists and the local Aboriginal community. It is now seen as one of the scenic jewels of outback Australia."

There are many tours which will take you to Purnululu. No other tour will allow you to experience as much of the park in as intimate a fashion as ours.

The start of our Bungles walks is about 130 kilometres from Turkey Creek (330 km from Kununurra). The last 80 kilometres is a 4WD track, so the drive will take some hours.

Our walk takes us to a base camp about 12–13 kilometres up Piccaninny Gorge, where sheer red cliffs are silhouetted against the clear blue skies of the dry season. Piccaninny is by far the largest gorge in the Bungles. We spend three or four nights there using the days to explore the many fascinating side gorges.

These gorges offer a variety of delights — some are palm filled, some are narrow and require swimming, some have caves which require the use of a torch. At least one gorge that allows us to reach a high point. (We cannot climb to the actual top as climbing up the domes themselves is not permitted because of their exceptionally fragile nature. We can, however, follow watercourses as far as they will take us.) No words can do justice to the beauty of the area. The only way to appreciate it is to come and see it for yourself.

On the final day, we return to the vehicle and drive back to Kununurra arriving early to mid afternoon.

Terrain and difficulty

Overall Level 3

Climate This is a relatively hot time of year. The temperature will reach the low to mid 30's most days. Temperatures of 35°C are not uncommon. The heat reflecting back from the sand and rocks in some areas can make it feel hotter still. The humidity is normally relatively low so the heat will not feel as uncomfortable as it does during the wet season. Nighttime minimum temperatures average 18-20°C but can go down to about 10C so you need to be prepared for cold nights. The pools, especially those which get some sun, are much more comfortable for swimming than they are later in the year. Although rain is unlikely, it is common enough so you should be prepared for a rainy day or two.

Terrain With packs - level 2: flat, minimal rock hopping, some ledging, some soft sand. The long walk up the Piccaninny Gorge, mainly over pebbles and sand can be quite tiring for many people.

Going beyond our first base camp, done with full packs on some trips, requires some clambering over large rocks and includes edging along at least one narrow ledge.

Daywalks without packs - level 4. Most of the day walks involve clambering over large rocks. Some include steep climbs. Some people find this very difficult, even without full packs.

Although this difficulty is often more psychological than physical, it can be very real. The only reason this section is not rated "difficult" is that the hardest parts are done without full packs.

The climb up one of the gorges is particularly strenuous. Few groups have had every member go all the way. If you don't wish to do the rock scrambling, you need to be prepared to relax and enjoy their surroundings while the others continue. Keen birdwatchers often find this especially pleasant. Some people become uncomfortable in the absence of the rest of the group. Please keep this in mind when choosing this trip.

Vegetation With packs - level 1: minimal vegetation

Without packs - level 2-4: some walks include dense sections of sharp and/or sticky spinifex, gaiters essential, long trousers recommended.

Hours You normally walk 4-6 hours per day.

Packs As for section one.

Art: Two minor sites

Campsites Mostly on sand, might include rock ledges on some nights. Rain rare but could cause change of site.

Swims Reasonable, often fairly cold. Depends very much on the just finished wet season.

Lowlights Helicopters intrusive most of day, aircraft early and late. Not as bad as later in the year.

Highlights Incredible and spectacular gorge scenery, each one uniquely different from the others.

Fishing No.

Maps Kimberley Tourist map and the Turkey Creek 1:100 000 or Bungle Bungle 1:50 000 topographic map.

Notes

Those who wish to do a half hour helicopter flight over the Bungles may do so either on arrival or just before departure from the park. Which time we choose depends on when we arrive. Flights cost \$205 to \$495 depending on duration. See the Slingair/Heliwork website for information.

www.slingair.com.au/bungleBungleHelicopterFlights.shtml

As one of the people on the trip is booked to fly out of Kununurra at 3:35 pm, doing the flight on the way in might be better. If we do it on the way out, it will have to be quite early.

All this area is a stove only area. Campfires are not permitted.

You will need to bring a small bag for toilet paper as neither burning nor burying are permitted.

Bringing fresh fruit, vegetables or honey into WA is illegal whether you come by road or plane. (You cannot even bring in boxes or other containers that once contained fruit or vegetables.) Bags are checked both on the highway and at the airport. There will be time to do some shopping in Kununurra.

A day pack will be useful. If you don't have a daypack, you can empty your main pack and carry that.

This trip is rated level three because of the day walks. If you had to carry a full pack every day, it would rate as level four.

You should always keep a water bottle, your lunch and some money with you during the drives as you cannot easily get into your pack during the journey. You should have enough money to pay for your drinks at the stops.

Itinerary: Bungle Bungles & Osmond Range

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Day 0 Section one begins in Kununurra. There are daily air and bus services between Kununurra and Perth and Darwin. Connections to the eastern states are normally made through Darwin.

Pre-trip meeting 6.30 p.m., outdoor area, Kimberley Croc Backpackers. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance. Note.

Day 1 Pick up between 7.00 and 7.30 a.m. Pick up is from your accommodation in Kununurra provided you have given us the address at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. If you are unable to notify us where you are staying, the pick up is from in front of the Kununurra Visitors Centre.

Drive to the Bungles. Stop en route to buy cool drinks, etc.
Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2–6 Bush camping. Carrying full packs on 3 or 4 days, day packs at other times, exploring gorges.

Day 7 Walk out to vehicle. Drive back to Kununurra.

Important **Air North** the only airline currently operating into Kununurra uses relatively small aircraft

Note on some flights. These have a baggage allowance of only 13 kg. Unless special arrangements have been made, if you are flying to Kununurra and your baggage weighs more than 13 kg, it may not get on the plane with you. (This would be very unusual but it is possible.)

Contact Air North for more details. Phone: 1800 627474 or (08) 8920 4000;
Fax: (08) 8920 4095; email: airnorth@regionallink.com.au