



Park Entry / Charles Darwin National Park

EXCURSION GUIDE

Charles Darwin National Park

Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory

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QUICK VIEW...

Getting there

Travel east from Darwin city, along Tiger Brennan Drive.

Highway signs identify the entrance at Winnellie (opposite Bowen Rd), about 5.5 km from the city. Turn south through the gates.

Buses can access the day use area.

Contact

Darwin Parks Office
(08) 8999 4555

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 Charles Darwin National Park.

See you out there!

Provide feedback

Provide feedback on this excursion guide by contacting the Community Engagement Officer in Darwin on (08) 8999 4432.

Charles Darwin National Park

Charles Darwin National Park is a small gem close to the centre of Darwin. The park has national significance for its ecological diversity and Aboriginal and World War Two history. It also protects part of the Port of Darwin wetland, one of Australia's most important wetlands. 36 of the Territory's 51 mangrove species are found in the park.

Charles Darwin National Park has a large day use area with an information shelter, toilet and barbecue facilities. There is a lookout that provides wonderful views of city, the harbour and its wetlands.

The park is open daily from 8am to 7pm.

Annual Temperatures in Darwin

April to September (Dry season)
Average Daytime Min/Max: 20-30°C

October to March (Wet season)
Average Daytime Min/Max: 26-33°C

Average rainfall for the area is approximately 1700 mm per annum and occurs between October and April.



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 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.
- 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
- It is highly recommended insect repellent be worn at all times.
- All major mobile providers have coverage in this area.
- Do not feed native animals.



Biting Insects are common all year but certain tides and moon phases increase their numbers. Teachers are advised to download a copy of the biting insect calendar from the NT Department of Health website.



Saltwater Crocodiles are removed from Darwin Harbour through an ongoing crocodile management program, however they may enter the area undetected.

FACILITIES

PICNIC AREA

There is a designated picnic area in the park with free barbecues, tables, lawns and tree shade.

TOILETS

Are located in the picnic area and have disabled access.

DRINKING WATER

Taps and drinking fountains are located in the picnic area only.

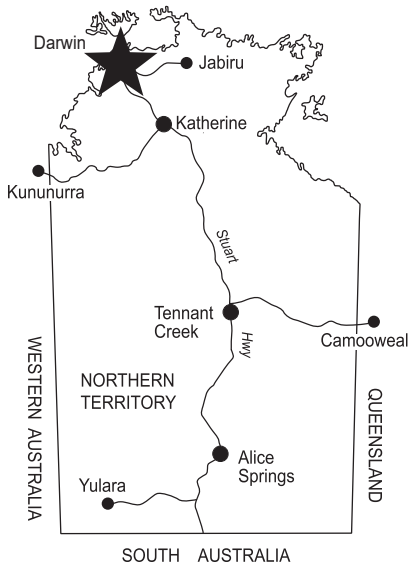
WWII Bunker Display - An overview of Darwin's role in the Pacific War. Free Entry, open 8 am - 7 pm daily. Located along the access road between the park entrance and picnic area.

Please Remember

- Keep to designated roads and tracks.
- All historic, cultural items and wildlife are protected.
- Fires are not permitted, use the gas barbecues provided.
- Dogs and horses are not permitted in the reserve.
- Camping is not permitted.
- Bins are provided in the picnic area. Encourage your students to take their rubbish with them.
- Do not feed native animals.
- Drones are not permitted.

Charles Darwin National Park

Locality Map

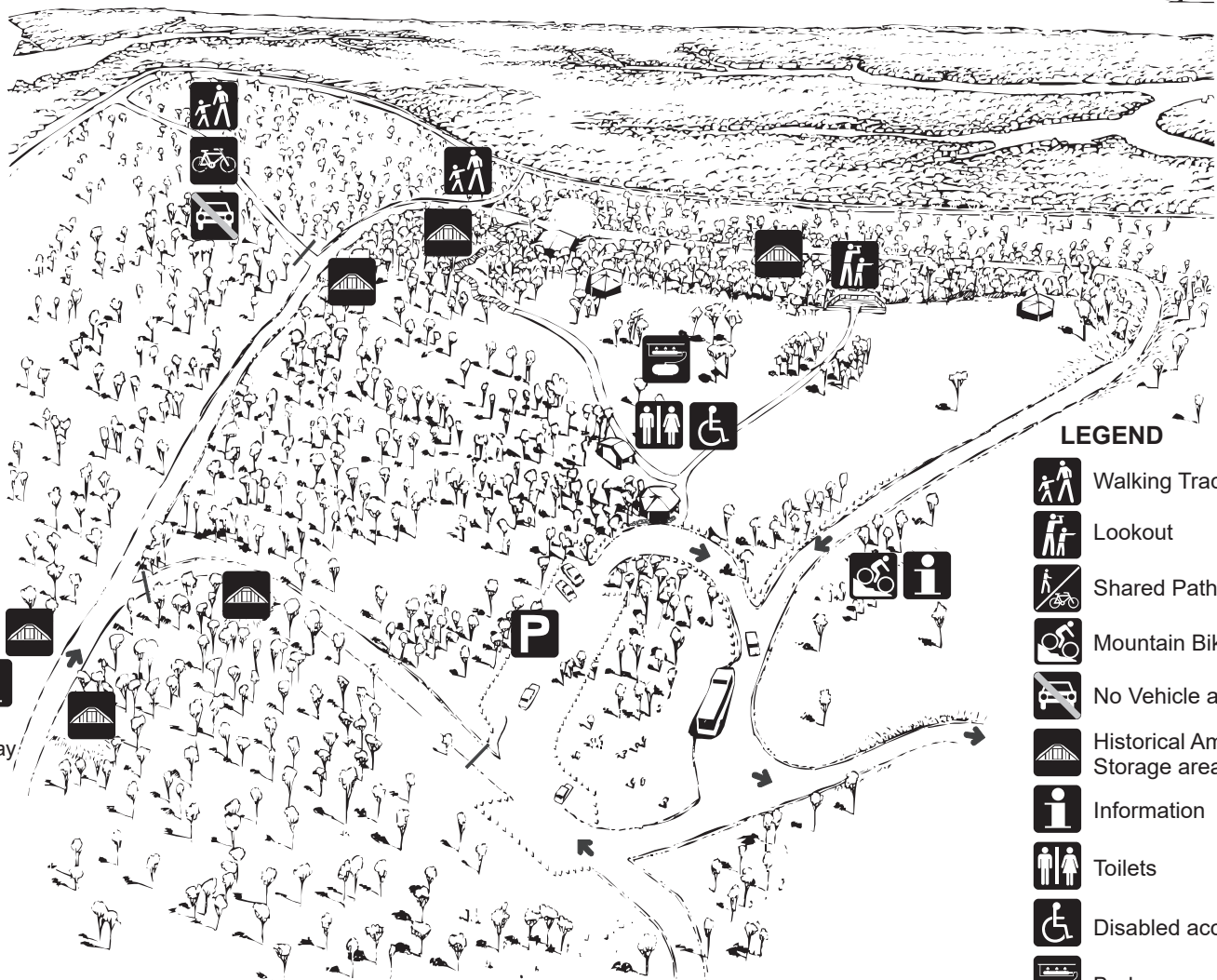
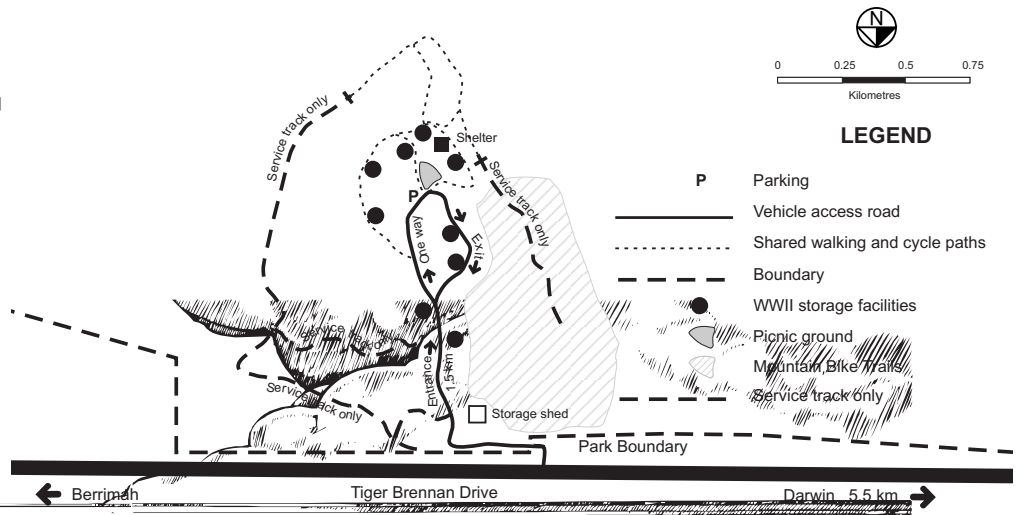


NT Maps on the Go



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.



LEGEND

- Walking Track
- Lookout
- Shared Path
- Mountain Bike Trail
- No Vehicle access
- Historical Ammunition Storage areas
- Information
- Toilets
- Disabled access
- Barbecue
- Parking

Things to do... incorporate activities like searching for tracks and traces, a vegetation survey, or a morning birdwatch to practice skills in wildlife spotting.

TRAIL WALKS



Mangrove Walk, 1.6 km, 40 min, Moderate (return). Mangrove communities are often made up of obvious zones which run parallel to the shore. Each zone is likely to be dominated by one particular tree species which has adapted to specific environmental characteristics. This walk takes you from the picnic area down into the mangroves community where you will see distinct zonation of the mangrove environment. Keen eyed students will also see the various animals that call mangroves home. Make sure everyone is wearing shoes that can get muddy as well as insect repellent.

Service Trail Walk, 1.6 km, 30min, Moderate (Loop Walk). Starting at the picnic area this walk follows the maintenance trail underneath the lookout, past World War II infrastructure and through eucalypt woodland. Possible themes for this walk could include fire management, weeds or war history.

WORLD WAR II BUNKER DISPLAY



880m along parks access road from entrance. All abilities access. Housed in one of the ammunition storage bunkers, this display tells the story of World War II and the role the Top End played during the war, from the attacks on Darwin to ultimate victory. There are also replica displays of equipment and ammunitions used during the war. Make sure to look at the doors to see bullets holes left by attacking aircraft.

MOUNTAIN BIKING



Charles Darwin National Park Mountain Bike Trails, 4.1 km (in total). There are several trails in Charles Darwin National Park that are for mountain bike riders only. You can test your skills on the Wirraway Trail, which winds through the centre of the park.

Or you can try the more challenging Spitfire Trail, which is graded as 'difficult'. This trail is closed during the wet season. A map of the trail network can be found on the Parks website.

Guided Talks

Tap into local knowledge... Community Engagement Officers or Park Rangers 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 contact the Community Engagement Officer on (08) 8999 4432.

Nearby locations

Holmes Jungle	A refuge for many threatened plant and animal species
Casuarina Coastal Reserve	A popular reserve with long stretches of beach and walking trails
Howard Springs Nature Park	An area to play in the adventure area and explore the rainforest
Territory Wildlife Park	Provides the opportunity to see many of the NT animals up close

Visit www.nt.gov.au/parks or www.territorywildlifepark.com.au for more information.

Information to help plan your excursion...

Charles Darwin National Park, what's it all about?

Charles Darwin National Park is named after the great scientist and naturalist Charles Darwin, after whom the Port of Darwin and eventually the city of Darwin were named. The park is located minutes from Darwin city centre and provides an unique opportunity to conserve and enjoy, some of the cultural, heritage and natural values, which characterise the Top End coastal fringes within an urban setting.

The Park comprises extensive littoral and estuarine vegetation communities, a large portion of which are undisturbed mangrove forests merging with expansive mudflats that are exposed at low tide. Open woodland covering the undulating hills offer superb views from the escarpment ridge. Several Aboriginal shell middens and a number of World War II bunkers of cultural and historical significance are located in the Park. The creation of Charles Darwin National Park in 1997 was a major step toward the protection of these values, while at the same time providing an important natural recreation area close to the city centre.



Suggested excursion themes

Life in the Mangroves

Mangroves have specialised adaptations enabling them to grow and reproduce in demanding conditions. High levels of salt, tidal inundation and wave action typify these challenging conditions. As well as examining the variety of mangrove species visible, students can also study the animal life. A variety of invertebrates, fish, birds and reptiles call the mangrove system home.

Scientific methods

There is opportunity for students to undertake habitat assessments and comparisons, vegetation transects, plant and bird identification

Culture, heritage and history

A visit to Charles Darwin National Park can include investigations into the history of the Darwin area. Ten shell middens have been identified in or adjacent to the mangroves within the Park indicating that the area was traditionally used as a gathering ground. Radiocarbon studies have identified the formation of the middens to be approximately 3000 years ago. There are many plants in the picnic area that have traditional uses such as food, medicine or tool making. Students can learn to identify plant species and their uses.

Get Active!

Teachers can use the park for outdoor education encompassing mountain biking, orienteering, cross country activities. The short walking tracks at Charles Darwin National Park are an ideal introduction into bushwalking for younger students.

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.



Learn and Discover

There are many different resources and supporting materials available to enhance the Charles Darwin National Park 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 parks inhabitants is to learn facts about the local environment before visiting. Incorporate this into your pre-visit to make the most of your time on park.

Mangroves



The mangrove communities of Darwin Harbour are a significant natural resource both locally and globally. The mangroves in the harbour are amongst the most diverse in Australia. Approximately 50 species are regarded as 'mangroves' worldwide, 36 of these occur naturally in Darwin Harbour. Mangrove ecosystems are associated with a high level of productivity which support complex plant communities. These in turn become the unique habitats that sustain extensive and varied populations of animals. The high level of biodiversity associated with mangroves is an important indicator in the need for conservation of these ecosystems.

"Mangroves of the Northern Territory, Australia: identification and traditional use " by G Wightman

"Mangroves in the Northern Territory" by NT Government

Plants and bushfood



The three major vegetation communities in the Park are, Eucalypt dominated woodland and open forest on the slopes and plateau, grassland and Pandanus in poorly drained areas, and mangroves in areas subject to tidal influence. A large number of Cycads are present in the woodland of the Park.

Several shell middens have been identified within the Park, indicating that the area has been traditionally used as a gathering ground. Many plants in the picnic area are common bushtucker plants.

"Bush Tucker Identikit" by G. Wightman and M. Andrews

"Bush Food" by J Isaacs

"Common Plants of Australia's Top End" by D. Napier, N. Smith, L. Alford and J. Brown

"Native Plants of Northern Australia" by J Brock and A Dunlop

World War II



The area, developed as an Explosive Ordnance Storage Area during World War II, was known as the Frances Bay RAAF Explosives Complex for many years. The construction of the complex just prior to and during the war years, was part of an initiative to establish Darwin as a major allied defensive and counter offensive base in the war against Japan. Eleven of the bunkers that housed the explosives during the war are still standing. Nine of these are set into the contours of the hills, the other two are free standing, all are covered with vegetated earth. They are all 'Armco' barrel vault constructions internally strengthened with tramway rails, possibly from tracks used at mines throughout the Territory at the turn of the century. One of the bunkers carries 12.7 mm diameter projectile entry and exit points which have been attributed to Japanese strafing in air attacks on Darwin.

"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



For more information contact:

Darwin Community Engagement Officer (08) 8999 4432

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