

Perth, City Of Light [C1]

La capitale dell'Australia Occidentale è una delle città più isolate del mondo. Eppure, possiede un'identità unica, un fascino cosmopolita e un'atmosfera rilassata.

Located on the southwest coast of Australia, Perth is a place [apart](#). Nearer to Jakarta and Singapore than to Canberra or Sydney, the city of 2.3 million people is the capital of Western Australia (WA). Rich in mineral resources and with a mining history, it was once considered a forgotten [backwater](#). Perth today is a cultural oasis, and with its warm, dry summers and [mild](#) winters, the city has become a [cosmopolitan hub](#) of the arts, food and festivals.

TWO HISTORIES

The Perth area was home to the Indigenous Noongar people for at least 45,000 years. The Whadjuk people were its traditional Noongar custodians. They called the area Boorloo and used its river, [shallow](#) lakes and coastal plain as a source of food and [shelter](#). The European [settlement](#) of Perth began in March 1827, when Captain James Stirling of the British Royal Navy [sailed](#) the [HMS](#) Success up the Swan River. His arrival led to the creation of the Swan River Colony on 18 June 1829. Backed by wealthy investors, the new settlers built roads along traditional tracks and occupied the most fertile land, already cultivated by the Indigenous people, using it for farmland and homes. Dispossessed of their sacred lands, the Whadjuk Noongar were [driven from](#) the area.

SETTLERS & CONVICTS

The Swan River Colony was the first free-settler colony in Australia founded with private finance. Perth, named after the Scottish city, became its capital and administrative centre. A commercial port was formed to the south. However, the pioneers struggled for resources: the land did not provide sufficient food, there was too little money, and Perth did not grow fast or

profitably enough. From 1850 on, convicts were [shipped](#) to Perth in large numbers to build roads, public buildings and other infrastructure. Many of these buildings, including Perth [Town Hall](#), Fremantle Arts Centre and its iconic prison, can be visited today. In 1856, Perth was [granted](#) city status by Queen Victoria. By 1868, convicts [outnumbered](#) settlers and Perth's population reached 17,000.

GOLDEN STATE

The discovery of gold in the 1880s and 1890s transformed the fortunes of the colony and the city of Perth. With large numbers of [prospectors](#) arriving in the area, Perth expanded rapidly. Today, Western Australia is still home to some of the world's largest gold mines, and is [nicknamed](#) the Golden State. Perth is the centre of the mining industry for gold, [iron ore](#), lithium, nickel, cobalt, bauxite, diamonds, salt and [rare earths](#).

TOURISM DIVIDEND

Tourism is big business for Perth, with more than 5.3 million visitors annually. Many are [drawn](#) to its festivals, arts and museums. Others come to visit King's Park, one of the world's largest urban parks, with its botanical gardens and protected [bushland](#). Many come to enjoy the Swan River, the rare quokkas of Rottnest Island, and Perth's wealth of [unspoiled sandy beaches](#). And everyone enjoys the relaxed [charm](#) of a city that is bathed in more than three thousand hours of sunshine every year.

TAKING A TOUR

To find out more, Speak Up contacted Adie Chapman. Born and raised in Perth, Chapman is the founder of Oh Hey! WA walking tours. Nicknamed the Chief Perth Enthusiast, she recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of her award-winning business. Chapman believes that Perth has benefitted from its relative [isolation](#), developing its own identity as an international hub and population centre in the vast state of Western Australia, rather than [borrowing](#) its culture from neighbouring cities, as she explains. **Adie**

Chapman (Australian accent): I really love that Perth... it's kind of like a big small town. It's small enough, friendly and relaxed, especially compared to say, Sydney and Melbourne, but it's big enough that there's lots of cool things happening... There's lots of great bars and restaurants and events and activities... So, that's one thing I really love about it. And I love that it's kind of like a hidden gem, it's overlooked in the world and even in the country, like we're so far away from everything that people don't usually really think about us. We've developed this kind of unique culture over here just all by ourselves, and it's really cool and it's changed a lot. Perth was always considered a boring place or a quiet place, but in the last ten years, it's changed so much, it's so much [more] amazing.

LAID-BACK

Perth today has a global reputation as a creative hub, buzzing with artistic and entrepreneurial energy and home to street art, food and festivals, sports, music and museums. Perth has been growing faster than the national average since 1966 and 80 per cent of Western Australia's population now lives in the city. Despite its growth, Perth has developed a reputation for being one of the world's most relaxed and liveable cities, a place where the sun shines for more than eight hours a day on average, and the boardroom is never far from a restaurant, bar or beach. **Adie Chapman:** It's very easy-going. It's not so serious or so fashion-focused, like Sydney and Melbourne. I think we're just chill and laid-back compared to those places, for sure. So, instead of being like, "Oh, you're that small city way away from everything where nothing exciting happens", I think we're now turning into such an exciting destination with amazing tourism and food and drinks and events. It's so worth going over.

DESTINATION

With no end in sight to Western Australia's vast supply of mineral resources, the money keeps flowing into Perth. Just as the gold rush in the 19th century transformed the city, the mines continue to support the development of high-rise Perth, its arts, architecture and culture. **Adie Chapman:** It's

definitely very impactful and always has been, the mining. Since the late 1880s, 1890s, you can see the [boom and bust](#) eras of the city through different architecture and different expansions and [developments](#) that have happened in that time. We then had a big boom around the 60s, a lot of those lovely old buildings got [knocked down](#) to make way for boring brutal towers. So that's definitely a big part of the city today. And then another big wave came around 2012-ish, lots of [developments](#) started around then. So we had quite a few new towers built then, lots of the [developments](#) like Yagan Square and Elizabeth Quay started in that time as well, so there's definitely lots of growth and lots of money for things to be happening in the city. You know, they say you can tell who [runs](#) the city by the tallest buildings... the churches and cathedrals and then the town hall... by far, all of the biggest buildings in the city are the mining companies'.

BEYOND MINING

While the mining industry continues to contribute significantly to the wealth of Perth, there is a growing desire among some of its residents to move beyond this association, as Chapman explains. **Adie Chapman:** There's quite a bit of controversy that goes on at the moment, especially around some of our main big cultural and arts festivals are often sponsored by Rio Tinto, Chevron, BHP... and there's lots of people, especially in the arts world, trying to stop that happening. So there's definitely a bit of a [shift](#) now in trying to get away from the dependence or just having the mining companies [plastered](#) everywhere. But it's difficult because that's what our economy is built on. So, it's kind of hard to see how we could exist without it, but it's definitely an interesting conversation that's happening in many [realms](#) of the city at the moment. For more information:

Glossary

- **buzzing** = vivace, vibrante
- **sailed** = risalire
- **driven from** = scacciare
- **granted** = concedere
- **outnumbered** = superare in numero
- **isolation** = isolamento
- **shallow** = poco profondi
- **settlement** = insediamento
- **plastered** = tappezzare, riempire
- **overlooked** = ignorare
- **developments** = sviluppi
- **shipped** = spedire
- **drawn** = attrarre
- **bushland** = boscaglia, terra incolta
- **borrowing** = prendere in prestito
- **boardroom** = sala riunioni
- **laid-back** = tranquilli
- **apart** = a sé stante
- **backwater** = luogo sperduto, isolato
- **prospectors** = prospektori, cercatori d'oro
- **unspoiled** = incontaminate
- **easy-going** = alla mano, rilassata
- **HMS** = His/Her Majesty's Ship, imbarcazione della Royal Navy, la marina britannica
- **worth** = valere la pena
- **shift** = cambio
- **boom and bust** = boom e crisi, espansione e contrazione
- **-ish** = circa, più o meno
- **runs** = gestire, amministrare
- **shelter** = rifugio
- **Town Hall** = municipio
- **iron ore** = minerali ferrosi
- **rare earths** = terre rare

- **high-rise** = grattacieli
- **supply** = riserva
- **knocked down** = abbattere
- **realms** = ambiti
- **mild** = miti
- **cosmopolitan hub** = centro cosmopolita
- **nicknamed** = soprannominare
- **sandy beaches** = spiagge sabbiose
- **charm** = fascino