

# 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 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 spectacular day walks including sections of the Cape to Cape Track around stunning Cape Naturaliste. Equally interesting walks include wandering amid the wildflowers of the Stirling Range National Park and negotiating Porongurup's granite formations. On two wheels, options include mountain biking through the forests of Margaret River or negotiating the 1000km Munda Biddi Trail. Dive and snorkel in marine parks and around shipwrecks, surf around Margaret River, or kitesurf and windsurf off Lancelin's expansive beaches.

## All Creatures Great & Small

WA's fauna includes kangaroos, emus and colourful parrots, and 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', and at Bremer Bay, there is the opportunity to see orcas. 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 oozing culinary confidence. Elsewhere, earlier boom times have left grand architectural legacies in Fremantle, Albany, Guildford and York.

Around Margaret River and the southwest, vignerons 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, excellent beer, farmers markets and local produce. Fremantle's historic townscape is worth multiple leisurely explorations, and it's just a short hop out to Rottnest Island. Edging the southern fringes of the cobalt Indian Ocean, the coastline around Cape Naturaliste and Margaret River offers spectacular walking opportunities, and the elemental red dirt and ocean landscapes to the far north are equally stunning.

**For more about our writers, see p288**