Trip Dossier

Coates Wildlife Tours
Specialist in Nature Tours since 1986

Northern Territory Birding & Nature Tour

Starts: Darwin 15 Sep 2026

Ends: Darwin 23 Sep 2026

Small Group Tour: Max 10 Passengers

Duration: 9-Days

Black-necked Stork - Credit Luke Paterson, NT Bird

Tour Highlights:

- Birdwatching at heritage-listed Fogg Dam
- Monsoon forest walks at East Point and Lee Point Reserves
- Discover Kakadu National Park's birdlife, Aboriginal culture, and ancient rock art
- Explore Mamukala Wetlands and Ramsar-listed floodplains
- Burrungkuy rock art and cultural stories
- Remote rock art sites in Kombolgie stone country
- Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre visit
- Nitmiluk National Park: Leliyn/Edith Falls walks and swimming
- Litchfield National Park: Florence Falls, Wangi Falls, Tabletop walk
- Savannah woodlands, cathedral termite mounds, and wildlife sightings

Experience the Top End's birdlife, wildlife and ancient landscapes.

Step into the timeless landscapes of Northern Australia's Top End, and this carefully crafted journey reveals the region's remarkable wildlife and the ancient stories etched into its land. Designed for nature enthusiasts, this intimate small-group journey is led by our Coates tour escort and an award-winning local naturalist. Expert guidance and personal insights are ensured at every step.

From the dazzling hues of the Gouldian Finch to the haunting calls of the Sandstone Shrike-thrush, you'll enjoy exceptional birding and wildlife opportunities, complemented by the insights of expert guides. Walk among ancient Aboriginal rock art sites, gaining a deeper understanding of the culture. Cruise Kakadu's Yellow Water Billabong, where lily-dappled wetlands teem with life.

Days unfold at an unhurried pace, with easy to moderate walks through sandstone escarpments, pockets of monsoon forest, and the tranquil waterholes of Litchfield National Park.

With its blend of natural history, cultural insight and gentle adventure, this journey offers more than just travel—it's a rare opportunity to truly experience the spirit of the Top End.

Azure Kingfisher - Credit Luke Preston, NT Brid

Itineray Outline

Day 1	Arrive Darwin
Day 2	Darwin and Surrounds
Day 3	Darwin to World Heritage Kakadu National Park.
Day 4 & 5	Kakadu National Park.
Day 6	Kakadu National Park to Pine Creek
Day 7	Pine Creek and Nitmiluk National Park
Day 8	Pine Creek to Darwin via Litchfield National Park.
Day 9	Depart Darwin.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrive Darwin, Northern Territory.

Arrive at Darwin International Airport and make your way to the Mercure Darwin Airport Resort. You can either take the resort's shuttle bus, available 24 hours by calling (08) 8920 3333, or walk the short 300-metre distance to the hotel.
In the evening, meet your local expert naturalist guide at the welcome dinner, where you'll also receive a tour briefing and get acquainted with fellow travellers.

Accommodation: Darwin Mercure Airport Hotel D

Day 2 – Darwin and Surrounds.

Start your day early with wildlife-watching around Darwin. Birdwatching spots will depend on tide conditions to maximise sightings of target species.
Visit East Point and Lee Point Reserves, known for their monsoon forest environments featuring both dense, dark forest and open areas. Here, you might spot species like the Rainbow Pitta and various shorebirds.
Continue to George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens, which offers a mix of monsoon forest and open parkland, where some bird species are used to human presence, providing great viewing opportunities. The gardens are also home to the Rufous Owl, the largest owl in the Top End region.

Accommodation**: Darwin Mercure Airport Hotel. Dinner at a local restaurant.** BLD

Day 3 – Darwin to World Heritage Kakadu National Park.

Before breakfast, we'll check out and head to the heritage-listed Fogg Dam near the Adelaide River. Here, we'll enjoy great birdwatching and wildlife spotting opportunities around the quality bird hides and nature tracks to explore this thriving wetland area.

We'll enjoy a picnic lunch among waterbirds, spiders, and Asian Water Buffalo. As we explore this biodiverse landscape, keep an eye out for species like the forest kingfisher, rose-crowned fruit-dove, rainbow pitta, lemon-bellied flycatcher, barking owl, and golden orb spider.

Our adventure continues as we venture through the Top End's vast savannah woodlands into the World Heritage Kakadu National Park.

Kakadu is Australia's largest land-based national park, and its incredible natural and cultural features include about one-third of Australia's bird species (280 species), more than 2,000 plant species, ancient Aboriginal cultures dating back 65,000 years, and stunning rock art.

We'll explore the ever-changing Mamukala Wetland and bird hide on the Ramsar-listed South Alligator floodplains, a fantastic spot for bush and water birds, including crimson finch, plumed and wandering whistling, magpie goose, glossy ibis, and Agile Wallaby. During the late dry season, this site is vital for large gatherings of magpie geese and migratory shorebirds.

For the next three nights, you'll be staying in Jabiru, Australia's first Aboriginal-owned township.

Accommodation: Aboriginal-owned Anbinik Kakadu Resort. A/C rooms, private external bathrooms. Dinner at a local restaurant. BLD

Day 4 - Kakadu National Park.

Today, we're ready for a day of cultural immersion in the Kakadu region, where your passionate local guide will take you on two private tours of rock art and occupation sites to discover unique and endemic wildlife and histories.

The morning starts in Kakadu's northern 'stone country', which borders Arnhem Land. It features stunning ancient Aboriginal rock art, along with chestnut-quilled Rock pigeons, rainbow pitta, partridge pigeon, and sandstone shrike-thrush. You might also catch a good glimpse of the Saltwater Crocodile when conditions are right, and have opportunities to spot the shy Wilkins rock wallaby.

After lunch and a quick refresh, we'll spend the rest of the day in the Burrungkuy region. Your guide will share quite different cultural histories and fascinating rock art stories compared to this morning's site while searching for endemic species of macropods and birds (black-banded fruit-dove, white-lined honeyeater, Arafura shrike-thrush, peregrine falcon, black wallaroo, and Leichardt's grasshopper). The area's stunning contrast between billabongs and sandstone offers an ideal setting for late-afternoon views.

Accommodation: Anbinik Kakadu Resort. Dinner at a local restaurant. BLD

Day 5 - Kakadu National Park.

This morning, you'll walk through dramatic Kombolgie stone country to reach remote rock art sites (up to 4 km return, easy to moderate walk). Look for endemic flora, birds such as Banded Fruit-Dove and White-lined Honeyeater, and mammals like Black Wallaroo.

This afternoon, you can rest and recharge at the lodge or take an optional walk around the township.

Accommodation: Anbinik Kakadu Resort. Dinner at a local restaurant. BLD

Day 6 – Kakadu National Park to Pine Creek.

Rise early to make the most of every minute of this morning's sunrise during your 2-hour boat cruise on the renowned Ramsar-listed wetlands of Yellow Water Billabong.

Key birds include little, azure, and sacred kingfisher, great-billed heron, brolga, comb-crested jacana, black bittern, radjah shelduck, white-bellied sea eagle, and whistling ducks, among many others. You might also encounter golden tree snakes, freshwater crocodiles, freshwater turtles, and non-native species such as wild buffalo and brumby (horses) remnant from pastoral days gone by.

After breakfast and a visit to the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre, we'll head back on the road and continue south. We'll scan the bush for the silver-backed butcherbird, black-breasted buzzard, mighty rare red goshawk, frill-necked lizard, and wild donkey.

Tonight, you'll stay in the historic gold rush town of Pine Creek. Spend time around the accommodation spotting colourful parrots, including the endemic hooded parrot and the beloved red-winged parrot, as well as northern rosella, cockatiel, and bush birds such as great bowerbird, red-backed fairywren, grey-crowned babbler, and red-backed kingfisher. Flying foxes are usually plentiful here.

Accommodation: Pine Creek Lazy Lizard, cabins. Dinner at a local restaurant. BLD

Day 7 – Pine Creek and Nitmiluk National Park.

Setting out at dawn, we go in search of the iconic and highly prized Gouldian finch, a real highlight for all wildlife enthusiasts. Along with this gorgeous finch, we'll look out for masked and long-tailed finches, northern rosellas, blue-winged kookaburras, and the impressive Australian bustard, making our savannah birding experience even more memorable.

You'll visit Leliyn/Edith Falls, where you can choose to take the 2km walk and swim at the top of the waterfall or explore the walks, swim, and relax at the plunge pool at Nitmiluk National Park. The afternoon is spent birding in and around Pine Creek township.

Accommodation: Pine Creek Lazy Lizard, A/C ensuite cabins. Dinner at a local restaurant. BLD

Day 8 – Pine Creek to Darwin via Litchfield National Park.

On our final full day of the Top End Birding and Nature Tour, we'll head back to the tropical areas of Darwin through Litchfield National Park.

Litchfield is home to several breathtaking waterfalls that flow into crystal-clear pools, iconic magnetic termite mounds, and clusters of weathered sandstone pillars. This ancient landscape has been shaped by both water and Aboriginal ancestral spirits, who remain present in the land, plants, and animals today.

Sites you'll visit include Florence Falls (optional swim and loop walk on the Tabletop), Wangi Falls waterfall viewing area, and the lowland boardwalk.

Before concluding our adventure in Darwin, we pass through savannah woodlands adorned with towering cathedral termite mounds. Keep your binoculars and cameras ready for sightings of species such as varied lorikeets, red-tailed black cockatoos, antillopine wallaroos, and even the occasional glimpse of a dingo.

You'll be farewelled by your local expert guide and join your tour leader for a farewell dinner.

Accommodation: Mercure Darwin Airport Resort. Dinner at a local restaurant at own expense. BL

Day 9 – Depart Darwin.

Today marks the end of your journey in the Northern Territory's Top End.

Depart at your leisure via airport shuttle. B

NOTE: The above itinerary may vary according to conditions and advice.

Tour Cost:

Cost:	AUD $8,765.00	Per Person Twin Share
	AUD $1,049.00	Single Supplement

Tour Payments

Deposit:	At the time of booking, AUD $2,000.00 per person
Final Payment:	On or before 1 August 2026

Notes:

- An escort from Coates and a local expert naturalist guide will accompany a group with **8 or more passengers**.
- For groups with **fewer than 8 passengers,** the tour will be led by the NT expert naturalist guide only.
- Flights between Australia and Darwin are NOT included.
- Prices are based on all known costs and current rates of exchange. Any significant changes beyond our control will be passed on to participants.
- All deposits and payments are non-refundable. We recommend taking out comprehensive travel Insurance.

Included

- Land content as set out in the itinerary
- Commercial tour vehicle and licence, driver and custom 4WD trailer
- Hotel and airport transfers
- All national park entrance fees
- Meals as per itinerary: breakfast (B), lunch (L), dinner (D)
- Spotting scope, field guides and bird list.

Not Included

- Travel expenses to and from Darwin
- Travel insurance (very strongly recommended)
- Pre and post-tour accommodation
- Entrance fees or activity costs other than those included in the itinerary.
- All other private expenses (e.g. laundry, telephone calls, camera batteries)
- Restaurant/café beverages and alcoholic beverages
- Room Service, towels for swimwear
- Items not listed on the itinerary

Tour Information

Coates Escort: Tom Grove (Director)

Specialist Guide Jamie Smith - Morvell

Join passionate birder, herper and wildlife photographer Jamie Smith-Morvell in the Top End as he helps you seek out memorable bird and wildlife sightings in some of Australia's most biodiverse regions. Highly recommended by past guests, Jamie's keen eye and enthusiasm for nature make this an ideal tour for anyone who loves birds, reptiles and unique wildlife encounters.

Itinerary:
While every effort is made to follow the itinerary, we reserve the right to adjust it when necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of our guests and crew.

Accommodation:
Accommodation styles and standards can differ in remote areas. All rooms are air-conditioned and have private bathrooms.
If you prefer a single room, a single supplement will apply. When booking a twin room, please specify if you want a one-bed or two-bed room at the time of booking.

Meals:
The itinerary includes all meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). We can accommodate special dietary requirements with prior notice. Please contact the office if you have special dietary needs, as a surcharge may apply.

Physical Requirements:
Walks range from easy to moderate. You need to be at least moderately fit to walk over uneven terrain for up to 1-6 kilometres in warm weather while carrying your own gear and water.
All walks are optional and can be taken at your own pace.

Weather:
In the Northern Territory during September, the weather is usually warm and sunny as it signals the start of the dry season. You can expect plenty of sunshine and temperatures ranging from 23°C to 33°C during the day, while nights stay around 23°c. Humidity levels tend to be low, and there is little rainfall, making it a comfortable time for outdoor activities. Breezy mornings are common, but overall, the weather remains clear and dry throughout the month. This is the perfect time for exploring natural landscapes and wildlife without the heavy rains typical of the wet season.

Clothing:
A suggested list of items to bring on the tour will be included with our pre-departure information, which will be sent to you about one month before departure. However, we recommend wearing comfortable casual clothing. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes or boots are essential.

For full Terms and Conditions, please check the FAQ page on our website.

To make a booking or for further information, please contact us.

Coates Wildlife Tours

"Specialist in nature tours since 1986"

P.O. Box 1208, Booragoon, WA 6954
Mobile: Sylvia Grove 0400 218 169
Mobile: Tom Grove 0414 958 266

Email: coates@iinet.net.au

Plumed Whistling Ducks - Credit Luke Preston, NT Brid Specialists