

Section 6 Visitor safety

In this section

Tour guides and all staff that provide advice to visitors have a responsibility to inform the visitors how they can **safely** enjoy Nitmiluk National Park. This section outlines:

- safety issues and advice
- tour operator responsibilities
- tour guide responsibilities
- incidents and accidents.

Safety issues and advice

Different activities pose different potential risks to visitors, although the potential risks of most activities in the Park are dehydration, heat stress and accidents involving falls while walking over uneven and/or slippery rocks.

General advice

All staff leading tours, selling tours and answering questions must provide appropriate safety advice for the activities they are telling people about. Depending on the season and the activity, you should advise visitors to:

- carry and drink lots of water to avoid dehydration (drink from the river if they run out of water)
- avoid strenuous activity during the heat of the day to prevent heat stress
- wear a hat and light, long, loose clothing while walking to prevent sunburn, insect bites and heat stress
- wear comfortable, sturdy footwear during walks to prevent slipping, twisting and falling on uneven surfaces
- enter the water slowly and carefully when going for a swim. Not to jump or dive into waterways or rock pools.

What Nitmiluk tour guides need to know

What advice should you give someone asking about a walk in Nitmiluk National Park?

What should you tell someone when you sell them a ticket for a launch tour?

What are your responsibilities as a tour guide?

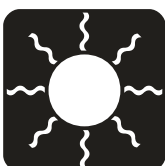
What licences, certificates and permissions must you have to conduct tours in Nitmiluk National Park?

What advice should you give your clients at a swimming hole?

How would you know if a person was suffering from heat stress and how would you deal with it?

What should you do if someone slipped on a rock and ended up with a minor scratch or bruise?

What should you do if someone suffered a major injury on your tour, like a broken leg or fractured skull?



When selling tours

What advice should you give when selling tickets for launch (boat) tours?

Did you know?

Athletes take two weeks to acclimatise to our climate.

When recommending a walk

What advice should you give a visitor asking about a walk?

Selling tours

Customers on launch (boat) tours need to be prepared for the walk between gorges before they board the boat. They will not have the opportunity to run up to get hats and suitable shoes after boarding the boat. All staff involved in selling tickets for tours should therefore advise customers:

- that there is a rocky walk with uneven terrain between the gorges
- to be prepared for the walk before boarding the boat by wearing appropriate footwear and sun protection.

Giving advice to walkers

Most visitors to Nitmiluk are not used to the heat and humidity. Visitors who are not prepared, or who choose to walk beyond their fitness level risk dehydration, heat stress or other injuries and putting others at risk.

All staff providing advice about walking in the Park should tell visitors:

- that it is up to 10% hotter on the walking tracks than around the visitor centre and near the river as the walks are up on the exposed sandstone. The sandstone is heated by the sun so when you are walking on it the heat is radiating up from the ground, as well as down from the sun
- to carry and drink plenty of water. Drink from the river or running streams if you run out of water
- to protect themselves from the sun – wear a hat and long, loose clothing or sunscreen. Long, loose clothing is cooler than sunscreen and also provides protection from insects. Bathing costumes do not breathe and can result in overheating
- to protect themselves from biting insects, like march flies and mosquitoes
- to wear comfortable, sturdy footwear for walking on rocky, uneven tracks
- to walk in the cool of the day - before 11:00 am or after 3:30 pm.

Specific advice on walking tracks is available from Rangers at the Information Desk in the Nitmiluk Centre. All overnight walkers and canoeists must register at the Information Desk.



Look after visitors by giving them the right advice for their safety.

Emergency radios

An emergency radio call system is provided for walkers in remote areas of the Park. The Emergency Call Devices (ECDs) are located along the Southern Walks and the Jatbula Trail.

Although ECDs are for emergency use only, solitary overnight walkers are asked to 'check in' using the ECDs so their progress can be monitored by Park staff.

The Park has an Emergency Response Plan that provides specific guidelines for finding and retrieving lost and/or injured bushwalkers.

Tour operator responsibilities

All tour operators are responsible for ensuring that the tour guides they employ have the appropriate licences and permits for the tour that they lead.

Tour operators holding concessions within Nitmiluk National Park must ensure their guides are familiar with the Directions to Tour Operations in their Operational Agreement under By-law 13 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

They must also provide their guides with:

- adequate and well-maintained equipment so they can deliver their tours safely
- a suitable induction process outlining policies and procedures and the location of relevant documents, particularly those relating to risk minimisation
- the standards of operation required of them under the concession Operational Agreement
- risk minimisation policies and procedures, including emergency response procedures
- access to relevant policy and procedure manuals and time for guides to familiarise themselves with their content
- adequate training so that guides can safely conduct a tour and accurately deliver the messages outlined in Section 1 of this handbook
- adequate training so guides can safely perform any other required duties
- access to this handbook and the books in the 'Must have references' list provided on this page.

Tour operators and tour guides

A tour operator is a company or business that operates tours.

A tour guide is a person who leads a tour group (conducts tours).

Must have references

Nitmiluk National Park Plan of Management, October 2002.

Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act

Nitmiluk Tours
Emergency Response Procedures

Nitmiluk Tours policies & procedures manuals

Current Senior First Aid reference book.

Brock, J (1993) *Top End Native Plants*.

Wiyonjorotj P, Flora S (dec.), Brown ND (dec.), Galmur J, Katherine M, Merland F and Wightman G (2005). *Jawoyn plants and animals, Aboriginal flora and fauna knowledge from Nitmiluk National Park and the Katherine area, northern Australia*.

Webb, G & Manolis, C (1998) *Australian Crocodiles, A natural history*. Reed New Holland.

Hoatson, DM & et al (2000) *Kakadu & Nitmiluk National Parks, Northern Territory*. Canberra: Australian Geological Survey Organisation.

Any complete field guide to birds of Australia.

Tour guides

What are your responsibilities?

Do you have the required equipment to safely carry out your responsibilities?

Do you know your employer's procedures for reporting faulty equipment?

Do you know your employer's risk minimisation policies and procedures and where you can view them?

Tour guide responsibilities

Tour guides are responsible for operating their tours in accordance with the Operational Agreement between their employer and PWSNT under By-law 13 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

Guides are responsible for the safety and well-being of their clients and ensuring that they do not interfere with wildlife (native plants and animals) or disturb Aboriginal sites. Guides have responsibilities to:

- safely operate the equipment (boats, canoes, vehicles, aircraft) they use to deliver their tours
- operate according to the standards outlined in the Operational Agreement between their employer and PWSNT
- be aware of their employer's policies and procedures, especially those relating to risk minimisation
- perform basic maintenance checks to ensure that all of the equipment they operate is safe and not operate any unsafe equipment
- report maintenance problems and unsafe equipment to their employer
- provide accurate advice for the safety of their clients and passengers
- deliver accurate and appropriate interpretive information.

Minimum requirements

As a minimum, all tour guides in the Northern Territory should hold a current Senior First Aid Certificate and the appropriate licence for the vehicle or vessel that they operate.

Different forms of transport have their own safety requirements. Your licence to fly, drive or lead a group means that you know the safety requirements and procedures for the type of tour that you lead and that you can provide relevant safety advice to your clients.

Tour guides operating concessionaire tours in Nitmiluk National Park must also have an Authority to Conduct Tours from PWSNT (see Section 9 of this handbook) and operate in accordance with the Operational Agreement between their employer and PWSNT under By-law 13 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

Essential further reading

Nitmiluk Tours
Emergency Response
Procedures.

Nitmiluk Tours policies
& procedures manuals.

Operational Agreement
between your employer
and PWSNT.

Nitmiluk launch guides

Must hold a Master V (or Temporary Permit to Serve Master V), Senior First Aid Certificate and have an Authority to Conduct Tours in Nitmiluk National Park from PWSNT. Launch guides must also understand VHF radio operation and procedures and follow management directions and their Operational Agreement.

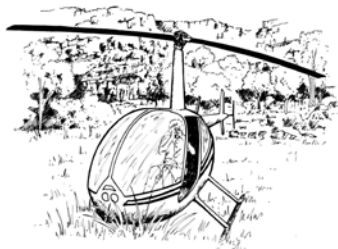
During tours, guides must advise passengers about the location and use of life jackets, the rocky walk between gorges, docking safety and to drink plenty of water.

Guides must also provide a commentary that conveys the significance of Nitmiluk’s cultural and natural values (identified in Section 1 and detailed throughout this handbook).

Helicopter pilots

Must hold a helicopter pilot licence, Senior First Aid Certificate and have an Authority to Conduct Tours in Nitmiluk National Park from PWSNT. Pilots must adhere to the flight path stipulated by senior Park management and follow management directions and their Operational Agreement.

Pilots must tell their passengers how to safely board, ride in and exit the helicopter. Pilots are also expected to provide a brief commentary that conveys the significance of Nitmiluk’s values (identified in Section 1 and detailed throughout this handbook).



Canoe safari guides

Should hold a current Bronze Medallion, Remote First Aid Certificate and must have an Authority to Conduct Tours in Nitmiluk National Park from PWSNT.

Canoe guides must ensure that they and their passengers are wearing personal floatation devices (life jackets). They must brief their clients on canoe safety, how to avoid sunburn, insect bites and minimise risks of heat stress and dehydration.

Guides must also provide a commentary that conveys the significance of Nitmiluk’s cultural and natural values (identified in Section 1 and detailed throughout this handbook).

Assessment

Section 9 contains details about the Nitmiluk launch (boat) tour guide assessment process.

Assessment

Section 1 outlines what PWSNT and Jawoyn people would like tour guides to convey to visitors and how you can go about it.

Tour guides

- What type of tour/s do you conduct?
- Do you have the necessary licences and certificates?
- Does the vessel or vehicle you operate have all of the safety equipment required for that type of vessel or vehicle?
- Do you have Authority to Conduct Tours in Nitmiluk National Park from PWSNT?

Guides taking visitors swimming

What is the best way to safely enter the water?

Do you hold a current Bronze Medallion?

Do you know how to safely rescue an unconscious person from the water?

Do you know how to safely rescue a person who is panicking in the water?

Guides leading walks

Must hold a Senior First Aid Certificate.

Prior to a walk, guides must advise their clients about appropriate footwear and how to avoid sunburn, insect bites, dehydration and heat stress.

Guides must also provide a commentary that conveys the significance of Nitmiluk’s cultural and natural values (identified in Section 1 and detailed throughout this handbook).

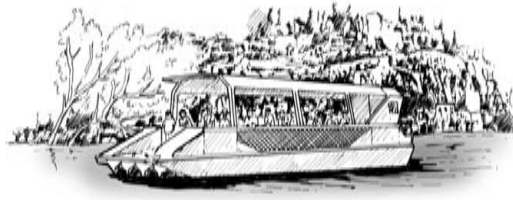
Guides taking visitors swimming

Must hold a Senior First Aid Certificate and should hold a current Bronze Medallion.

Guides need to be aware of the safety of their clients and other people in the water. Guides must advise their clients that the best way into the water is to walk in. They must actively discourage their clients from jumping or diving into the water from any height.

Nitmiluk launch (boat) tours

Following is general safety information for Nitmiluk launch tour guides. It is only a summary and does not replace the detailed operating procedures of your employer or the training required to safely conduct a launch tour.



Life jackets

At the start of each tour you must advise your passengers where the life jackets are and how to put them on.

Head counts

You must count the number of passengers at the start of the tour and make sure that you have the same number of people each time you board a vessel during a tour.

Drinking water

Advise passengers where the water is and encourage them to drink it to avoid dehydration and heat stress.

Vessel safety

Advise visitors to keep all body parts inside the vessel at all times and to remain seated whilst docking.

Nitmiluk launch (boat) tour guides

What should you tell your passengers at the start of each tour?

What must you do each time you board passengers onto a vessel?

What must you warn passengers of each time you approach a docking point?

Smoking

Smoking is permitted during the walk between gorges but not on the boat. Smokers should be asked to hold on to their butts until they find a rubbish bin to deposit them in. Cigarette butts should not be thrown on the ground or in the water.

Nitmiluk launch tour guides

How do you describe the walk between the gorges?

Walk between gorges

At the start of each tour, tell your passengers about the walk/s. Remember that they have probably never seen the gorge and do not know what to expect.

Repeat details about the walk as you approach the docking point where the walk begins.

How long are the walks?

- the standard dry season walk between the first and second gorges is about 500 metres
- the wet season walk between the first and second gorges is 400 metres
- the walk between the second and third gorges is 200 metres
- the walk between the third and fourth gorges is 1.5 km
- the walk between the fourth and fifth gorges is 200 metres.

Most people have no difficulty with the walk between the first and second gorges, but it is over **rocky and uneven ground...**

- sand on the rocks makes the walk slippery in places
- the rocky steps are not that big (high), but their surface and spacing are uneven
- visitors may remain on the boat for the hour or so that it will take to get to the second gorge and back.

When leading your passengers on the walk between gorges, you must adhere to, and guide people along, the correct path to avoid dangerous drop offs.

Power boat

Additional procedures are followed for power boat operations in the interests of making them as safe as possible:

1. Nitmiluk Tours will advise the Senior District Ranger that the power boat will be operating at the start of the day, then when operations have ceased for the day.
2. Guides test communications with the Nitmiluk Tours base station and Nitmiluk Tours constantly monitors for power boat scheduled calls.

Tour guides

Do you know your employers' Emergency Response Procedures?

Dealing with an incident

What should you do if someone on your tour slips and sustains a minor injury, like a cut or bruise?

How do you know if someone is suffering from heat stress?

What should you do if someone is suffering from heat stress?

Tour guides

Is your Senior First Aid Certificate current?

Where is your employers' Emergency Response Procedure Manual located?

Have you read it?

3. Power boat operators radio their base immediately before entering the rapids and after. There should be no more than 60 seconds between these calls.
4. Nitmiluk Tours will follow their Emergency Response Plan if the time limit for crossing the rapids is exceeded, or assistance is requested by the power boat operator.

Incidents and accidents

The Parks and Wildlife Service and concessionaires have a legal duty of care to ensure that people can visit the Park and undertake activities in a safe environment. With over 200,000 visitors, including elderly visitors, it is inevitable that someone will have an accident or medical emergency at some time. Rangers and concessionaire staff attend to approximately 50 incidents each year.

It is your responsibility to maintain first aid qualifications and equipment, be aware of potential emergencies and know how to respond. The following emergency response procedures are primarily intended for concessionaire staff. Rangers have a different role that is detailed in the Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Emergency Procedures Manual.

Organisational roles

Concessionaires are responsible for managing all incidents involving their operations. This includes providing appropriate first aid and assistance to tour boat passengers and patrons hiring canoes.

The Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for managing all other incidents on Park. Rangers will also assist concessionaire staff when required.

The Police are responsible for all emergency incidents. However, they will only assume control of major incidents.

Concessionaire emergency response

Although the nature and location of emergency incidents varies, the procedure to be followed is the same.

1. Ensure the safety of all bystanders, yourself and the patient. Response to an emergency situation must not involve putting any additional lives in danger.
2. Render first aid - stabilise patient and obtain a name and relevant medical details.
3. Report details of **every** incident to your supervisor and request an ambulance if required.
4. Report every incident to the Parks and Wildlife Service Rangers. Details required include:
 - the nature of the incident
 - exact location and time
 - name and age of patient
 - nature of injury
 - first aid and/or other assistance provided
 - names of concessionaire staff present
 - what further assistance (if any) required from Rangers.
5. Assist Rangers and Police if they become involved.
6. Submit a written incident report to your supervisor and ensure it is passed to the Chief District Ranger, within 24 hours if possible.

Remember DRABC

Danger
Response
Airway
Breathing
Circulation

Tour guide responsibilities in emergencies

You must be familiar with your employer's emergency response procedures.

You are required to have a current Senior First Aid Certificate and administer appropriate first aid as required.

Section 6 Assessment questions

You must answer all of the questions at the end of each section of this handbook and complete a practical assessment before you can conduct launch (boat) tours on Katherine Gorge.

Following are the questions that you must answer as part of your assessment for this section.

Please write your answers on the form in Section 9 of this handbook.

1. What advice should you give someone asking about a walk in Nitmiluk National Park?
2. What should you tell someone when you sell them a ticket for a launch tour?
3. What are your responsibilities as a tour guide?
4. What licences, certificates and permissions must you have to conduct tours in Nitmiluk National Park?
5. What advice should you give your clients at a swimming hole?
6. How would you know if a person was suffering from heat stress and how would you deal with it? (Answer not supplied in this Handbook - check your First Aid book).
7. What should you do if someone slipped on a rock and ended up with a minor scratch or bruise?
8. What should you do if someone suffered a major injury on your tour, like a broken leg or fractured skull?