

Understand Perth & West Coast Australia



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A multitude of multibillion-dollar mines, a well-preserved lifestyle (house, boat, beach), and a whole new outlook.

HISTORY 224

Lawlessness, hardship, good times. Western Australia has seen it all.

THE ENVIRONMENT 232

Take the tour with leading environmentalist Tim Flannery and find out why the kangaroo's hop makes a lot of sense.

LOCAL PRODUCE & WINE. 238

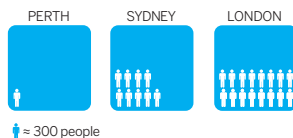
Why wineries and regional produce will always be among the twinkling highlights of the state.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM: MINING LIFE TODAY 242

How the great industrial transformation is shaping life across the state.



population per sq km



Perth & the West Coast Today

The Lay of the Land

Mining money has officially stamped Western Australia (WA) with wealth. Despite its small population (2.3 million), the state has been the strongest economic performer in the country for the last few years. The average family's income is higher than those over east – to the tune of a carton of beer per week. This may not sound like much, but it does translate into brand-new oversized homes, squeaky-shiny boats plonked casually on front lawns, and a population noted for its confidence and brash energy.

This frontier land has been built on mining money, and today many major iron-ore mines get into the ground only with substantial Chinese investment. Gargantuan projects such as Gorgon Gas are tapping into natural gas estimated at \$500 billion, employing thousands of workers. For the Australian economy, these are very big biscuits.

Still a Tough Nanny?

Law and order remain key political and social concerns. Premier Colin Barnett, who took power from Labor to form a coalition government following a hung parliament in the 2008 state election, waged his Liberal Party campaign on a strong 'tough on crime' platform. Laws considered heavy-handed by some, such as \$500 fines for not wearing a seatbelt, and strident anti-graffiti legislation, have contributed to WA's image as a nanny state.

Despite this pejorative moniker, other policy areas have been upheld as exemplars of forward-thinking. Perth's rail system is heralded as one of the best in the country. However, most people live in car-dependent suburbs – they need to drive in order to access public transport, then have to fight for a parking space at the train station. This problem is exacerbated each time a new suburb is built, and today Perth's sprawling suburbs have bled out into one mega-city.

Faux Pas

- » Championing daylight savings. The state voted it down in a referendum in 2009.
- » Asking for a pot, half-pint or schooner at the bar. It's a middle.
- » Talking about how wonderful it is in the eastern states. No one's interested.

Top Films

- Rabbit-Proof Fence** (2002), directed by Phillip Noyce
- Japanese Story** (2003), directed by Sue Brooks
- Last Train to Freo** (2006), directed by Jeremy Sims
- Gallipoli** (1981), directed by Peter Weir

Top Books

- Everything by Tim Winton, especially *Cloudstreet* (1991) and *The Turning* (2006)
- Sand** (2010), John Kinsella and Robert Drewe
- Tales from Outer Suburbia** (2008), Shaun Tan
- Benang** (1999), Kim Scott