



Coral Coast & the Pilbara

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Why Go?

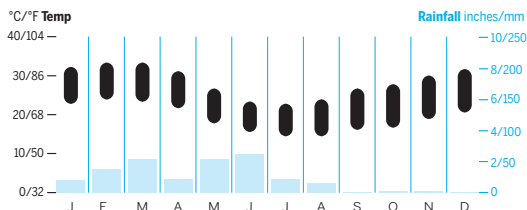
Lapping the edge of the Indian Ocean, the turquoise waters of the Coral Coast nurture a unique marine paradise – one of the few places you can swim with the world's largest fish, the gentle whale shark. Fringed by World Heritage-nominated Ningaloo Reef, the deserted beaches and crystal-clear lagoons play host to myriad other sea life including humpback whales, manta rays and loggerhead turtles. Development is thankfully low-key, and towns few and far between.

The Coral Coast is also Western Australia's adventure playground. The clean beaches and shallow lagoons are ideal for swimming and snorkelling while surfers can enjoy close reef breaks and big winter swells. There's world-class diving and fishing, excellent seafood and superb sunsets.

Inland, the huge, rusty chunk of iron ore known as the Pilbara hides another gem, the sublime Karijini National Park, where deep gorges, hidden pools and desolate peaks entice many a walker.

When to Go

Exmouth



April–July
Whale shark season – don't miss the swim of a lifetime.

September & October
Karijini's gorges warm up and wildflowers blanket the ranges.

November–March
Ningaloo is full of turtle love, eggs and hatchlings.

i Getting There & Around

AIR

The following airlines service the Coral Coast and the Pilbara:

Airnorth (☎1800 627 474; www.airnorth.com.au)

Golden Eagle (☎9172 1777; www.goldeneagleairlines.com)

Qantas (☎13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au)

Skywest (☎1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au)

Strategic (☎135 320; www.flystrategic.com)

Virgin Blue (☎13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au)

BUS

Greyhound (☎1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) runs three times weekly between Broome and Perth along the coast.

Integrity (☎1800 226 339; www.integritycoachlines.com.au) runs weekly between Perth and Port Hedland via the inland Great Northern Hwy.

CORAL COAST

The Coral Coast extends from Coral Bay to Onslow shadowing the spectacular Ningaloo Marine Park – arguably WA's most precious natural attraction. Remote beaches, bays, lagoons and islands run along the coast while the jagged limestone peaks and gorges of Cape Range National Park rise out of the otherwise flat, arid expanse of North West Cape.

Coral Bay

POP 190

The tiny seaside village of Coral Bay lies just north of the Tropic of Capricorn and its beautiful location and good facilities make it one of the easiest places to access the exquisite Ningaloo Marine Park. The town consists of just one street and a sweeping white-sand beach on **Bills Bay** where you can swim and snorkel close to shore. It's also a great base for outer-reef activities like scuba diving, fishing and whale watching (June to November) and tourists flock here in the winter months to swim with whale sharks (April to July) and manta rays (May to November).

Keep to the southern end of the bay when swimming as the northern end (Skeleton Bay) is a breeding ground for reef sharks. You can hire snorkel gear, kayaks and glass-bottom canoes on the beach. There's also

great snorkelling at **Purdy Point**, 500m south along the coast. Not surprisingly, the lookout above the beach car park provides excellent sunset panoramas. The town is chockers from April to October.

There are ATMs at the shopping centre and the Peoples Park grocer, and internet access at some of the tour outlets and Fins Cafe.

Fish-feeding occurs on the beach at 3.30pm everyday.

👉 Tours

Popular tours from Coral Bay include swimming with whale sharks, spotting marine life (whales, dolphins, dugongs, turtles and manta rays), coral viewing from glass-bottom boats, and quad-bike trips. Tour operators have offices in the shopping centre and caravan parks.

Coral Bay Adventures

WILDLIFE

(☎9942 5955; www.coralbayadventures.com) This excellent company offers half and full-day trips of wildlife watching (\$85/190), swimming with whale sharks (\$390) or manta rays (\$165), whale watching (\$110) and coral viewing on a glass-bottom boat (one/two hours \$33/46). It can also provide free snorkel hire for the length of your stay.

Ningaloo Reef Dive

DIVING

(☎9942 5824; www.ningalooreedive.com) This PADI and eco-certified dive crew offers snorkelling with whale sharks (\$365, from late March to June), reef dives (\$160) and a full range of dive courses (from \$380).

Ningaloo Kayak Adventures

KAYAKING

(☎9948 5034; www.ningalookayadventures.com; tours \$40-60) On the main beach. It offers two- and three-hour kayak tours with stops for snorkelling. You can also hire a glass-bottom canoe (\$25 per hour), wetsuit and snorkelling gear (\$15 per day).

Coral Coast Tours

4WD

(☎9948 5052; www.coralcoasttours.com; half-day adult/child \$135/78, full-day \$185/124) Go exploring and wildlife spotting along the rugged coastal tracks through Warroora Station. Or if it's windy, take a Blo Kart (sand yacht) out onto a nearby salt lake (\$50 per hour). Airport transfers from \$75.

Sail Ningaloo

SAILING

(☎9942 5869; www.sailningaloo.com.au; 3-day tours from \$1550; Apr-Oct) The fully cashed-up can select from a number of multi-day reef sailing cruises onboard the catamaran *Shore Thing*.