

# Understand West Coast Australia

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Against the background of an easing resources sector, Perth's city-altering civic works approach completion, and the state's tourism sector looks northeast to Asia.

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# West Coast Australia Today

Welcome to a city, state and economy in flux, where the mining-led confidence and growth of the last decade has been replaced with the need for a more diversified economy. Perth's infrastructural boost, including new public spaces, transport hubs and a riverfront stadium, is approaching spectacular completion, but challenges still lie ahead as Western Australia continues to build an economy less 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.

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

**Goldstone** (2016) Indigenous land rights and the machinations of the mining industry combine in this compelling outback blend of film noir and Western.

## 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.

**Island Home** (Tim Winton; 2015) This self-described 'landscape memoir' explores the relationship WA novelist Tim Winton has with the bold terrain and seascapes of his home state.

## Perth's Extreme Makeover Continues (With Caveats)

In Western Australia's state capital, major construction and infrastructure projects are now approaching completion. Linking the central business district to the Swan River, the Elizabeth Quay development will enliven Perth with new restaurants, international hotels – an overdue initiative in a city recently lacking accommodation options – and a transport hub combining buses, trains and ferries.

Along the Swan River, the new 60,000-seat Perth Stadium is set to drive the development of East Perth when it opens for the 2018 AFL season, and the nearby Riverside area is another mega-project approaching completion with restaurant and retail precincts and apartments for 7000 residents. In the CBD, the heritage State Buildings now house excellent new restaurants and a world-leading luxury hotel, and the City Link project incorporating an underground bus station and the pedestrian plaza of Yagan Sq is uniting central Perth with Northbridge. The gentrification of Northbridge itself also continues apace with new hotels joining cool laneway bars and a more diverse dining scene.

Yet balancing all this industry and energy is the slowdown of Western Australia's mining sector, which has definitely cooled Perth's economy. The state's budget deficit increased to an all-time high in 2016, while real-estate prices in the city fell by 8%. After almost nine years of government by the right-leaning Liberal Party, the economic over-extension of Perth's extreme makeover became a key issue in the Western Australian state elections in March 2017, and the left-leaning Labor Party won in a landslide.