



Perth & Fremantle

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Best Places to Eat

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Why Go?

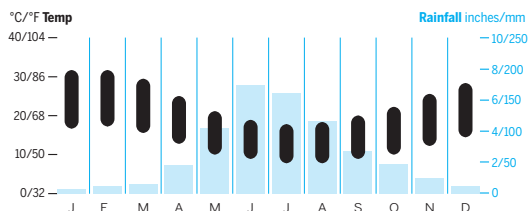
Planted by a river and beneath an almost permanent canopy of blue sky, the city of Perth is a modern-day boomtown, stoking Australia's economy from its glitzy central business district. Yet it remains as relaxed as the sleepy Swan River – black swans bobbing atop – which winds past the skyscrapers and out to the Indian Ocean.

Even in its boardrooms, Perth's heart is down at the beach, tossing around in clear ocean surf and stretching out on the sand. The city's beaches trace the western edge of Australia for some 40km, and you can have one to yourself on any given day – for a city this size, Perth is sparsely populated.

Perth has sprawled to enfold Fremantle within its suburbs, yet the port city maintains its own distinct personality – proud of its nautical ties, working-class roots, bohemian reputation and, especially, its football team.

When to Go

Perth



February

Perth's Arts Festival is on and school starts so the beaches are less crowded.

March

Warm and dry, so great weather for the beach, and not as swelteringly hot.

September

Kings Park wildflowers, the Perth Royal Show and the Parklife festival.

PERTH

POP 1.7 MILLION

Laid-back, liveable Perth has wonderful weather, beautiful beaches and an easygoing character. About as close to Bali as to some of Australia's eastern state capitals, Perth's combination of big-city attractions with relaxed and informal surrounds offers an appealing lifestyle for locals and a variety of things to do for visitors. It's a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city with myriad bars, restaurants and cultural activities all vying for attention. But the best bit is that when you want to chill out, it's easy to do so. Perth's pristine parkland, nearby bush, and river and ocean beaches – along with a good public transport system – allow its inhabitants to spread out and enjoy what's on offer.

Relaxed doesn't mean static, though. Western Australia's mining boom has seen Perth blossom like WA's wildflowers in spring. Those on the gravy train are out eating, socialising, spending money and flexing their muscles in the sun.

The city of Perth lies along a wide sweep of the Swan River. The river borders the city centre to the south and east, and links Perth to its neighbouring port city, Fremantle. Follow the river north from the city and you'll reach prosperous nooks such as Claisebrook Cove, lined with ostentatious houses, cafes and public sculpture.

Train tracks divide the city centre from the Northbridge entertainment enclave, im-

mediately to the north. Here's where you'll find Perth's cultural institutions, most of its hostels and the lively Little Asia restaurant strip.

Continue northeast along Beaufort St and you'll reach the sophisticated suburbs of Highgate and Mt Lawley. Head west from here and there's Mt Hawthorn and hip little Leederville. To the west of the central city rises Kings Park, with well-heeled Subiaco beyond it. Go further west and you'll hit the beaches.

For the Swan Valley and other parts of Perth's eastern suburbs, see the Around Perth chapter.

History

The discovery of stone implements near the Swan River suggests that Mooro, the site on which the city of Perth now stands, has been occupied for around 40,000 years. The indigenous Wadjuk people, a subgroup of the Noongar, believed that the Swan River (Derbal Yaragan) and the landforms surrounding it were shaped by two Wargal (giant serpent-like creatures), which lived under present-day Kings Park.

In December 1696 three ships in the Dutch fleet commanded by Willem de Vlamingh anchored off what is now known as Rottneest Island. On 5 January 1697 a well-armed party landed near present-day Cottesloe Beach and then marched eastward to a river near Freshwater Bay. They tried to make contact with the local people to

PERTH & FREMANTLE IN...

Two Days

Book ahead for dinner in **Highgate** or **Mt Lawley** and then spend your first morning in the art galleries and museum of the **Perth Cultural Centre**. Grab lunch in **Northbridge** before following our walking tour to **Kings Park**. For your second day, catch the train to **Fremantle** and spend the whole day there, prioritising the world-heritage prison, maritime museum and Shipwreck Galleries. Grab a bite in **Fishing Boat Harbour** and then head to a **pub** to catch a band.

Four Days

Take the two-day itinerary but stretch it to a comfortable pace. Head to **Rottneest Island** for a day trip and spend any time left over on Perth's beaches. Allocate a night each to **Leederville** and the city's **cocktail bars**.

One Week

As for the four-day itinerary, but spend a day in **Guildford** and the **Swan Valley**, take a **whale-watching cruise** and head out to **Rockingham** to view penguins and sea lions and to swim with dolphins. Spend one of the extra evenings in **Subiaco** and another in **Northbridge**.