

# The Top End Tour STAGE 1

## Darwin to Katherine (Stage 1)

Thursday 23 May, 2019 to Wednesday 29 May, 2019

### Day to Day

Imagine waking up in the early daylight and looking around and wondering where you are. You may have just spent the night under an impossibly starry sky in the great Australian outback, a lodge on the banks of a legendary river, or a donga room in a remote roadhouse. Either way, you want to get up and get on your bike again ready for another day on this legendary AllTrails long-haul cycle tour from Darwin to Broome.

After a hearty breakfast you head on your way as the AllTrails team load your luggage and head up the road to set up your morning tea. The food breaks are at set times enabling all riders to plan their day and the amount of time required to enjoy the sights along the way before arriving at the next food break.

You depart morning tea with a clear focus and understanding of the next leg of the day to lunch which is arranged and/or prepared by our crew. Lunch is a great time to relax, refuel your body and chat to your friends, be it in a bakery, a country pub, the rest area of a remote highway, overlooking a river, or deep in a National Park.

Our safety and support vehicles are never far away, one trailing the group as a warning to motorists of the cycling group ahead, and at least one other vehicle travelling among and ahead of the group preparing the food stops, arranging directional signage where required and being on-call for cyclists with mechanical failures or other requirements.

We have 2-way radio communications with trucks and other large vehicles on the road to further increase safety for our cyclists as well as first-aid qualified, and bike mechanic qualified staff. Safety is our number one priority and we strive to make each day as safe as possible - another great advantage of cycling on a tour with AllTrails.

After reaching your overnight destination, usually mid-afternoon, you check in and enjoy a cuppa and snack, shower, or soak in the bath. Sometimes there is a pool for you to lounge around and cool off in, or you may decide to explore the surroundings, go for a walk, share a cold drink with friends or simply relax. It is your life, it's your ride, enjoy it.

A briefing for all cyclists at 6pm before the evening meal is always interesting, finding out what happened that day, and a run-down on the sights and special attractions to look out for the next day. Lots of laughs and stories are shared before we settle down to a good healthy meal and a few drinks. The famous camaraderie developed on an AllTrails bike ride lasts a lifetime.

Bedtime is not far away, where you put your head down remembering the day and dreaming of tomorrow...

### A typical day on the ride:

- Breakfast 7am, Depart 8am
- Ride 30-50km to morning tea around 9-10am, half hour stop, usually on the side of the road. Coffee/tea with home-made biscuits, slice, fresh fruits, served up, of course, with some entertaining banter and fun.
- Ride 30-50km to lunch around 12-1pm. Half hour to an hour, often in a bakery or cafe.
- Ride 30-50km to our overnight accommodation, usually arriving around 3pm. Check-in, make a cup of tea or have a drink by the pool, or a soak in the bath. Explore the town or visit the local attractions.
- Evening briefing at 6pm with lots of laughs and stories about today's ride and safety tips for tomorrow.
- Dinner at 6:30pm – usually at the motel restaurant.
- Free time and off to bed!

Location	Distance	Date	B	L	D	A
Darwin (meeting day)	NA	Wed 22 May 2019	--	--	Y	Y
Darwin to Annaburroo	148 or 101k	Thu 23 May 2019	Y	Y	Y	Y
Annaburroo to Jabiru	141 or 98km	Fri 24 May 2019	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jabiru to Yellow Water	53km	Sat 25 May 2019	Y	Y	Y	Y
Yellow Water (rest day)	NA	Sun 26 May 2019	Y	--	--	Y
Yellow Water to Pine Creek	164 or 107k	Mon 27 May 2019	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pine Creek to Katherine	129 or 68km	Tue 28 May 2019	Y	Y	Y	Y
Katherine (rest day)	NA	Wed 29 May 2019	Y	--	Y	Y
Total distance cycled	635km		7	5	7	8
Average daily distance	127km					

Meal and accom inclusions noted as B, L, D, A (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Accommodation)

### **Darwin (meeting day) — NA — Wed 22 May 2019 — - - D A**

Day 1: Meeting day. Darwin is a fascinating tropical city - a melting pot of people and cultures that prides itself on its unique and friendly laid-back lifestyle. While a sophisticated, modern city in its own right, it is also one steeped in history, being on the front line of both WWII and cyclone Tracy, which left the town uninhabitable. It has bounced back on both occasions to become the vibrant capital that it is today. Get here early to enjoy the history, aboriginal art scene and excellent hospitality.

This afternoon we will have a ride registration, check over your bike, meet and greet the group and have your pre-departure briefing. In the evening we invite you to join the staff and fellow riders at a nearby restaurant for a welcome dinner. Both dinner and accommodation are included in your tour price.

### **Darwin to Annaburroo — 148 or 101km — Thu 23 May 2019 — B L D A**

Day 2: The Ride begins! And what a day to start off with - filled to the brim with highlights, action and adventure. Riding out of Darwin, we follow the quiet back roads as they open up to the Top-End landscape and its iconic burnt patches from recent dry season fires and the fresh green growth of Darwin Woolly-butt, Stringy Bark, and Bloodwood trees that follow. At 50km we stop in at the gorgeous Berry Springs Nature Park, a popular swimming and picnic area with several pools and a small waterfall fed by crystal clear spring water and surrounded by natural bush. We'll give you as much time as we can here for a longer-than-usual morning tea break for you to refresh before turning north east and rolling out another 50km before our lunch stop at Wak Wak. Here, if time allows, you can enjoy the famous 'Jumping Crocodile Cruise' - yes, the one that you have seen on TV where the croc jumps out of the water to eat the dangling meat held out on a stick by a Park Ranger.

This afternoon you are on the home straight with the last 50km into Annaburroo where you can kick back and relax at the Mary River Wilderness Retreat - a friendly and welcoming retreat with lovely grounds, lots of birdlife and a couple of swimming pools to choose from as you relax into your afternoon. Tonight we have our nightly group briefing and dinner together to celebrate the first day on the bike and the start of our top end journey.

### **Annaburroo to Jabiru — 141 or 98km — Fri 24 May 2019 — B L D A**

Day 3: Today is the day that you hit Kakadu! There is magic in the air as you find yourself immersed in this region of natural beauty and ancient cultural history. The kilometres will sail past as you follow the bitumen that winds through the famous Australian outback landscape. It's something special to be cycling in the outback - the vast sky and land, the harsh environment, the tough animals that somehow survive out here, and the plant life that has customised itself to the location. It looks great from the road but you know that hiding behind it all are the stunning natural treasures that you will discover in the coming days as you work your way through Kakadu.

Jabiru is at the end of the Arnhem Hwy as the road turns south west and becomes the Kakadu Hwy. Our overnight accommodation is the unique 'Crocodile Hotel' - one of the world's most distinctive hotels, shaped (from a birds-eye view) like a saltwater crocodile. Besides the novelty of the buildings, it's a great place to stay with plenty of resort facilities, a swimming pool (located at the 'heart' of the Crocodile), and a collection of indigenous art including paintings and didgeridoos, some available for purchase. Tonight we have our nightly group briefing and dinner together at the hotel.

### **Jabiru to Yellow Water — 53km — Sat 25 May 2019 — B L D A**

Day 4: It's a bit of a shorter ride today, which you will enjoy after some challenging distances over the last few days. This morning you can take it easy, enjoy your breakfast at a leisurely pace, take a wander around the grounds at the Croc Hotel, then head out on our 53km cycle to Yellow Water where we stay at the impressive Cooida Lodge. Again the scenery from the road is beautiful and so unique to this part of the world, but it's what lies beyond that awaits you at our next overnight stop.

Cooinda Lodge is a village style property located beneath a canopy of trees beside Yellow Water Billabong, home to world-renowned Yellow Water Cruises. Here you will see crocodiles (from a safe distance!) and birds on the flood plain amongst Paperbark, Pandanus and Fresh Water Mangroves - it's spectacular. With a relaxed resort atmosphere, this afternoon you can take a dip in the pool, check out the local crafts in the store or kick back at one of the bars. We do suggest having a look at the touring options available here as you won't want to miss out. Take up the opportunity this afternoon or plan for your rest day tomorrow.

#### **Yellow Water (rest day) — NA — Sun 26 May 2019 — B - - A**

Day 5: Cooinda Lodge is said to be 'The Ultimate Base to Explore Kakadu' and for that reason we had to stop here for a rest day. Your touring options are plentiful from the world renowned cruises on the Yellow Water Billabong to fishing tours to 4WD tours where you can explore deeper into the Kakadu National Park and see more of the highlights that are not accessible by paved road (and are therefore not as busy with visitors).

All of these tours can be booked at the lodge and we encourage you to make the most of this experience with a tour or two that piques your interest.

#### **Yellow Water to Pine Creek — 164 or 107km — Mon 27 May 2019 — B L D A**

Day 6: We hit the road early, and after your rest day you'll be rearing to go and ready to push through the kilometres out of Kakadu National Park and towards State Highway One, The Stuart Highway. This is the main road through the middle of the country, starting in Darwin in the north, travelling down through the Red Centre and Alice Springs, into South Australia to Port Augusta near Adelaide. Named after Scottish explorer John McDouall Stuart, who was the first European to cross Australia from south to north, the highway's 2800 kms approximates the route Stuart took.

As we reach the Stuart highway, we also reach Pine Creek, our overnight stop. This was the scene of a gold rush in the 1870's from which some timber and iron buildings still remain today. Ironically, the town was officially named Playford in 1889 after the South Australian Commissioner of Crown Lands. Playford's desire for immortality was misplaced and the town continued to be known as Pine Creek in spite of the government's attempt to honour him. After over 80 years, the town is now officially known by its original name. Worth a visit are the Railway Museum and the Old Repeater Station, Mining exhibition. Unfortunately, Ah Toy's Bakery and general store has closed down after 80 years but it's worth an internet search to read about the story.

#### **Pine Creek to Katherine — 129 or 68km — Tue 28 May 2019 — B L D A**

Day 7: Travelling out from Pine Creek the road becomes quite undulating, which is to be enjoyed before the flats of the Victoria Hwy, and the hillcrests also provide grand views over the beautiful tropical scenery. There are also many large termite (dirt) mounds, some are over 5 metres high. They are constructed by tiny insects that size-for-size, build structures that dwarf our own human constructions and very silently consume more grass than all of Australia's large herbivores combined!

We stop on the way at Edith Falls, a beautiful swimming and camping area with lovely paperbark and pandanus-fringed pools, before reaching the bustling town of Katherine, sitting proudly next to the Katherine River. Named by explorer John McDouall Stuart on his third and final attempt of his trans-continental crossing, it has long been a stopping point with the first permanent running water for thousands of kilometres for those travelling up from the south. The Katherine River is a mixed blessing however, causing plenty of floods and leaving the watermark up to 2m high on buildings all over town, as well as stories of crocodiles swimming down the main street. When you cross the bridge, which crosses one of the thirteen stunning gorges of the Katherine River your mind will boggle at how much water must pass through here to cause a wet season flood.

#### **Katherine (rest day) — NA — Wed 29 May 2019 — B - D A**

Day 8: Today is the rest day at the end of Stage One and the start of Stage Two so some cyclists may be coming and going today as they finish or begin their tour with us here. For those who are here all day we will be offering

transfers to Nitmiluk National Park where you can canoe, cruise and swim between sheer cliffs to the sandy freshwater beaches of the main gorges, and view ancient Aboriginal rock paintings high on the rock faces. Waterfalls and rock pools are found along walking tracks and for those looking for some high-time excitement; you can also explore the area by helicopter (activities are at your own cost).

There is also plenty to see in town, visit the Katherine School of the Air, the Outback Heritage Museum or relax by the natural spring-fed crystal-clear pool of the Katherine Hot Springs set in picturesque surroundings with lush green lawns, shady paperbarks and pandanas palms. For those who just cannot stay off the bike visit Springvale Homestead, 8 kilometres south-west of Katherine and the oldest original homestead in the Territory, built in 1879 by Alfred Giles the former Overland Telegraph linesman.

For those leaving today - thanks for joining us on this wonderful outback adventure. To read more about Stage Two and Three [click here](#).

