



Perth & Fremantle

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Duende (p68)
- ➔ Namh Thai (p67)
- ➔ Print Hall (p65)
- ➔ Il Lido (p69)
- ➔ Cantina 663 (p67)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Eight Nicholson (p60)
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- ➔ Durack House (p60)
- ➔ Above Bored (p60)
- ➔ Norfolk Hotel (p84)

Why Go?

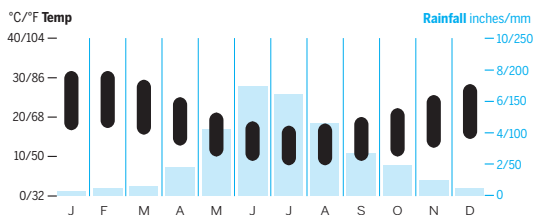
Planted by a river and beneath an almost permanent canopy of blue sky, the city of Perth is a modern-day boom town, stoking Australia's economy from its glitzy central business district. Yet it remains as relaxed as the sleepy Swan River – black swans bobbing atop – which winds past the skyscrapers and out to the Indian Ocean.

Even in its boardrooms, Perth's heart is down at the beach, tossing around in clear ocean surf and stretching out on the sand. The city's beaches trace the western edge of Australia for some 40km, and you can have one to yourself on any given day – for a city this size, Perth is sparsely populated.

Perth has sprawled to enfold Fremantle within its suburbs, yet the port city maintains its own distinct personality – proud of its nautical ties, working-class roots, bohemian reputation and, especially, its football team.

When to Go

Perth



Feb Perth's Arts Festival is on and school starts, so the beaches are less crowded.

Mar Warm and dry, so great weather for the beach, and not as swelteringly hot.

Sep Kings Park wildflowers, the Perth Royal Show and the Parklife festival.

PERTH

POP 1.75 MILLION

Laid-back, liveable Perth has wonderful weather, beautiful beaches and an easygoing character. About as close to Bali as to some of Australia's eastern state capitals, Perth's combination of big-city attractions with relaxed and informal surrounds offers an appealing lifestyle for locals and lots to do for visitors. It's a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city with myriad bars, restaurants and cultural activities all vying for attention. When you want to chill out, it's easy to do so. Perth's pristine parkland, nearby bush, and river and ocean beaches – along with a good public transport system – allow its inhabitants to spread out and enjoy what's on offer.

Relaxed doesn't mean static, though. The mining boom of Western Australia (WA) continues to see Perth blossom like the state's wildflowers in spring. Those on the gravy train are out eating, socialising, spending money and flexing their muscles in the sun.

The city of Perth lies along a wide sweep of the Swan River. The river borders the city centre to the south and east, and links Perth to its neighbouring port city, Fremantle. Follow the river north from the city and you'll reach prosperous nooks such as Claisebrook Cove, lined with ostentatious houses, cafes and public sculpture.

Train tracks divide the city centre from the Northbridge entertainment enclave, immediately to the north. Here's where you'll find Perth's cultural institutions, most of its hostels and the lively Little Asia restaurant strip.

Continue northeast along Beaufort St and you'll reach the sophisticated suburbs of Highgate and Mt Lawley. Heading west there's Mt Hawthorn and hip Leederville. To the west of the central city rises Kings Park, with well-heeled Subiaco beyond it. Go further west and you'll hit the beaches.

History

The discovery of stone implements near the Swan River suggests that Mooro, the site on which the city of Perth now stands, has been occupied for around 40,000 years. The indigenous Wadjuk people, a subgroup of the Noongar, believed that the Swan River (Derbal Yaragan) and the landforms surrounding it were shaped by two Wargal (giant serpent-like creatures), which lived under present-day Kings Park.

In December 1696 three ships in the Dutch fleet commanded by Willem de Vlamingh anchored off Rottnest Island. On 5 January 1697 a well-armed party landed near present-day Cottesloe Beach and then marched eastward to a river near Freshwater Bay. They tried to make contact with the local people to enquire about survivors of the *Ridderschap van Hollant*, lost in 1694, but were unsuccessful, so they sailed north. It was de Vlamingh who bestowed the name Swan on the river.

Modern Perth was founded in 1829 when a hopeful Captain James Stirling established the Swan River Colony, and named the main settlement after the Scottish hometown of the British Secretary of State for the Colonies. The original settlers paid for their own passage and that of their servants, and in return they received 200 acres for every labourer they brought with them.

At the time Mooro belonged to a Wadjuk leader called Yellagonga and his people, whose main camp was at Boorloo, near where the colony was founded. Relations were friendly at first, the Noongar believing the British to be the returned spirits of their dead, but competition for resources led to conflict. Yellagonga moved his camp first to Lake Monger and, by the time of his death in 1843, his people had been dispossessed of all of their lands around Perth's city centre and were forced to camp around the swamps and lakes to the city's north.

Midgegooroo, an elder from south of the Swan River, along with his son Yagan, led resistance to the British settlement. In 1833 Midgegooroo was caught and executed by firing squad, while Yagan was shot a few months later by teenage settlers whom he had befriended. Yagan's head was removed, smoked and sent to London where it was publicly displayed as an anthropological curiosity.

Life for the settlers was much harder than they had expected it to be. The early settlement grew very slowly until 1850, when convicts alleviated the labour shortage and boosted the population. Convict labour was also responsible for constructing the city's substantial buildings such as Government House and the Town Hall. Even then, Perth's development lagged behind that of the cities in the eastern colonies. That is, until the discovery of gold inland in the 1890s increased Perth's population fourfold in a decade and initiated a building bonanza.