

it's about the

Experience

Ultimate Kakadu Family Road Trip

Avida Daydreams > Northern Territory

DURATION: 6 Days

A FAMILY ADVENTURE TO THE SPECTACULAR KAKADU NATIONAL PARK IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY WILL NOT ONLY AMAZE, BUT ALSO TEACH INVALUABLE LESSONS AND CREATE EVER-LASTING MEMORIES, TOO.

There are many reasons why a trip to Kakadu National Park might be the ultimate family adventure: abundant wildlife-spotting opportunities (expect birds, buffalo and saltwater crocs galore); authentic Aboriginal experiences and ancient rock art that will amaze the whole family; the elemental thrill of wetlands, waterfalls and wild swimming spots to name a few.

But the real magic of Kakadu is something intangible that will stay with you, and the kids, forever. So hit the road to the Top End and get ready to make some serious memories on this six-day round trip journey from Darwin.

STAGE 1: DARWIN TO JABIRU VIA ADELAIDE RIVER TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 3 Hours

Set off early from Darwin to begin your Kakadu adventure with a splash (make sure to book your park pass in advance), following the Stuart and Arnhem highways for about an hour until you reach the Adelaide River. Pop into the Window on the Wetlands Visitor Centre, where fun interactive displays provide an introduction to the landscapes you're about to see, before hopping on a Spectacular Jumping Crocodile Cruise.



Spectacular Jumping Crocodile Cruise

Then head down the road for an insight into traditional life on the wetlands with family-run Pudukul Aboriginal Cultural Tours. A two-hour tour will have you learning about local bush food and medicine with your guide, trying your hand at basket and dilly bag weaving, throwing a spear or playing the didgeridoo. Polish the experience off by tucking into some freshly made traditional Aussie damper bread.

From here, drive for about two hours until you reach Jabiru, the main township in Kakadu National Park. This outback hub is well-served by restaurants, and there's a supermarket to stock up on food and essentials.



Pudukul Aboriginal Cultural Tours

WHERE TO STAY?

Aurora Kakadu Lodge & Caravan Park - (08) 8979 2422
aurorakakadulodge.com.au

STAGE 2: JABIRU AND THE EAST ALLIGATOR (ERRE) REGION

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 30 Mins

See a variety of Kakadu's habitats this morning simply by strolling the one-hour return Bowali Track, which links the Crocodile Hotel to the Bowali Visitor Centre. The award-winning visitor centre is a great place to score tips and orientate yourself for the days ahead. While you're here, take a look at the art on display in the Marrawuddi Gallery and sneak in an ice-cream at Anmak An-me Cafe.

Spend the rest of the day in the East Alligator (Erre) region, north-east of Jabiru. This region is the gateway to mysterious and sparsely populated West Arnhem Land, where access is restricted to permit-holders and a select few tour operators in order to preserve the traditional culture that has thrived here for tens of thousands of years. Join a Guluyambi Cultural Cruise to get a sense of this culture and the secrets of this impossibly scenic and biodiverse waterway.

Nearby Ubirr is home to one of the most remarkable rock art collections in the world. Follow the one-kilometre (0.6-mile) circular track and look out for different animals depicted in the region's signature x-ray style, including the Tasmanian tiger. Climb 250 metres (820 feet) to reach Ubirr Rock's ledge in time for sunset for a shimmering and soul-lifting panorama of Arnhem Land and the Nadab floodplain.



STAGE 3: JABIRU TO BURRUNGKUY (NOURLANGIE) AND YELLOW WATER **TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 1 Hour**

Today, head south from Jabiru to explore the Yellow Water and Mary River regions of Kakadu via another special rock art site. Burrungkuy (Nourlangie) is where you'll find a painting of the important creation ancestor Namarrgon (Lightning Man). Seek it out on the 1.5-kilometre (0.9-mile) circuit walk and, if time permits, embark on a couple of the other scenic walks in the area that take in everything from billabongs chattering with life to views of the majestic Arnhem Land escarpment.

Continue south-west for 45 kilometres (28 miles) and check into Cooida Lodge, your base for the next three nights, set on the edge of Kakadu's famous Yellow Water

billabong in a dappled bushland setting. Pitch your tent in one of the campground's powered sites, otherwise check into a family room or glamping-style safari tent complete with bunk beds. There's a restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, and barbecue facilities at the campground.

A Yellow Water cruise, a Kakadu must-do, is best enjoyed at sunset. Glide out onto the pristine 10-square-kilometre (3.9-square-mile) billabong to see Kakadu's remarkable wildlife: sea eagles, jacanas – or Jesus birds, which seem to walk on water – brolgas, crocodiles and buffalo.



WHERE TO STAY?

Cooinda Lodge Kakadu - (08) 8979 1500
kakadutourism.com/accommodation/cooinda-lodge

STAGE 4: EXPLORE GUNLOM AND MAGUK FALLS

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 2 Hours

Pack water, sunscreen, lunch and your swimmers and set out early from Cooinda to explore the Mary River region of Kakadu: home to rugged stone country, vast wetlands, stunning waterfalls and some of Kakadu's famed swimming spots. Perhaps the most famous of all, and one easily reachable with kids in tow, is at Gunlom Falls.

Allow around two hours to get to Gunlom (dry season only). From the base of the falls, it's a short, steep hike to the top – where a natural infinity pool lies in wait and promises an idyllic dip. And, with spectacular views of the park's far corners, it makes for an unbeatable picnic spot.

Back at Cooinda Lodge, rest up before grabbing an outside table at Barra Bistro for dinner.



STAGE 5: LEARN ABOUT LIFE IN KAKADU

Enjoy a relaxed morning at Cooinda Lodge, including a visit to the Warradjan Cultural Centre, where interactive and educational exhibits developed by the Bininj/Munggyu traditional owners bring to life tens of thousands of years of human history in Kakadu. Shop for souvenirs and try to catch a live workshop, too – artists and weavers often give demonstrations here.

After lunch, hop onboard an Animal Tracks Safari for an immersion into authentic Aboriginal bush life. These seven-hour tours depart Cooinda at 1 pm and are well-g geared towards families. Travelling out to the park's wildlife-rich wetlands and tropical savannah woodland with your guide, you'll gather bush foods, hear stories and learn about traditional medicines before enjoying a campfire cook-up on the spectacular Goose Camp floodplain.



STAGE 6: COOINDA TO DARWIN

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 3 Hours 30 Mins

If once isn't enough, get up early to experience the Yellow Water billabong at sunrise (you'll get a discount on your second cruise), before starting the drive back to Darwin. Stop at Mamukala, a birdwatcher's paradise, to breathe in Kakadu's wetlands one last time and test the whole family on how many bird species you can identify now.



This article was written in conjunction with Tourism Australia.

For more information about road trips in the Northern Territory go to northernterritory.com.