

Understand Perth & West Coast Australia

PERTH & WEST COAST AUSTRALIA TODAY 230

An expanding number of multibillion-dollar mines, a well-preserved lifestyle with all the bells and whistles (house, boat, beach) and a feeling of confidence borne of isolation.

HISTORY 232

Lawlessness, hardship, good times, and the rebirth of Fremantle after a yacht race loved by the wealthy. Western Australia has seen it all.

LOCAL PRODUCE & WINERIES 241

Taste test your way around Western Australia's expanding network of wineries, breweries and local food producers.

BOOM TOWN: MINING & THE ENVIRONMENT . . 245

How demand by Asia's biggest economies is shaping the economic, demographic and physical landscapes of Western Australia.

INDIGENOUS ART IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA . . . 250

Understanding the key styles of Western Australian indigenous art, and where to see the best examples throughout the state.

Perth & West Coast Australia Today

Welcome to the engine room of the Australian economy, a boom town where nature's resources are driving ongoing growth and expansion (p245). Perth is rapidly developing into an international city – further enhancing the population's existing independent streak – and the urban landscape is being transformed by heritage restorations and audacious town planning. And in the remote mining regions that drive the economy, there are glimmers of hope that the benefits of this latest fiscal gold rush may be slightly more equitably spread.

Best on Film

Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) Three Aboriginal girls trek through the WA desert to be reunited with their families.

Japanese Story (2003) A touching film that's set in the Pilbara and equal parts romance and thriller.

Gallipoli (1981) Young men from rural WA enlist to fight as Anzac soldiers in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign.

Mad Bastards (2010) Shot in the Kimberley and featuring Indigenous issues and a great soundtrack.

Best in Print

Cloudstreet (Tim Winton, 1991) A chronicle of post-WWII working-class families sharing a house in Perth.

Sand (John Kinsella and Robert Drewe, 2010) Poetry and prose exploring the role of sand in the Australian psyche.

Tales from Outer Suburbia (Shaun Tan, 2008) Beautifully illustrated short stories – for kids – with quirky reimaginings of Australian suburbia.

That Deadman Dance (Kim Scott, 2011) Novel exploring the 19th-century interactions between settlers, whalers and the indigenous Noongar people of Albany.

A Confident Western Capital

Just a few decades ago, Perth was definitely in the shadow of east-coast Australia's major cities, but, fuelled by the energy and economics of the mining boom, it's now a contemporary city on the rise. There's an almost tangible confidence and verve to the city's population, keen to look westwards for both recreation and reward. Bali is firmly entrenched as the state's favourite holiday destination – it's even emerging as a residential option for FIFO ('fly in, fly out') mining workers – and the 21st-century mega economies of China, India and Indonesia are huge markets for WA's resources and agricultural sectors.

Evidence of the city's impetuous growth includes newly sprawling suburbs, with oversized homes squeezed onto compact plots, and front gardens punctuated with shiny boats, flash utes, and other blokey indicators of ongoing injections of mining money. With so many cars in circulation, transport to these emerging satellite suburbs can be slow going, and the need for ongoing investment to keep Perth's much-admired rail system up to scratch is another hot topic. A \$1-billion light-rail system to link Perth's northern suburbs to the CBD is projected to open in 2018. Other major civic works in progress include Perth's City Link Project and the development of Elizabeth Quay to *finally* reintroduce the CBD to the river (see boxed text, p51).

Another 'finally' moment is the restoration of many of the heritage buildings along St George's Terrace in the city's west end that were proudly constructed during much earlier mining booms. The emergence of new eating and drinking precincts and boutique hotels is an overdue dynamic in a city blighted sometimes in recent history by showy modern architecture.