

Western Australia Intro

The largest state by landmass, at 2.5 million square kilometres, it has a relatively small population of 2.5 million people, mostly centred around its capital, Perth. With the second largest iron ore deposits in the world, oil and gas discoveries, and agriculture that, combined, make up for a vast majority of the country's exports, Western Australia is developing at a rate that is quickly giving this sunny state with a great climate a rising resident population.

Covering the entire western most part of the continent, Western Australia has a Mediterranean climate with exceptional biodiversity, and as such is a very interesting place to explore wildlife, while its very large size allows for distinctly different landscapes and flora and fauna endemic to different territories can be covered in the same trip.

Specific highlights in the state are also extremely varied. The Swan River in Perth, down to Fremantle and the Swan Valley vineyards; the south west with its surf beaches, fruit orchards, tall forests, and country towns; Cape Leeuwin, the furthest western point on the continent; Ningaloo Reef and Monkey Mia, with their huge whale sharks and the wild Bottlenose dolphins; at Cable Beach, ride a camel or pearl dive; explore Dampier Peninsula via 4WD; fly over the Bungle Bungle ranges; boat the man-made Lake Argyle in Kununurra; check out Kaagoorlie, the old mining town and its Super Pit. Western Australia is brimming with the most quintessential Australian experiences and adventures; just driving around could keep you busy and entertained for weeks.

Perth Intro

This is where you go if you want sun more than anywhere else in the country, a quieter and more relaxed beach vacation than any major city on the continent, and quality food, wine, and sunsets.

In many ways, Perth is the dream city for the quiet, calm vacationer. With 3,000 hours of sunshine a year, and a climate that is neither too hot nor too cold, it is the perfect year round destination, with surf and swim beaches, the fantastic Swan River, and one of the biggest inner-city parks in the world, Kings Park, with its Botanic Garden.

Ranked the ninth most liveable city in the world in 2012, this gorgeous Perth was settled in parts: first the Fremantle port area, on the Swan River, and then the city's CBD, also on the shores of the Swan, and has developed gradually outwards, with a large intake of residents seen in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the gold rush, followed by another mining rush after, and since, World War II making Perth the fastest growing city in the country.

Its unique history also makes it very different from other cities. The green spaces that cover most of the metropolitan area have evolved into becoming a defining characteristic of the city, with most of its growth being much more recent and the architecture being visibly modern and contemporary, with not much old world feel to it, unlike the Queenslander estates and the Victorian homes of other major cities.

While still a very relaxed city, this influx of migration has led to a much more vibrant lifestyle within the city, which makes it markedly entertaining. Start at the Swan Bells, the 18 bell tower, then jump on the free bus and explore the rest of the city.

Five of the best:

1. one
2. two
3. three
4. four
5. five

Perth

Perth Mosque
427 William St
Perth
+61 8 9328 8535

Stay

The most relaxed of the capitals of Australia, it goes without saying that the hotels would be equally laid back. Then again, laid back does not mean grungy: relaxation in style is the keyword here, and the fastest growing city in the country and its surrounding townships do it perfectly. Four of our favourites.

The Terrace Hotel

Old world luxury and heritage listed buildings, this hotel brings back the charm of the original City of Perth, while not missing a single detail of contemporary comforts. Try the terraced dining experience, with their excellent wine list, and then stroll down into the heart of the CBD's West End. West Australian culture and history abound at The Terrace Hotel.

The Richardson

Not as central as other options, this is the hotel for the design connoisseur and the very picky among you. Perth's leading luxury boutique hotel, the elegance of this place drips from every last detail on display. Walk to the CBD and the King's Park in only fifteen minutes, a beautiful stroll after dining at the glamorous Opus.

Cape Lodge

The vineyards at Margret River produce some of the finest wines in the world, and so Cape Lodge is one of the finest boutique lodges in the country. Situated in stunning surrounds, the forest, lake, and parkland is a short trip from the beaches and the coast. With Condé Nast Traveller placing it on the 2012 Gold List, you can't go wrong.

Injidup Spa Retreat

Close enough to the wine makers but still secluded so as to give you the complete retreat experience, this 10 villa world class escape adjacent to Margret River and the National Park is a great place for a group to disappear for a week of relaxation, impeccable spa treatments, and your own private beach at Injidup Bay.

Shop

There is, of course, the standards: Harbour Town, Myers, and the high designer labels around King's Street and Hay Street, in the centre, but Perth, although new to the shopping scene, has a different flavour for you to try out.

Start with the Fremantle Markets, with over 150 stalls, and loads of local and regional curiosities, linger there for a while, exploring the heritage architecture, the atmosphere and music, the history of the place, and various creative approaches to shopping that these vendors bring to their stalls.

If you've still got a hunger for more, drop by the Wesley Quarter and its One40William, where you can find everything high-end, from fashion and retail to entertainment and art, culture, and dining. Since Wesley leads up to Hay Street, drop by the international brand name designers. Next up you should explore the Scarborough Fair Markets, a fun experience that is more of an amusing fair than just a market, and can easily be coupled with a visit to the surfer beach that is its namesake.

Eat

South Australia might have more vineyards than Western Australia, but the best grapes in the country are grown a short drive out of Perth, at Margret River. And so, it follows that the city with the highest number of restaurants per capita in the country would also have the best wine lists at these fantastic eateries.

To start with, the modern Australian Restaurant Amusé is the domestic flavour par excellence, with a particular bias towards the local varieties of food and wine – which is actually a great thing. The widely recognisable Rockpool Bar & Grill also makes an appearance in Perth, and is always a reliably great eatery. The Heritage Brassiere is the best place for mingling of any kind – your safe bet great food and wonderful atmosphere for business meetings, family dinner, and couples night – while The Print Hall gives you Australian fare, a Hong Kong eatery, a baker and roaster, and bars on three levels, all in a contemporary take on the original printing press that the building used to host.

If you venture out of Perth, check out Kim's Food Bar, John Street Café, il Lido, and the Beaches Café at Cottesloe, or the Indiana Tea Rooms. There's also Clancy's at City Beach and Salt at North Fremantle, as well as the Sicerós' fish and chips and Gino's, a Fremantle tradition.

Play

While we generally suggest you just roam around and explore for yourself, there are a few entertaining spots that you can't miss out on when you visit Western Australia, and Perth in particular.

Kings Park

The infamous Kings Park and Botanic Garden, larger than New York's Central Park, with Mount Eliza at its centre. Take the high ground and watch the entire city and the Swan River wake up at sunrise, when you can open up your picnic basket and enjoy your breakfast in the middle of the greenest space in any city.

Rottnest Island

Taking the ferry to Rottnest, where you can cycle around or ride the Bayseeker Bus, and head down to the secluded beaches and surf spots. As always, there is wildlife – quokkas, seals, ospreys, and whales – and history, from pre-colonial to post-WWII. Swim the best beaches in the country, snorkel in the reefs, and really get to know the indigenous animals.

Perth Zoo

1,300 native and exotic animals from 230 species, and breeding programs for the more endangered species that have received worldwide recognition. See these fascinating creatures in their recreated natural habitats, and roam the many and diverse green spots like the Australian Walkabout, the African Savannah, and the Asian Rainforest.

Fremantle (Freo)

We've mentioned it a few times already, and sent you roaming this vibrant township-cum-suburb at different instances around Perth. If you missed all the other times we recommended it, go now. History, markets, bars, street cafes, and cultural spots like the Fremantle Prison, the Roundhouse, and the Western Australian Maritime Museum. The Fishing Boat Harbour is around 100 years old, too.

48- Hours in coastal Perth

With the Indian Ocean lapping at its shores, Perth is well known for its wide and spectacular white sandy beaches with the perfect laid back atmosphere. The best place we'd recommend for you to stay at would be the Crown Perth, on the banks of the Swan River, perfect for a relaxing getaway for the whole family with a newly refurbished pool and day spa areas. Add in the award-winning restaurants, and you can't miss.

Friday afternoon

Head down to the Indian Tea House at Cottesloe Beach, where Perth meets the Hamptons. Western Australian seafood that satisfies every craving is served while you sit back and take in the view of Cottesloe beach at sunset – you may even see some Dolphins breaking the waves!

Saturday morning

A river cruise down the Swan River to Fremantle, soaking up the atmosphere in Fremantle, where Europe meets Australia: fishing harbour, espresso, fish and chips, and gelato. Find a range of souvenirs and gifts, maybe some people watching and an afternoon tea, at the famous Fremantle Markets. Then, check out interesting and beautiful Aboriginal artwork and get a real sense of Perth.

Saturday afternoon

Take the coast road by to South Perth, hugging the spectacular coastal scenery of Mossman Park, Cottesloe, and Swanbourne beaches. Parasail at Mill Point Road in South Perth, or take a catamaran down the river. Otherwise, head back to the hotel and treat yourself to the ISIKA Spa at the Crown, while the kids spend time at the Kidzone.

Saturday night

After a long day out, stay at the Crown and check out the Rockpool Bar and Grill, Nobu, or Bistro Guillaume. Take in a show at the Crown Theatre. There's plenty going on in and around the hotel, so you don't need to journey too far for a good Saturday night.

Sunday morning

Cycle the bike paths by Swan River, head for a breath taking start to your day at Kings Park, with the best views in the city. With 1,000 hectares of park and bushland, there's loads of good camera moments and the kids can play in any of the many playgrounds. The nature trails and a tree top walk are also city highlights.

Sunday afternoon

You're already here, so spend the day at Kings Park, riding, walking, and discovering this beautiful space. If you are feeling a bit peckish, organise a picnic basket and enjoy a casual meal on the grass, outdoors. For something more formal, head over to Fraser's Restaurant – the best seat in town enjoying the sunset over sunny and beautiful Perth.