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.

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

This guide contains information to support excursions to two sections of Casuarina Coastal Reserve -

• Casuarina Beach between Rapid Creek and Free Beach
• Lee Point to Buffalo Creek

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 Darwin at parkmanagement.pwcnt@nt.gov.au

Casuarina Coastal Reserve

The picturesque Casuarina Coastal Reserve protects approximately 1500 ha of coastal habitats between the estuaries of Rapid Creek and Buffalo Creek. It features 8 km of sandy beaches, dramatic cliffs and shady casuarina trees.

The beach areas, especially near Buffalo Creek, are important resting and feeding areas for wading birds including migratory birds. Marine turtles, mainly Flatbacks, nest on the beach.

Casuarina Coastal Reserve has several day use areas with toilet and BBQ facilities.

The reserve is open year round.
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 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/Reserve/Garden 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.

SAFETY and COMFORT
• Observe park safety signs.
• 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.
• All major mobile providers have coverage in this area.
• Do not feed native animals.

Annual Temperatures in Darwin
April to September (Dry season)  October to March (Wet season)
Average Daytime Min/Max: 20-30°C  Average Daytime Min/Max: 26-33°C
Average rainfall for the area is approximately 1700 mm per annum and occurs between October and April.

FACILITIES
PICNIC AREAS - There are picnic areas at Dripstone Cliffs, Dripstone Park, Lee Point and Buffalo Creek with free gas BBQ’s, tables, lawns and shade. Rapid Creek, Dripstone Cliffs and Dripstone Park have large undercover shelters. These areas also have large, grassy areas for younger students to play on. A playground is available at Dripstone park.

TOILETS - There are toilets (all with disabled access) at Rapid Creek, Dripstone Cliffs, Dripstone Picnic Area, Miyimining (Free Beach Car Park), Lee Point and Buffalo Creek.

DRINKING WATER - There is drinking water at Rapid Creek, Dripstone Cliffs, Dripstone Picnic Area, Miyimining (Free Beach Car Park), Lee Point and Buffalo Creek.

Please Remember
• Keep to designated roads and tracks.
• All historic, cultural items and wildlife are protected.
• Fires are not permitted, use the gas BBQ’s provided.
• Dogs and horses are permitted in the reserve, regulations apply.
• Camping is not permitted.
• Bins are provided in the picnic areas. Encourage your students to take their rubbish with them.
• Do not feed native animals.

Box Jellyfish are common between October and May, but have been recorded throughout the year. Their stings can be deadly.

Saltwater Crocodiles are removed from Darwin Harbour through an ongoing crocodile management program, however they may enter the area undetected - Be Crocwise.
So you’ve decided to go! Here is some further information to help plan your excursion...

Casuarina Coastal Reserve, what’s it all about?

The Larrakia people speak for this area and maintain links with the land and its sacred sites. Darriba Nungalinya, also known as Old Man Rock, sacred to the Larrakia people this large rock is situated in the waters just off Casuarina Beach. The Larrakia people believe that Darriba Nungalinya is an old man who resides in the rock and whose spirit, when aroused or upset by the actions of humans, wreaks havoc by way of a meteorological event, such as a severe storm or cyclone.

Although set aside primarily for recreation, Casuarina Coastal Reserve protects natural and cultural values which are important to the people of Darwin. The reserve supports a wide variety of coastal habitats that are typical of the Top End. The main vegetation communities include monsoon vine forest, mangrove, eucalypt woodlands, paper bark, grassland and pandanus communities. The reserve boundaries extend past the low water mark to include some of the best expanses of sea grass in Darwin Harbour. These sea grass meadows provide important feeding grounds for dugongs.

The reserve has remnants of 10 World War II observation posts with the Sandy Creek Observation Post being a declared heritage site. The Reserve also contains a concrete bunker, concrete cistern and remnants of a corduroy crossing.

Suggested excursion themes

Coastal Processes

The coastal zone of the reserve is highly dynamic in nature. The whole of the Reserve, with the exception of the area above Dripstone Cliffs and Dripstone Caves, is located within the primary or secondary storm surge zone. Previous cyclones have caused severe erosion of the dune system. It has also seen extensive sand mining in the past. Important sea grass beds are located in the shallow waters of the reserve, so water quality and erosion prevention are important.

Culture, heritage and history

Casuarina Coastal Reserve has a rich cultural history. Larrakia people traditionally used the reserve for bush tucker, hunting and shelter. Sacred and significant sites include Darriba Nungalinya (Old Man Rock), visible at low tide from Dripstone Cliffs lookout. The reserve has several locations of World War II ruins.

Environment / Nature

A visit to Casuarina Coastal Reserve can include investigations into marine ecology, coastal ecosystems, animal and plant adaptation or different aspects of land management such as the impact of visitation, the use of fire or the management of weeds and feral animals can also be studied. The reserve is an interesting site for marine studies because the large tidal differences expose large sections of beach and reef, perfect for beach combing or rock pool rambles. The beach also provides a place to observe and study migrating birds.

Get Active!

Walks at Casuarina Coastal Reserve are easy, catering for every age group. Walk along the Rocklands drive walkthrough to see deciduous monsoon vine forest and mangrove communities, or along the Lee Point to Buffalo Creek trail and visit the bird hide. There are also numerous bike trails throughout the reserve.

Creative Arts

The landscape, colours and shapes often serve as inspiration for budding artists. Lookouts provide areas to capture the wide landscape. Please remember that any commercial filming and photography on park must be in line with PWCNT permit policies visit our website for more information.

EXTERNAL SOURCES

See pages 6 and 7 for specific activities and information for your visit, here are some external links that may provide further information.

www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au

www.facebook.com/ParksandWildlifeNT

Casuarina Coastal Reserve Visitor Fact sheet
Learn and Discover

There are many different resources and supporting materials available to enhance the Casuarina Coastal Reserve school excursion experience. Use the natural classroom for hands on learning! The best way to introduce students to the reserve’s inhabitants is to learn facts about the local plants and animals before visiting. Incorporate this into your pre-visit learning to make the most of your time on park, then take lessons out into the environment and learn new skills.

Animals
There are about 266 native animal species recorded in the reserve including at least 10 threatened animal species. The reserve is also home to many different insects, crustaceans and molluscs. About 213 species of birds have been recorded in the area with Lee Point, Sandy Creek and Buffalo Creek being recognised as nationally and internationally important sites for migratory and resident shorebirds. The reserve is a nesting area for several marine turtle species.

Suggested reference; “Birds and Animals of Australia’s Top End: Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, and Kununurra” by N Leseberg & Iain Campbell

“Birds of the Darwin Region” by N McCrie, R Noske

Plants
There are about 273 native plant species recorded in the Reserve, including two threatened flora species - *Cycas armstrongii* and *Stylidium ensatum*. Several vegetation communities exist in the reserve including monsoon vine forest, mangrove, eucalypt woodlands, paper bark, grassland, pandanus and sea grass communities.

“Plants of Northern Territory Monsoon Vine Forest” by G. Wightman and M. Andrews

“Common Plants of Australia’s Top End” by D. Napier, N. Smith, L. Alford and J. Brown

Geology
Interesting geological features in the Reserve include the eroded siltstone cliffs and caves (Dripstone Cliffs and Dripstone Caves) and fossil deposits located within the bedrock of some of the Reserve’s offshore reefs. The soils and dunes in most of the Reserve are highly susceptible to disturbance and erosion where vegetation cover is removed along drainage lines and in areas influenced by storm activity such as fore dunes.

Historical information
Gurambai (Rapid Creek) is an area traditionally cared for by the Larrakia people. In the past Gurambai provided them with food, shelter, timber, medicine, fibre, dye and as a natural calendar. During World War II a number of observation posts and defence positions were established along Casuarina beach, as part of Darwin’s coastal defence network.

“Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War (Australian Army History)” by P Dean

Organise a visit to The Defence of Darwin Experience - www.defenceofdarwin.nt.gov.au

Community
The Reserve is used for many purposes by different stakeholders ranging from sporting clubs, schools and Charles Darwin University. The Casuarina Coastal Reserve Landcare Group is a committed group of local residents who volunteer their time to assist the Parks and Wildlife Commission in protecting and enhancing the natural values in the Reserve. They have been actively involved in the Reserve since 1997.

Facebook - Friends of Casuarina Coastal Reserve
Try activities like searching for tracks and traces, a shell survey on the beach, or take the class on an evening spotlight walk or a morning bird watch to practice skills in wildlife spotting. Incorporate these or other activities into your park visit, there are many resources currently available online with tips and ideas for outdoor learning.

Walks and Experiences

**TRAIL WALKS**

**Rocklands Drive walkthrough**, < 1 km, 20 min, EASY (one way). Leading through monsoon vine forest and along a short boardwalk through mangroves this track leads to an area of Atlas Moth habitat that is currently being rehabilitated.

**Unnamed Walk**, 4.6 km (one way), EASY. Stretching from the Free Beach to Lee Point a shared bike and walking trail passes through a variety of habitats.

**Coastal Walk**, 1 km, 30min, Easy (one way). Starting at Lee Point this short trail travels past hind dunes, across salt pans and through stands of Casuarina trees and mangroves before finishing in a section of monsoon vine forest. Can be walked in reverse from Buffalo Creek.

**BEACH WALKS**

**Rapid Creek to Sandy Creek**, 4.6 km (one way). This section of beach starts at the mouth of Rapid creek and goes past the Dripstone Cliffs and Surf Lifesaving Club to the mouth of Sandy Creek. **Note**, 400m of this walk goes through a clothing optional area. A walking trail behind the beach bypasses this section of beach.

**Lee Point to Sandy Creek**, 1.7 km (one way). Marine turtles sometimes lay their eggs on this beach, keep an eye open for turtle tracks in the sand.

**Lee Point to Buffalo Creek**, 1.7 km (one way). Dog free zone and resting area of Migratory birds. Interesting rock formations exposed on low tide.

**MIGRATORY BIRD OBSERVATION**

**Coastal walk**, 300m (one way) to bird hide from Buffalo Creek, 5 min, EASY, wheelchair access along gravel path. Lee Point and Buffalo Creek are an important stopover along the East Asian-Australasian flyway. Over the wet season nearly 30 species of migratory shorebirds can be seen in this location. Some of these migratory species travel enormous distances, coming from Alaska and Siberia.

**BIKE RIDING**

**Casuarina Coastal Reserve Mountain Bike Trails**, 2.3 km (in total). The newly upgraded trail network at Lee Point provides opportunities to include bike hike excursions of the reserve. Five trails of varying degrees of difficulty are available. A map of the trail network can be found at [www.nt.gov.au/leisure/recreation/mountain-biking/casuarina-coastal-reserve](http://www.nt.gov.au/leisure/recreation/mountain-biking/casuarina-coastal-reserve)

The Territory Parks Alive program of Ranger guided talks and walks are conducted from May to September. Visit the [Parks and Wildlife website](http://www.nt.gov.au) to view the current program.

**Tap into local knowledge** - Schedule a discussion into the visit! Community Engagement Officers or Park Rangers may be available to provide a short talk to your group on a nominated subject, providing Ranger availability. Visit the [Parks and Wildlife website](http://www.nt.gov.au) and fill in a booking form or contact the Community Engagement Officer on 08 8999 4432 or ParkManagement.Pwcnt@nt.gov.au

Nearby locations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holmes Jungle</td>
<td>A wildlife refuge close to urban areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Darwin National Park</td>
<td>Discover an area rich in WWII history and Mangrove communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Springs Nature Reserve</td>
<td>Play in the adventure area and explore the rainforest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory Wildlife Park</td>
<td>See many Top End native animals up close.</td>
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Need Help? Or more information? Contact the Darwin Community Engagement Officer at parkmanagement.pwcnt@nt.gov.au

We may be able to contribute ideas towards enhancing your excursion program.