

Litchfield - Gregory Explorer: June 15-28, 2008

This trip is for adventurous people who wish to explore the unknown. Although we can say that the trip will take place in or near Litchfield and Gregory National Parks, we may, in fact, not know exactly where we will be going until shortly before departure.

Section 1: Litchfield National Park: June 15-21

Located less than 150 kilometres from Darwin, Litchfield National Park is a wonderful area full of permanent springs and waterfalls. Although the northern part of the park has been developed for intensive day use, the southern part remains an almost untouched wilderness. We will spend our first week doing a long walk in the southern part of the park, combining areas we have already visited with others that appear interesting on the map.

There are a variety of possibilities: Sandy Creek, the upper portions of the Reynolds River, Red Rock Creek and Tableland Creek are just a few. Our final itinerary will depend on a variety of factors including, the fitness, interests and wishes of the group, the amount of water present, the state of the 4WD track through the southern part of the park, what walks the park authorities are willing to permit and the number of participants. (With a large group using two vehicles we might be able to do a vehicle shuffle and a through walk. With a smaller group, we are restricted to loop routes.)

At the end of the walk, we drive to Katherine where those doing the full trip spend a night in budget accommodation. Those leaving the trip at the end of this section have the choice of being dropped off in either Pine Creek or Katherine.

Terrain and difficulty. Most of the walk is relatively flat. There are, however, a few moderate climbs and a fair amount of rock hopping. There may be sections of thick scrub. We cannot say for sure as this depends how recently the area has been burnt and on how much rain there has been since.

Maps. The 1:50 000 Prospect hill map covers most of the route. A small part lies on the Mt Tolmer and/or Rum Jungle maps. The 1:100 000 Reynolds River map covers it all.

Note. The last time we did this trip, we did it as a long through walk. We will try and do this again. Doing this gets the group to some beautiful and otherwise inaccessible places but it does involve long walks through open woodland with little water. Some members of the group enjoyed this very much. Others would have been happier if they had been along creeks for most of the way.

Section 2: Gregory National Park: June 22-28

Gregory is one of the largest yet least known national parks in the NT. It lies about halfway between Katherine and Kununurra and contains several creek systems where large permanent pools and shady rock shelters can be found in the depths of sheer, red-walled gorges. On this trip, we plan to do a loop along Matt Wilson and Ryan Creeks in the northeast section of the park. This area contains some of the most spectacular cliffs in the park. We do not visit it on any of our other Gregory trips.

The trip finishes with a 5–600 km drive back to Darwin.

Terrain and difficulty. The walk along Matt Wilson Creek is relatively flat and easy as is the lower portion of Ryan Creek. In between there are a few steep climbs and a fair amount of rock hopping. The amount of scrub varies depending on the recent history of bushfires and rainfall.

Maps. 1:50 000 Ryan Creek and Sullivan Creek or 1:100 000 Hogarth and Gregory Creek.

Notes on both sections

Explorer trips are the least structured and most adventurous of those we offer during the dry season. They are not endurance tests. They are intended to be run at a reasonably leisurely pace so that we can have a really good look at the areas we choose. It is, however, likely that there will be some long days when it will be necessary to cover a considerable distance. Those taking part will need to be fit enough to do this.

If you wish to be among the first people to explore a particular area, possibly opening it up for future visits by others, then this could be the trip for you.

Although we intend to run each section as a single long walk, conditions beyond our control might mean that we have to split one or both sections into two shorter walks.

Those doing both sections have to carry only what they need on each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks.

The trip may include a number of day-walks, either from a base camp on a long walk or from the vehicle. You should either bring a day pack or be prepared to use a full size pack on day-walks. Make sure you keep some money and a water bottle with you during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack during the journey.

Crocodiles and swimming. Most of the creeks along which we walk present no problem. There are, however, a few places in the lower reaches of some creeks where large crocodiles could conceivably present a danger. Please ask the guide before you swim in any large waterhole.

Itinerary: Litchfield Gregory Explorer

Note 1 **Day 0 is the day before departure.**

Note 2 **This itinerary is subject to change.**

Section 1 Litchfield National Park

Day 0 Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Holiday Inn Darwin, 122 The Esplanade. **Note.** There are two Holiday Inns next to each other on the Esplanade. The meeting is in the taller one, closer to the roundabout at the end of the street. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up. Pick up is from your accommodation if you have notified us where you are staying at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street. Drive to Litchfield. There will be a stop along the way to buy cool drinks, etc. Begin the walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

Day 2-6 Bush camping, carrying full packs.

Day 7 Return to vehicles. Drive to Katherine. Those ending with this section may choose to get off in Pine Creek or they may continue to Katherine, arriving in the late afternoon. Both Greyhound-Pioneer and McCaffertys offer daily bus service to Darwin from Katherine and Pine Creek. We recommend booking in advance. Please check the bus timetables when you book. Those continuing spend night in backpacker accommodation in Katherine.

Section 2 Gregory National Park

Day 7 Those beginning with this section have the option of meeting the group the night before the trip departs. If you wish to do this, you will need to contact the Walkabouts office well in advance to find out where the group will be staying. Both Greyhound-Pioneer and McCaffertys offer daily bus services between Darwin and Katherine.

Day 8 Section two begins. 7.30 to 8 a.m. pick up at the Katherine Visitors Centre on the corner of Lindsay Street and the Stuart Highway for those beginning with this section. Drive to Gregory and begin walk. Bush camp, carrying full packs.

Day 9–13 Bush camps, carrying full packs. We may choose to return to the vehicle on the final night.

Day 14 Return to vehicles if we have not already done so. Drive to Darwin via Katherine. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon or early evening.