

Welcome to West Coast Australia

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

An Immense, Sparsely Populated Land

If the huge expanses of Western Australia (WA) were a separate nation, it would be the world'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 only 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, 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, but there are also chances to get acquainted with lesser-known local critters such as quokkas, bilbies and potoroos. The WA coast's lengthy dalliance with the Indian and Southern Oceans means opportunities to spot marine wildlife are also extraordinary. 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; while 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. Bold infrastructure projects are transforming central Perth, while the inner neighbourhoods of Northbridge and Leederville are growing in culinary confidence. Elsewhere, earlier boom times have left grand architectural legacies in Fremantle, Albany, Guildford and York.

Around Margaret River and the southwest, 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 West Coast Australia

By Brett Atkinson, Writer

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 culinary scene, which combines great wine, farmers markets and local produce. Fremantle's historic townscape – and excellent pubs serving great craft beer – are worth multiple leisurely explorations, and the state's elemental red-dirt outback expanses are compellingly beautiful. Edging the cobalt Indian Ocean, the cliff-studded coastline is best explored by hiking or in a small plane, while always keeping a keen eye out for migrating whales.

For more about our writers, see page 272.