

# Welcome to Western Australia



*The state of sunshine and contrasts, where the outback meets the sea*



**H**ere's a fact: Western Australia lays claim to more powdery white beaches than any other state in the country. Sure, the state stretches over about a third of Australia, but size isn't everything: WA's horizon-bending Indian Ocean turns translucent in the morning sun, illuminated like glass so swimmers can spot their toes wiggling on the sandy bottom. Whether you're feeling the grains on Perth's famous Cottesloe Beach (p103), wandering Margaret River's footprint-free coastline (p108) or rhythmically riding a camel as the sun sets over Broome's iconic Cable Beach (p111), WA will redefine your opinion of what a truly amazing beach is – we promise. The beachcombing lifestyle is embedded in the entire population's psyche; locals flock to the shoreline to picnic, read beneath umbrellas and paddle with their families. And the best part? There's so much space, everyone scores their own piece of sand.

But Western Australia is more than its beaches; it's also home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites. One of them – the Ningaloo Coast – has the world's largest fringing coral reef; it's home to turtles, manta rays and the intriguing, majestic (but harmless) whale sharks. (Read on to discover the other two listed sites.) The remote dive-mecca of the Rowley Shoals (p113) harbours even greater diversity, with 688 fish species, 233 colourful corals and, blissfully, zero humans. Inland, the billion-year-old Kimberley region (p113) is like nowhere else on the planet, with towering red rock formations, gushing waterfalls and bottomless gorges that capture every adventurer's heart. WA is as diverse as it is large, and despite its incredible food scene and stylish capital city, Perth, it's still largely considered off the beaten track. See it before the secret's out.

[westernaustralia.com](http://westernaustralia.com)

## GETTING THERE

■ Fly into WA's capital city, Perth, to join a tour, hire a car or fly onwards to the state's outer reaches. Margaret River is a three-hour drive, while Exmouth is a solid two-day effort, otherwise fly there in two hours. Broome and the Kimberley are best reached by plane, then tap into the expertise of local guides, pick up a 4WD or slide into a private charter plane destined for one of the region's luxury outback retreats.

## EATING THERE

■ Perth's culinary scene is right in line with the city's good-living vibe, and inventive dishes accessing locally grown ingredients are on-trend – a food-fashion that extends south to Margaret River's polished restaurants. Further afield, country pubs and cafés offer generous portions and unaffected character. Free outdoor BBQ facilities abound, in keeping with WA's DIY spirit.

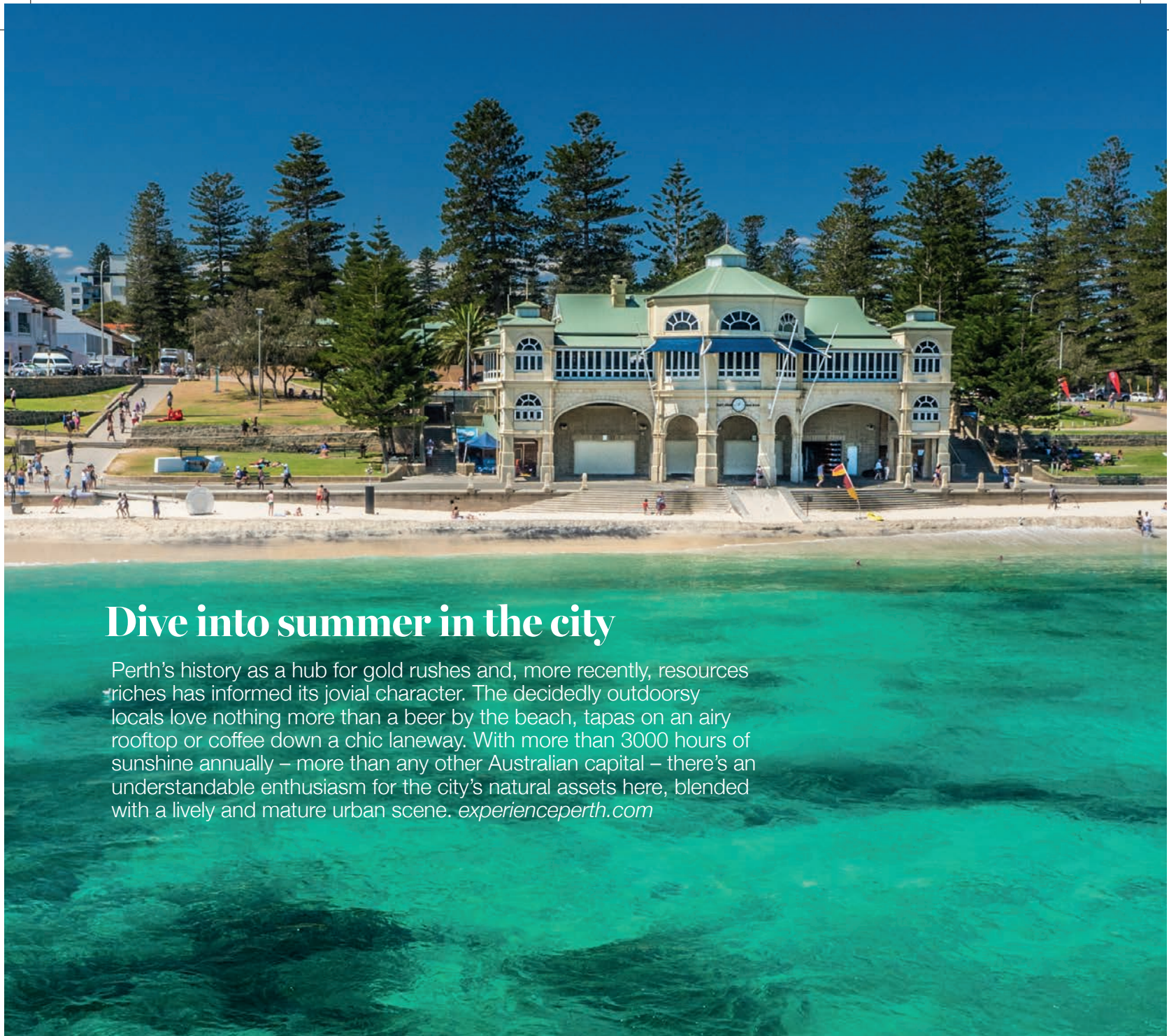
## STAYING THERE

■ Everything from luxe resorts, high-end hotels, safari-tent glamping, privately owned B&Bs and country motels, to ocean-facing caravan parks, bush-encased campgrounds and budget-friendly hostels. For a true bucket-list experience, sleep to the sounds of nature at one of WA's far-flung, five-star eco-retreats in the Kimberley (p114), where the untouched landscape grants even the busiest souls true peace.

## WHEN TO GO

■ Here in WA, it can get mighty hot – 42°C December days are not uncommon – but it's a dry heat and therefore much more bearable, even for the uninitiated. And since the WA climate as a whole is so varied – from the Mediterranean feel of the south to the tropical monsoonal north – you can find splendid summer days here at any time of year.





## Dive into summer in the city

Perth's history as a hub for gold rushes and, more recently, resources riches has informed its jovial character. The decidedly outdoorsy locals love nothing more than a beer by the beach, tapas on an airy rooftop or coffee down a chic laneway. With more than 3000 hours of sunshine annually – more than any other Australian capital – there's an understandable enthusiasm for the city's natural assets here, blended with a lively and mature urban scene. [experienceperth.com](http://experienceperth.com)



Locals and visitors alike spend many a lazy weekend making the most of Freo's café culture

## Drift into the bohemian café culture of Fremantle

Fremantle's curving, history-etched streets have attracted artists and creatives for decades, and its eclectic cafés, diverse shopping (from big-name local designers to traditional Greek providores) and vibrant weekend market all curve around the boat harbour, where ocean-fresh seafood is served at numerous casual restaurants (the sardines here are particularly sought-after). Freo, as it's referred to locally, is also home to Australia's best-known micro-brewery, Little Creatures ([littlecreatures.com.au](http://littlecreatures.com.au)) – don't miss the free tours and tastings – and lovely Bathers Beach, which is surprisingly secluded from the crowds. All that, just half an hour's drive from Perth's city centre. [visitfremantle.com.au](http://visitfremantle.com.au)

SCULPTURE BY THE SEA: WENDI ZHANG AND NORTON FLAVEL; DOLPHIN: SHUTTERSTOCK; ALL OTHERS: TOURISM AUSTRALIA AND WA TOURISM COMMISSION



## Escape to Perth's private island

How many capital cities have their own private island? Rottnest Island, owned and run by the state of Western Australia as a protected, Class A nature reserve, is an easy 19km stretch from Perth. Catch the ferry over ([rotnestexpress.com.au](http://rotnestexpress.com.au)) and once there you can hire a bike and cycle the car-free roads, explore its 63 sandy coves and snap a shot or three with these cute, furry island-dwellers (below). Quokkas are wild animals, so naturally they're not to be touched, picked up or cuddled, but they sure do love to pose! Stay a night (or two) in an historic limestone cottage to properly soak up the relaxed atmosphere and remember life's simple pleasures. [rotnestisland.com](http://rotnestisland.com)

## Snap up fish and chips on the sand

Perth is home to 19 beautiful beaches, so there are plenty of spots to choose from when you want to eat your freshly cooked dinner of fish and chips (fish and chips on the beach is an Aussie tradition, after all.) But for the iconic Perth experience, you can't go past the city's most loved beach, Cottesloe. Known affectionately by locals as Cott, this special spot lures with pillowy sands, bustling cafés and lively pubs, but most of all it's the place to be at sundown, when locals spread out picnic rugs, pour glasses of wine and feast on fish and chips while gazing at the citrusy horizon line. Head to Amberjacks takeaway ([amberjacks.com.au](http://amberjacks.com.au)) to order and watch the sun sail into the horizon.



A very cute quokka

Rottnest Island is car free and care free



### BY THE WAY...

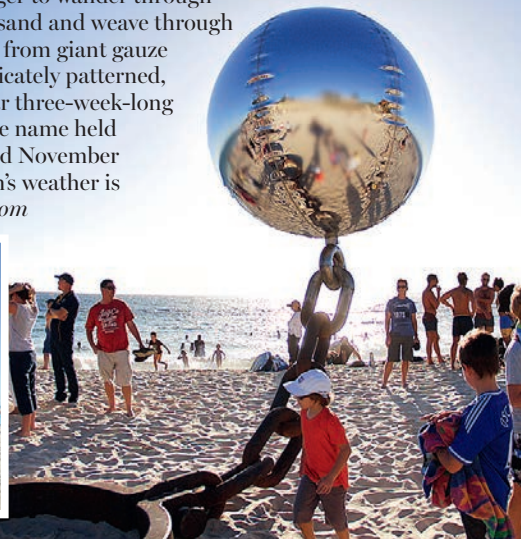
Perth's love affair with the outdoors has resulted in a burgeoning rooftop bar culture. Try Bob's Bar at Print Hall ([printhal.com.au](http://printhal.com.au)), named after Australian ex-Prime Minister Bob Hawke, which offers Spanish-style share plates alongside an upmarket drinks list, the Mechanic's Institute ([mechanicsinstitutebar.com.au](http://mechanicsinstitutebar.com.au)), and the summertime rooftop movie cinema, Rooftop Movies ([rooftopmovies.com.au](http://rooftopmovies.com.au)).

A friendly local



## Explore aquatic art by the shore


Each March an annual outdoor exhibition, known as Sculpture by the Sea, draws thousands of people eager to wander through enormous outdoor artworks that dot the sand and weave through the trees at Cottesloe Beach. Pieces range from giant gauze flamingos to knotted steel forms and intricately patterned, abstract sea creatures. The hugely popular three-week-long show was inspired by an event of the same name held in Sydney's Bondi Beach each October and November (see p38) and occurs at a time when Perth's weather is absolutely incredible. [sculpturebythesea.com](http://sculpturebythesea.com)



## Splash among dolphins

Less than an hour's drive from Perth is the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, home to more than 180 resident dolphins who, despite being wild, happily frolic with visitors on organised snorkelling trips. Nearby, Australia's largest colony of Little Penguins cluster on Penguin Island, off the coast of Rockingham, and emerge for feeding time thrice daily. Visitors can – and should – take a glass-bottom boat across, cruising beside sea lions and pelicans. [dolphins.com.au](http://dolphins.com.au)





Welcome to the world's largest  
fringing coral reef, Ningaloo



SAL SALIS: KIRKLAND; ALL OTHERS: TOURISM AUSTRALIA  
AND WA TOURISM COMMISSION

## Swim with the whale sharks at Ningaloo Reef

Gazing through a snorkelling mask at the world's largest fish – the gentle giant whale shark – has to be one of life's great moments. You'll never forget seeing the intricate patterns on their leathery skin, the mesmerising sway of their huge tail and their wide-open, vacuum-cleaner-like mouth (they're vegetarian, don't worry). Whale sharks are regular visitors to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Coast, so between March and July we highly recommend joining them as they coast silently through the water. Just getting here is beautiful: from your base at the coastal outpost of Exmouth – a two-hour flight from Perth – you'll drive to the water's edge to discover a coastline edged by a rainbow of blues on one side, and a national park filled with canyons and gorges on the other. Once on board, you're only moments away from Australia's largest fringing coral reef. [visitningaloo.com.au](http://visitningaloo.com.au)

104 australia.com

The aptly named  
Turquoise Bay, Exmouth





## EXPLORING



## While you're here...

Launching into the deep blue to snorkel alongside a giant, laid back whale shark is the must-do experience from Exmouth or Coral Bay, but there's plenty more happening. Here are 12 more of the most amazing things to do at Ningaloo:

- Catch the drift at Turquoise Bay: a gentle current allows you to float over fish-covered coral with barely a kick of the flipper – some 500 species flit through these warm waters, close to shore.
- Seek out less-populated snorkel spots at Oyster Stacks, where large schools of bigger fish cluster, or laze on the sand at Bundegei Beach.
- Watch in glee as giant manta rays somersault before you, as gracefully as ballerinas and as playfully as puppies – plenty of boats do tours (try [ningaloodreaming.com/manta-rays.php](http://ningaloodreaming.com/manta-rays.php) or [ningalooreedive.com](http://ningalooreedive.com)).
- Pull on your dive gear and explore beneath the Exmouth Navy Pier, regarded as one of Australia's top ten dive sites. [visitningaloo.com.au](http://visitningaloo.com.au)
- Learn about the many endangered sea turtles that lay eggs along this coastline at Jurabi Turtle Centre. From November to March, you may get to watch nesting turtles. [ningalooturtles.org.au](http://ningalooturtles.org.au)
- Look out for puffs of mist on the horizon – thousands of whales migrate up and down this temperate coastline from July to November.
- Gaze at the sun's fading glow, canapés in hand, from the deck of your private safari tent at outback-luxury wilderness camp, Sal Salis. [salsalis.com.au](http://salsalis.com.au)
- Fly above the birds and over Cape Range National Park in an open-sided microlight, then spot whale sharks and dugongs beyond the reef and, for an extra high, have a go at steering. [ningaloomicrolights.com](http://ningaloomicrolights.com)
- Join a catch-and-release game fishing charter, where the thrills are as great as the care for the sealife (try [onstrike.com.au](http://onstrike.com.au) or [bluehorizoncharters.com.au](http://bluehorizoncharters.com.au)).
- Pick a different restaurant every night, from fancy fare overlooking the pool at the Novotel Ningaloo ([novotelningaloo.com.au](http://novotelningaloo.com.au)), to slow-cooked ribs at The BBQ Father ([thebbqfather.com.au](http://thebbqfather.com.au)), or fresh seafood at Whalers Restaurant ([whalersrestaurant.com.au](http://whalersrestaurant.com.au)).
- Hire an eco-camper and spend a night or two in the well maintained bush campgrounds at Tulki or Kurrajong, with the beach only metres away. [exmouthcamperhire.com.au](http://exmouthcamperhire.com.au)
- Join Yardie Creek Boat Tours and spot rare blackfooted wallabies, camouflaged against the gorge walls. [yardiecreekboatours.com.au](http://yardiecreekboatours.com.au)

*“Gazing through a snorkelling mask at the world’s largest fish – the gentle giant whale shark – has to be one of life’s great moments”*

Private safari tent views from Sal Salis in the Cape Range National Park



Whale sharks aren't the only aquatic attraction along the Coral Coast



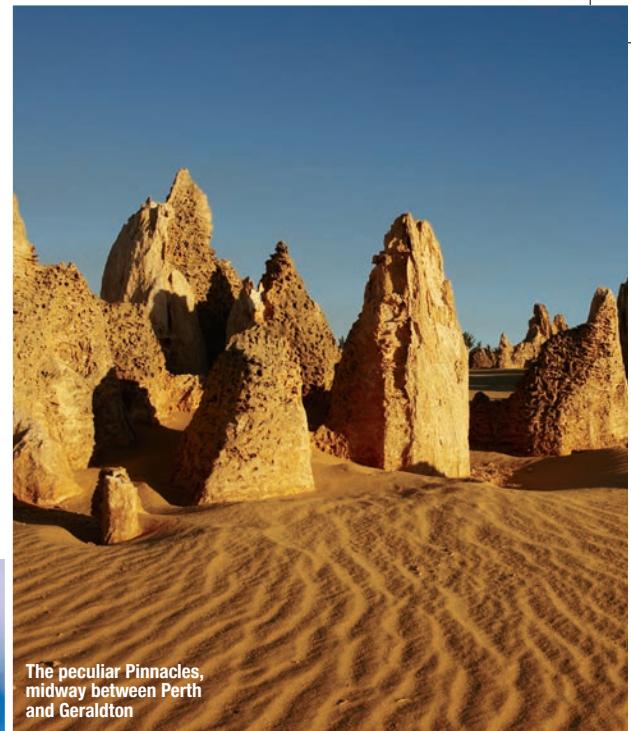


# Find freedom on a barefoot Coral Coast road trip

The Coral Coast drive between Perth and Ningaloo Reef ([australiascoralcoast.com](http://australiascoralcoast.com)) is filled with a kaleidoscope of unforgettable experiences – carpets of wildflowers, wild dolphins, more seafood than you can possibly eat and a rugged landscape of rusty red earth and shimmering aqua blue. Here are some of our highlights:



Kayaking through Francis Peron National Park



The peculiar Pinnacles, midway between Perth and Geraldton



Peer through Nature's Window in Kalbarri

## DAY 1

### Panoramas, pinnacles and petals

#### PERTH TO KALBARRI

Leave Perth early so you reach the Pinnacles, a sea of tall, narrow limestone karsts, before the sun's ray strengthen ([visitpinnaclescountry.com.au](http://visitpinnaclescountry.com.au)). This strange, moon-like landscape is almost otherworldly, and you'll want to stop along the sandy ring-road to photograph yourself beside them before moving on. Next, follow the coast of the sparkling Indian Ocean Drive to Geraldton ([visitgeraldton.com.au](http://visitgeraldton.com.au)), a busy port town considered the lobster capital of Australia (no guesses what you should order for lunch). Then, drive on to Kalbarri National Park ([kalbarri.org.au](http://kalbarri.org.au)), famous for its 400-million-year-old wind-carved cliffs and countless carpets of wildflowers, which bloom between July and October. If you're lucky enough to be here during that time you'll see thousands of flowers colouring the landscape, creating a giant outback garden, while whales are often spotted breaching beyond the surfers and windsurfers who chase the region's extreme conditions. The best views are at the Red Bluff lookout, where you might see dolphins, too. Rest your head at Kalbarri Edge Resort ([kalbarriedge.com.au](http://kalbarriedge.com.au)).

## DAY 2

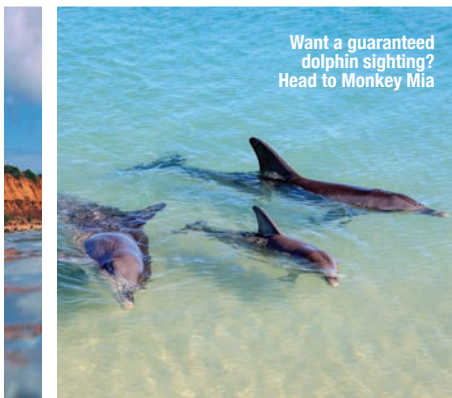
### Kayaking with an Aboriginal guide

#### KALBARRI TO SHARK BAY

After the 8.45am daily pelican feeding across from Murchison River Caravan Park, and possibly a short hike to the rock formation known as Nature's Window in Kalbarri National Park, reward yourself with lunch and views of the Murchison River mouth at Kalbarri's Black Rock Café ([blackrockcafe.com.au](http://blackrockcafe.com.au)). Then head towards Denham and the World Heritage Site of Shark Bay ([australiascoralcoast.com](http://australiascoralcoast.com)), where you'll find Hamelin Pool's stromatolites – living fossils that form a direct link to life forms that existed 3.5 billion years ago. Take a guided bushwalk, or go on a kayaking adventure with an Aboriginal guide from Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures ([wulaguda.com.au](http://wulaguda.com.au)), where you'll explore the cultural ties of local Nhandu and Malgana Aboriginal people to the Shark Bay region, and visit Shell Beach, which is ten metres deep in tiny white shells – one of only two such beaches in the world. Stay at Heritage Resort ([heritageresortsharkbay.com.au](http://heritageresortsharkbay.com.au)), smack bang in the centre of town with great views of the water, or head to Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort just 30 minutes away ([monkeymia.com.au](http://monkeymia.com.au)), so you're ready to go bright and early tomorrow.

KAYAK: RUSSELL ORD; ALL OTHERS: TOURISM AUSTRALIA AND WA TOURISM COMMISSION





Want a guaranteed dolphin sighting? Head to Monkey Mia



In Coral Bay, the underwater sights are just 50m from shore



CORAL COAST

WA

In Coral Bay, you can eat fresh oysters right off the rocks!

## DAY 3

# Hungry dolphins, sunbaking emus and seafood, seafood, seafood!

## MONKEY MIA TO CORAL BAY

Be on the beach out front of Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort ([monkeymia.com.au](http://monkeymia.com.au)) by 7.45am for the free daily feeding of the resident bottlenose dolphins, which have visited the bay each morning for more than 20 years. (It may be a little crowded initially, but that soon thins out and members of the pod visit between 8am and 12 noon, so wander further down the beach while you wait, and explore the shallows for photo-ops with starfish, seashells and red dunes. Oh, and keep an eye out for emus – they often come down to the sand for a bit of sun!) Then make tracks for Carnarvon ([carnarvon.org.au](http://carnarvon.org.au)), where you can explore the town's many fruit and vegetable properties – those on the Gascoyne Food Trail ([gascoynefood.com.au](http://gascoynefood.com.au)) sell freshly harvested produce that you can take with you on your journey.

Have lunch at Pickles Point Seafood & Boatyard (+618 9941 4078) for a selection of so-fresh-it's-dripping seafood, and if you're here on a Saturday between May

and October, check out the Gascoyne Growers' Market ([gascoynefood.com.au/growers-market](http://gascoynefood.com.au/growers-market)), where local farmers and artisans come to sell their fresh produce, baked goods and chutneys. Then make tracks for Coral Bay ([coralbaywa.com.au](http://coralbaywa.com.au)), a laid back little town at the southern end of Ningaloo Reef, where footwear is optional, the sand is soft and the ocean as placid as can be.

In Coral Bay you can snorkel out about 50 metres to reach the coral, or walk north up the beach to see the natural reef shark nursery (they're harmless). Since you can also do whale shark tours from here, many people like to spend a few days and add on manta ray swims ([coralbayecotours.com.au](http://coralbayecotours.com.au)), kayaking ([ningalookayakadventures.com.au](http://ningalookayakadventures.com.au)) or for the more adventurous, some quad-biking on sand dunes ([coralbaytours.com.au](http://coralbaytours.com.au)).

The best spot to stay is Ningaloo Reef Resort ([ningaloooreefresort.com.au](http://ningaloooreefresort.com.au)), and when you're ready to move on, it's only a two-and-a-half hour drive to the main jumping off point for Ningaloo reef, Exmouth. [australiascoralcoast.com](http://australiascoralcoast.com)



# Indulge at Australia's most beautiful beach town

To say Margaret River is a dream destination is not exaggerating one bit. Its wineries are world-class and there are about 100 to visit, with big names such as Leeuwin Estate, Vasse Felix and Voyager Estate attracting wine- and food-lovers (the restaurants are great too).

Its waves are so awesome, pro-surfer Kelly Slater visits nearly every year to ride the towering green walls and compete in international calendar event the Margaret River Pro, held every April. Its forests are filled with native karri trees that stretch 60 metres into the sky, dwarfing all around with their pale trunks – especially in Boranup Forest. Then there are the whales, migrating past from June to November, with everything from humpbacks to southern rights and even minke and blue whales. There are also wildflowers galore, with miniature blooms twinkling through the undergrowth from August to October and helping make the South West the only internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot in Australia – one of just 34 on the planet. The rugged cliffs, some as high as 40 metres, lend themselves to epic coastal walks, and the Cape to Cape Track leads hikers along the best stretches between the region's two lighthouses – including dozens of untouched beaches. All this just three hour's drive from Perth. [margaretriver.com](http://margaretriver.com)

Waves and wine: Margaret River provides an unbeatable combination



## Drink in the surrounds at wineries by the sea

Chardonnay and shiraz are the regional specialities, but really, anything produced in a Margaret River winery is all but guaranteed to be outstanding – the region is responsible for just three percent of total Australian grape production, but over 20 percent of Australia's premium wine market. We love the ocean glimpses at Wise Wine, the eco ethos and kitchen garden at biodynamic winemaker Cullen Wines, the incredible Cape Dutch architecture and rose gardens at Voyager Estate, the intricate dishes and art gallery at Wills Domain, and the open, luxury sportscar garage at Aravina Estate. All boast brilliant restaurants, beautiful interiors and charming vineyard views – you won't want to leave. [margaretriver.com/wine-gourmet](http://margaretriver.com/wine-gourmet)





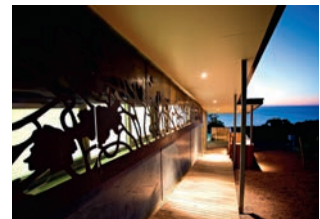
## Eat the world's best food... while barefoot

The Margaret River Gourmet Escape is a wildly popular food festival – so good that it attracts some of the world's best chefs. Past visitors have included Heston Blumenthal, David Thompson, Rick Stein, René Redzepi and Alex Atala. Each November a series of incredible events is held on beaches, in wineries, on private estates, at restaurants and bars, on boats and jetties and even in the forest; bringing new meaning to the phrase surf and turf. [gourmetescape.com.au](http://gourmetescape.com.au)

RESTING

# 3 of the best

FALL ASLEEP TO THE SOUNDS OF THE SEA



With so much beauty in the surrounds, Margaret River's lodgings have to be extra special to compete. Here are three faves:

### ● Injidup Spa Retreat (above)

Ten ocean-facing luxury villas with private plunge pool, plus access to spa treatments and private chefs. [injidupsparetreat.com.au](http://injidupsparetreat.com.au)

### ● Cape Lodge

Hidden away in stunning gardens and behind rows of grapevines, this intimate, five star country estate has nearly earned more awards than it has beds. [capelodge.com.au](http://capelodge.com.au)

### ● Smiths Beach Resort

Set back from one of the region's best beaches and blessed with a brilliant wine bar and restaurant, Smiths is a place you'll never want to leave. We love the modern upstairs apartments with oval bathtubs, wide balconies and ocean views. [smithsbeachresort.com.au](http://smithsbeachresort.com.au)

## TRAVELLERS'

### TIP

Best beach in Margaret River? There are dozens – whether you like glossy waves or secluded shores, we guarantee you'll find your own 'perfect'. But Meelup Beach is the perfect all-rounder: its flat, sandy bottomed turquoise cove is perfect for swimmers of all abilities; there are picnic tables beneath the shady tree canopy; and you'll find a relaxing walking track meandering through its coastal scrub, offering views of the surfers catching waves peeling off the point. Pack a picnic.

The Gourmet Beach BBQ series on Castle Bay Beach is just one small part of the Margaret River Gourmet Escape

## Take a stunning stroll on the coastal 'Cape to Cape'

Linking Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin, two peninsulas stretching virtually the length of the Margaret River region, is a 135km track that snakes along the spine of a coastal limestone ridge, leading walkers through tall-tree forests, over hills strewn with boulders, past ocean cliffs and along sandy beaches pocked with rockpools. You certainly don't have to walk the whole thing – though you can if you like – but many will jump onto the trail for a picturesque hour or two (it's free). However, you can also do it in style. Several operators offer walking experiences, including Walk into Luxury (pictured), involving five star resorts, massages and wineries ([walkintoluxury.com.au](http://walkintoluxury.com.au)); and Cape to Cape Explorer Tours, a more adventurous option involving cave tours, evening wildlife walks and fancy tents set up for you each evening while you relax by the fireside with wine ([capetocapetours.com.au](http://capetocapetours.com.au)).



## Watch for whales at Geographe Bay

The calm, protected waters of Geographe Bay at the northern end of Margaret River are favoured by some 35,000 whales that migrate along the WA coast. From September to early December, new mothers like to rest and nurse their calves in this gentle cove, making it the perfect place to join an ecologically aware whale-watching tour. [margaretriver.com/nature-adventure](http://margaretriver.com/nature-adventure)



FAR RIGHT: WALK INTO LUXURY; TOP LEFT: MARK BOSKELL; WHALE: SHUTTERSTOCK; TOP RIGHT: INJIDUP SPA RETREAT



# Follow the road to wellness

Another hour's drive south of Margaret River you'll find yet another region graced by rolling vineyards, set against a backdrop of ocean and forest – combining spas and fine food to create a place of tranquillity and natural biodiversity. For a wonderfully relaxed holiday you can road trip the length of the coast from Perth to Esperance (p10) – and even travel on to South Australia, if you're game. But the several airports servicing this area, at towns such as Albany, Esperance and Busselton, make flitting to the destination of your choice an easy alternative. Certainly, you won't regret any time spent here – it's just that beautiful. [australiassouthwest.com](http://australiassouthwest.com)



## Slip into bliss at Greens Pool

William Bay National Park, near Denmark, is a beautifully photogenic, tree-lined retreat offering plenty of white, sandy beaches and a number of beautiful walking trails. But the main attraction here is Greens Pool, a natural oasis studded with rounded boulders. Aside from looking great in photos, these large rocks provide shelter from the Great Southern Ocean, creating glassy, emerald waters lined with powdery sand. Just next door, Elephant Rocks is even more secluded, and reached via a gap in two multi-storey spheres of granite. [parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au)



## See a stingray slide over your toes

Kids (and big kids) squeal with delight when the curious rays at Hamelin Bay, north of Augusta, come right to the water's edge and swim over your feet. They've been swimming in the shallows for years, creating black shadows as they hover around the boat ramp and the old jetty ruins.



## Watch kangaroos laze on the beach

At Lucky Bay you'll often find 'roos lazing on the sand, admiring views of the archipelago that stretches out from the nearby town of Esperance. The beach is within Cape Le Grande National Park and there's a campground at its entry, with free-to-use barbecues. [visitesperance.com](http://visitesperance.com)



Bremer Bay, home to hundreds of orcas every year

## Seek out the largest pod of orcas on earth

Between January and April, killer whales swarm in the deep southern waters around Bremer Canyon, a rich feeding ground that draws more than 100 orcas to the wilderness hot spot. Naturaliste Charters is the only tour operator to follow them, thanks to an exclusive collaboration with research body, the Bremer Canyon Killer Whale project. Join a tour at Bremer Bay, northeast of Albany. Giant squid, sperm whales and large flocks of sea birds have also been seen in this isolated part of the ocean. [whales-australia.com.au](http://whales-australia.com.au)



No need to head to Scandinavia; we have our own Denmark right here in southwest WA

## Swap your flippers for slippers at Denmark

Fact: the stunning beachside town of Denmark (found along the south-facing coastline of Western Australia, not to be confused with the Scandinavian country!) is a haven for spas, with more wellness operators per capita than anywhere else in the state – so you know where to go if pampering is in order. It's also surrounded by brilliant wineries such as Singlefile ([singlefilewines.com](http://singlefilewines.com)) and Howard Park ([burchfamilywines.com.au](http://burchfamilywines.com.au)), where there's a good chance you'll meet the friendly families and winemakers behind them. Drop in to the local bakery for award-winning pies. [denmark.com.au](http://denmark.com.au)



## Coast into the town where the outback meets the sea

Vibrant and multicultural, the beach town of Broome calms the soul with its glittering ocean, lazy strolls along famous Cable Beach and sunset camel rides. Its balmy nights lend themselves to long evenings of food and wine, or watching the moon's staircase-like reflection on the mud flats. Longer stays in this western gateway to the Kimberley allow you to explore the red-stained lands beyond, where remote pearl farms operate, waterfalls plummet and Aboriginal communities live. [visitbroome.com.au](http://visitbroome.com.au)

The distinctive boabs and red pindan soil of Broome and beyond



### Kayak above marine turtles

The eroded rock formations at the end of Cable Beach give way to azure pools where turtles dart like shooting stars beneath the surface. Spot them on a kayak ([broomeadventure.com.au](http://broomeadventure.com.au)) or hovercraft ([broomehovercraft.com.au](http://broomehovercraft.com.au)) tour, then at low tide explore the ledge known as Gantheaume Point on foot, where prehistoric dinosaur prints were discovered in the 1930s.

### Ride beach camels by sunset

Every day, camel chains trace the waterline at Cable Beach, their rhythmic plodding drawing riders into 'Broome time', the term locals use to describe the town's carefree pace. A sunset ride upon a doe-eyed camel has now become as iconic as the beach itself.

#### TRY THESE:

Broome Camel Safaris, [broomecamelsafaris.com.au](http://broomecamelsafaris.com.au)

Red Sun Camels, [redsuncamels.com.au](http://redsuncamels.com.au)

Sundowner Camel Tours, [sundownercameltours.com.au](http://sundownercameltours.com.au)







## Marvel at the power of The Horizontal Falls

The West Kimberley coast experiences the world's largest tropical tides, with millions of litres of ocean constantly surging in and out, changing the water line by up to 12 metres. The tidal strength ebbs and flows with the moon, at times creating white-water spectacles, the most dramatic of which are The Horizontal Falls – described by naturalist David Attenborough as “Australia’s most unusual natural wonder”. It’s here, about 250km north of Broome in an island-scattered wilderness known as the Buccaneer Archipelago, that water gushes through twin, parallel gaps in the ancient McLarty Ranges. Then, as the tides turn, the water flows in the opposite direction. The unique, flat falls can be seen from above in a light plane or helicopter, or felt from the bow of a speedboat; either way is absolutely thrilling. [visitbroome.com.au](http://visitbroome.com.au)



## Set your heart racing at the Broome Cup

Hooves thunder along Broome’s red dirt each August during the town’s ultimate racing festival, the Broome Cup. Join elegantly dressed locals on the festival’s finale, Cup Day, as they watch skilled jockeys race each other to the exhilarating finish and sip on Broome’s famous (and delicious) mango beer, made by the town brewery, Matso’s. [broometurfclub.com.au](http://broometurfclub.com.au)



## Find your pearls

Lustrous pearls put Broome on the map back in the 1900s, when it was the biggest pearling centre in the world. Today only a few pearl farms still exist but the glamorous boutiques remain, offering pearls from \$30 to \$30,000 and beyond. There’s even an annual pearl festival (Shinju Matsuri, pictured) – a whirlwind of colour and community with long table dinners on the beach, float parades and more. [shinjumatsuri.com.au](http://shinjumatsuri.com.au)

### TRY THESE:

Paspaley ([paspaley.com](http://paspaley.com)); Kailis Australian Pearls ([kailisjewellery.com.au](http://kailisjewellery.com.au)); Linneys ([linneys.com.au](http://linneys.com.au)); Cygnet Bay Pearls ([cygnetbaypearls.com.au](http://cygnetbaypearls.com.au)); Willie Creek Pearls ([williecreekpearls.com.au](http://williecreekpearls.com.au))

### RESTING



Kooljaman at Cape Leveque

## Glamping by the sea

Many of us have fond memories of camping, but if you prefer something a little more glamorous, Broome offers several ‘glamping’ experiences where you can sleep under the stars in a semi-permanent tent with modern essentials like hot showers, timber floors and large, plush beds. Here are three of the best:

### ● Ramada Eco Beach Resort

Only an hour and a half’s drive or a short scenic flight from Broome, this collection of luxury safari tents and eco villas sit on a dune facing the expansive ocean. Private and isolated, yet blessed with a pool, restaurant and daily yoga classes, as well as Aboriginal activities and seasonal dolphin and whale watching, it brings creature comforts to the outback. [ecobeach.com.au](http://ecobeach.com.au)

### ● Kooljaman at Cape Leveque

On the tip of the Dampier Peninsula, three hour’s drive or an eye-poppingly beautiful flight from Broome, the Aboriginal-owned wilderness camp of Kooljaman combines rustic cabins and safari tents with bush tucker and spear fishing expeditions, led by Aboriginal Australians. You can even catch and cook your own Kimberley mud crab (p9). [kooljaman.com.au](http://kooljaman.com.au)

### ● The Billi

Close by Broome’s famous Cable Beach you’ll find The Billi’s pristine, white surrounds, leafy trees and exotic gardens in a calming resort atmosphere. Eco tents fitted with real beds, cow-hide rugs and original artworks – as well as expansive holiday apartment villas – surround the lovely pool. This is true outback style brought right into town. [thebilli.com.au](http://thebilli.com.au)



# Cruise the Kimberley's world-class wilderness

There aren't many places in the world where your mobile phone rarely works – and where the ancient environment makes you wonder why we even measure time at all. More than 2000km north of Perth, the Kimberley is one of those rare expanses, pocked with deep gorges, rocky red escarpments and landscapes that stretch way off into the horizon. A small luxury cruise along its ancient coastline unlocks so much of this massive area that is otherwise unseen: the hidden Aboriginal rock art dated at tens of thousands of years old, the beaches without a single footprint, the archipelago of islands topped with tropical

growth and the shallow reef systems teeming with marine life. Early in the season, which runs from April until early October, waterfalls plummet over the sides of 80m-high cliff walls, staining the ochre black. Small numbers of exclusive cruise boats take only a few lucky guests through these rarely seen parts. Carrying excellent chefs and knowledgeable guides with a thirst for the outdoors, and equipped with comfortable ensuite rooms, the level of luxury increases with the price tag. But when you're back home looking at your photographs, you'll know it's money well spent. [australiasnorthwest.com](http://australiasnorthwest.com)

## CRUISING



### Baby, let's cruise

Only a handful of operators cruise along the Kimberley coastline; fewer still venture out to the Rowley Shoals. Most are five star, so it's hard to go wrong no matter who you choose, but here are five of our favourites:

- **True North Luxury Adventure Cruises**

Cruises the Kimberley (with helicopter) and the Rowley Shoals. [northstarcruises.com.au](http://northstarcruises.com.au)

- **The Great Escape Charter Company**

Cruises the Kimberley (with helicopter) and the Rowley Shoals. [greatestescape.net.au](http://greatestescape.net.au)

- **Kimberley Quest**

Cruises the Kimberley and the Rowley Shoals. [kimberleyquest.com.au](http://kimberleyquest.com.au)

- **Silversea Cruises**

Cruises the Kimberley only. [silversea.com](http://silversea.com)

- **Coral Expeditions**

Cruises the Kimberley only. [coralprincess.com.au](http://coralprincess.com.au)



A Kimberley cruise is an experience for everyone's bucket list

## Drift through coral walls in the Rowley Shoals

One of Earth's last untouched marine wildernesses, the Rowley Shoals are a magical trio of coral atolls that, underwater, look like a giant aquarium. Not only is the water delightfully warm at about 28°C, it's also home to 688 species of tropical fish and 233 coral varieties. Sprouting from the ocean floor from depths of 440m, the pear-shaped atolls are seriously remote, found in a protected marine park about 300km west of Broome and reached only by cruise boat or plane. On a good day – in November, when trade winds cease and the water glasses off – snorkellers and divers can see as far as 60m through the multi-hued ocean, spotting huge, fearless potato cod, schools of hump-headed maori wrasse or clusters of cobalt blue staghorn coral. A highlight is drifting with the current through coral corridors past giant clams, anemone, fish and more. You simply won't believe your eyes. [australiasnorthwest.com](http://australiasnorthwest.com)



Marvel at the unmatched underwater visibility of the Rowley Shoals

MAIN IMAGE ABOVE: KEN DUNCAN, TRUE NORTH;  
INSET TOP RIGHT: TOURISM AUSTRALIA





El Questro's Homestead overlooks Chamberlain Gorge and river systems

## Escape to the outback aquatic in style

Hovering over the rusty red, 1.9-billion-year-old Cockburn Range in an open-sided helicopter is quite a thrill. Particularly if earlier that day you were splashing through a creek on horseback, or reeling in the Kimberley's iconic fighting fish, a barramundi. Such are the activities on the agenda at El Questro Wilderness Park, a huge outback property in the East Kimberley, home to a surprisingly long list of water-filled activities: there's boating between the sunburnt cliffs of an ancient gorge; lazing in the thermal waters of palm-lined Zebedee Springs; hiking through the bush to the deep waterhole of Emma Gorge and far more.

Perhaps the most appealing part is the egalitarian nature of El Questro. Those who want to lash out can luxuriate in the colonial-style Homestead which, with its stunning views of Chamberlain Gorge, balcony baths and all-inclusive tariff, attracts media moguls, music legends and movie stars. Others can listen to a bubbling river below the

balcony of their dark wood bungalow; there's also the option of stretching out on the beds in a canvas-topped cabin, or if getting back to basics appeals most, there are plenty of traditional camping sites available. No matter which level of accommodation you choose, everyone has access to the extraordinary environment contained within El Questro's million-acre landscape. Most amazingly, it's surprisingly easy to get here – only a 90-minute drive from the outback town of Kununurra, which you can fly to directly from Perth (p102), Darwin (p98) and Broome (p111). And we haven't even mentioned its proximity to other East Kimberley attractions: Lake Argyle, the majestic man-made body of water which sits at around 22 times the size of Sydney Harbour; the Ord River, which flows like watery gold through the area's rust-coloured hills; and the Bungle Bungles, a range of World Heritage-listed, impossibly beautiful, beehive-striped mountains. Start planning, [elquestro.com.au](http://elquestro.com.au)

RESTING

# 3 of the best

## BREATHTAKING LUXURY ESCAPES

The Kimberley is extremely remote, which makes these exclusive retreats, perched on uninhabited lands, even more special:



### ● Berkeley River Lodge

Accessible only by air, this getaway spoils its guests with meals crafted by a highly qualified chef, guided tours to Aboriginal rock art seen by few, balconies that look to ocean or river mouth, open-air egg-shaped baths and a 25m lap pool. [berkeleyriver.com.au](http://berkeleyriver.com.au)



### ● Kimberley Coastal Camp

With only 12 guests at any one time, this low-impact wilderness retreat feels instantly welcoming and caters to fishing fans, historic rock art enthusiasts, nature lovers and those interested in Aboriginal traditions. [kimberleycoastalcamp.com.au](http://kimberleycoastalcamp.com.au)



### ● Faraway Bay Bush Camp

As charming as it is rustic, Faraway Bay weaves a spell over people, letting their shoulders drop and tensions evaporate as they stare at the turquoise Timor Sea. Highlights include waterfall cruises, dugong and crocodile spotting, rock art hikes, fishing, bird watching, stargazing and the especially wonderful outdoor showers. [farawaybay.com.au](http://farawaybay.com.au)

MAIN IMAGE ABOVE: TOURISM AUSTRALIA; INSET FROM TOP: BERKLEY RIVER LODGE; KIMBERLEY COASTAL CAMP; FARAWAY BAY BUSH CAMP