A Southwest Short Circuit

Pressed for time? This itinerary offers a taste of the best of the state – city life, colonial history, beaches, wildlife, wine, forests and lonesome rural roads.

Base yourself in **Perth**, either in the city centre or Fremantle, and spend three days exploring: don’t miss Fremantle Prison, Cottesloe Beach and Kings Park. Is the New Museum for Western Australia open yet? Ferry out for a day on **Rottnest Island**, then hire a car and head south, stopping first at **Bunbury** for a visit to the Dolphin Discovery Centre. Continue on to **Bunbury Geographe**, basing yourself in either **Busselton** or **Dunsborough**, and spend the rest of the day at the beach. Pick up a map of the **Margaret River Wine Region** and spend day six checking out the wineries, surf beaches and caves, all of which are close by. Sleep in the Margaret River township that night. The next morning, head to **Augusta** via Caves Rd and take the scenic detour through the karri forest along unsealed **Boranup Drive**. Visit **Cape Leeuwin**, where the Indian and Southern Oceans collide, before heading back to Bunbury on a picturesque rural drive through **Nannup** and **Balingup**. From here it’s a two-hour drive back to Perth.
Western Australia’s southwest is a magical corner of the continent. This itinerary checks off the main highlights over three weeks – give it a month to really relax into it.

Spend three days in **Perth** and **Fremantle** – the WA Shipwrecks Museum is a must – then beach yourself for a day on **Rottnest Island** or hit the wineries in the underrated **Perth Hills**. Truck south to Geographe Bay – stopping at Rockingham to wade out to **Shoalwater Islands Marine Park** – before overnighting in **Busselton**. After a morning walk along the town’s epic jetty, continue for two nights in **Margaret River** township, exploring the local breweries, wineries, surf beaches and caves.

The following morning head to **Augusta** via Caves Rd, detouring along scenic **Boranup Drive** with its karri trees. At **Cape Leeuwin**, pinpoint the exact spot where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet, then continue to sleepy **Pemberton**. Don’t miss the Karri Forest Explorer scenic drive. The next day, visit the extraordinary **Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk** near Walpole and overnight in hippie-meets-city **Denmark**. Assess the beaches, wineries, breweries and restaurants here, before two days in history-rich **Albany**.

Head north for more Great Southern wineries at **Mt Barker** before tracking east to **Porongurup National Park**. Spend the next day (or two) tackling the mountainous tracks either here or at **Stirling Range National Park**.

Continue to the South Coast Hwy and at Ravensthorpe hop down to **Hopetoun** – it’s a three-hour drive from the Stirling Range (spend the afternoon at the beach). The following day, head back to the South Coast Hwy and continue east around 2½ hours for two days in **Esperance** and **Cape Le Grand National Park**.

Back on the South Coast Hwy, turn north just past Ravensthorpe for **Hyden** and the curvilinear granite of **Wave Rock** – around four hours.

The following day, head west to the Avon Valley and classically colonial **York**. On your final day back to Perth, stop at the **Swan Valley** for craft beer and wineries.
Kimberley Outback

This is the biggest adventure in the west, leaving Broome during the dry season and traversing the rugged heart of Kimberley by 4WD.

From Broome, the first stop is the Dampier Peninsula, with its Aboriginal communities, beautiful beaches and mud crabs. It’s also your last saltwater swim. Take the back road to Derby and its boabs, then roll onto the Gibb River Road. Lennard River is the first of many inviting gorges here. Explore wildlife and more gorges at Mt Hart and remote Mornington Wilderness Camp, and look for examples of Wandjina art at Galvans Gorge and Mt Elizabeth Station. Turn off onto the Kalumburu Road, check the road conditions at Drysdale River and drive on to the Mitchell Plateau, with its forests of livistona and astonishing waterfalls. Discover the area's ancient rock art before hitting the northern coast for some top-flight fishing at Honeymoon Bay, just beyond the mission community of Kalumburu.

Retrace your route back to the Gibb, then turn left for wonderful Home Valley Station, where soft beds make a happy change from camping. Nearby El Questro has gorges aplenty, none more beautiful than Emma Gorge near the resort. Soon you’re back on asphalt, but not for long as you take in the amazing birdlife of Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve. Let Wyndham’s Five Rivers Lookout blow your mind, before heading for the civility of Kununurra, with its excellent eateries. Canoe down the mighty Ord River, or jump back behind the wheel for the wonders of Purnululu National Park and the orange-domed Bungle Bungle Range.

Darwin and the Northern Territory are beckoning, or you can follow the Great Northern Hwy back to Broome, stopping in at beautiful Geikie Gorge for a relaxing boat cruise: any freshwater crocs? There are plenty at nearby Windjana Gorge, sunning themselves on the riverbanks. En route, grab your torch and wade through the icy waters of Tunnel Creek National Park, with its bats and rock art. From Windjana, plant the pedal back to Broome, where the price of beer probably won’t bother you as much as it did a month ago.
### Indian Ocean Dreaming

Beautiful beaches, spectacular sunsets and diverse wildlife are your constant companions on this coastal cruise.

Take Indian Ocean Dr north from **Perth** to Cervantes for a crayfish dinner and sunset over the otherworldly **Pinnacles Desert**. Assess the native blooms at **Lesueur National Park**, take your 4WD to the **Stockyard Gully Caves**, then hit the cafes and museums of **Geraldton**. Try kitesurfing on for size, then move on to the wonderful **Kalbarri** coastline. Paddle a canoe in the gorges before the long drive to World Heritage-listed **Shark Bay**. Spy some dolphins and dugongs at **Monkey Mia**, and sign up for an Indigenous cultural tour. Check out the stromatolites of **Hamelin Pool** before hitting **Carnarvon**. Drop into **Gnaraloo** for world-class waves before arriving at tiny **Coral Bay** and **Exmouth**, where whale sharks, humpback whales, manta rays and turtles inhabit the exquisite **Ningaloo Marine Park**. Fly out of Exmouth, drive back to Perth, or push on to the gorgeous gorges of Karijini.

### Jewels of the Pilbara

You’ll camp most of the way on this missing link between Ningaloo and Broome, with long empty beaches, shady pools and some surprisingly good food.

From **Exmouth**, take Burkett Rd back to the highway and head north, turning off at Nanutarra for the long, scenic haul up to **Tom Price**. After stocking up, spend the next few days camped in **Karijini National Park**, exploring sublime gorges and engaging in a spot of peak-bagging among the state’s highest mountains. Don’t miss a swim at Hamersley Gorge en route to the relaxing, shady pools in **Millstream Chichester National Park**. Check out the mesas and breakaways of the Chichester Range before dropping down to the coast, assessing the petroglyphs at Murujuga, then on to lovely **Point Samson** for snorkelling. Take the North West Coastal Hwy directly to **Port Hedland** and indulge in some urban eats before camping at remote **Eighty Mile Beach**, where you might spot nesting turtles. Your last leg is a long stretch of nothingness (how amazing!) as you skirt the **Great Sandy Desert** to arrive in tropical **Broome**.
Off the Beaten Track - West Coast Australia

**MARBLE BAR**
Tumbleweeds blow across the road as you extricate yourself from your vehicle, shake off the dust and enter the cool, shady interior of the Ironclad Hotel. In the hottest town in Australia, an icy beer has never tasted better. (p202)

**MT AUGUSTUS NATIONAL PARK**
When it comes to Australian inselbergs (colossal ‘island’ boulders), Uluru in the Northern Territory gets all the glory. But far-flung Mt Augustus is twice as hefty and twice as tall. (p185)

**DUNCAN ROAD**
The rarely visited Duncan Road provides a more laid-back, scenic and self-sufficient outback experience than the Gibb River Road. There are beautiful gorges, safe billabongs and zero facilities. You’ll be sleeping in the million-star hotel. (p232)

**KALUMBURU**
Few travellers make it to this shady, palm-fringed mission at the end of a disintegrating track, but those who make the effort are rewarded with laid-back camping, WWII wrecks, lonely beaches and legendary fishing. (p231)
Just begging to be explored, remote Dirk Hartog Island has a fascinating history. Just getting here is an adventure...and the sunsets this far west are as good as they get. (p181)

Around Esperance you’ll find a trio of brilliant national parks – Cape Le Grand, Cape Arid and Stokes – offering isolated fishing, swimming, camping and beach-going kangaroos. (p166)
SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

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Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book
**Tasmin Waby**  
*Margaret River & the Southwest*  
A London-born writer with Kiwi whānau who grew up in Australia, Tasmin loves cartography, starry night skies, and getting off the beaten track. When not on the road for Lonely Planet she lives in a narrowboat and is planning her next adventure with her two school-aged kids. Her love affair with Western Australia is off the charts.

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**Steve Waters**  
*Broome & the Kimberley*  
Travel and adventure have always been Steve’s life; he couldn’t imagine a world without them. He’s been using Lonely Planet guidebooks for over 30 years in places as diverse as Iran, Central Asia, Kamchatka, Tuva, the Himalaya, Canada, Patagonia, the Australian Outback, Northeast Asia, Myanmar and the Sahara. Little wonder then that he finally got a gig with the company he was supporting! Steve has contributed to *Iran, Indonesia* and the past five editions of *West Coast Australia*, and come any September you’re likely to find him in a remote gorge somewhere in the Kimberley.

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**Contributing Writer**  
*Michael Cathcart* is well known as a broadcaster on ABC Radio National and has presented history programs on ABC TV. He has also taught Australian history and culture at Deakin University and the University of Melbourne. Michael wrote the History chapter.
OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, Across Asia on the Cheap. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

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Perth, Perth Region

Charles is a veteran travel, food and music writer who has penned 40-something titles for Lonely Planet – including guides to Singapore, Toronto, Sydney, Tonga, New Zealand, the South Pacific and every state in Australia, including his native terrain of Tasmania and current homeland of South Australia – plus too many articles to recall. After dabbling in the dark arts of architecture, cartography, project management and busking for some years, Charles hit the road for Lonely Planet in 2005 and hasn’t stopped travelling since. He’s also the author of a bestselling rock biography on Glasgow band Del Amitri, These Are Such Perfect Days. Follow Charles on the socials @crawlingsway and www.facebook.com/chasrwmusic. Charles also wrote the Plan, Understand and Survival Guide chapters.

Fleur Bainger
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Having worn her first backpack to Europe when she was just 10 years old, Perth-based journalist Fleur Bainger gets a heck of a buzz from being a freelance travel and food writer. As Western Australia’s weekly food reviewer for the Sunday Times Magazine, she’s constantly on the hunt for Perth’s best new eateries, while her weekly ‘what’s on’ slot on 6PR talkback radio means she’s always got the lowdown on events and openings around town. She’s a Lonely Planet Local, a destination expert for the Telegraph (UK) and a regular contributor to Australian Traveller, Escape, ABC radio and more.

Anna Kaminski
South Coast WA, Monkey Mia & the Central West, Ningaloo Coast & the Pilbara

Originally from the Soviet Union, Anna grew up in Cambridge, UK. She graduated from the University of Warwick with a degree in Comparative American Studies, a background in the history, culture and literature of the Americas and the Caribbean, and an enduring love of Latin America. Her restless wanderings led her to settle briefly in Oaxaca and Bangkok and her flirtation with criminal law saw her volunteering as a lawyer’s assistant in the courts, ghettos and prisons of Kingston, Jamaica. Anna has contributed to almost 30 Lonely Planet titles. When not on the road, Anna calls London home.