

# Welcome to Perth & West Coast Australia

*If you subscribe to the 'life's a beach' school of thought, you'll fall in love with Western Australia (WA) and its 12,500km of spectacular coastline.*

## **An Immense, Sparsely Populated Land**

If the huge expanses of WA were a separate nation, it would be the planet's 10th-largest country. Most of the state's population clings to the coast, yet you can wander along a beach for hours without seeing another footprint, or be one of a handful of campers stargazing in a national park.

The south is a playground of white-sand beaches, expanses of springtime wildflowers and lush green forests teeming with life. Up north in the Kimberley, you'll encounter wide open spaces that conceal striking gorges, waterfalls and ancient rock formations.

## **Action Stations**

WA has plenty for the active traveller. Traverse the 963km Bibbulmun Track (or focus on a few spectacular day walks), or mountain bike the 1000km Munda Biddi Trail. Shorter but equally interesting walks include wandering amid the wildflowers of the Stirling Range National Park and negotiating Porongurup's granite formations. Dive and snorkel in stunning marine parks and around fascinating shipwrecks, or surf around Margaret River and kiteboard and windsurf off Lancelin's expansive beaches.

## **All Creatures Great & Small**

WA's fauna includes kangaroos, emus and colourful parrots, and there is also the chance to get acquainted with lesser-known local critters like quokkas, bilbies and potoroos. The WA coast's lengthy dalliance with the Indian and Southern Oceans means opportunities to spot marine wildlife also abound. Each year about 30,000 whales cruise the coast-hugging 'Humpback Hwy'. At Ningaloo Marine Park you can dive with the world's largest fish, the whale shark, and at Rockingham, Bunbury and Monkey Mia you can interact with wild dolphins.

## **The Finer Things in Life**

Perth and neighbouring Fremantle are cosmopolitan cities, yet both retain a laid-back feel courtesy of their fantastic beaches and parks. The mining boom continues to add a glitzy sheen to everything in the shadow of its skyscrapers, and earlier boom times have left grand architectural legacies in Fremantle, Albany, Guildford and York.

Around Margaret River and the south-west, vigneron and brewers craft world-class wines and beers, complemented by the inventive menus of the region's restaurants. Truffles are grown down south, and WA's seafood is consistently sublime.



## Why I Love Perth & West Coast Australia

By Brett Atkinson, Author

Despite being very familiar with Australia's eastern states, I always find the country's far west a compellingly different destination. Perth's pride at being the world's most remote capital is reflected in the verve and independence of the locals, and I love exploring the state's emerging culinary scene, which combines great wine and local produce. Fremantle's historic townscape – and excellent pubs serving great craft beer – is worth multiple leisurely explorations, and the state's combination of the outback's elemental red-dirt expanses and cliff-studded coastline is truly like nowhere else I've been.

**For more about our authors, see page 280**