



### **35 Day Broome to Cairns 'Across the Top' 4wd Self-Drive Adventure**

Journey 'Across the Top' of Australia from the Indian Ocean at Broome, past the Arafura Sea at Darwin to the Coral Sea at Cairns. This odyssey across Northern Australia takes in the spectacular Wilderness, Aboriginal art and waterfalls of the Kimberley through the birdlife and gorges of Kakadu and Katherine and then via the Gulf Country and Lawn Hill Gorge to the subterranean highlights of Chillagoe and Undara. Extensions can also be had to Cape York or the Daintree.

#### **Suggested Itinerary**

##### **Day 1 Broome to Fitzroy Crossing**

Ensure the Darrngku Heritage Cruise is booked for this afternoon in Fitzroy Crossing. Conservation and Land Management (CALM) run a cheaper, shorter cruise if preferred. Depart early from your accommodation and drive through Kimberley cattle country for the morning. After a morning stop near the Fitzroy River at Willare, you can detour to Derby and visit the wharf and Prison Boab Tree. Ensure you have adequate alcohol supplies for the next 7 nights before leaving Derby or Fitzroy Crossing. You arrive in Fitzroy Crossing and head out to the gorge before enjoying an afternoon Darrngku Heritage Cruise on Geikie Gorge. Your camping this evening is at the

**Fitzroy River Safari Lodge (Full facilities- shower, laundry & toilet facilities) (5 hours (400 km) driving**

##### **Day 2 Fitzroy Crossing to Windjana Gorge**

Retracing your steps a short distance up the Great Northern Highway, you turn off to the right (signposted) to Tunnel Creek, a 3/4 km subterranean walk through the Napier Range. Continue on with a stop at the ruins of Lillilmooloora, (signposted) to right, site of the first dramatic chapter in the story of the Aboriginal resistance fighter, Jandamarra, before heading right towards Windjana Gorge (signposted) and establishing camp.

**Overnight camping Windjana Gorge National Park. (Toilet & shower facilities.) (3 hours (151 km) driving, 1&1/2 hours (3km) walking.)**

##### **Day 3 Windjana Gorge to Bell Gorge.**

A morning walking into Windjana Gorge will be very rewarding as you explore this ancient fossil reef forming imposing walls and see crocodiles basking in the sun. The Gorge is nearly 5km long and the energetic may wish to walk right to the end. Continue to the Gibb River Road (GRR) and turn right, making your way to the Lennard River, where you may be able to stop for a swim. Travel past the Queen Victoria's Head rock formation as you pass through the Napier Range. Turn left to Lennard Gorge (signposted) in the afternoon and soak in the impressive scenery, although the track is usually very rough. Return to the GRR, turn left and continue down to the Bell Gorge (signposted) turn off to the left and make your way to camp.

**Overnight camping Silent Grove, Bell Gorge. (Toilet & shower facilities) (3&1/2 hours driving (140 km), 2 hours (4 km) walking,**

##### **Day 4 Bell Gorge National Park to Manning Gorge**

After a drive to the Car park and a morning walk into Bell Gorge; retrace your steps to the GRR. Head off left to your next stop, picturesque Galvans Gorge (signposted) on the left for a lunchtime interlude. Park at the gate and walk to the fall. After a stop at Mt Barnett Roadhouse to pay camp fees, you make your way to Lower Manning Gorge. You can walk that afternoon to beautiful Manning Gorge to see the waterfall and some Gwion (Bradshaw) figures. For the less energetic, you can stop for a swim and relax beneath shady paperbarks and perhaps take the walk in the morning.

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**Overnight camping Manning Gorge (Toilet facilities)** (3 hours (155 km) driving, 3 hours (9 km) walking.)

### **Day 5 Manning Gorge to Miners Pool**

After a morning stop at Mt Barnett Roadhouse, turn left back on the GRR and cross the Barnett River. Turn left to (signposted) Barnett River Gorge. Keep veering right until you get to the car park or stop at the rocky creek crossing and walk from there. Time can be spent at Barnett River Gorge before heading left on down the road towards the Kalumbaru turn-off. Proceed straight ahead and leave the GRR, you can make a stop and perhaps a swim at Gibb River before the journey northwards for an hour to Drysdale River Station (signposted) to the left for fuel and to pay camp fees. Return to the Kalumbaru road, turn left and take the right track before the river crossing (signposted) to Miners Pool to set up camp for the evening and perhaps a swim.

**Overnight camping Miners Pool. (Toilet facilities.)** (5 hours (320 km) driving, 1 hours (2 km) walking.)

### **Day 6 Miners Pool to Mitchell Falls**

Return to the Kalumbaru road, turn right and cross the Drysdale River. Turn left (signposted) to Mitchell Plateau and make a stop at King Edward River to inspect the crossing before attempting it. Turn down the track immediately left and park in the car park to walk to the Wandjina and Gwion (Bradshaw) art. Retrace your steps to the Plateau track and turn left. Turn right to the main King Edward River camping area and stop for a swim and lunch. Ascending the Mitchell Plateau, you enter a world of forests of Livistona Palms, ancient Aboriginal Wandjina and Gwion (Bradshaw) art, magnificent waterfalls and isolated swimming holes. The track can be quite rough all the way. Your overnight camp is on water at Mertons Creek.

**Overnight camping Mitchell Falls. (Toilet facilities.)** (4 hours (139 km) driving, 1 hour (3 km) walking)

### **Day 7 Mitchell Falls**

A full day is available to fully explore this magnificent waterfall and its associated aboriginal art. Call in with the Helicopter pilots' camp at the start and arrange a 'taxi' from the falls back to the car park (about \$60) departing the falls about 3pm or a longer scenic flight. Walk from the car park to Little Merton Falls (down the hill to the left) and see wonderful Aboriginal art in overhangs under the falls. Continue through open woodland to another Gwion (Bradshaw) artsite, visible across the creek to the left. After a stop at impressive Big Merton Falls, you arrive at Mitchell Falls. Cross the river and walk past the heli-pad to the wonderful lookout facing the falls. For the adventurous, you may find the track near this lookout down the other side of the hill to the river. Aboriginal Art may be found down the bottom on the other side of the river in overhangs. Walk or fly back to the car park.

**Overnight camping Mitchell Falls. (Toilet facilities.)** (3 hours (6km) walking, (the helicopter can usually be taken one way from the falls.)

### **Day 8 Mitchell Falls to Gibb River**

Retracing your steps back to the Kalumbaru Road, stop for a leg stretch at the Lawley Lookout on the left. Continue off the Mitchell Plateau and stop and view more galleries of Aboriginal Bradshaw Art, down a track off to the left when you come down off the Plateau. Stop again at King Edward River and relax for a while at its refreshing waters. Recross the river and turn right at the Kalumbaru road. Continue back past Drysdale River Station, where you may need to refuel. Proceed on down to the Gibb River for a bush camp. Stop at Miners Pool or Drysdale Station if you prefer the facilities.

**Overnight Bush camp Gibb River. (No facilities)** (6 hours (250 km) driving.)

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### **Day 9 Gibb River to El Questro**

Returning to the GRR, turn left and continue the Gibb River Road trek. Cross the Durack River (check the depth early in the season). After stopping to view the magnificent Cockburn Range at the lookout on the right, descend the range and ford the Pentecost River. Continue on to Emma Gorge (signposted to left) and call in to the office to purchase a wilderness pass and a station map. Walk to the gorge and droplet waterfall for a refreshing swim. Retrace your tracks to the El Questro turn-off (signposted to left) and make your way through to the station. There are choices of camping areas. Black Cockatoo at the Station is best if you want facilities.

**Overnight camping El Questro Station (Full facilities.)** (5 hours (281 km) driving, 2 hours (3km) walking)

### **Day 10 El Questro**

Set off this morning to explore beautiful Zebedee thermal springs (signposted) to right to relax in the tropical surroundings. The energetic then have the opportunity to walk up El Questro Gorge before returning for lunch. This afternoon, hire an electric motor from the store and drive to Chamberlain Gorge (signposted) to give you a glimpse of the Station Homestead from a distance. Take an electric boat up Chamberlain Gorge to see the Aboriginal Art at the end or do a spot of barramundi fishing. Alternatively, arrange a boat cruise. Return towards the store and turn left to Branco's Lookout (signposted) for sunset before returning to camp.

**Overnight camping El Questro Station. (Full facilities)** (1 hour (50 km) driving, 2&1/2 hours (6km) walking.)

### **Day 11 El Questro to Bungle Bungle**

Retrace your steps to the GRR and turn right. We make our way down to a right turn to MB Rocks and some Aboriginal Art. Completing your traverse of the Gibb River Road, you reach the Great Northern Highway and turn right and travel for a few km to the Halls Creek turn-off and turn right. After 50km, you come to the Ragged Range lookout to the left (signposted) for a detour down the old highway. Continue on to Warmun (Turkey Creek) and make a stop at the roadhouse. If you wish, ask directions at the roadhouse to the Warmun Aboriginal Art Centre. 52km along the Great Northern Highway turn left to the Purnululu National Park (signposted) before hitting the dirt to head west 55km to the Bungles. This road has many rough wash-aways at creek crossings. Travel through the Osmond Ranges to Calico Springs, with permanent water, which makes a pleasant stop. Stop at the Ranger Station and pay camp and entry fees. Turn left at 3 ways and make your way to Kurrajong Camp. Walk up the limestone ridge behind the camp for sunset.

**Overnight camping Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park. (Toilet facilities)** (6 hours (322km) driving, 2 hour sightseeing and exploring.)

### **Day 12 Bungle Bungle**

Head off in the morning to the southern side of the massif to allow time to fully explore and appreciate the magnificent dome area of Piccaninny Creek. On the way, drop into the airstrip (signposted) to the right and arrange a time for optional helicopter flights, preferably lunchtime. An easy- paced walk up the creek, flanked by the curious, striped beehive domes, brings you to hidden gorges and a wide array of vegetation. Time can be spent wandering around these awe-inspiring domes before an optional helicopter flight (app \$190) and lunch. This afternoon you can travel around to the northern side of the massif and explore Echidna Chasm. If time allows, also visit Froghole Gorge.

**Overnight camping Kurrajong Camp, Purnululu National Park. (Toilet facilities.)** (3 hours (100 km) driving, 3 hours (6 km) walking)

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### **Day 13 Bungle Bungle to Kununurra**

This morning you revisit the northern side to walk Minipalms Gorge. The longish walk is rewarded with an amazing gorge blessed with an abundance of small palms in the gorge floor. Retrace your tracks to the Great Northern Highway and turn right to continue on to Turkey Creek. Retrace your tracks to Kununurra and return to Kimberleyland Caravan Park.

**Overnight camping Kimberleyland Caravan Park. (Full facilities)** (7 hours (492km) driving and 1/2 hours (1km) walking)

### **Day 14 Kununurra**

Today is a good opportunity to explore this Irrigation town. The morning can be spent shopping for Argyle Diamonds or optional touring of the Diamond Mine, touring the agricultural area before an afternoon Ord River Cruise.

**Overnight camping Kimberleyland Caravan Park (Full facilities.)**

### **Day 15 Kununurra to Timber Creek**

Start your journey along the Victoria Highway with a visit to Hidden Valley National Park. Detour to Lake Argyle to marvel at the Inland Sea, many times the size of Sydney Harbour. Stop and view some Aboriginal Art on the right after you cross the Spillway Creek. Return to the Victoria Highway, turn right and make your way on to the NT border. A little deviation to the Keep River National Park will be rewarding before finally ending up in Timber Creek for the evening.

**Overnight camping Timber Creek. (Full facilities)** (220 km (4 hours) driving, 1 hour walking)

### **Day 16 Timber Creek to Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge)**

This morning you have the opportunity for a cruise on the Victoria River. You then head east along the Victoria Highway to Victoria River Crossing through the Gregory National Park. Continuing on to Katherine, you can make a stop in town before heading left out to the Gorge to set up camp and taking an afternoon cruise on the gorge.

**Overnight camping Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge.) (Shower & toilet)** (310km (3&1/2 hours) driving.)

### **Day 17 Katherine to Kakadu**

Making your way back to Katherine, you turn right and head north. The detour to the right to Edith Falls is a well-worthwhile stop for a swim and explore. Return to the Stuart Highway and head north to Pine Creek, where you take the Kakadu Highway to the right. Follow the signs to Gunlom to the right and enjoy lunch at this delightful waterhole. Return to the Kakadu Highway and stop to pay your park entry. Make your way to Cooida and book in for the sunset cruise on Yellow waters. After the cruise, make your way to

**Mardugal campsite for overnight camping. (Shower & toilet facilities)** (220 kms (4 hours) driving, 1 hour walking,)

### **Day 18 Mardugal to Jim Jim Falls**

An early start today will bring great rewards as you take to the 4wd tracks to the magnificent Jim Jim Falls. Travel on to Twin Falls (Approx. 10kms) to the access point and walk 10 minutes to swim up the gorge (best to have airbed for this trip). After a great day of waterfalls, return to

**Overnight camp at Jim Jim Falls campsite. (Shower and toilet facilities)** (250km (5 hours) driving, 1&1/2 hours walking.)

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### **Day 19 Jim Jim to Ubirr**

Return to the Kakadu Highway and deviate to Barramundi Gorge to take a walk to the gorge for a swim. Continue on to Nourlangie Road and visit the Anbangbang rock shelter and Nourlangie Rock. During the dry season there are ranger-guided tours here for you to enjoy. You will find a great spot for lunch in the area, Annabangbang Billabong, where the famous shaving scene in **Crocodile Dundee** was filmed. After lunch you can make a stop at the Ranger station and then deviate to Jabiru if you wish. Make a stop at Cahill's Crossing on the South Alligator River, the border of Arnhemland. You then head to Ubirr and set up

**Camp at Merl Campsite. (Shower & toilet facilities)** (110 kms (2&1/2 hours) driving, 2 hours walking.)

### **Day 20 Ubirr to Darwin**

Make your way up to Ubirr to walk and view the X-Ray Aboriginal art here. Return to the Arnhem Highway and turn right. Continue to the Bark Hut Inn for a break. You traverse the Marrakai Plains for about 60km before arriving at the Stuart Highway. Turn right and make your way to Darwin. Perhaps take in the sunset from Mindil Beach before setting up for your overnight camp.

**Overnight camping Darwin (Full facilities)** (300kms (5 hours) driving, 1 hour walking)

### **Day 21 Darwin**

Today is available to explore the environs of Darwin and take in such sights as the Territory Wildlife Park, Howard Springs, Fanny Bay Jail Museum, East Point and the Mindil Breach.

**Overnight camping at the Caravan Park. (Full facilities)**

### **Day 22 Darwin to Lake Bennet**

This morning you head back down the Stuart Highway and turn right to Batchelor. After a few kilometres, turn right to Litchfield National Park. Stop to view some magnetic and Giant Termite mounds and visit Florence Falls for a walk through the rainforest to view the fall. After a stop at Buley Rockholes for a swim, continue on to Wangi Falls for a swim over lunch and walk to the lookout. This afternoon you detour to Tolmer Falls before making your way back to the Stuart Highway. Turn left and then right for your

**Overnight camping at Lake Bennett.** (220km (4 hours) driving, 2 hours walking)

### **Day 23 Lake Bennett to Mataranka**

Turn left onto the Stuart Highway and head south down the highway towards Katherine. Turn to the left for a visit to Edith Falls for a swim and then continue to Katherine. After another 100km, turn left to Mataranka Hot Springs and set up camp for the evening, after a relaxing dip in the thermal springs.

**Overnight camping Mataranka Homestead. (Full facilities)** (145km (1&1/2 hours) driving)

### **Day 24 Mataranka to Bush Camp (Towns River)**

After a morning relax in the Thermal Pool, return to the Stuart Highway and turn left. Detour to the left to Elsey Cemetery, containing graves of characters from Jeanie Gunn's book 'We of the Never Never'. Return to the Roper Highway and turn right to Roper Bar. Continue along the bitumen to Roper Bar store for a stop and look at the Roper River, a famous Barramundi fishing destination. Turn right down the Nathan River Road and continue on to a

**Bush camp at Towns River. (No facilities)** (277km (4 &1/2 hours) driving)

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### **Day 25 Towns River to Borroloola**

Continue over the Cox River and Limmen Bight River to Nathan River Station. This is soon to be a National Park with striking 'Lost City' formations, similar to the Bungle Bungle, so check out if access is available. Veer left near Billengarra Station and on to your

**Overnight camp in the Caravan Park at Borroloola. (Full facilities)** (230km (5 hours) driving)

### **Day 26 Borroloola to Hells Gate**

Explore Borroloola and make a stop at the historical museum, as this outpost was the 'Timbuctu of Australia' and has a fascinating and colourful history. Have a look at the mighty McArthur River and pick up any last minute supplies. Beware of the world's longest roadtrains that ply this route! Take the road to Burketown and travel through to Wollogorang, near the Old border. Continue on to stop at

**Hells Gate Roadhouse for your overnight camp. (Full facilities)** (322km (7 hours) driving)

### **Day 27 Hells Gate to Kingfisher Camp**

Continue towards Burketown; turn right to Kingfisher Camp (signposted) and follow signs to the camp. Afternoon options include fishing, boating and exploring nearby gorges.

**Overnight camping at Kingfisher Camp. (Shower and toilet facilities)** (2 & 1/2 hours driving)

### **Day 28 Kingfisher to Lawn Hill Gorge**

Confirm directions with Kingfisher Camp of the route to Lawn Hill Gorge. Following signs, you come in at Adel's Grove, famous for the expansive gardens that grew there. Camping is available here if there is no room at the gorge. Continue in for 10 km to your

**Overnight campsite at Lawn Hill Gorge National Park. (Shower and toilet facilities)** (160km (4 & 1/2 hours) driving)

### **Day 29 Lawn Hill Gorge National Park**

A wonderful day can be had today with many options such as canoe hire-an ideal way to see the gorge, walks and lots of swimming. One of Australia's top National Parks!

**Overnight camping Lawn Hill Gorge National Park. (Shower and toilet facilities)**

### **Day 30 Lawn Hill to Burketown**

Drive back out to Adels Grove and link up with a 1/2 trip with the Savannah guide at Adel's Grove to the Dinosaur fossil site at Riversleigh. Continue back to the Gregory Roadhouse on the Burketown-Camooweal Road and make an afternoon stop. Turn left and make your way to colourful Burketown and perhaps have a drink this evening in a real Aussie pub!

**Overnight camping Burketown Caravan Park. (Full facilities)** (219km (4 hours) driving)

### **Day 31 Burketown to Croydon**

Take the Nardoo- Burketown Road to Leichhardt Falls and break for a morning stop, but don't swim as there may be crocodiles. Take the road to Normanton and stop to see the grave of Frederick Walker, the mounted policeman who led one of the expeditions to search for the explorers Burke and Wills. Turn right to visit Burke and Wills' Camp 119, the explorers' most northerly camp. Continue through to Normanton and explore the wonderful architecture of another frontier town and the wonderful old train, the Gulflander. Travel on to the gold mining town of Croydon and terminus for the Gulflander to set up

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**Camp at the Caravan Park. (Full Facilities)** (358 km (5 & 1/2 hours) driving)

#### **Day 32 Croydon to Undara Lava Tubes**

After a look at the historic town of Croydon, travel on to Georgetown along the Gulf Development Road. Travel through Mt Surprise and turn right, following the signs to Undara Lava Lodge. This afternoon, take a guided tour through one of the fascinating Lava Tubes. Set up your

**Overnight camp at Lava Lodge. (Full facilities)** (230 km (3 & 1/2 hours) driving)

#### **Day 33 Undarra to Chillagoe Caves**

A morning walk to nearby lookouts will reward the active as you get panoramic vistas of the surrounding countryside and remnant volcanoes. Retrace your route to the Gulf Development Road and head left. Turn north and cross the Lynd River and Tate Rivers before joining the Burke Development Road at Almadon, where you can stop to view the historic railway station and its lush gardens. Travel on to Chillagoe, an historic old mineral field, and tour the limestone caves with a ranger before setting up your

**Overnight camp at the Caravan Park, Chillagoe. (Full facilities)** (230km (3&1/2 hours driving))

#### **Day 34 Chillagoe to Malanda**

Explore the surrounding mining area ruins and museum and Aboriginal art. Retrace your steps to Almadon and on through to Petford, where you turn right. Travel through Irvinebank to Herberton and down to Millaa Millaa to see the picturesque falls. Time should be taken to travel the 21km Waterfall Circuit to visit quite a number of spectacular waterfalls and to take in the panorama from Millaa Millaa Lookout. Travel on to Malanda and visit Malanda Falls before setting up for your last night

**Camping in the Malanda Caravan Park.** (200km (3 hours) driving, 2 hours walking)

#### **Day 35 Malanda to Cairns.**

Travel towards Yungaburra and stop on the way at the Crater Lakes, Lake Eacham and Lake Barrine. Lake Barrine has a wonderful cruise and walk to the monstrous Kauri Pines. Continue through to Yungaburra and detour to the Curtain Fig Tree. Travel through to Atherton and then on to Mareeba for lunch. This afternoon you can make a stop at Kuranda and spend some time exploring this village. Another stop at the base of the range at the Tjapukai Aboriginal cultural centre will be rewarding and you can also take the Skyrail back up the range to view the rainforest and Barron Falls. Continue on to Cairns at the end of an outstanding Gulf Country experience. (130 km (2 hours) driving, 2 hours walking.)

#### **Recommended References**

The above itineraries are not intended as the sole guide to the details of your route. Four Wheel Drive Hire Service recommends the following references be consulted or purchased prior to departure.

#### **Road Conditions**

It is important to seek up to date advice on road conditions as things can change rapidly.

#### **Map**

Hema Maps – The Kimberley, TopEnd and Western Gulf, Cape York.

#### **Guide Book**

*The Kimberley- An Adventurers Guide* by Ron and Viv Moon

*Cape York-- An Adventurers Guide* by Ron and Viv Moon

*Discover Australia* by 4WD by Ron and Viv Moon.

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#### Background Reading

*Kings in Grass Castles* by Mary Durack

*The Territory* by Ernestine Hill

*The Australian Geographic Guide to the Kimberley.*

*The Explorers* by Tim Flannery

#### Websites

Moon Guidebooks- [www.guidebooks.com.au](http://www.guidebooks.com.au)

Hema Maps for an idea of the range of maps and information on suppliers -

[www.hemamaps.com.au](http://www.hemamaps.com.au)

Outback tracks information -

[www.mynrma.com.au/travel/go/outback\\_tracks/index.shtml](http://www.mynrma.com.au/travel/go/outback_tracks/index.shtml)

Kimberley National Parks- [www.calm.wa.gov.au/national\\_parks/index.html](http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/national_parks/index.html)

Uluru, Nitmiluk and Kakadu- [www.ea.gov.au/parks/index.html](http://www.ea.gov.au/parks/index.html)

Other NT National Parks- [www.nt.gov.ai/ipe/paw/parks/index.html](http://www.nt.gov.ai/ipe/paw/parks/index.html)

QLD National Parks- [www.epa.qld.gov.au/environment/park/discover](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/environment/park/discover)

Aboriginal books- [www.magabala.com.au](http://www.magabala.com.au)

Darngku Heritage Cruise- [www.darngku.com.au](http://www.darngku.com.au)