



5 Day Mary River, Kakadu and Katherine Bird Watching Tour

Day 1 – Tues 2nd Oct 2018 (L)

You will be collected from your Darwin accommodation at 6.30am for your 5 day bird watching tour to Mary River, Kakadu and Katherine.

We head south along the Stuart highway, onto the Arnhem Highway and into Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve. These wetlands have international significance because of their beauty and natural ecosystems. A variety of fauna may be found here throughout the year as well as a large variety of birdlife (230 bird species have been listed in this area by The Australian Bird Atlas).

As well as viewing the birds as we drive across the dam wall, we also have the option of taking one of woodlands walks- either the 2.7k Monsoon Forest Walk or the 2.2km Woodlands to Waterlily Walk.

As well as a variety of wetlands birds, such as Brolga, Jabiru, Comb Crested Jacana, Sacred Kingfishers and Royal Spoonbills, we may also have the opportunity to see a range of other birds such as Crimson finches, Double Barred Finches, Rainbow Bee-Eaters and the Rainbow Pitta.

We continue along the Arnhem Highway and depending on the conditions at the time, we visit either Leaning Tree Lagoon or Djukbinj National Park, as well as taking a drive down the Marrakai Track, for some further bird viewing opportunities.

Our accommodation tonight is at the Mary River Wilderness Retreat and there may be time after lunch, to take one of retreats walks or have a wander down to one of the nearby billabongs.

Mid-afternoon we depart for our 2 hour sunset cruise on Corroboree Billabong, part of the Mary River, which is teeming with bird life. The wet season transforms the wetlands into an inland sea and replenishes the earth after the long dry and fish, crocodiles and birds breed and flourish. As the flood waters subside, the dry season offers excellent opportunities for viewing birds and wildlife.

Species of birds that can be found in the Mary River region include Gouldian Finch, Rufous Owl, Grey Goshawk, Great- Billed Heron, Black Bittern, Rainbow Pitta, Brolga, Jabiru, Kingfishers, Darters, Cormorants and Sea Eagles.

Back to the retreat and dinner tonight can be purchased in the bistro.

Overnight accommodation- Mary River Wilderness Retreat – Bungalow with en-suite

Day 2– Wed 3rd Oct 2017 (B,L)

This morning we continue into World Heritage listed Kakadu National park. Kakadu is the largest national park in Australia, has some of the world's finest rock art and a variety of habitats, including floodplains and savannah woodlands.

Kakadu's many habitats support more than 280 species of birds, or about one-third of Australia's bird species. Some birds range over a number of habitats, but many are found in only one environment, including the Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon, Banded Fruit-Dove, White- Lined Honeyeater and the White-throated Grasswren, which are only found within or near Kakadu National Park.

Our first stop are the Mamukala Wetlands in the South Alligator Region. The entire river and it's catchment are contained and protected in Kakadu National Park. Mamukala Wetlands are home to an array of wetland birds including thousands of Magpie Geese, Wandering and Whistling Ducks, Green-

Pygmy Geese and Australian Pelicans. We may also see birds of prey, such as Black-breasted Buzzard and Square-tailed Kite.

We can view and photograph the birdlife from the observation platform, where the mural depicts the seasonal changes throughout the year. Depending on seasonal conditions we may be able to take the wetlands walk.

Then onto Ubirr in the very north of the park. Here we'll walk through galleries of ancient aboriginal rock art, which your guide will interpret. Also learn about bushtuckers and bush medicines before reaching the top of the plateau. Here we can enjoy the panoramic view of the floodplains and Arnhemland escarpment.

The escarpment is home to a variety of birds including the Chestnut-Quilled Rock Pigeon, Banded Fruit-Dove, Whistling Kite, Bush Stone- Curlew as well as the short-eared rock wallaby.

We can also take the nearby Bardedjilidji Sandstone Walk (a flat 2.5km) , which provides a close up look at the habitats in the East Alligator area. This walk meanders amongst sandstone outliers, through small pockets of monsoon vine forest and paperbark woodland and past wetland areas. Torres Strait pigeon is a seasonal visitor and you may also see sulphur-crested cockatoos, chestnut-quilled rock-pigeon, black wallaroo and short-beaked echidna on this walk. The chestnut-quilled rock-pigeon and black wallaroo are endemic to the sandstone habitats in the area.

Dinner this evening can be purchased at the hotel restaurant

Overnight accommodation in Kakadu-Mercure Crocodile Hotel- hotel room with en-suite

Day 3– Thurs 4th Oct 2017 (B,L)

We start today in the Nourlangie area. Our first stop is Angbangbang Billabong, which offers great views of Nourlangie Rock behind the billabong and bird watching opportunities. There is a loop walk you can take around the billabong as well as a woodland walk which will take us to Nawalandja Lookout.

Then onto Nourlangie Rock itself, which is an ancient Aboriginal shelter. Here we explore the area and the rock art, which your guide will interpret for you. This area is home to the Black Wallaroo (endemic to the Nourlangie area), short-eared rock wallaby, Banded Fruit- Dove, White-Lined Honeyeater and the Chestnut-Quilled Rock Pigeon.

This afternoon we drive to Maguk (Barramundi Gorge and waterfall), where we may see Rainbow Pitta and Shining Flycatchers. Termite mounds are abundant along the dirt road that takes us to the Maguk car park and from there, we take a walk through a paperbark forest and then along the pandanus lined creek to reach the gorge. Once we reach the gorge and waterfall, we can have a refreshing swim in the plungepool.

After we've checked into our accommodation, you have the option of having a wander around the lodge grounds or taking a walk to the Yellow Waters boardwalk, alongside Yellow Waters Billabong.

Overnight accommodation in Kakadu- Kakadu Lodge Cooida, motel room with en-suite

Day 4– Fri 5th Oct 2017 (B,L)

We start today on a private sunrise Yellow Waters Billabong cruise for our group only. Located at the end of Jim Jim Creek, at least 60 bird species are found in these wetlands, the billabong is home to many saltwater crocodiles and you may see other wildlife such as Water Buffalo.

Back to the lodge for breakfast and check out and then we travel to the very south of the park, to Gunlom (Waterfall Creek). A scenic drive on an unsealed dirt road takes us to the falls, which offer the opportunity for a swim in the large plunge pool at the base of the falls. There is also a walk to the top of the falls, where rockpools and a spectacular view await you. Bird species inhabiting this area include Rainbow Pitta and Buff- sided Robin, in the poolside monsoon forest and up on the escarpment, along from the rock pools,

you can look for Chestnut- Quilled Rock Pigeon, White- Lined Honeyeaters and Sandstone Shrike Thrush among others.

Departing Kakadu through the southern entrance, we have a break in the historic town of Pine Creek and in the late afternoon, we can explore a couple of nearby birding spots, including the Ferguson River.

We continue to Katherine and out to our accommodation at Nitmiluk Gorge, home to 13 spectacular gorges, carved out of the rock by torrential summer rains, over millions of years. The campground and gorge are home to a variety of birds and heaps of wallabies !

Dinner tonight is available to purchase at the poolside bistro

Overnight accommodation at Nitmiluk Gorge- 1 bedroom cabin with en-suite

Day 5 – Sat 6th Oct 2017 (B,L)

We start today with a 2 hour cruise through Nitmiluk Gorge, where you can view the beautiful scenery and discover the customs of the traditional owners, the Jawoyn people.

Departing Katherine, we now head north again, to Leilyn (Edith Falls) en-route. Leilyn is part of Nitmiluk National Park and is well known for it's picturesque waterfalls and pools, particularly the large pool at the base of the escarpment which is great for a swim. Birds seen in this area, including on the road to the falls, include Hooded Parrot, Gouldian, Long-Tailed and Masked Finches, Black-tailed Treecreeper and Golden-headed Cisticola.

We now depart for Darwin, arriving at approximately 6pm and you will be dropped off at your accommodation.

END OF TOUR

B= Breakfast L= Lunch D= Dinner

AUD \$2815 per person twin share

\$540 single supplement

Price includes GST and itinerary is exclusive to Sacred Earth Safaris, subject to availability road, weather and cultural conditions

***Please note that we are not a specialist bird tour company and your guide is not a specialist birding guide but does have a good knowledge of the local birds. This itinerary has been designed to take you to the best spots to see the most amount of birdlife and the focus of the tour is to see birds and wildlife with other, like- minded enthusiasts ***

Minimum 6 guests, maximum 8 guests

Inclusions:

- Sole use of 4WD vehicle, with professional driver guide
- Meals as stated, snacks, fruit and iced water in the vehicle at all times
- Accommodation, as stated
- Mary River Wetlands sunset cruise
- Private (our group only) sunrise Yellow Waters Cruise
- Kakadu National park entry fee
- 2 hour Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge cruise

Exclusions:

- Arrival/departure flights

- Pre & Post tour accommodation
- Travel Insurance
- Alcohol
- Binoculars- please bring your own