



THE TOP END

WITH JERRY COLEBY-WILLIAMS

08 June 2022 to 18 June 2022

the
adventuretraveller
take the road less travelled

SO FAR AWAY: TOUR DARWIN & THE TOP END WITH JERRY, WINTER 2022



Step out of the plane, take a deep breath, and discover that the Top End is a very different part of Australia to the one most of us know

When I last visited the Top End in 1987, 'So Far Away' by Dire Straits was on high rotation in the bars of Darwin, and Kakadu was as far away from SE London as I could get.

Darwin city is bright, new and eclectic. Like Cairns on steroids only with beaches. Top End indigenous culture is hiding in full view. The First Australians have been living in the Top End for at least 65,000 years, giving this region a rich history.

In terms of human civilisation and cultural heritage, this part of the world is incredibly important. Ancient is a word you will hear in many contexts - the Top End is an ancient landmass, with ancient species, and which has hosted the longest continuous human civilisation on the planet.

Many of our most familiar native plants - gum trees, wattle and grevilleas - spread northwards after Gondwana broke up. Others spread south to continental Australia via a land bridge that once linked us to New Guinea and beyond. And here they have collided and diversified.

Prepare to learn about local food, medicine, art, biodiversity and caring for country in one of humanity's oldest, wildest and weirdest classrooms.

It is intensely sunny and very humid, even though this is the 'cool' season. There are familiar resort plants growing in city gardens: frangipani, bromeliads, orchids and palms, but immediately you take a closer look and differences quickly emerge. See those palms resembling Bangalow palms? They are Carpentaria palms and their growing points are edible - palm cabbage. In the wet season, you can almost watch them grow.

Here grow tropical plants you might also find growing in Bangkok, Singapore or Ho Chi Minh City: coconuts, fig trees, sea almonds, lillypillies and sacred lotus. In a Darwin food garden, you might find elephant foot yam, aerial potato, noni, and red cotton tree.

The Top End also abounds with unique variations, relatives of those familiar tropical plants and animals that have evolved here. The further into suburban bush you go, the more distinct and different things become. Take the local cycad, *Cycas armstrongii*, for example. Many of us are familiar with cycads - sturdy, fern-like, sculptural evergreens widely used in landscapes in Southern Australia. However, this local native is deciduous. In the dry season, they stand tall, like totems. Female plants are adorned with big seed.

In subtropical Queensland, I have become familiar with a distinctly dry season and a wetter wet season, but up north things become extremely dry before they become extremely wet. And it is never cool.

The European concept of four neat seasons, all of equal length, is totally alien to the Top End, and it is an oversimplification to say the region has just two seasons - wet and dry. As we will discover, things are richer and far more complicated here than at first glances.

Jerry Colby Williams.

TOUR ITINERARY

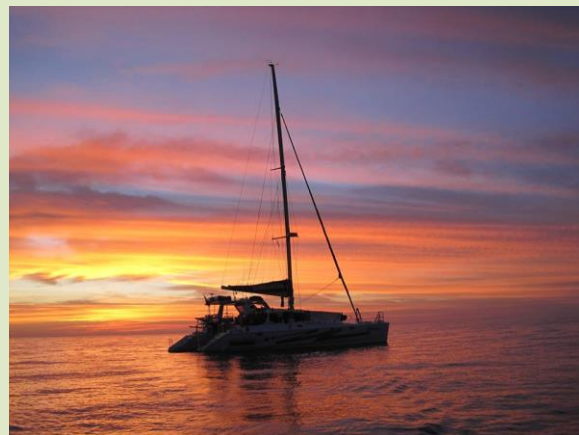
DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY 08 JUNE 2022

ARRIVE DARWIN

Upon arrival in Darwin, you will be transferred from the airport to your comfortable and centrally located accommodation at Palms City Resort (Garden Bungalow) by Metro Mini Bus.

After freshening up, meet Jerry and the group in the hotel lobby at 4:00pm to begin a leisurely 20-minute walk to Stokes Hill Wharf. Here you will board the 50-foot ocean-going luxury catamaran *Sundancer*.

Enjoy champagne and a delicious tapas-style dinner on board *Sundancer* whilst chatting with Jerry and getting to know your fellow travellers. If you are lucky, you might spot dolphins surfing the bow, or see turtles and dugongs. In addition, you will witness one of the spectacular sunsets for which Darwin is renowned.



(Meal Included: Dinner)

The airport-hotel transfer is only included if you arrive on QF824 (ex-Brisbane) or QF840 (ex-Sydney) on 08 June 2022.

All group members must arrive in Darwin by 2pm on 08 June 22. Airfares are not included in the tour cost.

Please contact The Adventure Traveller to book your flights to/from Darwin.

DAY 2 - THURSDAY 09 JUNE 2022

HIDDEN SECRETS OF DARWIN, CROCOSAURUS COVE & THE GEORGE BROWN BOTANIC GARDENS



This morning a representative from Walk Darwin will meet you in the hotel lobby at 8:00am to begin a private 'Hidden Secrets of Darwin' walking tour.

As you walk the paths of pioneers in this modern tropical city, the knowledgeable guides will cheerfully share their passion for the town they call home - recounting its history from the World War II bombings and Cyclone Tracy, through to the present day.

Discover buildings that were painstakingly rebuilt and restored after they were flattened by Tracy in December 1974, including the old Court House and Police Station, Browns Mart Theatre and the Old Palmerston Town Hall ruins.

You will also view Parliament House, the Northern Territory Supreme Court and Government House with its 1.4 hectares of lush gardens, shady trees, terraced walks and rolled lawn.

Every city has secrets and hidden treasures so during the 2-hour walking tour we will veer off the main track, perhaps down a laneway or side street, to get a real sense of the city. You will view the Chinese Temple, visit the HMS Beagle Ship Bell and be mesmerised by Darwin street art.

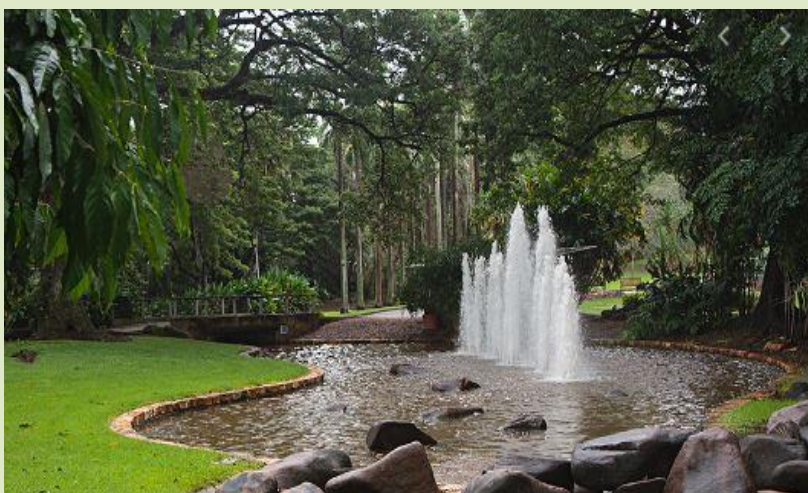
The walking tour will conclude at Crocosaurus Cove where you will enjoy a VIP tour of the World's largest display of Australian reptiles and see some of the biggest Saltwater Crocodiles in the country. Do you think Jerry is brave enough to enter the 'Cage of Death' and immerse himself in the underwater world of our leading apex predator?

A 2:00pm transfer with Metro Mini Bus will take you from Palms City Resort to the George Brown Botanic Gardens. Covering 42 hectares, this Botanical Garden is too large to explore thoroughly in one visit but with Jerry and the local guides by your side, you will see the highlights of it during the 3-hour guided walk with Walk Darwin this afternoon.



Founded in 1886, this was the third attempt by European settlers of Darwin to establish a garden where plants of economic importance could be tested for their suitability to local soils and conditions. Cyclone Tracy wiped out almost 90% of the living collections and this catastrophe allowed for a comprehensive rethink and replanting to create the gardens we see now.

As you would expect there are some brilliant exclusively tropical species growing here and some of Jerry's favourites include the Double Coconut (*Lodoicea*), also known as the Coco de Mer, and the Cuban Petticoat Palm (*Copernicia macroglossa*).



Along the way, Jerry and the local guides will point out the heritage features and legacies left by prominent curators, as well as highlighting a number of significant trees, collections and plantings. It is a wonderful mix of history and horticulture with the added possibility of sighting birds and seasonal flowers. We will also do the Matboerrma Walk, which provides information about how the local Larrakia people use native plants for traditional purposes.

As the sun dips below the horizon, you will have some free time to enjoy the Mindil Beach Sunset Markets, which are a short walk from the Botanical Gardens. Held from 4pm-9pm every Thursday and Sunday, these colourful markets host over 200 specialty stores and food vendors making for a truly unique experience. With sore legs and full bellies, make your own way back to the hotel this evening.

(Meal Included: Breakfast)

DAY 3 - FRIDAY 10 JUNE 2022

BERRY SPRINGS BUSH TUCKER, BOTANICALS & COMMUNITY GARDENS TOUR

The crew from Off Road Dreaming will collect you from the hotel at 8:00am this morning to go on a guided bush tucker walk through the Berry Springs Nature Park. With Jerry and the local guide on hand to share their knowledge about the plants and their uses, this will be a very informative outing.



Welcome to the original 7 Eleven store, known here as forest foraging.

Monsoonal vine-forest occurs in pockets that correspond to rainfall and are usually (but not exclusively) associated with all year round water availability due to springs and creeks. It can vary in height from three to thirty metres.

The vine-forest plant community has evolved in response to marked seasonal rainfall - prolonged drought, extreme evaporation and heavy, leaching summer rainfall - over around 30 million years. Areas of dry vine-forest that lack permanent water look very different during the dry season because they cope with the stress of drought by being deciduous. You may spot the familiar mock orange growing, but here it is our own special native variety (*Murraya paniculata* var. *ovatifoliolata*), not a garden escape.

During the guided walk through Berry Springs, you will learn the techniques of foraging, discover which plants are used for medicinal purposes or eaten, and learn about the many benefits of locally found ingredients.

After the forest forage, you will be able to enjoy a dip in the fresh waters of the Berry Springs so make sure you bring your swimming gear. The springs feed into three pools – a shallow top pool, scenic middle pool and expansive lower pool. There is easy access at each level. Whilst cooling off, your guide will prepare a selection of local produce for you to sample over lunch, as you hear more stories about how and where the foods are prepared.

There are some wonderful community gardens in and around Darwin, and this afternoon we will explore some of them. Community gardens are an innovative way to grow food and improve health. They bring together people from all walks of life, backgrounds and ages to foster a lively and connected community.

A local community gardens representative will spend the afternoon walking you through some of Darwin's community-managed gardens - highlighting the diversity of edible plants from around the world that survive and thrive in this tropical climate.

There will be taste-testing opportunities as we meander along garden paths, and you will hear stories about the community gardeners who nurture these spaces to life.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch)



DAY 4 - SATURDAY 11 JUNE 2022

LITCHFIELD NATIONAL PARK & KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

This morning you will be collected from your hotel at 7.00am by Wayoutback to begin the short journey to Litchfield National Park.



Here we will find great examples of lush vine-forest in a park filled with waterfalls and waterholes in stark contrast to rugged sandstone outcrops. The ancient landscapes of the Top End include masses of sandstone habitat populated by tough, hardy, open eucalypt woodland and scrub that has evolved in response to the nutrient deficient, heavily leached, porous soils. Evergreen species here have evolved from ancient Gondwanaland plant lines, including gum tree, tea tree, paperbark and brush box (Myrtaceae family) and grevillea and banksia (Proteaceae family), with many drought-resistant legumes, including acacias.

Litchfield is also home to hundreds of enormous termite mounds. Colonies of approximately a million termites created each mound, and each one has a shaft 3 to 4 metres deep to reach the permanent water table. They harness this water through a myriad of ventilation shafts to provide evaporative cooling and fresh air for the colony, which grows its own food. The termite mounds also act as natural magnetic compasses, with their thin edges pointing north-south and the broad backs facing east-west.

These social invertebrates are incredible architects and, in Northern Australia, they replace the ecological services of the earthworm. To replicate one of these mounds using a building on a human scale would involve a construction twice as tall as the 828 metre Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the worlds' tallest building since 2010.



After an invigorating swim at Buley Rockhole, we will continue on to Florence Falls where we will enjoy a hike and another swim followed by a picnic lunch.

The afternoon will see us leave the highway behind and hit the dirt - travelling along a typical outback track deep in to World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park. Travelling past billabongs and traversing water crossings will provide us with plenty of opportunities to spot wildlife before a comfort stop to refresh.

Kakadu is a timeless place. Covering over 20,000 square kilometres it is the largest national park in Australia with landscapes that change dramatically from one end of the park to the other. Encompassing mangrove-lined coastlines, sweeping stone country, rugged escarpments, cascading waterfalls, endless floodplains and wetlands, the park is home to around one-third of all Australian bird species, and about one-fifth of all Australian mammals.

Kakadu is bursting with botanical life. From waterlilies to Kakadu Plums (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*), the park is home to more than 2000 plant species. Jerry enjoys a challenge - he is wondering how well he will cope with identifying the huge variety of plants that grow here.

The First Australians have lived outdoors for thousands of years and their lives have harmonised with seasonal change, being linked to the flowering and fruiting of plants and the breeding cycles of animals. They continue to use a number of plants found in Kakadu for food (bush tucker), medicine and craft materials.



There are six seasons in this part of the Top End, and we will be visiting Kakadu during Yekke - the cooler, humid season, which starts in May and ends in mid-June. Expect to see flowing rivers and full pools with fish, birds, reptiles and wildflowers. The waterlilies are to die for and so are the crocodiles, so please pay attention to safety advice.

We will arrive towards the end of the flowering season of the Darwin Woollybutt (*Eucalyptus miniata*). This is a calendar plant - a floral cue to begin early dry season burning to clean-up grass that has died following its growth cycle during the monsoon. Since the ground is still damp, the fires are cool and not intense. In response to this fire grows fresh new grass, also known as dinner, which attracts browsing animals.

This is a one example of the many environmental cues of important activities associated with a particular season. The Gun-djeihmi people, who are the traditional owners of the region near the South Alligator River around Cooida in Kakadu, recognise six seasons.

Six Seasons:

- Kudjewk – Monsoon season. December to March.
- Bangkerreng – 'Knock 'em down' storm season. April.
- Yekke – Cooler (but still humid) season. May to mid-June.
- Wurrkeng – Cold weather season. Mid-June to mid-August.
- Kurrung – Hot dry weather. Mid-August to mid-October.
- Kunumeleng – Pre-monsoon storm season.



As the sun sets on a long but amazing day, we will arrive at our private campsite in Kakadu. The campsite is equipped with comfortable permanent tents with beds, flushing toilets and hot showers. You will have time to freshen-up whilst the guides prepare dinner before enjoying an evening of stargazing and chatting with Jerry, the local guides and your new friends around the campfire.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 5 - SUNDAY 12 JUNE 2022

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

After an early start and bite to eat this morning we will embark on an iconic Yellow Water Cruise - a must-do activity whilst in Kakadu National Park.



The award-winning Yellow Water Cruises is Aboriginal owned and centres around a spectacular billabong system that is home to an incredibly diverse range of birds, animals and plants. Spotting crocodiles is just one of the many wildlife-viewing opportunities in this unique and spectacular wetland.

Upon completion of the cruise, we will hit the road again and drive towards the iconic Twin and Jim Jim Falls.

Accessed by a 4-wheel drive track, boat shuttle service and rocky pathway and boardwalk, Twin Falls gorge has a split cascade that plunges from a 150-metre high cliff face into a deep pool. Once there we will relax on the sandy banks to admire the falls. More 4-wheel driving will follow as we make our way to the majestic Jim Jim Falls. A walk through a monsoon forest and over boulders will take us to the waterfall and plunge pool – a sight to behold whether they are raging with water or reduced to a mere trickle.

Pass the afternoon absorbing the sheer beauty of your spectacular surrounds before we return to camp for a hearty dinner and well-earned rest.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 6 - MONDAY 13 JUNE 2022

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

This morning we will travel to nearby Burrunggui, previously known as Nourlangie Rock. Here you can see how local Aboriginal people lived in this area through changing times. Environmental and social changes are reflected in the rock art and in the ground, where archaeologists have uncovered over 20,000 years of Aboriginal occupation.



We have all visited art galleries. It is one thing to stand in front of a canvas in an air-conditioned space; it is completely different standing in front of ancient, World Heritage rock art at Burrunggui. In the heat of a Top End day, we will attempt to imagine what life here was like at the time Namarrgon - the Lightning Man - was created.

We will also pop by the Bowali Visitor Centre, a Gun-djeihmi name for the local area and creek on land owned by the Mirarr clan. Here we will see the audio-visual presentations and visit the Marrawuddi Gallery where Aboriginal art by artists from Kakadu and the wider region is showcased.

Lunch will be eaten at the culturally significant Aboriginal art site, Ubirr, located within the East Alligator region of the park. Here you will view a wide range of ancient Aboriginal art, which will be interpreted by your guide. Learn the story of the Rainbow Serpent and climb the Nadab Lookout for stunning panoramic views over the floodplain and beyond into Arnhem Land before heading to our private campsite at Jabiru.



Enjoy some free time late this afternoon where you can relax by the pool with a cold beverage until dinner is served.

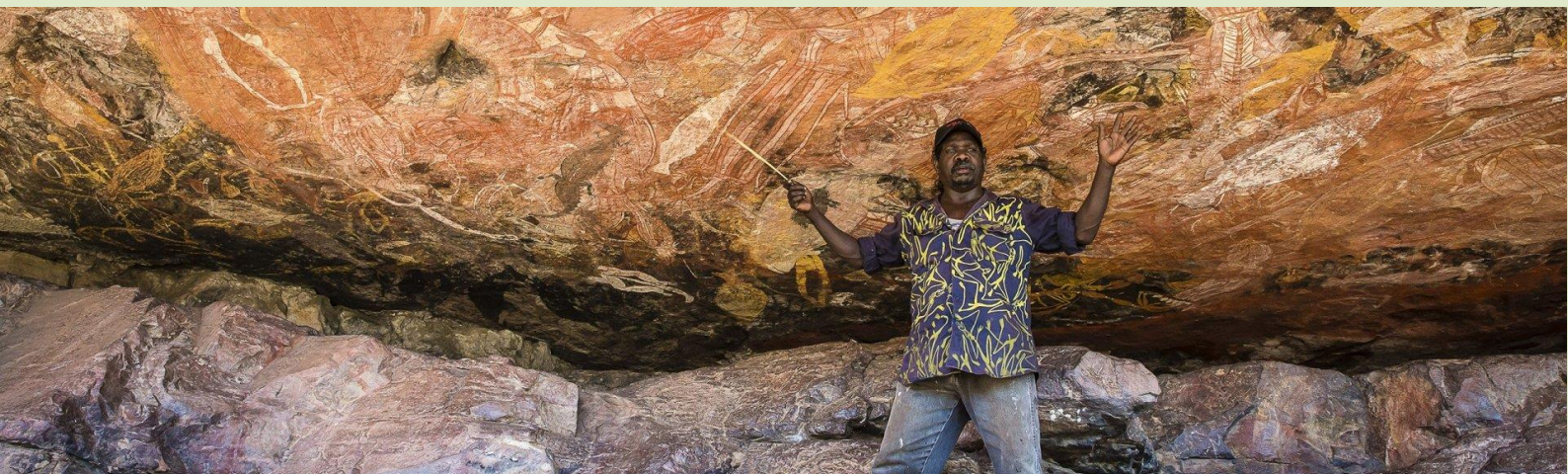
(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 7 - TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2022

WESTERN ARNHEM LAND

Today, a once in a lifetime experience awaits. Travelling into remote Western Arnhem Land you will witness ancient Aboriginal art brought to life by your indigenous guide at Injalak Hill.

The landscapes we will experience here are believed to be have been shaped by ancestral beings in the creation period of the Dreaming.



After absorbing jaw-dropping views across the escarpment, you will travel to the Injalak Art Centre, where we will say goodbye to our Indigenous guide and hello to some amazing art on offer, or simply watch the indigenous artists at work.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 8 - WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE 2022

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK & KATHERINE



A relaxed start to the day will allow for a sleep-in and leisurely breakfast. We will then head to Gunlom Falls - made famous by the movie Crocodile Dundee. When Jerry last visited Kakadu he left his campsite for an evening stroll and, like Mick Dundee, encountered a buffalo in the middle of the track. Jerry quickly discovered that life does not always imitate art.

Gunlom is a sensational seasonal waterfall with a large plunge pool, located towards the southern end of Kakadu. After a tasty picnic lunch, you will have some time to relax around the lower plunge pool.

After lunch we will travel towards the Katherine region, arriving at our private campsite in the early evening.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 9 - THURSDAY 16 JUNE 2022

NITMILUK NATIONAL PARK & KATHERINE GORGE

Up early this morning, we will venture into Nitmiluk National Park (Katherine Gorge) for a 2-hour dawn boat cruise (optional and own expense), or a walk along the sheer rock walls that make the area so spectacular.

Owned by the Jawoyn Aboriginal people, Nitmiluk National Park has been jointly managed with the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission since 1989. The park has many sacred places of great significance to the Jawoyn people and they maintain a close connection with this land.



Many sandstone and upland woodland plants require five or more years unburnt in order to thrive. Speargrass, a native species, thrives on regular wildfires, altering the intensity of fires to suit itself at the expense of overall diversity. Following the reintroduction of indigenous fire regimes, the ecological balance of flora and fauna has started to be rebalanced and rangers here have observed a decrease in speargrass dominance and an increase in natural regeneration.

Like Kakadu, this part of the Arnhem Plateau is an oasis for bird-lovers. Osprey, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Great Bowerbird, White-gaped Honeyeater and Red-winged Parrot frequent this park.

Freshwater crocodiles nest along the Katherine River, so this may be a good opportunity to see them in their natural habitat if we have not yet seen any. Saltwater crocodiles regularly enter the river during the wet season, but they are subsequently removed and returned to lower levels at the onset of the dry season. This is for the convenience and safety of visitors who want to swim there.



A short drive later, we will arrive at Top Didj Cultural Experience and meet Indigenous artist Manuel Parrikal who will teach you about Aboriginal culture and the significance of his painting style in this interactive activity.

Our next stop is at Edith Falls for lunch and one final swim before heading back to Darwin – stopping at Adelaide River en route for a refreshment break. You will arrive at the Palms City Resort in Darwin at approximately 6.30pm.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 10 - FRIDAY 17 JUNE 2022

TIWI ISLANDS

On our last full day in the Top End will be spend time with Tiwi Islanders who are culturally and linguistically distinct from those of Arnhem Land. After transferring from Palms City Resort (7:00am pick-up) to Cullen Bay Marina by Metro Mini Bus, you will board a high-speed deluxe catamaran for a 2.5-hour cruise to Wurrimiyanga community on Bathurst Island.

After disembarking in Wurrimiyanga, you will be escorted to Tiwi Design where local artists and dancers will perform a formal Welcome to Country with a smoking ceremony and totem dances.

Like the British Isles, the Tiwi Islands ('two islands') were created by a sea level rise at the end of the last ice age. Superficial similarity, however, ends here. There are three seasons: the dry season of smoke, the build-up seasons of high humidity and singing cicadas, and the wet season with monsoon storms and amazing lightning.

Open eucalypt woodland comprising Darwin stringybark and woollybutt predominates over the lateritic plateaux. These islands provide vital habitat for wildlife, birds especially, including the world's largest colony of Crested Terns. The Tiwi Masked Owl is endangered, and the Tiwi Hooded Robin is possibly extinct. The Tiwi Islands are vital for the survival of the Olive Ridley turtle, and a range of threatened mammal species including the Brush-tailed Rabbit Rat, Northern Brush-tailed Phascogale, False Water Rats and the Carpentarian Dunnart.



The Tiwi people have lived on this land for more than 40,000 years. It is believed that they conducted trade with Macassan merchants who sailed from South Sulawesi from the early 1700's until the early 1900's, and who interacted with First Australians on the mainland. They brought with them seed of tamarind trees (*Tamarindus indicus*) which have since naturalised.

We will enjoy a typical Tiwi morning tea of damper and a cuppa whilst getting to know some of the Tiwi Island community members. You will also explore the Patakijiyali Museum and the Mission Precinct with your knowledgeable local guide, hearing stories of life and culture in the Tiwi Islands.



After a rest and lunch in the shade you will re-visit Tiwi Design to participate in an exclusive 'behind-the-scenes' screen printing workshop. Choose from a contemporary or traditional Tiwi design to print onto a take-home t-shirt, tea towel or fabric – a wonderful souvenir of your visit to the Tiwi Islands

In the afternoon, we will return to Cullen Bay by ferry before transferring to the hotel with Metro Mini Bus for our final night in the Top End.

(Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 11 - SATURDAY 18 JUNE 2022

DEPART DARWIN

This morning will be at leisure for you to do some last minute shopping or sightseeing. Metro Mini Bus will provide a transfer from Palms City Resort to Darwin Airport for those who are departing Darwin today.

The hotel-airport transfer will only be provided if you depart on QF825 (to Brisbane) or QF841 (to Sydney) on 18 June 2022.

Airfares are not included in the tour cost. Please contact The Adventure Traveller to book your flights to/from Darwin.

(Meal Included: Breakfast)



PRICE:

TWIN/DOUBLE: **\$ 5,330 per person** *(plus flights to/from Darwin)*

SINGLE ROOM: **\$ 5,980 per person** *(plus flights to/from Darwin)*

Please note our prices are subject to a minimum group size of 15 passengers (plus Jerry). Should numbers fall below minimum numbers we reserve the right to review full pricing of travel packages and registration costs.

GROUP SIZE:

The maximum group size will be 15 people + Jerry Coleby-Williams.

INCLUSIONS:

- Darwin Airport-Hotel transfer to meet QF824/QF840 on 08 June 22 only.
- 3 nights hotel accommodation in Darwin (In: 08 June 22 – Out: 11 June 22)
- Champagne Sunset Sail (08 June 22)
- Hidden Secrets of Darwin (09 June 22)
- Entry to Crocosaurus Cove (09 June 22)
- Hotel-George Brown Botanic Gardens transfer (09 June 22)
- Walk the Botanic Gardens (09 June 22)
- Berry Springs Bush Tucker, Botanicals & Community Gardens tour (10 June 22)
- 1 x 4WD whilst on the Wayoutback tour (11-16 June 22)
- 1 x professionally trained & accredited tour guide whilst on the Wayoutback tour (11-16 June 22)
- 1 x professionally trained tour host whilst on the Wayoutback tour (11-16 June 22)
- 5 nights camping in permanent safari tents (11/12/13/14/15 June 22)
- Linen, pillows & sleeping bags whilst camping
- All camping fees & national park fees
- Yellow Water Cruise (12 June 22)
- Arnhem Land Tour (14 June 22)
- Top Didj Cultural Experience (16 June 22)
- Cold drinking water and snacks such as fresh fruit, muesli bars and biscuits during the day (11-16 June 22 only)
- 2 nights hotel accommodation in Darwin (In: 16 June 22 – Out: 18 June 22)
- Tiwi by Design tour including ferry & hotel transfers (17 June 22)
- Hotel-Darwin Airport transfer to meet QF825/QF841 on 18 June 22 only.
- Escorted by Jerry Coleby-Williams (08-18 June 22)
- Meals as listed on the itinerary

EXCLUSIONS:

- Flights to/from Darwin (Please contact The Adventure Traveller to book your flights)
- Travel Insurance (Compulsory – ask The Adventure Traveller for a quote)
- Border passes (if required)
- Items of a personal nature
- Beverages

BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES:

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