Our Parks and Reserves as a resource for your excursion

Inspire your students!

From a day trip to an overnight or week-long stay, excursions camps and field trips are a great way for teachers to present hands-on learning experiences and share knowledge in a unique way.

Parks and Wildlife Commission NT Parks and Reserves are ideal locations to enhance any education program, whether the visit be related to culture, history, science, outdoor education, or the creative arts.

This guide contains information to support excursions to Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park, an area jointly managed by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory and the Jawoyn Traditional Owners.

We hope to see you out there!

Provide your feedback!

We would love to receive your feedback and comments on this excursion guide, contact the PWCNT Community Engagement Officer in Katherine on 08 89738 865.

CAMPGROUND FACILITIES AND TOURS

Nitmiluk Tours manages all main visitor facilities including boat cruises, cultural tours, canoe hire, helicopter flights and campgrounds.

The Nitmiluk Visitor Centre has a cafe, toilets information display, reservations desk, car and bus parking.

The Nitmiluk campground has camp sites, powered van sites, semi-permanent tents, and cabins.

The campground has ablution blocks with toilets, showers and laundry facilities are available. There are camp and bus group area kitchens and free gas BBQs. There is a large swimming pool in the camping area.

The day use area has free gas BBQs, picnic tables, toilets and car and bus parking.

Overnight campsites along the Southern Walking Tracks have composting toilets. Fuel stoves must be used along all walking tracks, no camp fires are allowed.

The Camp Ngangang / Youth Group Area is available for student groups and has a small ablution block, gas BBQs, electricity, fire pit and covered dining area.

The Nitmiluk campground, Camp Ngangang and overnight campsites along walking tracks can be booked through Nitmiluk Tours.
Saltwater crocodiles may be present in waterways within Nitmiluk National Park. Observe park safety signs. Only enter the water in designated swimming areas.

Flying foxes and other bats may carry Australian Bat Lyssa Virus. Don’t touch bats.

SAFETY and COMFORT

- Observe park safety signs.
- Carry an adequate first aid kit with you at all times.
- Avoid strenuous activity during the heat of the day.
- Carry and drink plenty of water (PWCNT recommends consumption of one litre per hour, more if undertaking strenuous activity).
- Wear clothing suitable to the conditions, recommended items include: a hat, sunscreen, enclosed and sturdy shoes and insect repellent.
- Walking boots are recommended for the more difficult walks / overnight hikes (e.g. Yambi and Waleka Walks in the Southern Walking Track system and the Jatbula Trail).
- There is limited mobile phone coverage. Consider a satellite phone or personal locator beacon for emergency communication.
- Do not feed native animals.

Annual Temperatures in Katherine

May to August (cool season)         September to December (hot season)

Daytime Max: 29-32°C              Daytime Max: 35-47°C
Night time lows to 13°C           Night time lows: 19-26°C

January to April (main wet season)

Daytime Max: 33-35°C
Night time lows: 20-24°C

Temperatures on the escarpment can be up to 10°C higher than near the water.

Average rainfall is 900-1000 mm per annum with most rain falling during the peak wet season from mid-December / January to March.

DRINKING WATER - Drinking water is available in the Nitmiluk and Ngangang campgrounds. There are water tanks in several locations along the Southern Walking Tracks. We advise treating all drinking water taken from natural sources.
So you’ve decided to go! Here is some further information to help plan your excursion...

**Katherine Gorge, what’s it all about?**

A deep gorge carved through ancient sandstone by the Katherine River draws thousands of visitors to Nitmiluk (Nit-me-look) National Park each year. The heavily dissected sandstone that is such a feature above the gorge contrasts with lush rainforest gullies and broad valleys below. This national park also a living cultural landscape where Jawoyn people live and work, continuing and sharing their culture.

The park is managed for its cultural, natural, and recreational values.

The sandstone escarpment is home to endemic flora and fauna and the freshwater creeks and rivers are an important refuge for many animals.

Visitors from around the world come to Nitmiluk and hike, cruise, canoe, camp and helicopter their way around the park while they explore this spectacular landscape.

The Park Rangers and Traditional Owners manage Nitmiluk for weeds, fire and feral animals according to the Plan of Management. You may be able to see evidence of these projects on site e.g. weed removal or burnt areas.

**Suggested excursion themes**

**Joint Management**

The park was returned to the Aboriginal Traditional Owners on 10 September 1989 and leased back to the Northern Territory Government to be jointly managed as a national park in partnership with the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. The Parks and Wildlife Commission and Traditional Owners are responsible for managing the Park. Together they have developed a Plan of Management and renamed the Park to reflect the underlying tenure, joint management arrangements and Traditional Owners’ ongoing cultural connection with the Park.

**Culture, heritage and history**

People traditionally used Nitmiluk for cultural practices, hunting, fishing and as a refuge. The area now encompassed by Nitmiluk National Park was used by the pastoral and mining industries from the late 1800’s until the original, much smaller Katherine Gorge National Park was declared in 1962. The Leliyn/ Edith Falls area was declared a national park in 1963 and the two were amalgamated in 1977. Nimtiluk National Park now covers 2900 square kilometers of land that shares a boundary with the much larger Kakadu National Park.

**Environment / Nature**

A visit to Katherine Gorge can include investigations into Jawoyn culture, freshwater ecology, tropical and savannah ecosystems, geology, animal and plant adaptation or different aspects of land management such as fire, weeds and feral animal control. The Gorge is an interesting site for geology and ecology studies because the sandstone escarpment that is such a feature of Nitmiluk is a southern outlier of the Arnhem Plateau.

**Get Active!**

Walks in Nitmiluk National Park vary from medium to difficult. They range from the well marked 3.7km Baruwei Loop Walk to the mid-range and extended tracks in the Southern Walking Track system that include day, overnight and multi-day hikes. The 5-6 day 60km Jatbula Trail is an unforgettable experience for the well prepared.

Canoes are available to hire in season are a great way to explore the gorge. Contact Nitmiluk Tours for further information.
Learn and Discover

There are many different resources and supporting materials available to enhance the Katherine Gorge school excursion experience. Use the natural classroom for hands on learning, take lessons out in nature and learn new skills. The best way to introduce students to the inhabitants of Katherine Gorge is to learn some facts about the local plants and animals before visiting. Incorporate this information into your visit to make the most of your time on park.

Animals
The escarpment and lowland environments in Nitmiluk National Park provide complex habitats with important niches for native animals. There are 44 mammal species, 78 reptile species, 25 amphibian species and 206 bird species. Many different animals may be seen during the day or on a spotlight walk as part of your visit.

Plants
The diverse habitats in Nitmiluk National Park are home to more than 750 different species of plants. There are many examples of plant adaptations to water conservation, clear distinctions between plant communities associated with different landforms and species that are susceptible to the impacts of fire and grazing.

Geology
The sandstone escarpment of Nitmiluk National Park is the southern outlier of the Arnhem Plateau and part of the Kombolgie Formation. The 13km long gorge system has cliffs up to 100m high. The Kombolgie Formation was laid down approximately 1650 million years ago and has an average thickness of around 900m. Evidence of horizontal layering along with the erosion and weathering caused by rain, wind and the many sandstone leaks and springs.

Joint Management / Cultural information
The connection of Traditional Owners to the land is strong in Nitmiluk National Park. The Jawoyn people manage the park in partnership with the Northern Territory Government through the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. Nitmiluk is a living cultural landscape with many significant cultural sites. Nitmiluk Tours manages the main visitor facilities on the park and is wholly owned by the Jawoyn people.

EXTERNAL LINKS
For more information visit:

www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au
www.nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/parks-resources-for-schools
www.nitmiluktours.com.au
www.visitkatherine.com.au
Always remember to check with the Parks and Wildlife website before you head on out as seasonal changes in water levels may close some areas of Katherine Gorge.

**Walks and Experiences**

**SWIMMING**
Swimming opportunities in the Katherine River and smaller rock holes in Katherine Gorge are seasonal. There is no swimming in the first gorge at any time. Southern Rockhole is usually open for swimming in the mid to late wet season. You can check access by visiting nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/check-park-open-katherine. There is a swimming pool in the main campground, life guards are **NOT** on duty at the swimming pool. Please see Nitmiluk Tours for access to the swimming pool. For NT Teachers, please refer to the DECS School Swimming, Water Safety and Aquatic Procedures.

**WALKS AND TRAILS**

**Baruwei Loop walk**, 3.7km well-marked loop track leading up the escarpment and past lookouts with great views down into the first gorge and across the 17-mile valley.

**Southern Walking Tracks**, from the 8.4km return Windolf Track to Pat’s Lookout and Southern Rockhole to the multi-day 8th gorge and the Jawoyn valley hike the Southern Walking Track system, consisting of the Yambi and Waleka Walks, is a great way to explore the more remote areas of the park.

**Jatbula Trail**, 60km, 5-6 day one-way wilderness trail leading from Katherine Gorge to Leliyn/Edith Falls. All equipment must be carried, bookings are essential and limited.

**CRUISES AND TOURS**

**Nitmiluk Tours** offers a wide variety of boat cruises, cultural tours and helicopter flights. These are a great way to experience the Nitmiluk landscape and are the perfect introduction to the cultural values of Nitmiluk.

All bookings and reservations can be made by contacting Nitmiluk Tours on 1300 146 743, at www.nitmiluktours.com.au, or by emailing reservations@nitmiluktours.com.au

**RANGER GUIDED TALKS**
The **Territory Parks Alive** program of Ranger guided talks and walks are conducted from May to September.

**Tap into local knowledge** - Community Engagement Officers may be available to provide a short talk to your group. Contact 89 738 865 for bookings and information.

**Nearby locations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leliyn / Edith Falls</td>
<td>Also within Nitmiluk National Park, 40km north of Katherine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Reserve</td>
<td>A limestone cave, tours available through Nitmiluk Tours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elsey National Park</td>
<td>100km south of Katherine near Mataranka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katherine Museum</td>
<td>Insights into Katherine region history including WWII</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katherine Visitor Centre</td>
<td>Information on other tourism and visitor experiences in the Katherine area</td>
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Need Help? Or more information?
Contact the Katherine Community Engagement Officer on (08) 89 738 865
OR
the Nitmiluk National Park Visitor Centre on (08) 89721 886
We may be able to contribute ideas towards enhancing your excursion program.