



Katherine & Nitmiluk National Park

The town of Katherine is the major intersection for people travelling North, South and West in the Northern Territory. It's also a colourful town to visit and a great place from which to explore the stunning Katherine gorge in Nitmiluk National Park.

Katherine is one of the major regional centres in the territory and has a population of 9,500 people. This is mostly made up the Jawoyn and Dagoman indigenous people, farmers and people from the nearby air force base. Katherine lies 320 kilometres south of Darwin and nearly 500 kilometres from the West Australian border. There are plenty of shops, choices of accommodation and tourist operators available from Katherine. The Ghan also stops here for a few hours on its journey north and south between Darwin and Alice Springs.

Sight & Attractions

Katherine, sometimes described as 'where the outback meets the tropics', has a number of local tourist attractions to check out before you explore Nitmiluk National Park. The Katherine Hot Springs, just 1 km west of town, are worth a look as is the School of the Air, here you'll see how children on remote stations and Aboriginal communities get their education. The Railway Museum and the Katherine Outback Heritage museum and Springvale Homestead are also worthy to visit. If you're in town for the Katherine Country music muster or Katherine District show, get involved and get back to your country roots or take in a true blue Aussie rodeo show!

An easy day trip from Katherine is Mataranka and Eusey National Park, where you'll find luscious thermal springs, amongst the pandanus forests. For a look at how the first white people lived here, take a tour of Eusey Station homestead.

The Cutta Cutta Caves Nature park is 25 kilometres south of Katherine and is a nice and cool place to spend some time strolling the boardwalk under the crystal encrusted ceiling, that appears to sparkle like stars, which is what 'Cutta cutta' refers to in the Jawoyn language.

The main highlight, however is definitely Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park. Katherine Gorge is made up of thirteen gorges, that you can canoe or hike your way through. The gorges were formed over thousands of years as the Katherine River flowed over the rock, eventually eroding it into what is now known as Katherine gorge. The impressive gorge walls and white sandy beaches are fantastic to visit by canoe and swimming in the deep pools is very refreshing. For a different view you can take a boat cruise with an informative local indigenous guide or see it from the air on a scenic helicopter flight. Only 75 canoes are allowed in Katherine Gorge at any one time, so if you plan to go canoeing, be sure to book early.

Nitmiluk National Park was until recently known as Katherine Gorge National Park, until it was handed back to the local Aboriginal people and renamed Nitmiluk, meaning 'Cicada Place'. The Park is jointly managed by the Northern Territory Government and the Jawoyn people

in accordance with traditional Jawoyn law. The Park which covers more than 292 000 hectares is rich in Aboriginal art, with rock paintings representing the spiritual 'dreaming' of the Jawoyn people. There are many adventure activities on offer in Nitmiluk National Park and it's a haven for nature lovers, with its rugged landscapes, dramatic waterfalls and lush gorges providing an abundance of flora and fauna.

Climate

As with most of the top end, Katherine and Nitmiluk National Park are best visited in what's known as the 'dry' season, from April to October. At this time the weather is quite dry, with temperatures in the 30's (°C), but low humidity. During the Dry, the waters of Katherine Gorge are placid in most spots and ideal for swimming and canoeing. The 'wet' season (December to March) is quite different. The waters of Katherine Gorge go wild in the Wet and canoeing and swimming may be out of the question. Also the daily temperature is in the 40's (°C), the humidity is extremely high and it rains like it only can in the tropics!!

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