



Katherine Gorge, Nitmiluk National Park

EXCURSION GUIDE

Katherine Gorge

Nitmiluk National Park

Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory

Updated: May 2022



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QUICK VIEW...

Katherine Gorge is in Nitmiluk National Park.

Getting there

Located 30 km from Katherine. Park access via Giles Street and Gorge Road. Access via a bitumen road. Floodways may cut road during the peak wet season.

Main visitor facilities and the day use car park are situated at the end of Gorge Road, 30 km from Katherine.

Coaches can access the day use car park.

Fuel available from Katherine.

Contacts

Nitmiluk National Park Visitor Centre
(08) 8973 8821
Nitmiluk Tours
1300 146 743
Katherine Parks Office
(08) 8973 8888

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.

Northern Territory 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.

See you out there!

Provide your feedback

Provide feedback on this excursion guide, contact the Community Engagement Officer in Katherine on (08) 8973 8865.

CAMPGROUND FACILITIES AND TOURS

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

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 contains ablution blocks with toilets, showers and laundry facilities available. There are group area kitchens and free gas barbecues.

There is a large swimming pool in the camping area.

The **day use area** has free gas barbecues, 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.

Overnight campsites along walking tracks can be booked via the online booking system.



SAFETY

DUTY OF CARE

- Teachers employed by the Department of Education who take part in excursions have a responsibility to ensure that departmental Educational Excursions policy and Educational excursions guidelines are met (see <https://education.nt.gov.au/education/policies/excursions> for policies and associated forms). Other States and Territories will have equivalent policies to be abided by.
- In addition to this, teachers have the responsibility to exercise proper care and supervision throughout the duration of the excursion. The duty of care of the teacher requires the reasonable steps to protect the student against risk of injury or harm that the teacher could reasonably foresee. The rules and regulations of the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT while within Park boundaries must also be abided by.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- Department of Education Occupational and Safety policy requires the completion of an Excursion self-inspection checklist (also found via the aforementioned link) prior to any excursion. The site-specific information provided below should assist you in completing this checklist.

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**IN AN EMERGENCY
CONTACT THE POLICE**

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 (recommended 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.
- 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)	Sept to Dec (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 Gurriluk campgrounds. There are water tanks in several locations along the Southern Walking Tracks. We advise treating all drinking water taken from natural sources.



Saltwater crocodiles may be present in waterways within the Katherine region. Only enter the water in designated swimming areas.

Flying Foxes and other bats may carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus. Do not touch bats.

Please Remember

- Keep to designated roads and tracks.
- All historic, cultural items and wildlife are protected.
- Pets are not permitted.
- Generators are not permitted.
- Bins are provided in the campground. Day users must take your rubbish with you.
- There is limited phone coverage.
- Do not feed native animals.
- Drones are not permitted

Nitmiluk National Park

NT Maps on the Go



Download the **Avenza Maps App** on your device whilst you are still in range to find the FREE local park map you need.

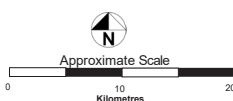
Once downloaded, the maps can be used without a network connection. Your device's built in GPS will plot your real-time location within the park onto the map. These GPS enabled maps will assist you to stay on track.

Leliyn (Edith Falls)

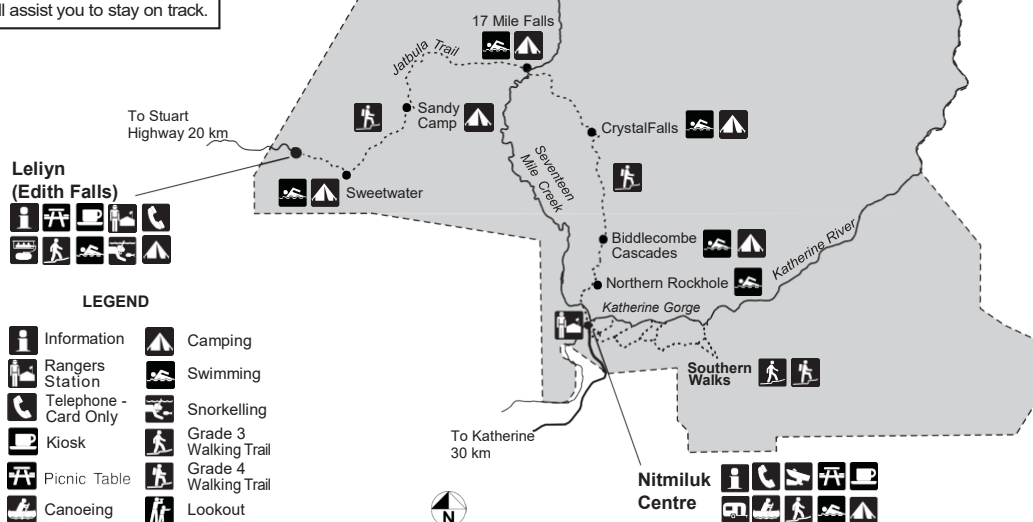


LEGEND

	Information		Camping
	Rangers Station		Swimming
	Telephone - Card Only		Snorkelling
	Kiosk		Grade 3 Walking Trail
	Picnic Table		Grade 4 Walking Trail
	Canoeing		Lookout
	Boat ramp		BBQ's
	Caravan Parking		
	Watercourse		
	Walking Track		

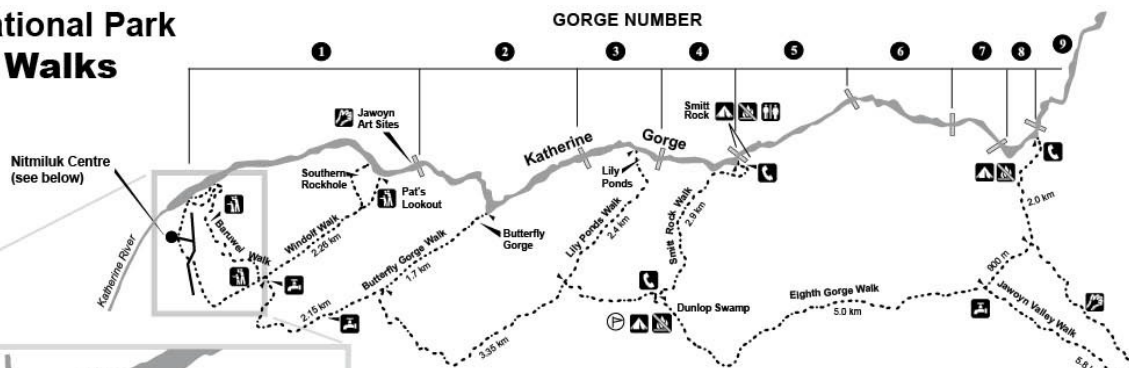


Nitmiluk National Park



Nitmiluk National Park Southern Walks

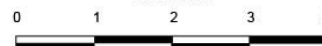
GORGE NUMBER



Toilets only at Smitt Rock campsite. At all other sites please bury waste at a depth of 30 cm, well away from campsites and waterways.



KILOMETRES



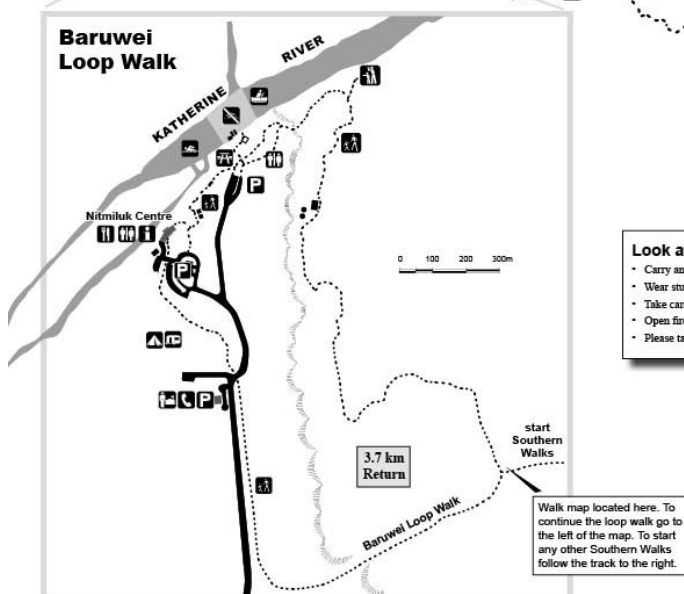
Legend

	Information		Emergency Call Device
	Water		Checkpoint
	Camping		Jawoyn Art Sites
	Caravans		Walking Track
	Toilets		Lookout
	Picnic tables		Canoeing
	No fires		Swimming
	Kiosk		No swimming
	Ranger Station		Rock Bars
	Parking		

Look after yourself and the Park

- Carry and drink at least three litres of water each day.
- Wear sturdy shoes, a hat and sunscreen.
- Take care on the steep tracks and loose rocks.
- Open fires are not permitted in the Park.
- Please take all your rubbish out with you.

Baruwei Loop Walk



Walk map located here. To continue the loop walk go to the left of the map. To start any other Southern Walks follow the track to the right.

Things to do... incorporate activities such as an evening spotlight walk, snorkeling, a tracks and traces search or a morning bird watch into your park visit.

Always remember to check with the Parks website before you head on out as seasonal changes in water levels may close some areas of Katherine Gorge.

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.

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 Department of Education 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 two 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 and linking tracks to places of interest, is a great way to explore the more remote areas of the park.

Jatbula Trail, 62km, 5-6 day one-way wilderness trail leading from Katherine Gorge to Leliyn/ Edith Falls. All equipment must be carried, bookings are essential, limited and can be made via the online booking system.

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

Guided Talks

Tap into local knowledge... Community Engagement Officer may be available to provide a short talk to your group on a nominated subject. Visit the website and fill in a booking form or call (08) 8973 8865.

Nearby locations

Leliyn / Edith Falls	Also within Nitmiluk National Park, 40km north of Katherine
Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Reserve	A limestone cave, tours available through Nitmiluk Tours
Elsay National Park	100km south of Katherine near Mataranka
Katherine Museum	Insights into Katherine region history including WWII
Katherine Visitor Centre	Information on other tourism and visitor experiences in the Katherine area

Visit www.nt.gov.au/parks for more information.

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 is 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. The Northern Territory Government 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. Nitmiluk 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. 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.



For more information contact:

Katherine Community Engagement Officer: (08) 8973 8865

Katherine Parks Office: (08) 8973 8888

Email: CommunityEngagementPW@nt.gov.au