ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Australia

Kakadu NP & the Top End

29th August to 14th September 2022 (17 days)



Gouldian Finch by Jonathan Rossouw

Australia is a land of scenic beauty and stark, contrasting habitats, only eclipsed by its remarkable diversity of endemic mammals and brilliantly-coloured and elaborately-patterned endemic birds. This epic birding adventure across northern Australia takes in the Northern Territory's best birding and wildlife localities on a quest for a number of the continent's most range-restricted and seldom-seen endemics! The scenery is spectacular with vast areas of seemingly endless plains, extensive wetlands, and rugged, rocky mountains. We will explore the arid interior around Alice Springs for legendary Australian dry-country endemics such as Dusky Grasswren, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Orange Chat, Bourke's Parrot, Spinifexbird, Spinifex Pigeon, Pied Honeyeater, Western Bowerbird,

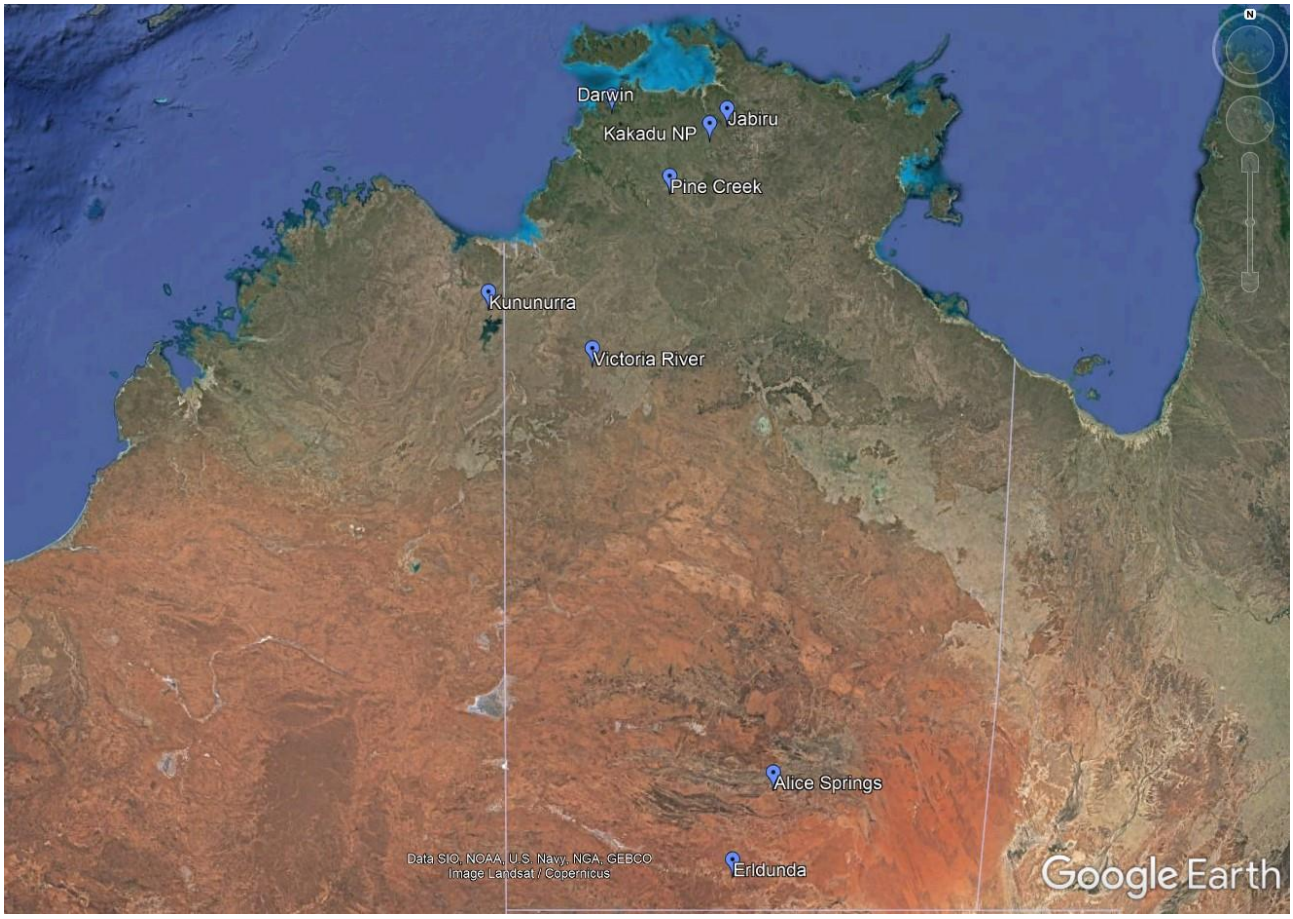
Banded White-face, Chiming Wedgebill, Inland Dotterel, Cinnamon Quail-Thrush and the magnificent Major Mitchell's Cockatoo. Thereafter, we journey up to the Darwin area and the tall woodlands and extensive, seasonal marshlands of Kakadu where highlights include Chestnut Rail, Rainbow Pitta, Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon, Banded Fruit Dove, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Hooded Parrot, Square-tailed Kite and Banded Honeyeater. Finally, we end in the remote Kimberley area where we hope to encounter mouth-watering rarities such as White-quilled Rock Pigeon, Yellow Chat, Pictorella Mannikin, the immaculate Masked, Long-tailed and Star Finches, the splendid Purple-crowned Fairywren, Brolga, Sandstone Shrike-Thrush and the rare and outrageously colourful Gouldian Finch. We will also, no doubt, be treated to a range of exciting mammals that should include an amazing selection of unique and varied kangaroos, wallabies and wallaroos while taking in our awe-inspiring and near-pristine surrounds.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Alice Springs**
Day 2	**Alice Springs area – Spinifex country**
Day 3	**Alice Springs area - West MacDonnell Ranges**
Day 4	**Alice Springs to Erldunda**
Day 5	**Erldunda to Alice Springs**
Day 6	**Alice Springs and fly to Darwin**
Day 7	**Darwin and surrounds**
Day 8	**Darwin to Jabiru (Kakadu National Park)**
Day 9	**Jabiru to Cooinda (Kakadu National Park)**
Day 10	**Cooinda to Pine Creek**
Day 11	**Pine Creek area**
Day 12	**Pine Creek to Victoria River**
Day 13	**Victoria River to Timber Creek**
Day 14	**Timber Creek area**
Day 15	**Timber Creek to Kununurra**
Day 16	**Kununurra area**
Day 17	**Kununurra and depart**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Dusky Grasswren by Jonathan Rossouw

Day 1: Arrival in Alice Springs. Today is set aside as an arrival day and you will be met this evening by your Rockjumper tour leader to discuss the very exciting days ahead over a delicious introductory dinner.

Days 2 & 3: Alice Springs and surrounds. We have two full days in the Alice Springs area to enjoy the fabulous array of outback specialities on offer in this unique landscape and habitat. This area is an excellent base from which to access a wonderful diversity of birds typical of Australia's arid interior. A large number of dry-country endemics occur in this area and in the days to come we will endeavour to track down as many of these specialities as possible.

Our birding excursions will take us into the unique spinifex habitat that occurs through much of the area and this endemic habitat is home to several sought-after endemics that include the skulking Dusky Grasswren. Grasswrens are endemic to Australia and are notoriously difficult to find but we do stand an excellent chance of seeing this target species along with the lovely Rufous-crowned Emu-wren that occupies the same habitat.

Spectacular White-winged and Splendid Fairywrens also occur here and we will also search for the nomadic but gorgeous Orange and Crimson Chats, as well as White-fronted Honeyeater, White-browed and Grey-crowned Babblers and the beautiful Red-capped Robin. In the heat of the day, we will return to Alice Springs to visit the famous Alice Springs Sewage Works, a veritable magnet for waterbirds in this thirsty landscape. Red-necked Avocet, Yellow-billed and Royal Spoonbills, Pink-eared Duck and Black-fronted Dotterel may be seen along with more retiring species like Baillon's Crake and with a lot of luck, the secretive Australian Spotted Crake. We'll also spend time birding in woodland areas near Alice looking for typical Australian interior species like Crested Bellbird and Hooded Robin and we may even encounter the very rare and elusive Grey Honeyeater. In the late afternoon, we will visit a nearby waterhole that will afford us views of common but no-less-lovely species such as the gaudy Galah and Common Bronzewing. These species will be watched coming in to drink



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo
by Glen Valentine



Pink-eared Ducks by Jonathan Rossouw

but our main target here will be one of the "outback's" star birds: the rare, localised and partially crepuscular Bourke's Parrot.

Our second day in the Alice area will be spent in the scenic MacDonnell Range, west of Alice Springs. This ancient landscape of rugged mountains and cool, scenic gorges is an impressive area and harbours a number of magnificent avian treasures. We will visit Simpsons Gap and Ormiston Gorge; both stunning locations that exhibit an interesting range of birds and mammals, as well as being scenically spectacular. The delightful Black-footed Rock-wallaby, a small and highly agile macropod with a very long tail, may be seen this morning as might the Common Wallaroo.

Notable endemic birds that we hope to find include the secretive Spinifexbird, robin-like Redthroat, the handsome Spinifex Pigeon, Western Bowerbird, and the rare and nomadic Pied and Black Honeyeaters. More widespread species include the vivid Mulga Parrot, Southern Whiteface, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, immaculate Zebra Finch, Red-backed Kingfisher, Brown Falcon and Australian Hobby and if we are very lucky, we may even encounter the very rare Painted Finch. We will enjoy a picnic lunch in the field and return to Alice in the early evening.



Zebra Finch by Jonathan Rossouw

Day 4: Alice Springs to Erldunda. This morning we will make an early start, leaving Alice Springs and heading southwards towards Erldunda. White-browed Treecreeper, Grey Honeyeater and a variety of thornbills including Slaty-backed, Inland and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill are all possible in the mulga



Budgerigar by Jonathan Rossouw

en route. This afternoon we will bird in the stony plains in the area, known as 'gibber plains' after the Aboriginal word for stone. These sparse and barren plains might look 'empty' but they are home to some very interesting bird species including Cinnamon Quail-Thrush, Chiming Wedgebill and the amazing Inland Dotterel. Two mega-rare and ultra-elusive raptors that are possible in this area are the Grey Falcon and Letter-winged Kite but we would have to be immensely fortunate to see either of these Outback rarities.

Day 5: Erldunda to Alice Springs. This morning we will take a pre-dawn drive out to the gibber plains in search of any species we may have missed yesterday. If we are very lucky, we may even encounter a flock of the nomadic and elusive Flock Bronzewing. In the afternoon we will continue north towards Alice Springs, stopping at an area of waterholes off the Sturt Highway along the Hugh River. This productive area is usually home to a few patches of water and these, along with the fabled red river gums, attract a range of striking species. This is an excellent area for Cockatoos and parrots and we may well see the eye-catching Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Little Corella, gaudy Galah, Cockatiel and the familiar but rather nomadic and erratic Budgerigar! If we encounter a mixed feeding flock in this woodland, we may also find White-plumed and Grey-fronted Honeyeaters and Western Gerygone. We will also keep a lookout for the scarce and nomadic White-backed Swallow along the way and as we near Alice Springs we might encounter several of the area's more regular species such as Western Bowerbird, Diamond and Peaceful Doves, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, the attractive Crested Pigeon, Black-shouldered and Whistling Kites and Nankeen Kestrel.



Forest Kingfisher by Jonathan Rossouw

We can expect to arrive at our comfortable accommodation in Alice Springs in the late afternoon for a three-night stay.

Day 6: Alice Springs and fly to Darwin. This morning after breakfast we will make our way to Alice Springs Airport for our onward flight to Darwin. Upon arrival, we will check into our accommodation before spending the afternoon in the Botanical Gardens where we will no doubt be treated to a marvellous suite of wonderful birds and unique and beautiful flora that occurs in this part of northern Australia. Possibilities include Red-collared Lorikeet, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Rose-crowned Fruit Dove, Little Bronze Cuckoo, White-breasted Woodswallow, Magpie Goose, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Rainbow Bee-eater, Sacred Kingfisher and Brown Myzomela (Honeyeater).



Great Bowerbird by Jonathan Rossouw

Day 7: Darwin and surrounds. Darwin is surrounded by a fantastic diversity of habitat types and we will spend most of the day exploring an area of mangrove and monsoon forest for an impressive range of possible highlights. In the coastal mangroves, we will concentrate on finding the elusive Chestnut Rail, hyper-active Red-headed Myzomela, the furtive Mangrove Robin, the scarce White-breasted Whistler, Mangrove Fantail and Mangrove Gerygone; while in the monsoon forest and adjacent woodland, we hope to find Orange-footed Scrub-fowl (a kind of megapode), the gorgeous Rose-crowned Fruit Dove, the striking Rainbow Pitta, Forest Kingfisher, the uncommon Pacific Baza, Olive-backed and Green Orioles, Little Shrikethrush, Black Butcherbird, Green-backed Gerygone, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Northern Fantail, Spangled Drongo, the loud and obtrusive Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, impressive Blue-winged Kookaburra with their amazing vocalisations, Great Bowerbird, Pheasant Coucal, musical Pied and Silver-backed Butcherbirds, Bar-shouldered and Pacific Emerald Doves and the lovely Red-collared Lorikeet (a recent split of the more widespread Rainbow Lorikeet).

Two very rare raptors that we may be extremely fortunate to find in this area and during the next week include the impressive Black-breasted Buzzard and the mega Red Goshawk. Little Red Flying-fox and Agile Wallaby are two of the possible mammal species that we may encounter during our day's explorations of this faunal-rich area.



Long-tailed Finch by Jonathan Rossouw

Day 8: Darwin to Jabiru (Kakadu National Park). This morning we start the day with a visit to Fogg Dam. This well-known site is an excellent area for waterbirds such as the monotypic Magpie Goose, Green Pygmy Goose, Hardhead, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe, White-necked, White-faced

and Pied Herons, Glossy, Straw-necked and Australian White Ibises, the stately Brolga, White-browed Crake and the quirky Comb-crested Jacana. By mid-morning, we will depart Fogg Dam and continue our drive towards the vast and world-renowned Kakadu National Park. Kakadu is undoubtedly the Northern Territory's most well-known protected area and at almost 20,000 square kilometres (around 7600 square miles), it is a massive area that protects vast tracts of woodland and seasonal wetlands that harbour a wealth of magnificent creatures.



Australian Owlet-nightjar by Glen Valentine

En route to Kakadu, we will enjoy a stop at the Adelaide River crossing for lunch where we may see Mangrove Golden Whistler and a variety of flycatchers, including Shining, Leaden, Restless and Broad-billed. In the afternoon we will visit the impressive Mamukala Wetlands where, if conditions are right, we can enjoy the spectacle of thousands of birds represented by many different species. Plumed and Wandering Whistling Ducks, Raja Shelduck and Black-necked Stork are possible highlights.

On arrival in Kakadu, we will embark on a short walk to a nearby, scenic lagoon not far from our cabins to enjoy an amazing sunset. After dinner, there will be an optional spotlighting excursion for nocturnal species such as Barking Owl, Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Large-tailed Nightjar and Australian Owlet-nightjar.

Day 9: Jabiru to Cooinda (Kakadu National Park). Early this morning we visit Ubirr, an area of rock outcrops in Kakadu that is home to some impressive aboriginal rock art, much of which is many thousands of years old. The art depicts creation ancestors and animals of the area, including several fish and turtle species, wallabies and possums. If we are lucky, we may see the localised Short-eared Rock Wallaby around their day-time rock shelters. Other birding highlights that we may find during some short stops today include Sandstone Shrike-Thrush, Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon, Partridge Pigeon (red-eyed form) and Rufous-throated Honeyeater.



Purple-crowned Fairywren by Alfred Schulte

In the afternoon we will enjoy a rewarding cruise on the Yellow Waters Billabong, Kakadu's best-known wetland. This impressive wetland of channels, swamps and floodplains is a delight to explore and is home to crocodiles a-plenty and a variety of waterbirds, including Nankeen Night Heron,

Black-necked Stork, Black Swan, Australasian Darter, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, the impressive Australian Pelican, the minuscule Little Kingfisher, White-bellied Sea Eagle and Australasian Swamphen. The stately Great-billed Heron and Black Bittern may also be seen, as might the rare Black Falcon. In the early evening, we will check into our accommodation.



Cinnamon Quail-Thrush by Jonathan Rossouw

Day 10: Cooinda to Pine Creek. This morning we will make an early visit to Nourlangie Rock where we hope to find several of the area's most sought-after specialities, like the very attractive Banded Fruit-dove, White-lined Honeyeater, Little Woodswallow, Black-tailed Treecreeper and the strange Helmeted Friarbird. We also have a reasonable chance of seeing the range-restricted Black Wallaroo in this area. We will then enjoy a last look around Kakadu before making our way out of the park and south-west towards the Pine Creek area. We will be sure to stop for any new birds and mammals on the way. After checking into our accommodations, we will visit Copperfield Dam where we will spend the afternoon searching the grasslands for Chestnut-backed Buttonquail and possibly Brown Quail; while the surrounding dry woodland supports the superb Hooded Parrot, Varied Lorikeet and Buff-sided Robin and we may also encounter Silver-backed Butcherbird and Blue-winged Kookaburra during our forays.

If time allows, we may also spend time birding around Water Gardens and the Old Cemetery where Red-winged Parrot, the noisy Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, the sought-after Hooded Parrot, Northern Rosella, the scarce and migratory Red-backed Kingfisher, the delightful Red-backed Fairywren,



White-quilled Rock Pigeon by Alfred Schulte



Buff-sided Robins by Jonathan Rossouw

Australian Figbird, Striated Pardalote, the stately Great Bowerbird and brilliant Masked, Long-tailed and Double-barred Finches are all possible.

Day 11: Pine Creek area. We have the whole day to bird the variety of habitats around the Pine Creek area. Sites that we will visit today include Edith Falls in Nitmiluk National Park for the now-rare and absolutely sensational Gouldian Finch, as well as Umbrawarra Gorge for Chestnut-backed Buttonquail, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Great Bowerbird and Partridge Pigeon should we have missed them earlier in the trip. Other specialities that we hope to encounter in this bird-rich area include Grey Goshawk, Jacky Winter, Black-faced Woodswallow, Varied Sittella, Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, the vociferous Grey Shrikethrush, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, the minute Weebill, the boldly-patterned Bar-breasted Honeyeater, tiny Mistletoebird (a type of flowerpecker) and the rather elusive and unpredictable Square-tailed Kite.

Day 12: Pine Creek to Victoria River. Today we begin our journey west across the "Top End". En route we have additional chances for Hooded Parrot and with some luck, we may see the uncommon northern race of Crested Shrike-tit (all the more challenging as this species is silent at this time of year!). Other possible species today include Black-tailed Treecreeper, Rufous-throated, Black-chinned, White-throated and Banded Honeyeaters and Buff-sided Robin, amongst many other more common species.

Day 13: Victoria River to Timber Creek. Today we will wind our way west through Gregory National Park. One of the unique, target habitats that we will explore today will be the tracts of cane-grass on the fringes of the Victoria River. This localised and endangered habitat is the favoured habitat for the superb Purple-crowned Fairywren and Yellow-rumped Mannikin. Freshwater Crocodiles are common here and, unlike their saltwater cousins, subsist mostly on fish, and thus pose little threat to large mammals (humans included!). In the surrounding rocky and wooded areas, we stand a good chance of seeing White-quilled Rock-Pigeon and Sandstone Shrike-thrush, amongst other more widespread and regular species.



Blue-faced Honeyeater by Glen Valentine

Day 14: Timber Creek. Today will be dedicated to continuing our search for the stunning Gouldian Finch should we have missed it earlier at Edith Falls. This area is also home to a rich diversity of species and there

will be plenty to keep us entertained while we search for our quarry. Highlights may include the Spinifex Pigeon, Long-tailed, Masked and Star Finches, Chestnut-breasted and Yellow-rumped Mannikins and Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, as well as further chances to locate White-gaped Honeyeater, Purple-crowned Fairywren, Silver-crowned and Little Friarbirds, Little Woodswallow, Crimson Finch, White-throated Gerygone and Pheasant Coucal should we have missed them earlier in the trip.

Day 15: Timber Creek to Kununurra. This morning we continue our sojourn west, as we cross the Western Australia border. We will be on the lookout for the very rare Pictorella Mannikin during the drive, as well as a selection of raptors that could include Collared Sparrowhawk, Brown Goshawk, Spotted and Swamp Harriers, Little Eagle and the magnificent Wedge-tailed Eagle, as well as the rare and erratic Square-tailed Kite. While today is mostly a travel day, we will be passing through spectacular countryside and making regular stops to stretch our legs and enjoy any birding highlights. In the late afternoon, we will arrive in Kununurra in the fabled Kimberley area where we will spend the final two nights of this incredible northern Australian birding tour.

Day 16: Kununurra. Today we have a full day to explore the riches of Kimberly in the Kununurra area. A certain highlight is bound to be the boat trip on Lake Argyle, where we will enjoy a wonderful variety of waterbirds, as well as search for two very special avian gems: the highly sought-after, incredibly localised and low-density Yellow Chat and the range-restricted White-quilled Rock Pigeon. Other highlights that we are likely to encounter during the trip include Australian Reed Warbler, White-browed Crake and Pheasant Coucal that reside in the dense vegetation at the lake-edge. Local conditions will determine where we spend the rest of the day, with additional possible birding highlights including Brolga, the gorgeous Northern Rosella, Silver-crowned Friarbird, the spectacular Blue-faced Honeyeater, Bar-breasted and Banded Honeyeaters, and Sandstone Shrikethrush. Noteworthy mammal possibilities include Short-eared Rock Wallaby and the bizarre Northern Nail-tail Wallaby.

This evening we will enjoy a farewell dinner while reminiscing over our many memorable sightings and experiences over the past two and half weeks.

Day 17: Kununurra and depart. After a final breakfast, we will transfer to the Kununurra Airport where our birding adventure of northern Australia will conclude.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 17;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- All ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- All activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services.

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY flights** (see above);
- Any drinks;

- Transfers;
- Special gratuities (including tips for local guides and services); and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: In general, Australians do not expect to be tipped. Therefore, as noted above - gratuities to drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc. are **NOT** included on this tour. However, if you feel your Rockjumper leader has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Temperatures in northern Australia can reach as high as 37˚C (98˚F).
- We will be spending one night in the Victoria River area. This area is rather remote with limited accommodations. Please note that anybody who has booked a single room will not have an en-suite bathroom for this night. There will, however, be shared facilities available.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will depart from Alice Springs Airport (IATA: ASP) on Day 1 and, as it is an arrival day; you are welcome to arrive at any. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 17 at East Kimberley Regional Airport (IATA: KNX), Kununurra.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Sydney International Airport, Sydney (IATA: SYD) is the main port of entry for international flights in Australia, and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. Regular flights linking Australia's major cities are also available. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**