



Five day, four night tour starting with woodland and wetland habitats in the Mary River region then through to the dramatic sandstone escarpments and wetlands of Australia's largest National Park, Kakadu. We explore open savannah country around Pine Creek then back to Darwin via Litchfield National Park. This route is called 'Nature's Way'.

Key species - Rainbow Pitta, Green-backed Gerygone, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Crimson Finch, Long-tailed Finch, Gouldian Finch, Hooded Parrot, Northern Rosella, Red-winged Parrot, Cockatiel, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Buff-sided Robin, Partridge Pigeon, Black-tailed Treecreeper and Sandstone Shrike-thrush. Red Goshawk, Black-breasted Buzzard. Also Kakadu escarpment endemics such as Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon, White-lined Honeyeater and Banded Fruit-dove.

Will this tour suit me?

All accommodation is in comfortable air-conditioned rooms with ensuites. We start before dawn and stop for a bush breakfast at beautiful locations surrounded by birdlife at its busiest. Lunch is enjoyed out in the field and dinners are ala carte menus at resorts or restaurants. Groups are small, with a maximum of only six guests.

Cost - \$2945 per person twin share

2018 dates - June 13-17 (four seats available)

Itinerary

DAY 1 - DARWIN to MARY RIVER PARK

6.00am Pick up from Darwin accommodation
 Bush breakfast on the Marrakai track, 'Kakadu rief comfort stop at Corroboree Park Tavern we have a bush breakfast in savannah woodland habitat and then spend the rest of the day exploring the Adelaide River region. Our number one target is the rare and spectacularly beautiful Gouldian Finch. This area is amazingly productive for bird sightings. Species we may see in addition to Gouldian Finches are Masked, Long-tailed, Double-barred and Crimson Finches, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Varied Sitella, Diamond Dove, Channel-billed, Brush, Pallid and Little Bronze Cuckoos, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Northern Rosella, Varied Lorikeet, many raptor species including Black Falcon and Black-breasted Buzzard, as well as many of the more common species. We have a picnic lunch on the banks of the Margaret River where we often get sightings of Buff-sided Robin, Shining and Paperbark Flycatchers and Arafura Fantail. Mammal species in the area are Agile Wallabies, Antilopine Wallaroos and Dingoes.

Next we take the turn off to Bird Billabong in Mary River National Park, and do a 4 kilometre (return) walk through bushland and floodplain to the Bird Billabong hide, with views of Magpie Geese, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Pied Heron, White-necked Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Little Black Cormorant, Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-necked Stork and often some Estuarine Crocodiles and many bush birds, including Rufous Whistler, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Gouldian Finch, Masked Finch, Double-barred Finch, Long-tailed Finch, Azure Kingfisher and Lemon-bellied Flyrobin.



Itinerary continued...

Then we proceed to our accommodation at Mary River Wilderness Retreat, where we have the opportunity to bird along some of the wildlife tracks at the park.

We have dinner at the restaurant and compare notes on sightings for the day. After dinner we look for nocturnal resident Bush Stone-curlew, Tawny Frogmouth and Barking Owl, snakes and nocturnal mammals.

Accommodation - Bush Bungalow at Mary River Wilderness Retreat.

DAY 2 - MARY RIVER to KAKADU

We head out early to Kakadu National Park and stop at Mamakala bird hide. We do the four kilometre loop walk at sunrise, encountering many savannah and wetland species. We have some breakfast then check out the bird hide.

We continue on to Ubirr, we explore the Manngarre Monsoon Forest walk, Cahill's Crossing and Bardedjilidji Sandstone Escarpment walks, searching out some Kakadu escarpment endemics such as Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon and White-lined Honeyeater. Other species on our target list are Partridge Pigeon, Rainbow Pitta, Shining Flycatcher, Northern Fantail, Arafura Fantail, Little Red Flying Fox and Wilkin's Rock Wallaby.

We take in some spectacular ancient rock art and a magnificent view across the Nadab Floodplain.

Dinner and bird call at the resort and some nearby nightspotting for Barking Owl.



DAY 3 - EXPLORE KAKADU

We head out early to the Burrunggui rock and Anbangbang area (Nourlangie), and after a bush breakfast at Anbangbang Billabong, we explore Burrunggui. Here there is more ancient Aboriginal rock art, and more endemic species such as Banded Fruit-dove, White-lined Honeyeater, Sandstone Helmeted Friarbird and Black Wallaroo. Other species we will look for include Emerald Dove, Northern Rosella, Partridge Pigeon and Spangled Drongo.

We have a picnic lunch at Mardagul and then do the short Mardagul Billabong walk. Then we visit the Warradjan Cultural Centre which offers an amazing insight into local Aboriginal culture and history. There is also a well stocked cultural and natural history bookstore and authentic souvenir shop.

At 4.10 we depart for the famous Yellow Waters cruise. From the comfort and safety of an open sided, covered vessel we are likely to see four species of Egret - Great, Intermediate, Little and Cattle as well as Black-necked Stork, Brolga, Radjah Shelduck, Wandering and Plumed Whistling-ducks, Green Pygmy-goose, Pied Heron, Nankeen Night-heron, Comb-crested Jacana, Royal Spoonbill, Azure Kingfisher, Little Kingfisher, Buff-sided Robin as well as many large Estuarine Crocodiles. What is particularly amazing about this cruise, is that, because it runs four times a day, every day of the year, the birds and crocodiles are so accustomed to it that they continue on in their natural behaviour completely undisturbed by the presence of the boat.

We pause on sunset and take a few minutes to absorb the splendour of the location as the sun dips below the horizon, often with hundreds of birds flying overhead to their night roosts. Then it's the short drive to the resort to for dinner.

Dinner and bird call at Coinda.



Itinerary continued...

DAY 4 - KAKADU to PINE CREEK

We visit Gunlom and look for more Kakadu endemic species. We check out a nesting location for Red Goshawks and visit a site where Silver-backed Butcherbirds are reliable and a very rare cycad grows.

We continue on to Pine Creek and check out some reliable areas for Hooded Parrot! Other target species here are Banded Honeyeater, Bar-breasted Honeyeater, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Budgerigar, Cockatiel, Red-winged Parrot, Varied Lorikeet, Great Bowerbird and Grey-crowned Babbler.

Dinner and accommodation Pine Creek



DAY 5 - PINE CREEK to DARWIN

Early bush breakfast by a river bed south of Pine Creek, where we often see Gouldian Finches, Cockatiels, Hooded Parrots, Northern Rosellas and then head north towards Darwin.

We enter Litchfield National Park, visiting and stop to view some magnificent waterfalls and the wildlife in the area. Here we may find Dingo, Short-eared Rock Wallaby, Olive Python, Merton's Water Monitor, Spangled Drongo, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Great Bowerbird, Pheasant Coucal, Pied Butcherbird and Silver-backed Butcherbird. This is also one of the few locations where the amazing magnetic termite mounds are found.

We head back to Darwin now via the back route which takes over the beautiful Finniss River. Both Estuarine and Johnston's Crocodiles are present here. If there is time we will explore birding hotspots around Darwin.

We have our last dinner together and review of highlights for the day and the trip.

Please Note:

The above itinerary is based on the outcomes of many previous tours to the areas described. Each season is different and as various wildlife observing opportunities arise, adjustments will be made.

Inclusions - Four nights comfortable air-conditioned accommodation, Yellow Waters Sunset Cruise, all meals, Kakadu Park entry fees. Cold water, tea and coffee and refreshments available at all times. GST.

Exclusions - Pre and post tour accommodation, alcoholic drinks, purchases of a personal nature such as souvenirs.

Booking Information - www.experiencethewild.com.au

Photos in this itinerary were kindly shared by Marg Lacey and Ian Morris

