

Understand West Coast Australia

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Explore the key styles of Western Australian Indigenous art, and tips on where to experience the best examples of each throughout the state.

West Coast Australia Today

Welcome to a city, state and economy in flux, where the unbridled mining-led confidence and growth of the last decade has been replaced with a more clear-eyed view of future prospects and the need for a more diversified economy. The resources sector is still huge, but challenges lie ahead as Western Australia (WA) struggles with the implications of building an economy not so heavily dependent on getting stuff out of the ground and selling it.

Best on Film

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

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

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

Tracks (2013) Recreating Robyn Davidson's epic 1975 journey by foot from Alice Springs to the Indian Ocean.

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.

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

Eyrie (Tim Winton, 2014) WA's best-known author usurps his usual focus on wide open spaces in this blackly comedic novel set in a Fremantle apartment block.

A Newly Cautious Economy

Fuelled by mega-construction projects of mines, ports, railways and roads designed to harness the state's mineral wealth, for more than a decade WA has enjoyed the country's fastest growing economy. In late 2014, that record came to an end as the property-led economy of New South Wales knocked WA off the number one spot, and resources growth in the Northern Territory also increased its economic impetus. Two key reasons account for WA's economic cooling: the mining sector has moved from a capital- and labour-intensive construction phase to an export phase, and China's rapacious demand for iron ore has eased. Indian demand remains strong and the Chinese economy will no doubt fire up again, but a diminishing confidence in the Western Australian economy and a weakening of the Australian dollar indicate the growing need to diversify.

In the state capital of Perth, city-altering construction projects – including new urban developments, a new hospital and a football stadium – continue unabated, but with the revelation that WA state debt has ballooned beyond \$20 billion, there is a real chance that future generations may eventually pay for the city's current impetuous growth through cuts in facilities and services.

Past, Present & Future

The year 2014 marked a very important anniversary in Australian history: the centennial commemorations of when Australian soldiers and nurses travelled from afar to take part in WWI. Up to 65% of Australian servicemen were killed or wounded in 'The Great War' – one of the highest national casualty rates for the war – and poignant memorials are now dotted in sleepy farming and fishing towns across WA. Many of the servicemen and women left Australian shores by boat from WA's King George Sound, and the recently opened National