

Freezing Gorge, Koolpin 23 – 25 September 2011

Our walking team included our fearless leader Marj and Mike, Sue, Vreni, Mara, Amanda, Kevin, Rob and Cheryl. We met at Koolpin base camp 8pmish Friday evening. There wasn't much of a welcome committee when we first pulled up in the camping grounds to get our bearings in the dark: one silly camper said frostily 'you're not camping there are ya'?' As tempting as it was to set up all our tents semi-circle around this person, we ventured to a quiet corner to make home for the night. Thanks again Mike for firing up the bbq and overseeing snags etc with meat ants underfoot. Apart from reports (you know who you are) about strange 'black mothership' shadows lurking above (someone called them clouds), the evening was almost ... non-eventful.

We took off next morning across flat, grassy terrain and crossed Koolpin Creek before following the gorge.

Before morning tea, we reached our first waterhole to wade through, floating our packs like oversized upturned turtles. The second waterhole was a bit more challenging with a short paddle in the water to a cliff front where the pack was handed over and then, a scramble to the top (which some performed more elegantly than others). A few Elvis shaky legs but the team worked together to ensure we made it up. [Actually coming down was probably more challenging with the packs on.] A few of us – pushed out of our comfort zones – felt quite the achievers after this feat!

The boulders became larger and more foreboding which created a great environment for inventive climbing and 'squirreling' which was required through one small hole; pack and then person at a time.

After some time, we landed at our camp site of gently sloping rock positioned up from a private 30m pool.

After loading off packs, loading up on an early lunch, and I think for some, stolen siestas, we headed up Freezing Gorge. The boulders became even bigger and it was exciting scrambling up, around and under rocks 'til we arrived at the entrance of Freezing Gorge. It was stunning landscape to walk between two rock walls and wade through numerous water pools. It was cool wading in and out of cool crystal clear water pools which did not quite live up to its name of freezing but no-one asked for their money back.

Just at the end of the gorge was a deep section to dog paddle across. At the end of the gorge and around the corner (to the left) was a pebbly/rocky beach to a swimming hole surrounded by a curved rock wall. Most of us swam around to find a small waterfall and the more adventurous climbed to the top to see what was on the other side.

We turned back and arrived at camp by late afternoon. A civilised adventure without the martinis, though some did have Cinzano, stirred and not shaken.

There was a bit of cloud cover Saturday evening making the night warmish but not intolerable. No black motherships reported. The majority turned in quite early leaving Marj ready to party on... alone...where does she get her energy?!

Next day we packed up early and took a steady walk back. One of the vehicles broke a back axle on the way in to the camping ground so it was wise to head back to Darwin early and therefore we gave a walk to Koolpin Gorge a miss.

Congratulations to Amanda who was on her first bush walk and made it look like a walk in the park - adventure park.

Thanks Marj for wonderful weekend and patiently responding with, 'go and have a look' to those who continually asked, 'What way?' or 'Do we go this way?' [If only you had a dollar each time Marj]

Wildlife sightings: buffalo, 2 wallaroos, bandicoot, tiny yellow snake and someone else will have to fill this space of bird sightings but there were many to be heard.

Tip: bring water proof shoes and pack water proof bag if you wish to protect camera or walking boots if you don't pack waterproof shoes!

Optional: Cinzano.



