

The Northern Territory – Permits and permissions required to access indigenous and other lands, including national parks

(See also the paragraph regarding the “intervention” in the NT in the information on this site titled “Heading Outback – Do I Need a Permit? – Can I drive that track?”)

Northern Areas generally:

For transit permits across aboriginal lands in the northern areas of NT contact the Northern Land Council. Their Head Office is in Darwin, whilst the Darwin/Daly Area Office is at Palmerston in Darwin. They also have offices at Jabiru for West Arnhem; Katherine for the South Region and Nhulunbuy for East Arnhem. Offices are also located at Ngukurr, Tennant Creek and at Timber Creek. The Head Office postal address is GPO Box 1222, Darwin, NT 0801 and the street address is 45 Mitchell Street, Darwin, NT 0801. Telephone (08) 8920 5100. Fax is (08) 8945 2633. An 1800 number is also available at 1800 645 299. You can download lots of good information, including Permit Application Forms from their web site at www.nlc.org.au; use the “Visiting Aboriginal Lands” button. Click on “Contacts” for all other addresses and contact details.

If you want to go fishing in Northern Land Council areas, there are now some wonderful opportunities being made available. Have a look at their website under the “Visiting Aboriginal Land” section.

Central Areas generally:

For central area permits including the Mereenie Loop Road (which can be obtained over the counter at a cost \$2.50 per vehicle to cover the cost of printing the informative little Booklet that accompanies the permit), contact the Central Land Council, 31-33 Stuart Highway, Alice Springs, NT 0870 or PO Box 3321, Alice Springs, NT 0871. Telephone (08) 8951 6211 or Fax (08) 8953 4343. Again, you can download lots of good info and Permit Application Forms (excluding Mereenie Loop Permits) from their web site at www.clc.org.au. Permits to travel the Mereenie Loop Road can also be obtained over the counter from the Glen Helen Camping Area Office and from the service station at Kings Canyon. You also need to apply to the Central Land Council for a permit to transit the Docker River Road from west of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park boundary to the WA border via the Docker River Community. (This is the second of the two permits needed when transiting the Docker River Road. For the other permit see the Western Australia PDF and refer to Central Reserves Area). Transit Permits will normally only be issued for a maximum period of transit of 21 days within the whole of Central Area.

Sandy Blight Junction Road:

Permits to transit the NT section of the Sandy Blight Junction Road are once again being issued by the Central Land Council, but no camping is permitted anywhere along the NT section of the road. (Also see the comments on the Sandy Blight Junction Road under the WA information).

Colson Track:

Please note that permits to transit the Colson Track from the French Line in the Simpson Desert to Numery Station are simply not being issued. (Again, this is due to past problems with damage caused to a number of sacred sites contained within the aboriginal land through which the track runs).

Coburg Peninsula (Gurig National Park):

For permits to access the Coburg Peninsula and to camp there, you need to contact the Coburg Peninsula Sanctuary and Marine Park Board, Permits Office, PO Box 496, Palmerston, NT 0831. Telephone (08) 8999 4814 or Fax (08) 8999 4524. A weeks camping (7 nights) at Coburg will cost you (in 2009) the princely sum of \$232.10 per vehicle containing up to five (5) passengers. If you have a Troopy for example, and it is licensed to carry more than five passengers, it will be an extra \$11 per person carried (above five) per week. Permits are only sold by the week so if you wanted to stay for say 8 nights; it would cost you another \$220. (The \$232.10 break up is \$220 for camping and a \$12.10 transit fee).

Note also that as at March, 2008, the Gurig Store has been closed till further notice. This means that absolutely no supplies whatever are available at Coburg. Coburg Cottages which had a small number of quite comfortable beach cottages for rent has also closed. A commercial operator at Coburg is however once again offering fishing charters and boat tours to Victoria Settlement, which is really good news. The Ranger Station is of course still open and operating. Check with the Sanctuary and Marine Park Board as to the current status of commercial activities when you apply for your permit.

You are not permitted to take any form of caravan out to Coburg and that includes off-road caravans, but you can take "sturdy" off-road campervans provided they are of the "fold down" variety. Apparently they have had a number of problems with caravans over the years including accidents, roll-overs, etc., so some time ago a decision was taken not to allow any form of normal height caravan out to Coburg Peninsula.

Gove Peninsula:

If you would like to experience and explore the delights of the Gove Peninsula, you will need a permit from the Northern Land Council to traverse the Central Arnhem Road to access Nhulunbuy. You can camp for a night in a few nominated spots on the Central Arnhem Road as the distance to Nhulunbuy is in excess of 700 k's. Some of these small sites charge camping fees of around \$15 per night per vehicle. There is however, one free location. All the locations are shown on the mud map of the Central Arnhem Road which you will receive with your permit.

The Mainoru Roadhouse, ((08) 8975 4390) which is located on the Central Arnhem Road about 220 kilometres from Katherine, just outside the boundary of the aboriginal land has been closed till further notice. (There is a possibility that it could re-open for the 2009/2010 dry season, but that is by no means certain). In the past it offered camping at \$20 per vehicle per night with a limit of 4 persons per vehicle, anything above that and additional charges applied. If you were on your lonesome, it was only \$10 per night. The camping area is a grassed, shady site down behind the Roadhouse on the banks of a quite large creek. It's a pretty good site in comparison to the others. Campers had access to a flush loo and a cold shower. Camping for a night breaks the 700 kilometre trip into two easy legs which is worthwhile. Whilst the locals generally drive the Central Arnhem Road in one day, that is not advisable for first time visitors. If you want to inquire as to whether the Roadhouse is to be opened for the 2009/2010 dry season you can try Mainoru Station which is about 17 kilometres inland from the Roadhouse on (08) 8977 4107.

Once you arrive at Nhulunbuy, you must gain a Recreation Permit to visit and camp at most locations where camping is permitted. The permits, which cost \$35 per person, (Concession \$25) are valid for a 2 month period. Camping Permits will cost you an additional \$20 per vehicle for a 5 day period. Some special environmentally monitored camp sites are also available at an additional cost of \$20 per vehicle per night. Advance bookings for these latter sites are essential. Recreation Permits are available (either on a personal visit basis, or by post, phone or fax) from the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, PO Box 1551, Nhulunbuy, NT 0881. Telephone (08) 8987 3992 or fax (08) 8987 3224. If you also wish to access Yirkkala, then you will need to write to the Yirkkala Dhanbul Community Association Inc., CMB 1, Yirkkala, NT 0880. Telephone (08) 8987 3433 or fax (08) 8987 2304. No camping is available anywhere within the Yirkkala area.

The Land Council Office generally closes around 4.00 pm and is not open over the weekend. If you arrive late, or over the weekend, you can now obtain Recreation and Camping Permits from either of the two commercial accommodation providers in Nhulunbuy. The first is the very comfortable Gove Peninsula Motel, PO Box 314, Nhulunbuy, NT 0881. Telephone (08) 8987 0700. (Their accommodation costs in 2009 are \$176.00 for a double room and \$154 for a twin). The other is the Walkabout Lodge and Tavern on (08) 8987 1777.

Please particularly note that there is no caravan park or camping facilities within Nhulunbuy itself. The Northern Land Council states quite categorically that the Central Arnhem Highway is not suitable for caravans and they will not issue a permit to transit the Central Arnhem Road or anywhere else in East Arnhem Land if you intend towing a caravan. Equally the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation will not issue a Visitor Recreation Permit to anyone with a caravan.

Please also note that the Northern Land Council, under strict instructions from the dozens of affected traditional owners, are simply NOT issuing permits to transit the unnamed track which runs primarily west/east across Arnhem Land from Oenpelli, past Gumadeer, Maningrida and Ramingining, and then turns south to link up with the Central Arnhem Road.

There is a good website available with a lot of really good (if slightly outdated) information about the whole of East Arnhem Land at www.ealta.org
I assume that ealta stands for East Arnhem Lands Tourist Association but can find no actual reference to them.

Wiso Track/Warrego Mine Road:

The Central Land Council are NOT issuing permits to transit the Wiso Track (also known as the Warrego Mine Road) which runs from Tennant Creek to Lajamanu, as they consider it impassable.

Hay River:

For permits to travel the Hay River area north from above Poeppel Corner to Jervois Station (on the Plenty Highway), contact Jol Fleming at Direct 4WD Awareness at Alice Springs on (08) 8952 3359. Jol has a web site at www.direct4wd.com.au which is very informative and contains a lot of excellent information. Permit numbers are limited each year to ensure the area remains unspoilt. Bush tucker tours are available en route at Batton Hill Camp courtesy of Lindsay Bookie or a member of his family. The “My Country” – Bush Tucker Tour is not to be missed; it’s a “must do”! Costs in 2008 were: Transit Fee per vehicle - \$120.00; Camping fees at Batton Hill - \$18.00 per person per night; “My Country” Bush Tucker Tours from Batton Hill - \$85.00 per person for a full day. (N.B.: All persons undertaking the Hay River trip are required to camp at least one night at Batton Hill Camp as a condition of their permit).

The application process for this area should be commenced as early as possible prior to your planned departure date as some of the forms can take up to 3 months to process.

Savannah Way:

If you are traveling the Savannah Way from Borroloola to Burketown ensure you carry sufficient fuel for your journey as both the Wollongorang and Hells Gate Roadhouses are now closed. The only fuel available on that trip is at Doomadgee. Hours of fuel availability at Doomadgee may also be unreliable.

Plenty Highway (which becomes the Donohue Highway in Qld)

Travelers using the Plenty Highway to cross from Alice Springs to Boulia in Qld need to be aware that Tobermorey Homestead no longer provides either fuel or camping. Fuel and camping is still available at Jervois Homestead which is 220 kilometres west of Tobermorey. (Tobermorey is located just inside the NT, right on the NT/Qld border).

Channel Point Coastal Reserve:

A system of visitor permits is in operation by the NT Parks and Wildlife Service to regulate access to this Coastal Reserve. When your permit is approved you will be provided with a key to open the gates to access the Reserve.

Bookings can only be made up to a maximum of three months ahead of the date on which you inquire. Maximum stay is five nights. A day visit also requires a camping permit.

Camping fees of \$6.60 per adult per night apply. Children (5-15 years) are \$3.30 each per night. A Family Pass of 2 adults and up to 4 children is available for \$15.40 per night. A refundable key deposit of \$100.00 also applies.

A Fishing Permit might also be required to enter Aboriginal land, including waters overlying Aboriginal land. For up to date information contact the Northern Land Council or go to their website.

For further information and permits contact: The Permit Office, Parks and Wildlife Service NT, PO Box 496, Ground Floor, Goyder Centre, Palmerston, NT 0831; or telephone (08) 8999 4795 or fax (08) 8999 4524. The email address for permits is pwpermits.nreta@nt.gov.au

The Parks and Wildlife Service NT website has more information; go to www.nt.gov.au/nreta/permits/channel_point.html

Uluru and Kakadu:

Bear in mind also that neither Uluru nor Kakadu National Park falls under the control of the NT Parks and Wildlife Service. Whilst access to Kakadu has been free for about the last five (5) years, this is set to change. From 2010 a "Park Use Fee" of \$25 per adult (16 and over) is to be introduced. Camping fees are also about to change. From April, 2009, the major camping areas offering toilets and showers will increase costs to \$10 per person

per night. Some other camping areas will remain as free camping, whilst some others with limited facilities will charge \$5 per person per night. The commercially run sites charge considerably more, usually around \$30 - \$40 per site per night. Kakadu can be contacted on (08) 8938 1120.

Uluru still charges both an entry fee and camping fees in 2009. The camping fees (2009) for an unpowered site are \$15.50 per person per night for one or two adults, plus \$14.00 per night for any additional adults. Children 6 to 16 are \$8.50 each per night. Powered camping sites are available at \$18.00 per person per night for one or two adults, plus \$14.00 per night for each additional adult. Children 6 to 16 are \$8.50 each per night. Camping is only available at the camping area at Voyages Ayers Rock Resort Camping Area who can be contacted on (08) 8957 7001. The cheapest Park entry fee is \$25 per person for 3 days. However, if you have a Transit Permit for the Docker River Road, and are entering the Park for the sole purpose of your transit, then no entry fee is required to be paid. Your Permit will however be inspected and you will be told that you are not permitted to stop within the Park. Uluru Park Service can be contacted on (08) 8956 2299.

Parks and Reserves – Entry and Camping Fees:

The vast majority of Parks and Reserves in the NT under the control of the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory have free access, but most charge modest camping fees for an overnight stay. The majority of those that don't have free access have been addressed above. Special rates apply to the Territory Wildlife Park; the Alice Springs Desert Park and to the commercially operated Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Some Parks have Ranger Stations, whilst others have self registration processes in place. The NT Parks and Wildlife Service can be contacted at PO Box 496, Palmerston, NT 0831. Telephone (08) 8999 4555 or fax (08) 8999 4558. Their quite comprehensive website is at www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks and the direct line for Permits is (08) 8999 4795.

Camping fees are generally one of two rates depending on the facilities offered. The highest (non commercial site) rate is \$6.60 per adult per night, with children (5-15 years) being \$3.30 per child per night. A Family Pass covering two adults and up to 4 children is available for \$15.40 per night. The lower rate is \$3.30 per adult per night and \$1.65 per child per night with the Family Pass being \$7.70 per night.

For all bush camping a permit is required by applying to the Park where staff are in attendance (you may find though that they simply redirect you to the Head Office Permits Section) or to the NT Parks and Wildlife Service. For some of the more remote National Parks self registration processes may be available at or near Park entry points, but this will not include Permits to bush camp. Fees are as per the lower camping rates above. If you are intending to simply bush camp in a NT National Park or Reserve it is highly

recommended that in the first instance you actually discuss your plans with a Ranger from that Park. Information and contact details for each Park or Reserve are available on the website above.

Road Conditions:

For up to date road conditions in the NT, including seasonal and other closures go to www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/roadreport/ and select the areas you require.

Can I get a Concession?:

Don't forget, if you are dealing with a National Park Service or any Government Agency, and you have a Seniors Card or a Pension Card of some description; always ask whether a Seniors Discount is available. In most cases the answer is, yes!

Disclaimer:

Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of this information, no responsibility can be accepted for either the accuracy of the contents or for any errors or omissions.

With your assistance we might also endeavour to maintain this information in an updated form. So if you wish to amend, or add to any of the information contained in this article, please contact the undersigned on (02) 9523 9266 or email john.greig@bigpond.com

John Greig

Researched and compiled by John Greig – Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Australia – Sydney

Please also be sure to read the first part of this site titled “Heading Outback – Do I Need a Permit? – Can I drive that track?” in conjunction with the information above.