

Western Australia



Western Australia (WA) is often labelled the last frontier, and with its immense dimensions, meagre population and Perth's distinction as the world's most isolated capital city, perhaps it's true. If so, it certainly is a spectacular finale to what the planet has to offer.

'Up north', you'll encounter shrewdly concealed gorges and waterfalls and the enigmatic pearly town of Broome, with its flaming red sunsets on Cable Beach. The south is a playground of beaches, expanses of wildflowers and lush green forests that teem with life.

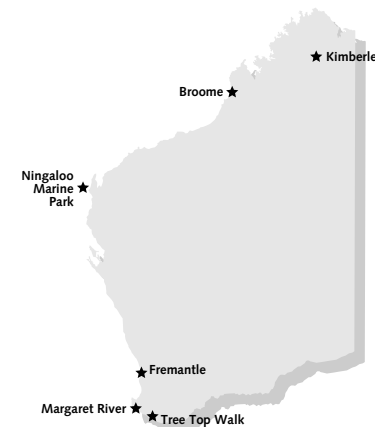
At Margaret River, surfers carve world-class waves while vigneron craft world-class wines, complemented by the gourmet grub of the town's restaurants. Wherever you go, wildlife-watching opportunities are extraordinary. Dive with a whale shark; interact with dolphins and seals; and simply enjoy the one-of-a-kind fauna that rules the russet-red outback.

However, it's not all fauna and flora. Perth and neighbouring Fremantle are both cosmopolitan cities, yet retain a languorously laid-back feel, perhaps inspired by having so many fantastic beaches and parks on their doorstep.

And, to top it off, WA is big enough to really get lost in. The driving distances are mind-boggling, the terrain can be challenging and the elements often unforgiving. The rewards, however, are obvious – jump in and see it before everyone else does.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Surf wild waves and sip world-class wines at **Margaret River** (p912)
- Walk among and above the giant tingle trees in Walpole's Valley of the Giants' **Tree Top Walk** (p920)
- Swim with the mighty whale sharks or just float over the colourful coral reefs of **Ningaloo Marine Park** (p965)
- Absorb a flaming red sunset in **Broome** (p972) on your camel ride along gorgeous Cable Beach
- Wildlife-spot in the **Kimberley** (p972): emus and roos on the road, eagles overhead and crocs in the gorges
- Bend your elbow in **Fremantle's** (p900) bars and boutique breweries



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 08

■ POPULATION: 2 MILLION

■ AREA: 2,529,875 SQ KM

HISTORY

Archaeological records indicate that Aboriginal people entered Australia in the northwest. Later findings show they were in a peaceful trading relationship with Macassan trepang fishers, from Sulawesi in Southeast Asia, from at least the 17th century. WA was close to the Indian Ocean trading routes – guns, slaves, home wares, hay and rats all sailed past and regularly sank off this coast due to the hazardous reefs and storms. Dutchman Dirk Hartog was one of the first-known Europeans to land here in 1616 and countryman Abel Tasman charted parts of the coastline in 1644.

Aboard the prophetically named *Cygnets*, William Dampier filled in the cartographic gaps in 1688 and again in 1699, from the Swan River to as far north as Broome. The race between the French and the English to explore and invade tempted British authorities to ignore reports of a barren, treacherous place. They sent Sydney-based Major Edmund Lockyer and a team of troops and convicts to set up base at King George Sound (present-day Albany) in 1826. Lockyer and co were well received by the local Minang Noongar people.

Just when transportation was finishing up in other parts of Australia, over 10,000 convicts were sent to slow-growing WA. Post-sentence, they established local businesses and were in effect a sizable, stable wave of settlers.

Late in the 19th century, someone stubbed their toe and the state's fortunes changed forever. Gold put WA on the map and finally gave it the population to make it a viable offshoot of the distant eastern colonies. Prosperity and proud isolation led to a 1933

referendum for secession: Western Australians voted two to one in favour of leaving the Commonwealth. Although it didn't eventuate, the people have retained a strong independent streak that comes to the fore whenever they feel slighted by the eastern states or the Federal Government.

The rest of Australia and beyond found out just how well WA was doing when local entrepreneur Alan Bond's *Australia II* sailed to victory in the 1983 America's Cup – after 132 years it was the first successful non-American challenger. The Cup was then held in Fremantle in 1987 and although the Australian team lost, the publicity for Fremantle was priceless. However, in the early 1990s, political and corporate scandals rocked the boat and sent some modern-day criminals sailing into prison. Today, while WA still suffers from the odd political scandal, the economy is robust and growth here habitually exceeds the national average.

Aboriginal People

Paintings, etchings and stone tools confirm that indigenous Australians lived as far south as present-day Perth at least 40,000 years ago. Despite their resistance, dispossession and poor treatment, the Aboriginal story in WA is ultimately a story of survival.

With around 70,000 people (about 15% of the nation's total Aboriginal population), WA has one of the strongest indigenous communities in Australia today. The Pilbara and Kimberley regions in the north are home to a large number of Aboriginal people, and in many towns there, indigenous folk make up most of the population.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA FACTS

Eat Crayfish (lobster), marron (odd-looking lobster), chilli mussels (yum)

Drink A 'middy' (285mL) of Emu Bitter, a Little Creatures beer or Houghton's White Classic wine

Read *A Fortunate Life* by AB Facey, Tim Winton's *Dirt Music*, Robert Drewe's *The Shark Net*

Listen to *Grand National* by John Butler Trio, *Black Finer Nails*, *Red Wine* by Eskimo Joe, *Personality (One Was a Bird One Was a Spider)* by Sleepy Jackson and *Hollywood* by Little Birdy

Watch *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Last Train to Freo*

Avoid Saying anything nice about the eastern states – it's a sure-fire argument starter

Locals' nickname Sandgropers

Swim at Scarborough, Cottesloe, Trigg Beaches (p885)

Strangest festival Charitable teams push mini wheelbarrows of iron ore over 120km (Whim Creek is the starting point) in the Blackrock Stakes (www.blackrockstakes.pilbara.net.au)

Tackiest tourist attraction Burswood Casino (Perth)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



As elsewhere in Australia, colonisation irrevocably changed indigenous ways of life in WA. Across the state, the experience was uniform: confrontations led to massacres or jail (see p903). Conflict and assimilation policies plagued Aboriginal people, with tales of 'blackbirding' (kidnapping for the purpose of labour), incarceration, illness, death and loss of basic rights. Forced off their traditional lands, some communities were practically wiped out by European disease. The *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA) allowed authorities to remove children, control employment and restrict movement.

After WWII many Aboriginal people banded together in protest against their appalling treatment on cattle stations, in their first public displays of political consciousness. One such resistance legend was Jandamarra (see the boxed text, p984). In 1972 there was a full repeal of repressive legislation. Today there are many native-title claims being made by Aboriginal people across the state, and the successful native title claim over the metropolitan area of Perth by the local Noongar Aboriginal people in September 2006 was a landmark decision.

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

WA is Australia's largest state, comprising one-third of its land mass. In the north much of the landscape is barren. The Great Sandy Desert fringes the central-west coast. The Nullarbor, a vast dry plain, sweeps across the south and over the border into South Australia (SA). The south-western corner of the state is a fertile area of forest and vineyards, and is only small in comparison to the size of the rest of WA.

Interesting variations in landscape include the Kimberley in the extreme north of the state, a wild and rugged area with a convoluted coastline and stunning inland gorges.

The Pilbara, in the northwest, is magnificent ancient-rock and gorge country from which the state derives vast mineral wealth. Away from the coast most of WA is simply a huge empty stretch of outback: along with the Nullarbor Plain and the Great Sandy Desert, the Gibson and Great Victoria Deserts cover much of the state.

It's tropical in the north, where the Dry and Wet seasons replace winter and summer. The Dry lasts from June to August and the

Wet from December to February, with monsoonal rain falling from January onwards. The rain can render roads impassable and Port Hedland weathers a serious cyclone at least every two years. In the interior the climate is semi-arid and arid. The southwest of WA is temperate. It's often above 25°C here while the average temperature along the Kimberley coast is a heavenly 28°C. Up in the Pilbara temperatures can soar to an enthusiasm-depleting 48°C.

INFORMATION

See the comprehensive **Western Australian Tourism Commission** (www.westernaustralia.com) website for general state-wide information. Most country towns have their own helpful visitors centres.

The **Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia** (RACWA; Map pp880-1; ☎ 13 17 03; www.rac.com.au; 228 Adelaide Tce, Perth) produces the terrific *Western Australia Experience Guide*, full of accommodation and touring information. Download free basic maps (with distances, en route facilities and road conditions) from its website.

Lonely Planet's *Perth & Western Australia* guidebook gives more comprehensive information about the state.

Permits

To travel through Aboriginal land in WA you need a permit issued by the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 08-9235 8000; www.dia.wa.gov.au; 197 St Georges Tce, Perth). Applications can be lodged on the internet. For information on Aboriginal culture tours see p874.

NATIONAL PARKS

Most of the state's important natural attractions are protected as national parks. The majority are managed by the **Department of Environment & Conservation** (DEC; Map pp878-9; ☎ 08-9334 0333; www.naturebase.net; Hackett Dr, Crawley), formerly the Department of Conservation & Land Management (CALM), with offices throughout the state. In recent times up to 30 new national parks have been created to protect old-growth forests in the southwest, but many of these are still being gazetted and having their boundaries pegged out. Contact DEC for an update.

You can camp in designated areas of some parks, and helpful maps, pamphlets and local signage are all produced by DEC.

ACTIVITIES Bird-Watching

Ornithologists delight in the variety of species found in WA. There are **Birds Australia** (www.birdsaustralia.com.au) observatories in Eyre (p938) and Broome (p981). Yalgorup National Park (p909) and the Kepwari Trail (p927) are important habitats for a wide variety of water birds. Twitchers also descend on the Kimberley in the Wet.

Bushwalking

You can contact the many bushwalking clubs in Perth through the umbrella organisation **Federation of Western Australia Bushwalking Clubs** (☎ 08-9362 1614).

The best bushwalking areas in WA include the Stirling Range and Porongurup National Parks (p922), both northeast of Albany. Good walking tracks abound in the coastal parks in the south and southwest, such as Walpole-Nornalup (p919), Fitzgerald River (p926), Cape Le Grand (p929) and Cape Arid (p929). To the north are the Kalbarri (p951), Karijini (p943) and Purnululu National Parks (p987), which provide a rugged walking environment.

There are also good walks through the hills around Perth. Real enthusiasts undertake the 1000km **Bibbulmun Track** (www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au) from Perth's outskirts to Albany. Catering for walkers of all abilities, it goes through seven rural communities and the loveliest natural areas of the southwest: take a gentle wander or have an eight-week adventure.

Beware you don't spread 'dieback', a fungal disease that rots the roots of plants. Observe 'no go' road signs and clean the soil from your boots before and after each walk.

Camping

Western Australia is an outstanding place to go camping. Considering that most people go camping to 'get away from it all', WA provides that in spades, especially in the national parks, where sleeping on a swag under the stars is almost obligatory.

Cycling

Rivalling the famous Bibb Track is the new **Munda Biddi Mountain Bike Trail** (www.mundabiddi.org.au), which will eventually take off-road cyclists some 900km from Mundaring on Perth's outskirts through the beautiful scenic southwest to Albany on the south coast. The third stage was complete as far as Denmark at the time

of writing. **DEC** (☎ 08-9334 0333) has more info, including map packs (\$31). Two-wheel enthusiasts always love the easy climes of Rottnest Island (p901) and Perth (p885). For more tips, check out the **Bicycle Transportation Alliance** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 08-9420 7210; www.multiline.com.au/~bta; City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi St, West Perth).

Since 1896, when the first bicycle crossing was made, the Nullarbor has continued to entice tenacious cyclists who relish a tremendous physical and mental challenge (1219km in the heat). Preparation and planning are essential (see p938).

Diving

The stunning reefs of the Ningaloo Marine Park (p965), the artificial reefs created by sunken ships at Albany (p925) and Dunsborough (p911), and older shipwrecks along the coast between Geraldton and Exmouth are all popular.

There are many companies, including the **Australasian Diving Academy** (Map pp876-7; ☎ 08-9389 5018; www.ausdiving.com.au; 3/142 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands; 4-day open-water dive course with/without Rottnest dive \$525/375), which hire out equipment and teach you how to dive.

Fishing

WA is a fishing paradise. Heading down the lengthiest coastline in Australia, popular places to drop a line are at Kununurra, Broome, the Dampier Archipelago, the North-West Cape, Shark Bay, Denham, Geraldton, Houtman Abrolhos Islands and Albany.

Recreational fishing licences (\$22 to \$38) are required to catch marron (freshwater crayfish) or rock lobsters, to use a fishing net or to freshwater angle in the southwest. There's an annual licence covering all fishing activities (\$75). Buy one from the **Department of Fisheries** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 08-9482 7333; www.fish.wa.gov.au; SGI Bldg, 168-170 St Georges Tce, Perth) or one of its regional offices. Saltwater angling and crabbing come free.

Rock Climbing & Caving

The southern sea cliffs of Wilyabrup, West Cape Howe and the Gap, and the huge cliffs of the Stirling and Porongurup Ranges attract plenty of climbers. Those with a head for heights will also enjoy scaling the lookout trees in the Valley of the Giants (p920).

The caves of the Margaret River region – for example, near Yallingup (p912) – and the

lesser-known 'holes' of Cape Range National Park (p965) offer plenty of opportunities for cavers.

Surfing & Windsurfing

If you're here to surf, WA is simply brilliant. Beginners, intermediates, wannabe pros and adventure surfers will find excellent conditions to suit their skill levels. The southwestern beaches, from Cape Naturaliste (p911) to Margaret River (p912), are the sites of some of the world's best waves. For less crowded conditions, great waves roll in along the stretch from Geraldton to Kalbarri as well. Around Perth's beaches, Trigg and Scarborough have decent beach breaks (p885) and Rottneest Island (p904) is a wave magnet. Check conditions at **Swellnet** (www.swellnet.com.au) or **Coastalwatch** (www.coastalwatch.com).

Windsurfers and kitesurfers have plenty of choice spots to try out in WA as well, with excellent flat water and wave sailing. Kitesurfers in particular will appreciate the long empty beaches and offshore reefs away from crowds. After trying out Perth's city beaches, head to Lancelin (p906), home to a large population of surfers, especially in summer. Further up the coast, Geraldton (p947) is another hotspot – especially at Coronation Beach. The remote Gnaraloo Station, 150km north of Carnarvon, is a world-renowned wave-sailing spot.

TOURS

There are dozens of tours through WA to suit all tastes and budgets. Here's just a sample: **AAT Kings Australian Tours** (☎ 1300 556 100; www.aatkings.com) A long-established and professional outfit offering a wide range of fully escorted bus trips and 4WD adventures for those who prefer more luxurious accommodation than most offer.

Active Safaris (☎ 1800 222 848; www.activesafaris.com.au) Small adventure tour company running budget 4WD safaris such as a four-day Monkey Mia safari that includes the Pinnacles Desert, Geraldton and Kalbarri.

Australian Adventure Travel (☎ 1800 621 625; www.safaris.net.au) Offers numerous tours from Perth, Broome, Kununurra, Exmouth and Darwin. Includes everything from five-day trips along the Gibb River Rd to a 12-day Kimberley discovery tour.

Dr Marion Hercoc's Explorer Tours (☎ 08-9361 0940; www.explorertours.com.au) Intimate tours following the footsteps of early explorers. Tours tackle some serious 4WD tracks along the routes of 19th-century explorers, immersing travellers in the history of the time.

Easyrider Backpacker Tours (☎ 08-9226 0307; www.easyridertours.com.au; 144 William St, Perth) Social hop-on hop-off bus service, including several different routes across WA.

Planet Perth Tours (☎ 08-9225 6622; www.planet-tours.com.au) Busy budget tour operator running round-trip minibus tours from Perth to destinations such as Broome and Exmouth, with the option of returning or staying on at each destination.

Aboriginal Culture Tours

There are a number of fascinating indigenous tours across the state that look at aspects of Aboriginal life and culture. Here's just a sample: **Kodja Place Indigenous Tours** Nyoongar Elder Jack Cox teaches you traditional practices and tells wonderful Dreaming stories over billy tea at Kojonup (p940).

Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Tours Learn traditional fishing, hunting and survival techniques as you walk through the mangroves of Broome's Roebuck Bay (p977). **Wula Guda Nyinda** Learn to love bush tucker, to let the bush talk to you and how to identify the size of an animal by its poo! Based at Monkey Mia (p956).

Yamatji Cultural Trails Compare the traditional past with contemporary issues around the camp fire under the stars in Geraldton (p947).

Yanchep National Park Let the Noongar people give you a dance lesson or two and give the didgeridoo a go (p905).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The east coast of Australia is the most common gateway for international travellers, although there are some airlines that fly direct into **Perth Airport** (code PER; ☎ 08-9478 8888; www.perthairport.com). If you do choose to fly to the east coast first, it's usually possible to book a same-day domestic flight that will wing you across country to Perth.

See the Getting There & Away sections for Perth (p894), the Kimberley (p972) and Kalgoorlie-Boulder (p936) for information on domestic transport into WA by air, bus and train.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) has regular flights to Broome and Kalgoorlie; it's also worth checking internet specials to Broome with **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au).

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au) operates flights to many regional centres, including Albany, Esperance, Exmouth, Carnarvon and Kalgoorlie. **Northwest Regional Airlines** (☎ 08-9192 1369; www.northwestregional.com.au) shuttles travellers between Port Hedland, Fitzroy Crossing,

Broome, Halls Creek and Karratha as well as offering scenic flights.

Bus

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au; ☎ 7am-9pm) buses run from Perth along the coast to Broome (\$351, 31 hours) and Darwin (\$630, 60 hours). If your trip is going to cross Australia, the Greyhound Aussie Kilometre Pass is purchased in kilometre blocks, starting at 2000km (\$340), then 1000-kilometre blocks up to 10,000km (\$1275) and onwards to 20,000km (\$2450). You can get off at any point on the scheduled route and have unlimited stopovers within the life of the pass. Also see Tours (opposite) for information on companies that provide hop-on hop-off bus services.

Perth-Goldfields Express (☎ 1800 620 440; www.goldrushtours.com.au) goes from Perth to Laver-ton via Kalgoorlie-Boulder. **Integrity Coach Lines** (☎ 08-9226 1339; www.integritycoachlines.com.au) runs between Perth and Port Hedland. **South West Coachlines** (☎ 08-9324 2333), in the Transperth City Busport, runs services from Perth to southwestern towns such as Augusta, Bunbury, Busselton, Dunsborough, Nannup and Margaret River.

Government-operated **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) goes to Albany, Augusta, Esperance, Hyden, Kalgoorlie, Pemberton and York, and north to Geraldton, Kalbarri and Meekatharra.

Car

To really see and explore this enormous state, and for flexibility, many people end up hiring or buying a car (see p1028). Bear in mind that WA is not only enormous, it's also sparsely populated, so make safety preparations if you plan to travel any significant distance (for more information on outback travel, see p1031).

There are many spectacular, enticing areas of the state that don't have sealed roads, and a 4WD is recommended for places such as the spectacular Kimberley, even in the Dry. You can hire one in Broome or Kununurra.

For up-to-date road information across the state, call ☎ 1800 013 314.

Train

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) operates WA's domestic rail network. It provides services between Perth and Kalgoorlie (*Prospector*), Northam (*AvonLink*) and Bunbury

(*Australind*); for details, see the individual destinations.

PERTH

☎ 08 / pop 1.4 million

On experiencing Perth's wonderful weather, beautiful beaches and easy-going character, some travellers wonder, just where is everyone? While the lack of big-city bustle has something to do with Perth being the world's most remote capital city, you won't find the locals complaining about the lifestyle!

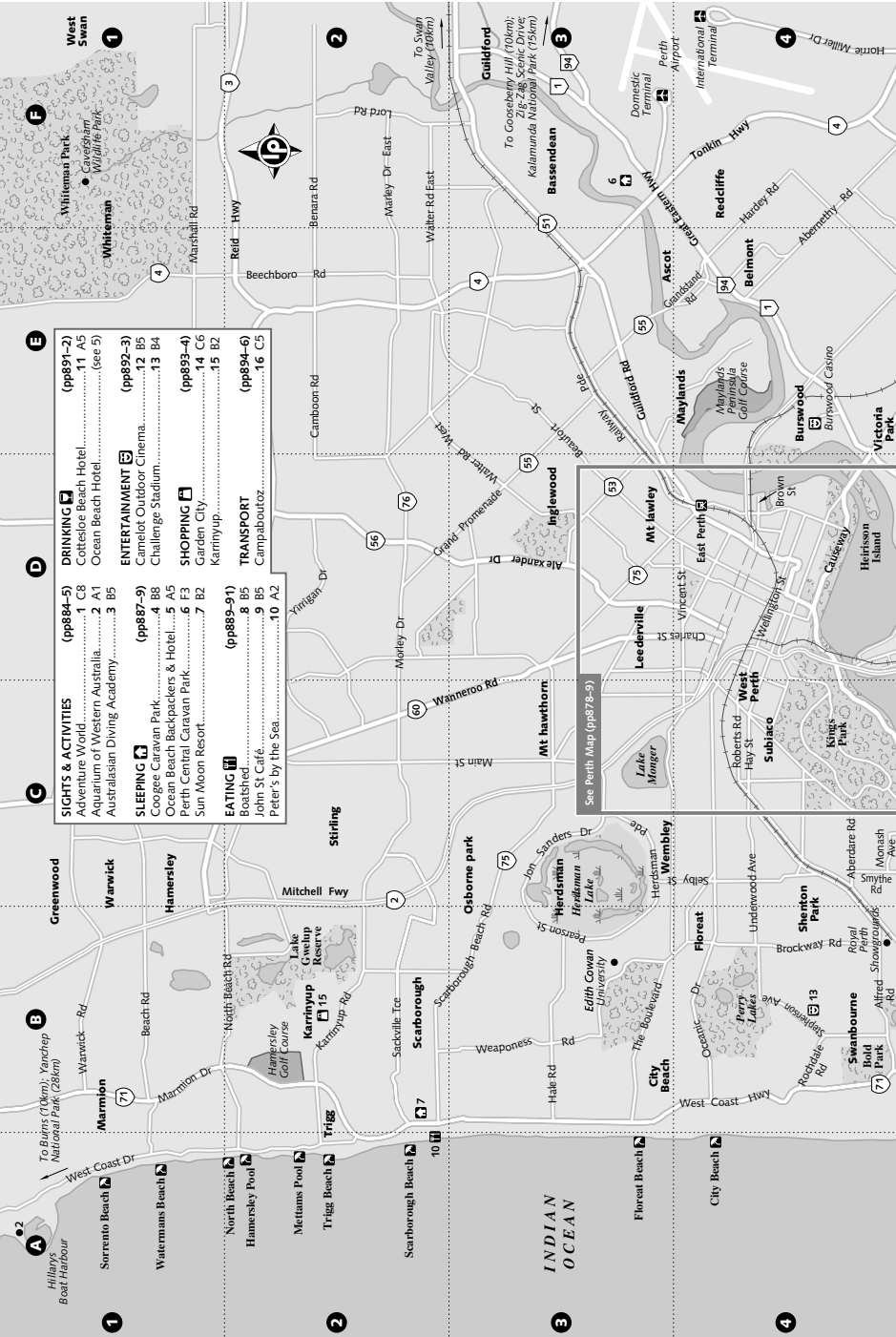
While Perth used to be characterised as rather dull, a resources boom has seen Perth blossom like WA's wildflowers in spring. Today it's a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city with myriad bars, restaurants and cultural activities all vying for attention. But the best bit is that when you want to chill out, Perth's pristine parkland and beaches allow the population to spread out and enjoy what's on offer. After all, we *are* talking about a city that has its own dedicated dog beach...

HISTORY

Aboriginal Noongar people lived here for tens of thousands of years before this land became the Swan River Settlement, not quite two hundred years ago. The settlement (later named Perth after a dignitary's hometown in Scotland) was founded by a hopeful Captain Stirling in 1829. The settlers paid for their own passage and that of their families and servants. In return they would receive 200 acres for every labourer they brought with them. This didn't appease them once they arrived. Life was much harder than they had been promised.

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. The discovery of gold in the 1890s increased Perth's population fourfold in a decade and initiated a building bonanza. Largely excluded from this race to riches were the Noongar people. In 2006, however, the Perth Federal Court recognised the Noongar people's connection to the land. Although unfortunately, at the time of writing, the Western Australian and Federal Governments appealed

(Continued on page 883)





INFORMATION	Rialto's.....17 A4	Subiaco Hotel.....18 A4
Department of Environment & Conservation.....1 A7	DRINKING	Hospital for Women.....2 A4
King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women.....2 A4	Subiaco Hotel.....(see 18)	ENTERTAINMENT
Kings Park Visitors Centre.....3 C5	SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES (pp884-5)	Holmes à Court Gallery.....4 F4
Perth Zoo.....5 D7	Funk Club.....(see 19)	Hip-E Club.....20 C3
Yoga Company.....6 A4	Luna.....21 C2	Minor.....(see 20)
Yoga Space.....7 C4	Moonlight Cinema.....22 A5	Regal Theatre.....23 A4
SLEEPING	Outram.....8 B4	Sonerville Auditorium.....24 A7
Subiaco Arts Centre.....9 A3	EATING	Subiaco Oval.....26 B3
Café Café.....9 A3	Chez Jean-Claude Pâtisserie.....10 A4	WACA Ground.....27 F5
Chutney/Mary's.....11 A4	Eco.....12 A3	SHOPPING (pp893-4)
Food.....13 A4	Fraser's Restaurant.....14 C5	Indigenous.....(pp893-4)
Kallis.....15 C3	Greyhound Australia.....29 F3	TRANSPO
Oxford 130.....16 C3	Transwa.....(see 29)	



INFORMATION

All Foreign Languages	
Bookshop.....	1 C6
American Express.....	2 C6
Boffins Bookshop.....	3 C6
Department of Indigenous Affairs.....	4 C6
Dymocks.....	5 C6
i-City Information Kiosk.....	6 D6
Lifecare Dental.....	7 D6
Main Post Office.....	8 C6
Police Station.....	9 D5
RACWA.....	10 E7
Royal Perth Hospital.....	11 E6
Travel Forever.....	12 C5
Travel Medicine Centre.....	13 B6
Travelex.....	14 C6
Traveller's Club.....	15 C5
Western Australian	
Visitors Centre.....	16 D5

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES (pp884-5)

Art Gallery of Western Australia.....	17 D5
Bicycle Transportation Alliance.....	18 A4
Captain Cook Cruises.....	19 C7
Cycle Centre.....	20 F7
Department of Fisheries.....	21 C6
Easyrider Backpacker Tours.....	22 C6
Perth Institute of	
Contemporary Arts.....	23 D5
Perth Tram.....	24 D6
Scitech.....	25 A4
Western Australian Museum.....	26 D5

SLEEPING (pp887-9)

Billabong Backpackers Resort.....	27 E3
Britannia.....	28 D5
Governor Robinsons.....	29 D4
Hotel Northbridge.....	30 D3
Medina Grand.....	31 D6

Melbourne.....	32 B5
Miss Maud.....	33 D6
Mont Clare Apartments.....	34 F7
Oneworld Backpackers.....	35 C4
Pension of Perth.....	36 D2
Perth City YHA.....	37 E6
Riverview on Mount Street.....	38 A6
Royal Hotel.....	39 C5
Saville Park Suites.....	40 F7
Witch's Hat.....	41 D3

EATING (pp889-91)

Annalakshmi.....	42 C7
Balthazar.....	43 D7
Good Fortune Roast	
Duck House.....	44 D4
Jackson's.....	45 F2
Kakulas Bros.....	46 D5
King Street Café.....	47 C6
Matsuri.....	48 B6
Must Winebar.....	49 F2
Red Teapot.....	50 D4
Soto Espresso.....	51 F2
Tarts.....	52 D3
Tiger Tiger.....	53 C6
Viet Hoa.....	54 D4

DRINKING (pp891-2)

Brass Monkey.....	55 D5
Brisbane.....	56 E4
Deen.....	57 D4
Grapeskin.....	(see 55)
Hula Bula Bar.....	58 E7
Luxe.....	59 F3
Must Winebar.....	(see 49)
Universal.....	(see 55)

ENTERTAINMENT (pp892-3)

Ambar.....	60 D6
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Amplifier Bar.....	61 C5
Astor.....	62 F1
Bakery.....	63 C4
Cinema Paradiso.....	64 C4
Connections.....	65 D5
Geisha.....	66 C5
His Majesty's Theatre.....	67 C6
Hyde Park Hotel.....	68 C2
La Bog.....	69 C4
Metro City.....	70 C5
Perth Concert Hall.....	71 E7
Perth Oval.....	72 F4
Playhouse Theatre.....	73 D6
Rise.....	74 C5
Rosemount Hotel.....	75 D1
Velvet Lounge.....	76 F2

SHOPPING (pp893-4)

78 Records.....	77 B5
Form.....	78 C6
Keith & Lottie.....	79 D4
Periscope.....	80 C6
Varga Girl.....	81 C6

TRANSPORT (pp894-6)

Avis.....	82 F7
Budget.....	83 B5
Esplanade Busport.....	84 C7
Ferries to South Perth, Fremantle,	
Swan Valley, Rottnest.....	85 C7
Hertz.....	86 B5
Long-Distance Coach	
Bookings Office.....	87 D5
Qantas.....	88 C6
Thrifty.....	89 F7
Traveller's Autobarn.....	90 C4
Wellington St	
Bus Station.....	91 C5
Wicked Campers.....	92 C4

(Continued from page 875)

this recognition of native title and the matter was before the Federal Court.

ORIENTATION

Perth lazes by the wide blue swath of the Swan River to its south. To the east it stretches towards a gentle backdrop of hills and the vineyards of the Swan Valley. In the city centre, the glass towers of the central business district (CBD) sparkle on the suited drag of St Georges Tce. North of here, the Hay and Murray St Malls and arcades are abuzz with shoppers who spill over into the streets and eateries of Northbridge, Leederville and Highgate. The high green expanse of Kings Park oversees Perth's western end. Beyond are the Indian Ocean, stylish Subiaco and the beachside suburbs of Cottesloe and Scarborough. Fremantle ('Freo') is only 20 minutes south by car, along Mounts Bay Rd and the Canning Hwy.

INFORMATION**Bookshops**

There are large chain stores on the Hay and Murray St Malls.

All Foreign Languages Bookshop (Map pp880-1;

☎ 9321 9275; 101 William St) Travel books, language guides, books in languages other than English.

Boffins Bookshop (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 5755; 806 Hay St) Australiana and travel books galore.

Dymocks (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 3969; 705-707 Hay St Mall; ☞ 9am-5.30pm) WA travel section and maps, plus a decent range of contemporary literary fiction.

Emergency

Dial ☎ 000 for ambulance, fire or police.

Lifeline (☎ 13 11 14) Crisis counselling.

Police station (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9222 1111; Curtin House, 60 Beaufort St)

RACWA Roadside Assistance (☎ 13 11 11)

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (☎ 9340 1828; ☞ 24hr)

Internet Access

There are plenty of places offering internet access along William St between Murray and Wellington Sts. Try the following:

Travel Forever (Map pp880-1; ☎ 6267 0700; www.travelforever.com.au; 123-125 William St)

Traveller's Club (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9322 1406; www.travellersclub.com.au; 137a William St)

Medical Services

King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9340 2222; 347 Bagot Rd, Subiaco)

Lifecare Dental (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9221 2777; Forrest Chase; ☞ 8am-8pm)

Royal Perth Hospital (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9224 2244; Victoria Sq) In the CBD.

Travel Medicine Centre (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 7888; 5 Mill St)

Money

Accessing Aussie dollars is fairly straightforward; ATMs are plentiful. There are currency exchange facilities at the airport and banks, and branches of all major banks in the CBD.

American Express (Map pp880-1; ☎ 1300 132 639; Westpac Bldg, 109 St Georges Tce)

Travelex (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 7811; 760 Hay St; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Branch at airport open Sundays.

Post

Main post office (GPO; Map pp880-1; ☎ 9237 5460; info line 13 13 18; 3 Forrest Pl; ☞ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat)

PERTH IN...**Two Days**

Get out and explore Perth with a **walking tour** (p885), winding your way up to vast **Kings Park** (p884) for a picnic. In the evening munch on the multicultural offerings of the restaurants at **Northbridge** (p890), close to the city. Next morning jump on the train to **Fremantle** (p896). After some meandering through Freo's **museums** (p896), make a beeline for an ale at **Little Creatures** (p900). Be sure to find the **Fremantle Markets** (p897), open Friday to Sunday.

Four Days

Do the two-day thing then cruise across to **Rottnest Island** (p901) on the morning ferry for a sunny day of cycling, surfing, snorkelling and quokka spotting. Spend your last day at **Cottesloe** (p885), where you can warm the soles of your feet on the windowsill of the **Ocean Beach Hotel** (p892), as the sun sets spectacularly over the Indian Ocean.

Tourist Information

i-City Information Kiosk (Map pp880-1; Murray St Mall; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 9.30am-8pm Fri, noon-4.30pm Sun) Volunteers answer your questions and run walking tours.

Western Australian Visitors Centre (Map pp880-1; ☎ 1300 361 351; www.westernaustralia.net; cnr Forrest Pl & Wellington St; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-6pm Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat, noon-4.30pm Sun) A good resource for a trip anywhere in WA.

SIGHTS

Most of Perth's attractions are all within easy reach of the CBD and many have their own stops on the free Central Area Transit (CAT) bus service route (see p895). For a pedestrian's perspective of Perth, see the Walking Tour (opposite).

Perth Cultural Centre

Just north of the Perth train station, between James St Mall and Roe St in Northbridge, you'll find the state museum, art gallery, library and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts.

The **Western Australian Museum** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9212 3700; www.museum.wa.gov.au; Perth Cultural Centre, Northbridge; admission by donation; ☎ 9.30am-5pm, tours 11am & 2pm) includes an excellent 'land and people' display that examines the history of the indigenous people and the more recent past; a gallery of dinosaur casts; a good collection of meteorites; and mammal, butterfly and bird galleries.

The **Art Gallery of Western Australia** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9492 6600; www.artgallery.wa.gov.au; Perth Cultural Centre, Northbridge; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm, tours 11am & 1pm Tue-Thu, 12.30pm & 2pm Fri, 1pm Sat, 11pm & 1pm Sun) has a brilliant collection of Aboriginal artworks. There's also a fine permanent exhibition of European, Australian and Asia-Pacific art, regular temporary exhibitions and a fabulous gift shop.

Cutting-edge contemporary art – installations, performance, sculpture, video works – lives at **Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA)**; Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 6144; www.pica.org.au; Perth Cultural Centre, Northbridge; admission free; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun). This gallery has long promoted new and experimental art, and exhibits graduate works annually.

Aquarium of Western Australia

Few will fail to be impressed by the **Aquarium of Western Australia** (AQWA; Map pp876-7; ☎ 9447 7500;

www.aqwa.com.au; Hillarys Boat Harbour, West Coast Dr, Hillarys; adult/child \$24/13; ☎ 10am-5pm). Here you can wander through a 98m underwater tunnel as gargantuan turtles, stingrays, fish and sharks stealthily glide over the top of you. A series of mini-marine worlds show off the state's underwater treasures: intriguing sea dragons, seahorses, moon jellies (which billow, iridescent, through a giant cylinder), venomous fish and sea snakes. Watch stingrays and seals play in the underwater-viewing area. But wait, there's more – the daring can snorkel or dive with the sharks in the giant aquarium with the help of the in-house divemaster. Book in advance (\$105, with your own gear; 1pm and 3pm).

To get here on weekdays, take the Joondalup train to Warwick Interchange and then transfer to bus 423. On the weekend, catch the train to Greenwood station, then hop on bus 456 to Hillarys Boat Harbour. AQWA is by the water, behind Hillarys shopping complex.

Kings Park

The green hilltop crown of **Kings Park & Botanic Garden** (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9480 3659; www.bgpa.wa.gov.au; Kings Park Rd, West Perth) is set in the midst of 4 sq km of natural bushland. The garden boasts over 2000 Western Australian plant species, many of them in full flower during the September **Perth Wildflower Festival**. The architect-designed **Lotterywest Federation Walkway** (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a broad 222m-long, glass-and-steel structure that allows you to walk among the tree-tops – it's a highlight.

Kings Park Visitors Centre (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9.30am-4pm) is opposite the war memorial on Fraser Ave. If you are laden with picnic gear, take the Red CAT bus service to the entrance or hop on the Perth Tram (p887).

Holmes à Court Gallery

Idyllically located by the river in East Perth, the **Holmes à Court Gallery** (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9218 4540; 11 Brown St; www.holmesacourtgallery.com.au; admission free; ☎ noon-5pm Thu-Sun) hosts a changing display of works from one of Australia's finest private art collections as well as touring exhibitions. The gallery was started by the late millionaire industrialist Robert Holmes à Court in the 1970s, and today the collection comprises more than 3000 artworks. About one-third of these are indigenous, boasting the best canvas and bark paintings by indigenous artists held in private hands; the remainder includes

some of Australia's leading contemporary artworks.

Greater Perth

A great little trip out of the city is to the **Swan Valley vineyards**. Dotted along the river to the Upper Swan, many are open for tastings and cellar sales. Start at the original, **Houghton Wines** (☎ 9274 5100; Dale Rd, Middle Swan; ☎ 10am-5pm).

Lake Monger (Map pp878-9) in Wembley, northwest of the city centre, is a hang-out for black swans, the emblem of Perth.

ACTIVITIES

Cycling

Need to rent some wheels? Try the **Cycle Centre** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9325 1176; 282 Hay St; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 1-4pm Sun; mountain bikes per day/afternoon \$25/15). Bicycle routes follow the Swan River all the way to Fremantle and along the Indian Ocean coast. Download city cycling maps from the **Department for Planning and Infrastructure** (www.dpi.wa.gov.au).

Swimming & Surfing

With some of the cleanest water in Australia, it appears that most Perthites are devoted to some kind of water activity: swimming, surfing, fishing or yachting. You'll see windsurfers practically flying on the afternoon wind and kitesurfers colouring the beach sky. Weekend snorkellers head north to Marmion Marine Park near Scarborough.

Cottesloe Beach (Map pp876-7) is a swimming spot that's popular with families, as is the stretch towards **Scarborough**, which is like a mini surf city, with good waves, surf shops, cafés and bars. The next beach along, **Trigg**, has better surf and a more hard-core group of locals who come out when the surf's up. Be aware that currents can be strong at these beaches. The comparatively quiet **City and Floreat Beaches** are in-between. On your way to Yanchep National Park, **Sorrento** is relaxed and beautiful. Close to town, surf-free beaches on the Swan River include **Crawley**, **Peppermint Grove** and **Como** (Map pp876-7).

Catch any nonexpress Fremantle-bound train for Cottesloe and Swanbourne – in each case there's a bit of a walk to get to the beach itself. Alternatively, bus 71 or 72 (destination Cottesloe) from the City Busport will get you to Cottesloe and Swanbourne. For Scarborough, take bus 400 from the Wellington St bus station.

Whale Watching

Humpback whales pass by Perth on their annual journey to Antarctic waters from September to December, offering visitors to the city a once-in-a-lifetime encounter. **Mills Charters** (☎ 9246 5334; www.millscharters.com.au; adult/child \$65/50) runs an informative three-hour whale-watching trip from Hillarys Boat Harbour (Map pp876-7).

Yoga

Yoga Space (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9243 5114; www.yoga.space.com.au; Shop 6, Seasons Arcade, 1251 Hay St; \$14) Ashtanga.

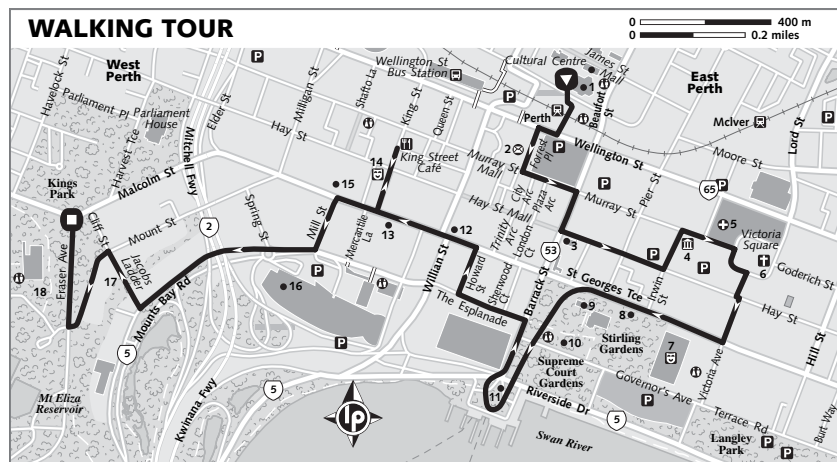
Yoga Company (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9388 6683; www.theyogacompany.com.au; 136 Rokeby Rd; \$16) Hatha.

WALKING TOUR

While Perth is a young city, it still has remnants from its early years. This tour shows you the best of the (relatively) old and the new, and guides you to great views of the city at Kings Park. Start at the Perth Cultural Centre, in front of the **Art Gallery of WA (1)**; opposite). Head over the walkbridge towards the train station. At the newsagency, head down the last set of escalators (don't cross the second walkbridge). Take your first left, across Wellington St and into Forrest Pl. The **post office (2)** looms to your right. Bear southeast up Murray St Mall, then right down Barrack St. At the corner of Hay and Barrack Sts you'll find the beautifully restored **town hall (3)**, the only convict-built town hall in the country (1867-70).

Continue southeast up Hay St, then turn up Irwin St. At the corner of Irwin and Murray Sts is the **Fire Safety & Education Museum (4)**, Perth's fire headquarters from 1900 to 1979. Further along the street a fig arches lazily over the road, and you'll pass the red-brick buildings of **Royal Perth Hospital (5)**. Down the end of the street is **St Mary's Cathedral (6)**, sited on its own square and dating from 1863. Wander around Victoria Ave to **Perth Concert Hall (7)**; p893) – a fine auditorium and grand structure built in the early 1970s – nestled to the right of the Duxton Hotel.

Continue along St Georges Tce, with **Government House (8)**; ☎ noon-2pm) to your left, a Gothic-looking fantasy built between 1859 and 1864, followed by the impressive **Council House (9)**, designed by Howlett and Bailey in the early 1960s. Past Council House, head southwest through Stirling Gardens to the creamy-yellow **courthouse (10)**, adjacent to the



WALK FACTS

Start Art Gallery of WA
Finish Kings Park
Distance 4.5km
Duration two hours

Supreme Court. The courthouse is one of Perth's oldest buildings (1837).

Walk south of the Supreme Court and make for the river. Within moments the **Swan Bell Tower (11)** will be in view: a modern copper-and-glass structure that contains royal bells from London's St Martin-in-the-Fields dating from the 14th century. Double back up Barrack St, northwest along the Esplanade, and up Howard St. Back on St Georges Tce, bear left: the **Palace Hotel (12)**, now home to Bankwest, is to your right. Continue to King St, but before you turn, note the **Old Perth Boys School (13)**, a modest structure today dwarfed by gleaming office towers. On the corner of King and Hay, you'll find **His Majesty's Theatre (14)**, where you can look around in the lobby.

If you don't wish to make the climb to Kings Park, head up to the King St Café (p889) for some cake. Otherwise, back on St Georges Tce you'll see **Cloisters (15)** to your right, built in 1858 as a school and notable for its brick-work. Roll down Mill St (not signed), straight for the **Perth Convention Exhibition Centre (16)**, one of Perth's vaunted landmarks. Stick to the north side of the road as it winds under the underpass, and keep an eye out for **Jacob's Lad-**

der (17), up a path by the Adelphi Hotel. Once you're at the end of Cliff St, head northwest, following Fraser Ave into **Kings Park (18)**; p884), along to the architect-designed Bali Memorial and, further, various lookouts.

To return to the city, go back to the roundabout on Cliff St, and head down Mount St and across the overpass to St Georges Tce. Or hop on the free red CAT bus at Havelock St.

PERTH FOR CHILDREN

There's plenty of free kids' entertainment in Perth: **Cottesloe Beach** (Map pp876-7) has long been a family favourite and **Leighton Beach** is fairly sheltered and shallow. **Kings Park** (p884) has numerous playgrounds, walking tracks and gardens. And there's always the bike tracks (p885) stretching along the river and the coast, long enough to tire out any young kelpie.

The **Royal Perth Show**, held September to October, is an ever-popular family outing, all sideshow rides, show bags and proudly displayed poultry. Many of Perth's big attractions such as **AQWA** (p884), the **Western Australian Museum** (p884) and the **Art Gallery of WA** (p884), cater well for young audiences.

Perth Zoo (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9474 3551; www.perth.zoo.wa.gov.au; 20 Labouchere Rd, South Perth; adult/child/family \$17/9/45; ☎ 9am-5pm) has a number of interesting collections, including a nocturnal house and an 'Australian Bushwalk'. Enjoy the sunshine by taking the ferry across the river from Barrack St jetty; the zoo is within walking distance of the jetty in South Perth. Otherwise catch bus 30 or 31 (to in front of the zoo) or

34 (north of the zoo) from Wellington St bus station or the Esplanade Busport.

Scitech (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9481 6295; City West Centre, cnr Sutherland St & Railway Pde, West Perth; adult/child \$14/9; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) is another option, especially if it's raining. It has over 160 hands-on, large-scale science and technology exhibits.

Adventure World (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9417 9666; 179 Progress Dr, Bibra Lake; adult/child \$39/32; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Mon Sep-Apr), packed with kids and teenagers, has all the palm-sweat-inducing rides such as 'Bounty's Revenge', a giant boat that swings around in an arc, plus pools and waterslides. Open daily during school holidays and throughout December, it's 18km south of Perth.

Slip on a flannelette shirt and drive down to **Tumbulgum Farm** (☎ 9525 5888; www.tumbulgumfarm.com.au; 1475 South Western Hwy, Mundijong; admission free; farm shows adult/child \$15/8; ☎ 9.30am-5pm), 6km south of Armadale on the South Western Hwy, a big display farm where you can feed animals, milk cows, and catch some sheep-mustering and whip-cracking. Wander around the grounds for free.

TOURS

There are countless tours on offer, so head to the visitors centre (p884) or one of the budget traveller centres for a full list of options.

Perth Tram (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9322 2006; adult/child \$20/10) This hop-on hop-off tram is a speedy way to tour some of the city's main attractions (with commentary) between Burswood Casino and Kings Park. It leaves 565 Hay St at least six times daily (or pick it up en route).

Planet Perth (☎ 9225 6622; www.planettours.com.au) Offers some great day trips, including a popular wine-tasting tour on Tuesday and Friday (\$45), an after-dark trip into Caversham Wildlife Park on Monday (\$45) or horse-riding trips (\$70) on Monday and Thursday afternoon. Offers YHA/VIP discounts.

Tourist Trifecta (☎ 9322 2006; www.perthtram.com.au; adult/child \$60/30) Combines a Perth Tram tour, return cruise up the Swan River with Captain Cook Cruises, and a ride on the Fremantle Tram in between.

Many companies offer day trips to the Pinnacles and Wave Rock, and extended trips (from two days) to the southwest. See p874 for more information.

Cruises

Several cruise companies run tours from Barrack St Jetty, including **Captain Cook Cruises** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9325 3341; www.captaincookcruises.com.au)

Boat Torque (☎ 9221 5844; www.boattorque.com.au) and **Oceanic Cruises** (☎ 9325 1191; www.oceaniccruises.com.au). All offer lunch and dinner cruises on the Swan River, winery visits and trips to Fremantle and Rottnest Island.

Captain Cook Cruises (Pier 5) does a three-hour river cruise around Perth and Fremantle (adult/child \$29/14), which will satisfy real estate-obsessed Australians from the east. There's also a day cruise to the Swan Valley vineyards (adult/child \$99/58) and a zoo tour combined with a sightseeing cruise (you can use the tickets on separate days). Oceanic Cruises' Carnac Island Luncheon Eco Cruise (adult/child \$79/39), from October to April, includes a guided beach walk with a marine biologist, snorkelling and a buffet lunch.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Perth Cup (www.perthtracing.org.au) New Year's Day sees Perth's biggest day at the races, with the party people heading to 'Tentland' for DJs and daiquiris.

Big Day Out (www.bigdayout.com) Held in late-January or early February, this long-standing one-day pop/rock music festival features interesting international and local artists.

Perth International Arts Festival (www.perthfestival.com.au) Several weeks of multi-arts entertainment in early February to early March, including theatre, dance, music, film and visual arts.

Perth Wildflower Festival (www.bgpa.wa.gov.au) In late September to early October, Kings Park and the Botanic Garden host displays, workshops and guided walks in this annual event celebrating WA's unique and spectacular wildflowers.

Royal Perth Show (www.perthroyalshow.com.au) In October, it's the west's biggest agriculture, food and wine show – with rides and show bags for the kids.

Perth Pride (www.pridewa.asn.au) This gay and lesbian event is in October, as is the annual Pride March.

Blessing of the Fleet Popular historic festival introduced to Fremantle by young Italian fishermen in 1948 and celebrated in mid-October.

Fremantle Festival (www.fremantlefestivals.com) Ten days of performances; music, dance, comedy, visual arts, street theatre and workshops held in November.

Gravity Games H2O (www.gravitygamesh2o.com) Early December sees Perth's version of the Gravity Games featuring plenty of wakeboarding action on the Swan River as well as demos of skate, BMX, in-line and FMX, along with live music.

SLEEPING

Perth is very spread out so choose your location carefully. Northbridge is backpacker central and is best for those unperturbed by

noise. The CBD and Northbridge are close to all forms of public transport, while the beachside Cottesloe and Scarborough are better for those who just want to kick back – a very Perth thing to do!

Note that many midrange and top-end hotels adjust their rates daily depending on occupancy.

City Centre

BUDGET

our pick **Perth City YHA** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9287 3333; www.yha.com.au; 300 Wellington St; 4-bed dm \$24, 6- & 7-bed dm \$21, s \$50, d with/without bathroom \$75/62, non-YHA members add \$5; 📺 📺) Sure, the YHA is a little predictable, with that boarding-school feel (there are 240 beds), but the floorboards of this well-preserved 1940s art deco building gleam – and charmingly creak – and the brightly painted rooms are fresh. Family and twins available.

Royal Hotel (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9481 1000; wentpert@fc-hotels.com.au; cnr Wellington & William Sts; s \$54-60, s with bathroom \$70, d \$65-70, d with bathroom \$87-98; 📺) A creaking, character-filled historic building, the Royal Hotel is well placed for early-morning trips out of town (the busport's metres away). Family rooms are light but noisy, with kitchenettes and cane bed heads. Cute though modest single rooms have atticlike roofs.

MIDRANGE

Riverview on Mount Street (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 8963; www.riverview.au.com; 42 Mount St; d from \$95; 📺 📺) Character-filled Riverview stands out as the best personality on the block. Its refurbished 1960s bachelor pads are sunny and simple, even if the beds feel as if they're from the same era. Rooms at the back, which have garden rather than river views, are quieter.

Mont Clare Apartments (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9225 4300; www.montclareapartments.com; 190 Hay St, East Perth; 1-bedroom apt \$124, 2-bedroom apt from \$155 min 6 nights or from \$206; 📺) Friendly and unfussy, fully self-contained Mont Clare's apartments are spacious and, notably, private. It's all a bit chalk-white and plain, but in summer the pool makes this a cool and restful spot.

Miss Maud (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9325 3900; www.missmaud.com.au; cnr Murray & Pier Sts; d from \$139; 📺) Anyone with a love of Scandinavia, kitsch or *The Sound of Music* will find a few of their favourite things in the alpine murals and dainty rooms. The bigger, more expensive Scandinavian rooms are best. The famous smorgasbords are enough to feed a goat herd.

Melbourne (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9320 3333; www.melbournehotel.com.au; cnr Hay & Milligan Sts; d from \$150; 📺) Classic country charm wafts through this gold-rush-era, heritage-listed hotel. Inside you'll find a stylish and serious dining room, and a polished bar and café buzzing with office workers. Rooms are unpretentious and comfortable, though 1st-floor rooms facing Murray St can be noisy.

TOP END

Medina Grand (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9267 0000; www.medina.com.au; 138 Barrack St; studio/d \$161/195; 📺 📺) The Medina's meticulously decorated apartment-sized hotel rooms are minimalist yet welcoming. All one-bedrooms have balconies, and rooms on Barrack St tend to have more natural light (not always easy to obtain in Perth).

Saville Park Suites (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9267 4888; www.savillesuites.com; 201 Hay St; 1-2-bedroom apt from \$185/210; 📺 📺) This Tuscan-orange structure close to the Swan River is relaxed and friendly. Apartments are roomy, with laundries, dishwashers and good-sized benches – plenty of room to chop up some local rock lobster here.

Outram (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9322 4888; www.theoutram.com; 32 Outram St, West Perth; s/d from \$295/335; 📺) Discreet and understated, the Outram is super-stylish with open-plan rooms (including the bathroom, with a walk-through shower), king-size beds draped in white linens, flat-screen TVs and spas big enough to host a party.

Northbridge & Around

Most hostels are in Northbridge. There are so many here, in fact, that it's possible to walk around and inspect rooms before putting your money down – some are not up to scratch.

BUDGET

Britannia (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 6000; www.perthbritannia.com; 253 William St; dm \$19-22, s \$35, tw & d from \$50; 📺) This no-frills backpackers in the centre of Northbridge has good-value dorms, friendly staff and a busy vibe. While the kitchen is, admittedly, a bit like a shearer's canteen, with some of the area's best cheap eats just up the road, it's no biggie.

Billabong Backpackers Resort (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 7720; www.billabongresort.com.au; 381 Beaufort St; dm \$20-23, d \$65; 📺 📺) This large, relaxed hostel (about 150 beds) is brought to life by Australiana murals along its walls as well as its poolside activities. The well-kept dorms are excellent value, the doubles less so.

Oneworld Backpackers (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 8206; www.oneworldbackpackers.com.au; 162 Aberdeen St, Northbridge; dm/d \$22/58; 📺) Oneworld is like a hippy backpackers with inheritance money: clean, green and beautifully maintained. Polished floorboards beam brightly in all the rooms of this nicely restored old house, and the dorms are big and sunny, if a little messy sometimes.

our pick **Governor Robinsons** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 3200; www.govrobinsons.com.au; 7 Robinson Ave; dm \$22, d from \$60; 📺) In two restored colonial homes, this small and beautifully furnished hostel (Chesterfields, floorboards) is more like a cosy B&B than a backpackers. The kitchen is a foodie's friend, the dorms are fresh and clean (if a little snug), and the fresh Federation-style bathrooms are a real hit.

Witch's Hat (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 4228; www.witchshat.com; 148 Palmerston St; dm/d \$23/64; 📺 📺) Resembling a gingerbread house, the Witch's Hat is clearly something out of a fairy tale. With its Edwardian turret (looking like a witch's hat) beckoning the curious to step inside, thrill-seekers will be rewarded with light and uncommonly spacious dorms and plenty of facilities.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Northbridge (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 5254; www.hotelnorthbridge.com.au; 210 Lake St; d with spa \$120-140; 📺 📺) The Northbridge has long been the star attraction for couples and country folk with its good-value rooms and old-fashioned charm. A recent refurbishment has dropped a spa in every single room, and considering its smack-bang location it's a great midrange choice.

Pension of Perth (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 9049; www.pensionperth.com.au; 3 Throssell St; s/d from \$115/145; 📺 📺 📺) French turn-of-the-century style laid on thick is what you'll find here: chaise lounges, rich floral rugs, open fireplaces, gilt-edged mirrors. Two doubles with bay windows (and slightly small bathrooms) look out onto gorgeous Hyde Park.

Cottesloe & Scarborough

BUDGET

Ocean Beach Backpackers (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9384 5111; www.oceanbeachbackpackers.com; cnr Marine Pde & Eric St, Cottesloe; 6-/8-bed dm with bathroom \$21, d \$63) Just a short skip to the sand and with ocean views, this is a big, bright surfer hostel right in the heart of Cottesloe. While the dorms are

spotless and have private bathrooms, you'll just be here to sleep with all the activities to enjoy here – even if you're just kicking back at the beach.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Sun Moon Resort (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9245 8000; www.sunmoon.com.au; 200 West Coast Hwy, Scarborough; d \$126-198, 2-bedroom ste \$176-226; 📺 📺) While this Bali-style resort and Scarborough marriage might appear a mismatch, the two make a lovely couple. The rooms are enormous, and the terracotta-tiled floor is cool and pleasing under bare feet. Batik furnishings compliment the otherwise minimalist rooms.

Ocean Beach Hotel (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9384 2555; www.obh.com.au; cnr Marine Pde & Eric St, Cottesloe; d/f \$180/340; 📺) The only boutique-style hotel on Cottesloe Beach features smart, playful colours and contemporary furnishings that bring this Art Deco building to life. Rooms are big, but get a deluxe or spa room if you want to watch the waves.

Camping

Perth Central Caravan Park (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9277 1704; www.perthcentral.com.au; 34 Central Ave, Redcliffe; tent/caravan sites \$30/32, cabins \$95; 📺 📺) This small caravan park, 8km east of the city, is the closest to Perth. The refurbished one-bedroom chalets are functional; the two bedroom ones are a little older but not poky. Tent sites are conveniently close to amenities.

Perth International Tourist Park (☎ 1800 626 677; 186 Hale Rd, Forrestfield; tent sites \$30, caravan sites \$33-35, studios \$56, cabins \$120; 📺 📺 📺) This caravan park, 15km out of the city, is more of a holiday complex than an overnight stop. It's big, with plenty of accommodation options, including cheap backpackers rooms. These are simple lodgings, but have big square balconies to lounge about on. There's a huge public pool up the road.

EATING City Centre CAFÉS

Tiger Tiger (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9322 8055; shop 4, Murray Mews; mains \$7-9; 📺) breakfast & lunch; 📺) While the wi-fi here attracts the bespectacled blogger types, the cool feel, with polished concrete floor, communal table and antique-style wooden chairs, might play a part too. The tasty café food's worth the twist down the laneway. It's signed off Murray St.

King Street Café (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 4476; 44 King St; mains \$19-33) This Perth stalwart played a crucial role in creating a café culture back when only European expats and well-travelled types drank espresso. Great wine list and an expansive menu.

RESTAURANTS

Annalakshmi (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9221 3003; www.annalakshmi.com.au; Jetty 4, Barrack St; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sun) While the 360-degree views of the Swan River and the city might be romantic, Annalakshmi is actually a curry house run by volunteers. Paying by donation, assorted hippies and others line up for spicy potato-and-pumpkin curries and fragrant dahl.

Matsuri (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9322 7737; cnr Hay & Milligan Sts; mains \$13-21; lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sun) You'll feel a bit like a carp in a fish tank here – floor-to-ceiling glass runs the perimeter of this large, long-standing Japanese restaurant. The tempura udon with sushi set (\$18) is enough to feed two salarymen.

Balthazar (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9421 1206; cnr Sherwood Ct & the Esplanade; mains from \$26, dessert \$14; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Low-lit, discreet and very New York. The menu here is refreshingly original with a strong European twist, with dishes such as caramelised witlof, Roquefort tempura, and fenugreek brûlée with fresh strawberries. Serious, but not snotty.

Northbridge

CAFÉS

Tarts (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 6607; 212 Lake St; breakfast \$10, lunch \$7-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Tarts is country style in the city. You'll find massive tarts piled with berries, apples or lime curd; rich scrambled eggs tumbling off thickly sliced sourdough; or mini custard tarts stacked with glazed strawberries.

RESTAURANTS

Good Fortune Roast Duck House (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 3293; 344 William St; mains from \$6; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Locals charge in here for family-sized feeds of BBQ pork, roast duck and noodles. The front window, with its glistening hanging ducks, will make you salivate.

Red Teapot (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 1981; 413 William St; mains from \$8, noodles \$9-11; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This intimate restaurant is always busy with diners enjoying stylishly executed Chinese favourites like fragrant Prosperous Chicken and Chilli Salt Squid.

Viet Hoa (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 2127; 349 William St; mains \$8-16; ☎ lunch & dinner) Don't be fooled by the bare-bones ambience of this always-busy corner Vietnamese restaurant or you'll miss out on the fresh rice-paper rolls and top-notch beef-and-rice-noodle soup (*pho*).

Inner-City Suburbs

CAFÉS

Oxford 130 (Map pp878-9; 130 Oxford St, Leederville; sandwiches \$8; ☎ 6am-midnight) Boasting one of the best breakfasts in Perth, this is the classic, casual café you need in every neighbourhood. Elbow your way into a booth, or pull up a milk crate out front, and let the day slip by.

Soto Espresso (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 7686; 507 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley; breakfast \$4-10, lunch \$9; ☎ 7am-midnight) Modern Soto opens onto the street to welcome its inner-city crowd, from stay-at-home dads to bleary-eyed students. The lime-green banquettes is a great spot to watch all the comings and goings, and the large *croque-monsieur* will cure that super-sized hangover.

RESTAURANTS

Must Winebar (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 8255; 519 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley; mains \$30-37; ☎ noon-late) Arguably Perth's best wine bar, this is a fine restaurant as well. Tuck into dishes such as beef-cheek ravioli with wild-mushroom crème or just stop in for a glass of something special.

ourpick Fraser's Restaurant (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9481 7100; Fraser Ave, Kings Park; mains \$31-39) Atop Kings Park, overlooking the city and the glittering Swan River, Fraser's location is unrivalled. And the food has enjoyed a good reputation for years, with Mod Oz standards like char-grilled rock lobster and Mt Barker chicken *confit*.

Jackson's (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 1177; 483 Beaufort St, Highgate; mains \$32-46, 9-course tasting menu \$95, with wine \$140; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Foodies flock to what is one of Perth's top dining experiences: Neal Jackson's tasting menu. Highlights include dishes like crispy pork belly with caramelised apple and sage, and Wagyu beefsteak with celeriac and Roquefort mash.

Subiaco

CAFÉS

Café Café (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9388 9800; Shop 20, Subiaco Sq, 29 Station St; breakfast \$8-11, lunch \$8-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch) A local favourite, Café Café is considered by many to have the best coffee in Perth. A

down-to-earth, unfussy spot where the focus is more on the Illy coffee than the food.

Food (Map pp878-9; ☎ 6380 2000; 151a Rokeby Rd; mains \$14; shared platters \$69, morning or afternoon tea \$8; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri) As its name suggests, this café is straightforward, practical and very focused on the food. Choose your meal at the counter, then snap up a spot on the bright-blue lounge out front.

RESTAURANTS

Chutney Mary's (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9381 2099; 67 Rokeby Rd; mains \$12-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) The feisty, authentic Indian food here is much loved. The menu's huge, and much of it's devoted to vegetarian favourites like *malai kofta* and *dal makhani*. The vibe's colourful and casual.

Ecco (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9388 6710; 23 Rokeby Rd; pizzas \$19; ☎ 11am-late Tue-Fri) With black-and-white prints of home (Italy) licked along the walls, small and rustic Ecco is all about the perfect simple Italian pizza. Slip into a wooden table inside, or gaze at passers-by out front, and get busy munching.

Subiaco Hotel (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9381 3069; www.subiaco-hotel.com.au; 465 Hay St; mains \$16-28) A Perth institution with midday-clutching men holding court in the side bar and friends bantering in lounges by the central bar, while the suits do business lunch in the dining room. Try the tasting platter.

Rialto's (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9382 3292; 424 Hay St; mains \$35; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Bold red leather, slick black stools, chalk-white walls and chairs: Rialto's is see-and-be-seen Euro-chic with flair that extends to the serious menu. Locals view this place as an essential experience.

Cottesloe & Scarborough

CAFÉS

John St Café (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9384 3390; 37 John St, Cottesloe; mains \$12-19; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Just two minutes from the beach, cute John St Café is *the* spot for that late-morning fry-up. Dig into massive eggs Benedict or a BLT with basil pesto and cherry tomatoes.

QUICK EATS

Peter's by the Sea (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9341 1738; 128 the Esplanade, Scarborough; burgers & kebabs \$5-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) A Perth icon, Peter's is the cure for those post-surf hunger pains. Locals swear that the bacon-and-egg burgers are the best hangover cure ever.

Self-Catering

Boatshed (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9284 5176; 40 Jarrad St, Cottesloe) Enormous upmarket shed stacked with fresh produce, soft drinks, bread.

Chez Jean-Claude Patisserie (Map pp878-9; 333 Rokeby Rd, Subiaco; ☎ 6am-6.30pm Mon-Fri) Line up with the locals for brioche and baguettes.

Kailis (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9443 6300; 101 Oxford St, Leederville) Big fresh seafood supplier.

Kakulas Bros (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 5744; 183 William St, Perth; ☎ Mon-Sat) Ramshackle provisions store overflowing with dirt-cheap legumes, nuts, olives.

DRINKING

The gems of Perth's drinking scene are sprinkled throughout the suburbs – the CBD has lost the locals' attention. Generally, the mainstream drinking venues are in Northbridge; smaller, more laid-back clubs and bars are in Mt Lawley and Leederville; and big beer gardens are strewn around the suburbs, notably in Cottesloe.

Connections (see p892) is the main gay club. Other good bars and clubs, such as Luxe (p892), the Brisbane and Grapeskin (below), are gay-friendly rather than gay-only.

CITY CENTRE

ourpick Hula Bula Bar (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9225 4457; 12 Victoria Ave; ☎ Wed-Sun) This tiny Polynesian-themed bar is decked out in bamboo, palm leaves and totems, and the ostentatious cocktails come in ceramic monkey heads. While it feels very much like Gilligan's Island, you won't mind being stranded, especially on the weekends.

NORTHBRIDGE

Grapeskin (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 9596; 215 William St; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Tue, 11am-1am Wed-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) This gay-friendly wine bar, next door to the Brass Monkey, used to be a gym but today its attraction is lifting glasses of wine or cocktails rather than weights. It gets very crowded.

Universal (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 6771; 221 William St; ☎ Wed-Sat until 2am, 10pm Sun) The unpretentious Universal is one of Perth's oldest bars and much-loved by jazz and blues enthusiasts.

Deen (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 9361; 84 Aberdeen St; ☎ 5pm-2am Mon & Thu-Sat) While Monday night's backpacker night is obligatory for travellers, other nights see DJs, pool tables and big lines out the front.

Brass Monkey (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 9596; cnr James & William Sts; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Tue, 11am-1am Wed-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) This massive pub boasts several different areas and vibes. Take your pick: sit up on a stool at the bar, lean back in the relaxed beer garden or hunker down on a Chesterfield by the fire. The food's good as well.

INNER-CITY SUBURBS

Luxe (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 9680; 446 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley; ☎ late Wed-Sun) With retro wood panelling, big sexy lounge chairs and red-velvet curtains, Luxe is knowingly hip. Like any serious bar, it's also armed with turntables and a specialist cocktail bar.

Must Winebar (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 8255; 519 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley; ☎ noon-late) With the hip house music pulsing through the air and the perfect glass of wine in your hand (40 by the glass, 500 on the list), it's very difficult to leave this buzzing bar in the thick of Beaufort St. The food's also excellent (see p890).

Leederville Hotel (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9286 0150; 742 Newcastle St, Leederville; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat, noon-11pm Sun) The something-for-everyone philosophy of the old Leederville is etched out in the sports screens, dance floors, pool tables and, on Fridays, Funk Club, upstairs – and it does them all well.

SUBIACO

Subiaco Hotel (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9381 3069; cnr Hay St & Rokeby Rd; ☎ 7am-late) The Subi's a local favourite and the institution of choice for a pre-footy beer. It's also not bad for a Sunday sundowner or an afternoon of quiet beers and people-watching.

COTTESLOE

Ocean Beach Hotel (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9384 2555; cnr Marine Pde & Eric St; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) While we love it here during the week when it's comparatively quiet and we can watch the waves roll in, the Sunday 'sesh' at this beachside pub is unmissable.

Cottesloe Beach Hotel (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9383 1100; 104 Marine Pde; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) If it's too crowded at the Ocean Beach, check out the Cottesloe – it's equally as good.

ENTERTAINMENT

Most of the big clubs are in Northbridge; Leederville and Mt Lawley are also nightlife spots. Theatre and classical music are found

in Subiaco and the city. *The Drum Media* is the best free weekly magazine with gig listings for pubs and clubs.

Nightclubs

Geisha (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 9808; 135a James St, Northbridge; ☎ 11pm-6am Fri & Sat) Geisha's a small and pumping DJ-driven, gay-friendly club. The vibe's usually music-focused and chilled out.

Manor (Map pp878-9; Leederville; admission \$6, after midnight \$8) Search for this spot down a laneway behind the Hip-E Club (through the car park off Newcastle St), and dance to your heart's content among the chandeliers and Chesterfields. DJs play funk and retro tunes till the wee hours.

Connections (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 1870; 81 James St, Northbridge; ☎ Wed, Fri & Sat) This is Perth's one 'real' gay club, with a mixed crowd mingling on Saturday nights – other nights can be hit-or-miss – you'll just have to try your luck.

Funk Club (Map pp878-9; 742 Newcastle St, Leederville; ☎ noon-1am Fri) Upstairs at the Leederville Hotel (left) on Friday nights, the Funk Club is full of colour and fun. A happy bunch bop away for hours up here, seemingly unaware of the entirely different vibe downstairs.

Velvet Lounge (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 6200; 639 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat), out the back of the Flying Scotsman pub, is a small, red velvet-clad lounge with hip hop, drum'n'bass, house and funk. Punters pop in and out of here and the Flying Scotsman all night long.

Other clubs include:

Rise (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 7447; 139 James St, Northbridge) Serious clubbers head here for nonstop trance.

Ambar (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9325 0000; 100 Murray St, Perth) The place for international DJs.

Metro City (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 0500; 146 Roe St, Northbridge). Ten theme bars in this thumping super-club.

La Bog (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 0900; 361 Newcastle St, Northbridge; ☎ 6pm-6am Mon-Sat, 8pm-1am Sun) Bump'n'grind to Eddie Vedder belting out 'Better Man'. Backpackers' night on Tuesday.

Hip-E Club (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9227 8899; 663 Newcastle St, Leederville; ☎ Tue-Sun) Thrust about to 'Tainted Love' all night long. Tuesday is backpackers' night.

Live Music

Amplifier Bar (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 7606; rear 385 Murray St, Perth; ☎ 8am-late Fri & Sat) Good old Amplifier's one of the best places for live (mainly indie) bands.

our pick Bakery (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 0629; 233 James St, Northbridge) Run by Artrage, Perth's contemporary arts festival body, the Bakery draws an arty crowd. Popular indie gigs are held almost every weekend.

Rosemount Hotel (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 7062; cnr Angove & Fitzgerald Sts, North Perth; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Local and international bands play regularly in this spacious pub that's all wood and floorboards. It even comes with a laid-back beer garden.

Hyde Park Hotel (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 6166; cnr Bulwer & Fitzgerald Sts, Northbridge) The Hydrie's still punky and a bit sticky. Indie and rock bands play here some nights.

The **Perth Jazz Society** (www.perthjazzsociety.com) meets every Monday night at the Hyde Park Hotel to play swing and modern jazz. The Jazz Club of WA, which plays traditional jazz and Dixieland, meets there on Tuesday nights.

Big international acts play at **Metro City** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 0500; 146 Roe St, Northbridge), and musicians of the calibre of Chris Isaak and Augie March play at **Kings Park** (www.mellenevents.com).

Cinemas

Perth has three art-house cinemas:

Luna (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9444 4056; www.lunapalace.com.au; 155 Oxford St, Leederville) Monday twin-features (\$10) and a bar.

Cinema Paradiso (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9227 1771; www.lunapalace.com.au; Galleria complex, 164 James St, Northbridge)

Astor (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9370 1777; 659 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley) In a spearmint and gold Art Deco building; the Astor doesn't screen as many films as Luna and Paradiso.

A number of outdoor cinemas operate in summer:

Somerville Auditorium (Map pp876-7; www.perthfestival.com.au; UWA, 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley; ☎ Dec-Mar) A quintessential Perth experience, the art-house Somerville is on beautiful grounds surrounded by pines. Picnicking before the film is a must.

Luna (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9444 4056; www.lunapalace.com.au; 155 Oxford St, Leederville)

Moonlight Cinema (Map pp878-9; ☎ 1300 551 908; www.moonlight.com.au; Kings Park)

Camelot Outdoor Cinema (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9385 4793; Memorial Hall, 16 Lochee St, Mosman Park)

Theatre & Classical Music

Check the *West Australian* newspaper for theatre programmes. For theatre, dance and classical music:

Perth Concert Hall (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9484 1133; 5 St Georges Tce, Perth) Home to the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO).

His Majesty's Theatre (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9265 0900; 825 Hay St, Perth)

Regal Theatre (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9484 1133; 474 Hay St, Subiaco)

Playhouse Theatre (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9484 1133; 3 Pier St, Perth)

Subiaco Arts Centre (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9382 3385; 180 Hamersley Rd, Subiaco)

Sport

During the Australian Football League season it's hard to get locals to talk about anything but the two local teams – the Fremantle Dockers and the West Coast Eagles – and thrashing 'the Vics' (any Victorian team is considered an arch-enemy). There's a great atmosphere during the games at **Subiaco Oval** (Map pp878-9; ☎ 1300 135 915; 250 Roberts Rd, Subiaco).

In summer, cricket fans spend lazy afternoons at the **WACA** (Western Australian Cricket Association ground; Map pp878-9; ☎ 9265 7222; Nelson Cres, East Perth) watching the drama unfold at a one-day or test match – and perhaps having a brew or two.

The Perth Glory soccer team has many obsessive fans. See them in action at **Perth Oval** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9492 6000; Members Equity Stadium, Lord St, East Perth). Perth Wildcats play NBL basketball at **Challenge Stadium** (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9441 8222; Stephenson Ave, Mt Claremont).

The *West Australian* has details of all sports games.

SHOPPING

The Hay and Murray St Malls border the city's shopping heartland, while James St Mall has a stylish selection of boutique shops. Opals and souvenirs can be found along the London Ct arcade. The new Harbour Town complex just west of the CBD, at City West station, has myriad clothing outlets. Upmarket Subiaco's Rokeby Rd and Hay St boast high fashion and classy souvenirs.

Leederville's Oxford St is the place for groovy boutiques and eclectic music and bookshops.

78 Records (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9322 6384; 914 Hay St, Perth) It's been around since 78s – well, almost. 78s is as big as a warehouse and has a massive range.

Keith & Lottie (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9328 8082; 276 William St, Northbridge) An indie kid's delight, this

extremely cute store has journals, badges, necklaces, T-shirts, a few homewares, and coats and tops.

Indigenart (Map pp878-9; ☎ 9388 2899; 115 Hay St, Subiaco) Reputable Indigenart carries major Kimberley, Papunya Tula and Arnhem Land artists. Works span weavings, canvases, works on paper and limited-edition prints.

Form (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9226 2799; 357 Murray St, Perth) Just around the corner from King St, Form stocks vases and craft pieces by Australian artists as well as design books, brochures, jewellery and bags.

If you suddenly find you have nothing to wear, try **Periscope** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 6868; 30 King St, Perth) or **Varga Girl** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9321 7838; 349 Murray St, Perth). Both carry Australian designers. Varga Girl has a good range of dresses, some vintage pieces and jeans.

Elephant-size shopping malls are **Garden City** (Map pp876-7; 125 Risely St, Booragoon), south of the city centre, and the more upmarket **Karrinyup** (Map pp876-7; 200 Karrinyup Rd, Karrinyup), to the north.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Qantas Airways (Map pp880-1; ☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au; 55 William St) and **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) fly between Perth and other Australian state capitals. **Jetstar** (www.jetstar.com) runs cheapies from Avalon, Melbourne.

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au) flies between Perth and regional destinations such as Esperance and Broome. Qantas also flies to Broome and Kalgoorlie.

Bus

Greyhound Australia (Map pp878-9; ☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au; East Perth terminal) has daily services from the East Perth terminal to Darwin via Broome.

Transwa (Map pp878-9; ☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.gov.au) operates services from the bus terminal at East Perth train station to many destinations around the state.

South West Coach Lines (☎ 9324 2333) focuses on the southwestern corner of WA, doing trips from the Esplanade Busport (Map pp880-1) to most towns in the region, including Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River.

Integrity Coach Lines (☎ 1800 226 339, 9226 1339; www.integritycoachlines.com.au) runs services between Perth and Port Hedland via Meekathara and Newman.

Train

The intrastate rail network, run by **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au), is limited to the Perth–Kalgoorlie–Boulder *Prospector* (\$72, once daily), departing from East Perth terminal. Some trains leave at 7.15am. The Perth–Mandurah railway should be operating by mid-2007. See www.newmetrorail.wa.gov.au for the latest.

There is only one interstate rail link: the famous *Indian Pacific* transcontinental train journey, run by Great Southern Railway (☎ 13 21 47; www.trainways.com.au), which leaves from East Perth station. One-way fares between Sydney and Perth are about \$590 (seat only), \$422 (seat only, backpacker rate) or \$1320 (sleeper cabin). Between Adelaide and Perth, fares are \$355 (seat only), \$253 (seat only, backpacker) or \$1005 (sleeper cabin). There are connections to the *Ghan* (to Alice Springs and Darwin) and the *Overland* (to Melbourne) trains.

You can buy train tickets at the interstate and country booking office at the Perth train station. The office is off Wellington St.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

The domestic and international terminals of Perth's airport are 10km and 13km east of Perth respectively. Taxi fares to the city are around \$25/35 from the domestic/international terminal.

The **Perth Airport City Shuttle** (☎ 9277 7958; www.perthshuttle.com.au) provides transport to the city centre, hotels and hostels. It meets incoming domestic and international flights. The shuttle costs \$12/15 from the domestic/international terminal. Bookings essential.

Transperth bus 37 travels to the domestic airport from Kings Park (or Esplanade Busport) via St Georges Tce (\$4) every 20 minutes during the day, every 30 to 60 minutes early morning, evenings and weekends.

Car & Motorcycle

All the major car rental companies – **Avis** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 13 63 33; 46 Hill St, Perth), **Budget** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 13 27 27; 960 Hay St, Perth), **Hertz** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 13 30 39; 39 Milligan St, Perth) and **Thrifty** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 1300 367 227, 13 61 39 within WA; 198 Adelaide Tce) – are in Perth. Some local operators – like **Bayswater Hire Car** (☎ 9325 1000; 160 Adelaide Tce) – can be cheaper, but make sure you read the fine print. Note that some insurance policies,

even with the bigger companies, don't cover you outside the metropolitan area after dark – in case you hit a roo.

Public Transport

Perth's central public transport organisation, **Transperth** (☎ 13 62 13; www.transperth.wa.gov.au), operates buses, trains and ferries. There are Transperth information offices at the Perth train station in Wellington St and at the Esplanade Busport on Mounts Bay Rd, by the new convention centre.

There's a free transit zone for all buses and trains within the city. Look for the 'FTZ' sign. On regular Transperth buses and trains, a short ride of one zone costs \$2.10, two zones \$3.20 and three zones \$4. Zone 1 includes the city centre and the inner suburbs, and zone 2 extends to Fremantle, Sorrento and Midland. The DayRider pass (\$7.70) is good value, giving you unlimited travel after 9am weekdays and all day on the weekend.

BUS

For travellers, the free Central Area Transit (CAT) services in the city centre are fantastic. There are computer readouts (and audio) at the stops telling you when the next bus is due. Using the CAT, you can get to most sights in the inner city. Pick up a CAT map at the Perth train station.

The red CAT operates east–west from Outram St, West Perth, to the WACA in East Perth. It runs every five minutes from 6.50am to 6.20pm weekdays. It also operates every 25 minutes from 10am to 6.15pm on weekends.

The blue CAT operates north–south from the river to Northbridge. Services run every seven minutes from 6.50am to 6.20pm weekdays, and on Friday evenings every 15 minutes from 6.20pm to 1am. On weekends, there's a bus every 15 minutes from 8.30am to 1am on Saturday and from 10am to 6.15pm on Sunday.

The yellow CAT runs from East Perth up Wellington St to West Perth every 10 minutes from 6.50am to 6.20pm weekdays, and every 30 minutes from 10am to 6.15pm on weekends.

A wide network of Transperth buses also services the metropolitan area. See the information office at Perth train station for timetables and advice or use the 'journey planner' on its website (www.transperth.wa.gov.au).

FERRY

A popular way of getting to the zoo, Transperth ferries cross the river from the Barrack St jetty in the city to the Mends St jetty in South Perth. Services run every 20 to 30 minutes from 6.50am to 7.24pm weekdays, and from around 8.10am to 9.15pm on weekends.

TAXI

Perth has a decent system of metered taxi cabs, though the distances in Perth make frequent use costly, and on busy nights you may have trouble flagging one down off the street. There are ranks throughout the city and in Fremantle. The two main companies are **Swan Taxis** (☎ 13 13 30; 9422 2240) and **Black & White** (☎ 13 10 08; 9333 3377); both have wheelchair access.

HAPPY CAMPERS

If you're heading up north for, say, more than two weeks, consider hiring a campervan. You won't be hampered by hostel check-in timetables and other hassles, leaving you to go where you want, when you want. And it can be quite economical once costs are split between two or three people. In general, if you're just planning to tour the southwest, a hire car is better value – accommodation is plentiful, and distances aren't as great.

There are a number of campervan rental companies in Perth, including:

Campaboutoz (Map pp876-7; ☎ 1800 210 877; www.campaboutoz.com.au; 198 Hampden Rd, Nedlands)

Wicked Campers (Map pp880-1; ☎ 1800 246 869; www.wickedcampers.com.au; 49 Shenton St, Northbridge) With graffiti-style murals splashed across the vans (not all are painted).

Compare deals carefully. You should be able to get unlimited kilometres, roadside assistance, and pick-up and delivery within metropolitan Perth.

If you've done the sums and decided to purchase, Freo has a number of second-hand car yards, including a cluster in North Freo, near Mojo's on Stirling Hwy. There's also the **Traveller's Autobarn** (Map pp880-1; ☎ 9228 9500; www.travellers-autobarn.com.au; 365 Newcastle St, Northbridge).

TRAIN

Transperth also operates suburban train lines to Armadale, Fremantle, Midland, Thornlie and the northern suburb of Clarkson (Joondalup) from around 5.20am to midnight weekdays. Trains run until about 2am on Saturday and Sunday. The line to Mandurah via Rockingham should be operational by mid-2007.

All trains leave from Perth station on Wellington St. Your rail ticket can also be used on Transperth buses and ferries within the ticket's area of validity; the free transit zone extends to Claisebrook and City West stations. You're also free to take your bike on the train in nonpeak times.

During the day, some of the Fremantle trains run through to Midland.

FREMANTLE

☎ 08 / pop 25,500

'Freo' lies at the mouth of the Swan, 19km from Perth but a million kilometres in terms of personality. Creative, relaxed, open-minded, Freo makes a cosy home for its myriad painters, writers and musicians and those who love to be around them. And there's more than the friendly atmosphere to enjoy here – Freo's home to some fantastic museums, historic buildings, galleries, pubs and cafés. At night on weekends, kids from the suburbs move in to party and cruise the main drag, mixing it with the city's hippies, ferals and freaks. It's a scene that's a must-see.

HISTORY

This area was settled thousands of years ago by the Noongar people who used it for ceremony and trade. Aboriginal groups quickly came to occupy various parts of the vicinity, known to them as Manjaree. Fremantle's European history began when the ship *HMS Challenger* landed here in 1829. The settlement made little progress until convict labour constructed most of the town's earliest buildings. Today, buildings such as the Round House, Old Fremantle Prison and the Fremantle Arts Centre are among the oldest in WA.

As a port, Fremantle was ineffective until the engineer CY O'Connor created an artificial harbour in the 1890s. In 1987 Fremantle was the host of the unsuccessful defence of the America's Cup yachting trophy. While Australia lost the Cup, Fremantle was the big

winner, having transformed from a sleepy port into the vibrant city it is today.

INFORMATION

Chart & Map Shop (☎ 9335 8665; 14 Collie St) Great range of maps and travel guides.

etech (☎ 9239 8189; 53 South Tce; per hr \$6; ☎ 8am-8.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-4pm Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat) Quiet internet access.

Fremantle Hospital (☎ 9431 3333; Alma St)

New Edition (☎ 9335 2383; 50 South Tce; ☎ 9am-late) Excellent bookstore.

Post office (☎ 13 13 18; 13 Market St)

Travellers Centre (☎ 9335 8776; 16 Market St) Travelers' hang-out with lots of travel information and internet terminals.

Visitors centre (☎ 9431 7878; Kings Sq; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat, 11.30am-3pm Sun) On the northwest side of the town hall.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Western Australian Maritime Museum

Housed in a stunning, architect-designed building on the harbour, just west of the city centre, the **WA Maritime Museum** (☎ 9431 8444; www.museum.wa.gov.au; Victoria Quay; museum adult/child \$10/3, submarine \$8/3, combined ticket \$15/5; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) is a fascinating exploration of WA's relationship with the ocean. It faces out to the sea, which has shaped so much of the state's, and Fremantle's, destiny.

You can't miss the display of **Australia II**, the famous winged-keel yacht that won the America's Cup yachting race in the 1980s (ending the 132-year American domination). Other boats on show include an **Indonesian fishing boat**, introduced to the Kimberley and used by the indigenous people, and a **pearl lugger** from Broome. A classic 1970s panel van (complete with fur lining) makes the cut as the surfer's vehicle of choice from that era.

If you're not claustrophobic, take a tour of another ocean-going machine, the submarine **HMAS Ovens**. The vessel was part of the Australian Navy's fleet from 1969 to 1997. Tours leave every half-hour from 10am to 3.30pm.

Fremantle Arts Centre & History Museum

An impressive neo-Gothic building, the **Fremantle Arts Centre** (☎ 9432 9555; www.fac.org.au; cnr Ord & Finnerty Sts; ☎ 10am-5pm) was originally constructed by convict labourers as a lunatic asylum in the 1860s. Saved from demolition in the late 1960s, the building now also houses

the **Fremantle History Museum** (☎ 9430 7966; admission free).

The arts centre has interesting temporary exhibitions. During summer it's a hive of cultural activity, with concerts, courses and workshops.

Old Fremantle Prison

In some ways, the **Old Fremantle Prison** (☎ 9336 9200; www.fremantleprison.com.au; 1 The Tce; day tours adult/child \$16/8, night tours \$20/11; ☎ 10am-6pm, last tour 5pm), with its foreboding 5m-high walls, dominates present-day Fremantle. Tales of adventures and hardships experienced here have lived on in the city's imagination.

Suitably enough, the prison was built by convict labour, and it operated from 1855 right through to 1991, playing host to people like bushranger Moondyne Joe, a famed escape artist; Brenden Abbott, a bank robber who escaped in prison guard's uniform; and Eric Edgar Cooke, the last person to be hanged in WA. Viewing is by tour only.

Maritime Museum Shipwrecks Galleries

Although the Maritime Museum (opposite) commands a lot of attention, don't miss the intriguing **Shipwrecks Galleries** (☎ 9431 8444; Cliff St; admission by donation; ☎ 9.30am-5pm), where you can learn about gung-ho seafaring adventures and misfortunes. The museum (in a building constructed in 1852 as a commissariat store) has a display on WA's maritime history with emphasis on the recovery and restoration of the famous wreck *Batavia* (see the boxed text, p953), in addition to other Dutch merchant ships and some more recent wrecks.

Round House

Out on Arthur Head, the western end of High St near the Maritime Museum, is the **Round House** (☎ 9336 6897; admission by donation; ☎ 10.30am-3.30pm). Built in 1831, it's the oldest public building in WA. It was originally a local prison and the site of the colony's first hanging.

Later, the building was used for holding Aborigines before they were taken away to Rottnest Island. To the Noongar people, the Round House is a sacred site because of the number of their people killed while incarcerated here.

Gold Rush Buildings

Fremantle boomed during the WA gold rush and many buildings were constructed during,

or shortly before, this period. **Samson House** (☎ 1.15-5pm Sun) is a well-preserved 1888 colonial home in Ellen St. **St John's Anglican Church** (1882), on the corner of Adelaide and Queen Sts, contains a large stained-glass window.

Other buildings from the boom era include Fremantle's **town hall** (1887) in Kings Sq; the 1903 former **German consulate building** (5 Mouat St); the 1907 **Fremantle Train Station**; and the Georgian-style **Customs House**, on the corner of Cliff and Phillimore Sts.

Other Attractions

Originally opened in 1897, the colourful **Fremantle Markets** (☎ 9335 2515; cnr South Tce & Henderson St; ☎ Fri-Sun) was reopened in 1975 and today draws slow-moving crowds combing over souvenirs and fresh produce – don't miss the market bar with live music. The huge **Esplanade Reserve**, behind the Fishing Boat Harbour and full of Norfolk Island pines, is a good spot to relax.

TOURS

The **Fremantle Tram** (☎ 9433 6674; www.fremantletrams.com.au) is actually a bus resembling an old-fashioned trolley car. It leaves from the town hall on a historic tour of Fremantle at 9.45am but you can hop on at other stops around the city (adult/child \$20/5).

The **Very Scary Ghostly Tour** (adult/child \$48/32) runs at 6.45pm on Fridays and visits the prison, graveyards and other spooky spots.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Sardine Festival Fun for foodies in January, with a gourmet seafood fiesta.

Busker's Festival April.

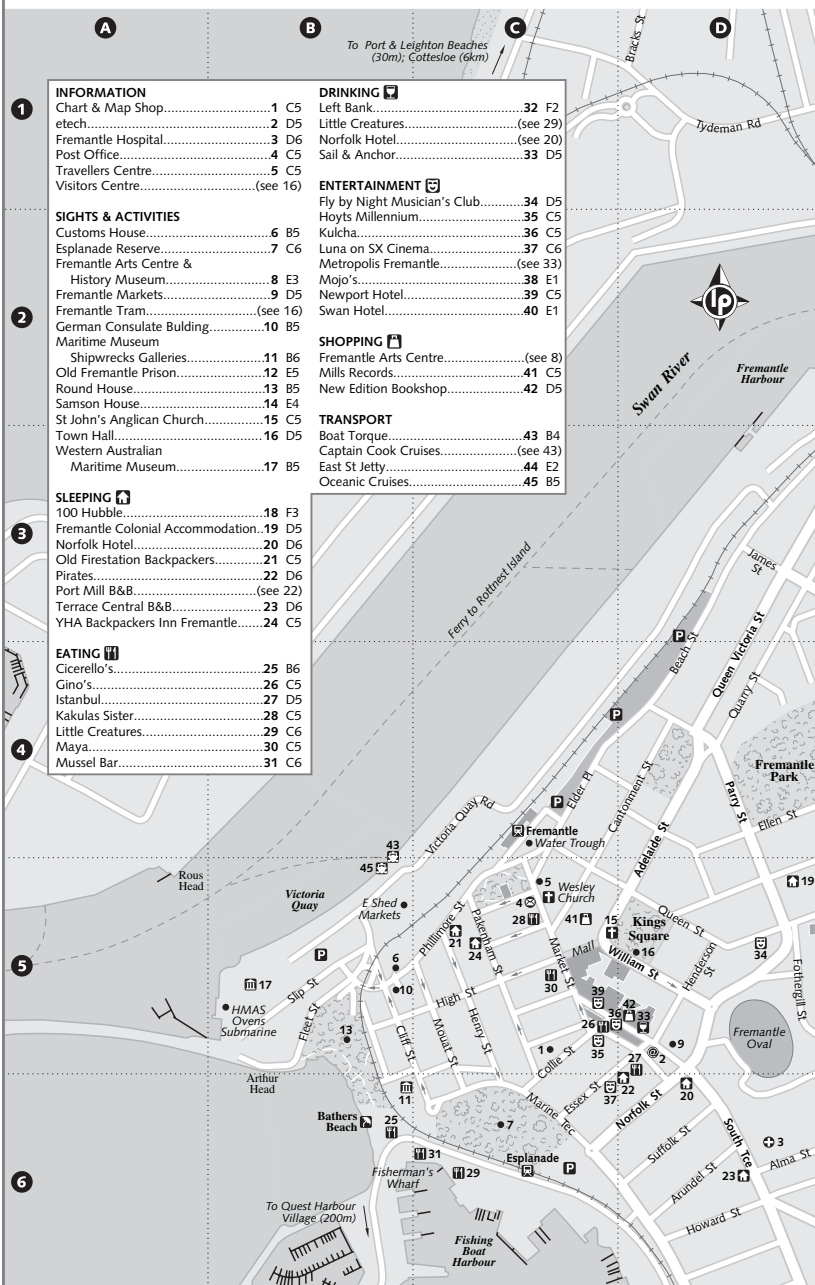
Blessing of the Fleet October.

Festival of Fremantle This 10-day festival in November is the city's largest annual event, featuring street parades, concerts, exhibitions and free performances.

SLEEPING Budget

Old Firestation Backpackers (☎ 9430 5454; www.old-firestation.net; 18 Phillimore St; 6- & 8-bed dm \$18, 4-bed dm \$20, d \$50; ☎) The firemen might have left, but there's still plenty of down-time entertainment in this converted firestation: free internet, futsal, Playstation and a sunny courtyard. Girls have their own space (including kitchen) and the dorms are good value, with natural light and the afternoon sea breeze fluttering in.

FREMANTLE



YHA Backpackers Inn Fremantle (☎ 9431 7065; bpinnfreo@yahoo.com.au; 11 Pakenham St; 8-/4-bed dm \$18/20, s without bathroom \$35, d with/without bathroom \$60/45, nonmembers extra \$4; ☑) New management has breathed fresh life into this YHA – the only one in the city – and rooms are bright and clean. Flicks are shown on the mini cinema screen every night, there's a huge indoor recreation area, and it's close to the action.

Pirates (☎ 9335 6635; 11 Essex St; dm/d \$22/70; ☑) This sun- and fun-filled hostel in the thick of the Freo action is a top spot to socialise. Rooms are in great shape, and the girls-only bathroom upstairs is freshly tiled and polished. The kitchen area is well equipped, and eye-catching wall murals of the sea remind you that an ocean swim is minutes away.

Number Six (☎ 9252 1380; www.numbersex.com.au; from \$70) This operator has a number of stylish studios, apartments and houses available for overnight to long-term stays in great locations around Fremantle and Margaret River. Facilities include decent kitchens and all mod cons.

Midrange

Norfolk Hotel (☎ 9335 5405; 47 South Tce; d with/without bathroom from \$95/70, tr \$105-115) Wrought-iron bed heads, crisp white linens and country-style furnishings make this a comfortable spot to rest up. Lounges come with sofas, fans and fridges, and there's a welcoming communal sitting room. There's no air-con, and it can be noisy at weekends, but it's still good value.

Terrace Central B&B (☎ 9335 6600; info@terracecentral.com.au; 83-85 South Tce; d/3-bedroom apt \$132/180, rates higher on Sat; ☑) Terrace Central may be a character-filled B&B at heart, but it's a spacious one. It's also full of character: miniature boats, flying mallards and giant wooden giraffes. There are two modern apartments out the back, which sleep up to eight. Doubles are roomy.

100 Hubble (☎ 9339 8080; www.100hubble.com; 100 Hubble St, East Fremantle; s \$100, d from \$150; ☑) More than a little eccentric, this environmentally conscious guesthouse sees you sleeping in a beautifully restored 1950s train carriage, showering in an outdoor telephone booth and relaxing on the sun-filled veranda, paved with gravestone off-cuts.

Fremantle Colonial Accommodation (☎ 9430 6568; fremantle.col@westnet.net.au; 215 High St; B&B d \$145, 2-bedroom apt \$150, cottages from \$180; ☑) Rambling two-storey terrace or historic prison cottage?

Whichever you choose, both embrace the colonial theme with gusto. While the terrace rooms have lovely balconies, the large, comfortable prison cottages must have the best location in Freo – now that the jail's shut!

Top End

Port Mill B&B (☎ 9433 3832; www.babs.com.au/portmill; 3/17 Essex St; d from \$170) One of the most luxurious B&Bs in town, it's clearly the love-child of Paris and Freo. Crafted from local limestone (built in 1862 as a mill), inside it's all modern Parisian style, like gleaming taps, contemporary French furniture and wrought-iron balconies.

Quest Harbour Village (☎ 9430 3888; www.questharbourvillage.com.au; Mews Rd, Challenger Harbour; 1-bedroom apt \$190, 2-bedroom apt \$220-280, 3-bedroom apt \$280-330; ☞) This set of apartments has all harbour-facing rooms with balconies for maximum nautical exposure. Downstairs the rooms are light and simple, if a little dated, and kitchens are fully equipped. Upstairs has a more contemporary, spacious feel.

Camping

With your own vehicle, these caravan parks are fairly accessible. Both are pleasantly located along the shoreline, near the Mayor Rd turn-off.

Coogee (Map pp876-7; ☎ 9418 1810; www.aspenparks.com.au; Cockburn Rd, Fremantle; paved sites \$34, chalets from \$95) This large caravan park has a slightly up-market feel. It's popular with young families, and has a tennis court and café.

Woodman Point (Map pp876-7; Cockburn Rd; ☎ 9434 1433; www.aspenparks.com.au; 132 Cockburn Rd, Munster; powered sites from \$38, chalets from \$125; ☞ ☎ ☎) A particularly pleasant spot, with tent sites (Coogee doesn't have these) and a feel of more summer beach holiday than outer-Freo staging post.

EATING South Terrace & Around

Gino's (☎ 9336 1464; 1 South Tce; mains \$9-24) Old-school Gino's is Freo's most famous café, and while it's become a tourist attraction in its own right, the locals still treat it as their second living room, only with better coffee.

Istanbul (☎ 9335 6068; 19b Essex St; mains \$18-22; ☞ lunch & dinner) Istanbul is one down-to-earth-Turkish restaurant. It's damn good, especially for vegetarians, who'll be overloaded with salads, tabouleh, meze and other delights. Comes with an attention-grabbing belly dancer.

Maya (☎ 9335 2796; 77 Market St; mains \$19-25; ☞ lunch Fri, dinner Tue-Sun) Maya's white tablecloths and wooden chairs signal classic style. The well-executed Indian favourites make it a popular local spot, right through the week. On Friday there's a special menu.

Kakulas Sister (☎ 9430 4445; 29-31 Market St) This provedore – packed with nuts, quince paste, Italian rocket seeds – is a cook's dream, and an excellent spot to stock up on energy-filled snacks. If you've been to Kakulas in North-bridge, you'll know the deal.

The Fremantle Markets (p897) is a good spot for fruit and other picnic items.

Harbour & North Fremantle

Cicerello's (☎ 9335 1911; 44 Mews Rd; mains \$12-20; ☞ lunch & dinner) This busy fish'n'chippy has been around since 1903 and remains a quintessential Freo experience. Choose your fish and chips, then pick a spot out on the boardwalk and soak up the sun – just watch those seagulls.

Little Creatures (☎ 9430 5555; www.littlecreatures.com.au; 40 Mews Rd, Fishing Boat Harbour; mains \$14-20; ☞ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, brunch & dinner Sat & Sun) Little Creatures is classic Freo: harbour views, fantastic brews (made on the premises) and excellent food. Try the classic chilli tomato mussels and woodfired pizzas while sampling the beer menu. No bookings.

Mussel Bar (☎ 9433 1800; 42 Mews Rd, Fishing Boat Harbour; mains \$18-29; ☞ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) For a more formal Freo experience, Mussel Bar's large glass windows afford romantic views of the glittering harbour. Mussels, of course, are the go: choose from five types of mussel dishes, including traditional chilli and Thai green curry.

Harvest (☎ 9336 1831; 1 Harvest Rd, North Fremantle; mains \$28-32; ☞ lunch Thu-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat, breakfast Sat & Sun) Settle into the dark-wood dining room, lined with artworks and curios, and tuck into some serious comfort food such as oxtail pie with cauliflower mash, caramelised red wine and shallot juice. Sunday breakfast is big.

DRINKING

Little Creatures (☎ 9430 5555; 40 Mews Rd, Fishing Boat Harbour) In a huge old boatshed, by the harbour, this brewery crafts award-winning ales of several different styles. Check out the brewing vats from the 2nd floor, or drink up on the deck and watch the boats out back.

Norfolk Hotel (☎ 9335 5405; 47 South Tce) A great selection of beers on tap – Asahi, Coopers, Becks, James Squire – give you a good excuse to take your time here. The limestone courtyard, with the sun streaking in through the elms and eucalypts, is downright soporific sometimes.

Sail & Anchor (☎ 9335 8433; 64 South Tce; ☞ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Built in 1854, this Fremantle landmark has been impressively restored to recall much of its former glory. Downstairs is big and beer-focused; it's more sedate upstairs, where there's a veranda.

Left Bank (☎ 9319 1315; 15 Riverside Rd; ☞ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun) This Edwardian riverside inn, up from the East St jetty and overlooking the water, is patronised by lively young 'uns in the downstairs café and bar.

ENTERTAINMENT

Given Freo's long been an enclave for artists, it's no wonder the city has turned out so many talented musicians – Eskimo Joe, the Waifs, the John Butler Trio.

Metropolis Fremantle (☎ 9336 1880; 58 South Tce; ☞ 9pm-4am Fri, 9pm-5am Sat) Most international and popular Australian bands and DJs perform here. It's a good space to watch a gig.

Mojo's (☎ 9430 4010; 237 Queen Victoria St; ☞ 7pm-late) Good old Mojo's is one of Freo's long-standing live music pubs – a real stalwart. Local and national bands (mainly Australian rock and indie) and DJs play at this small venue, and there's a sociable beer garden out back. Rest one elbow on the bar and turn your attention to an up-and-coming local band.

Fly by Night Musician's Club (☎ 9430 5976; Queen St) Variety is the key at Fly by Night, in this huge, shed-like venue that's been around for about 20 years. All kinds perform – The Kill Devil Hills, Renee Geyer, Jeff Lang. It's opposite the car park below the Old Fremantle Prison.

Kulcha (☎ 9336 4544; www.kulcha.com.au; 1st fl, 13 South Tce) World culture's the focus here, with Hungarian and Romanian music, and African drumming workshops. Book ahead.

Local bands play at the **Newport Hotel** (☎ 9335 2428; 2 South Tce; ☞ noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun), and the **Swan Hotel** (☎ 9335 2725; 201 Queen Victoria St, North Fremantle) has DJs and bands in the basement.

Retro **Luna on SX** (☎ 9430 5999; Essex St; www.lunapalace.com.au) is Freo's art-house cinema; block-

busters screen at **Hoys Millennium** (☎ 9430 6988; www.hoys.com.au; Collie St).

SHOPPING

Fashion stores run along Market St, towards the train station.

New Edition Bookshop (☎ 9335 2383; 50 South Tce; ☞ 9am-late) This excellent, well-stocked bookstore carries fiction as well as a range of local titles.

Mills Records (☎ 9335 1945; 22 Adelaide St) Your spot for music and tickets.

Fremantle Arts Centre (☎ 9432 9555; www.fac.org.au; cnr Ord & Finnerty Sts; ☞ 10am-5pm) This is an inspiring place to browse local arts and crafts.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

The **Fremantle Airport Shuttle** (☎ 9335 1614) leaves for the airport eight times daily from 8.15am to 9.15pm, picking up passengers at their accommodation (\$25 per person, bookings essential). It also runs shuttle services from the airport to Fremantle 24 hours. It costs \$20 per person, \$30 for two and \$35 for a family of four.

The train between Perth and Fremantle runs every 10 minutes or so throughout the day (\$3.20). There are countless buses between Perth city and Fremantle; they include buses 103, 106, 111, 158 and 107. Some buses travel via the Canning Hwy; others go via Mounts Bay Rd and Stirling Hwy.

Oceanic Cruises (☎ 9325 1191) has daily ferries at 8.45am, 10am, noon and 2pm from Perth's Barrack St Jetty to Freo; for the return journey they depart at 11am, 1pm, 3.15pm and 5.30pm (adult/child \$14/9, return \$22/12).

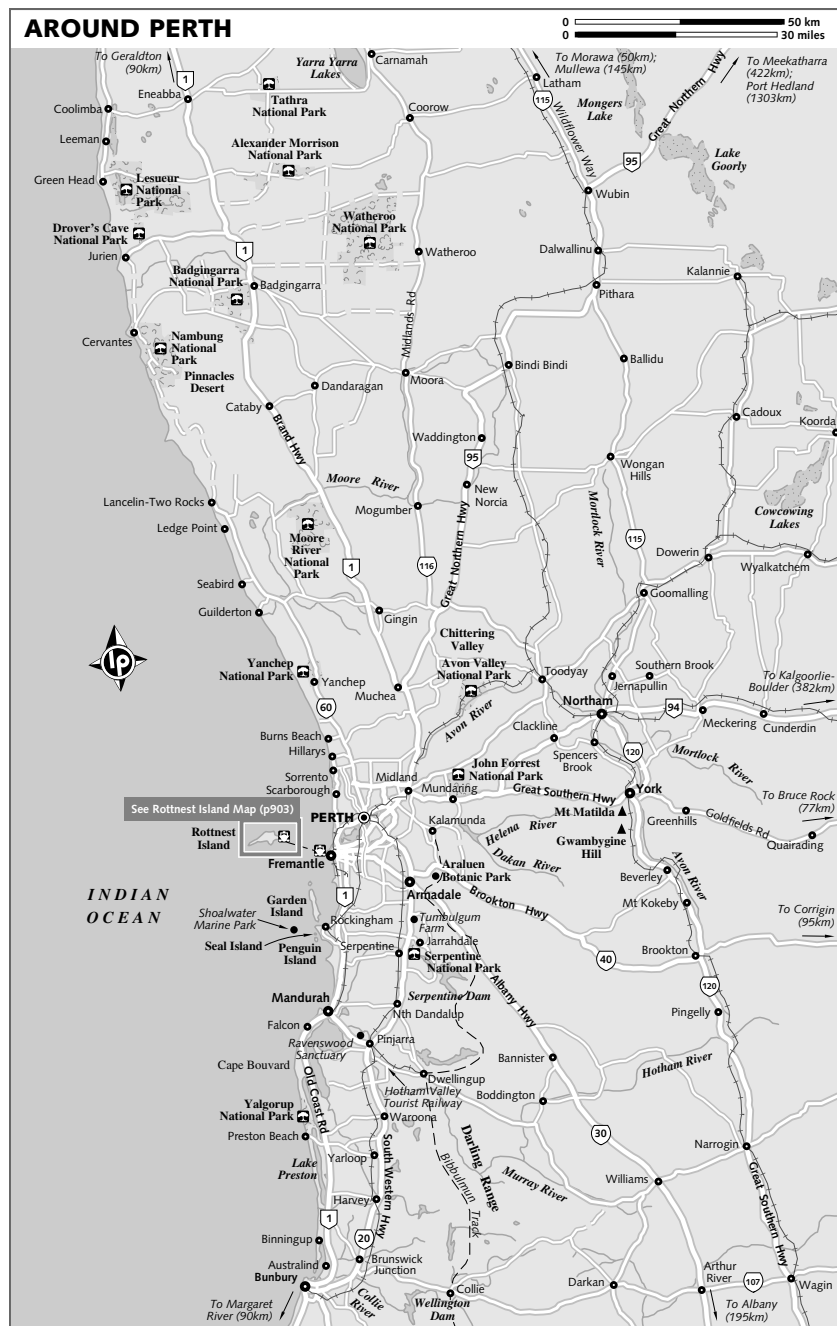
There is a plethora of one-way streets and parking meters in Freo. It's easy enough to travel by foot or on the free CAT bus service, which takes in all the major sights on a continuous route every 10 minutes from 7.30am to 6pm on weekdays and 10am to 6pm on the weekend.

AROUND PERTH

ROTTNEST ISLAND

☞ 08 / pop 475

'Rotto', as it's known to the locals, about 19km from Fremantle, is ringed by secluded tropical beaches and bays. Swimming, snorkelling, fishing, surfing and diving are just some of the activities that are popular here. Cycling



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

round the 11km-long, 4.5km-wide island is a real highlight; just ride around and pick your own bit of beach to spend the day.

Rotto is also the site of annual school leavers' and end-of-uni-exams parties, a time when the island is overrun by kids partying night and day. Depending on your age it's either going to be the best time you've ever had or the worst – check the calendar before proceeding.

Car-free Rottnest Island generates its own power and water, so it's important to use it sparingly.

History

There are signs of Aboriginal occupation on Rottnest dating from 7000 years ago, when a

hill on a coastal plain became the island after being cut off by rising seas. It was, however, uninhabited when Europeans arrived. Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh claimed discovery of the island in 1696 and named it Rottnest ('rat's nest') because of the numerous king-size 'rats' (quokkas) he saw there. The Noongar tribe knew it as Wadjemup.

The Rottnest settlement was originally established in 1838 as a prison for Aborigines from the mainland. Although there were no new prisoners after 1903, the existing prisoners had to serve out their sentences until 1920. The island is a sacred site to the Noongar because hundreds of their people died there. For more, see Indigenous Heritage Tours, p904.

ROTTNEST ISLAND

INFORMATION		SLEEPING	
Post Office.....	1 A2	Allison Camping Ground.....	11 A1
Visitors Centre.....	2 B2	Kington Barracks Youth Hostel.....	12 D4
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Quokka Arms.....	13 B2
Chapel.....	3 A2	Rottnest Lodge.....	14 A2
Family Fun Park.....	4 A2	EATING	
Malibu Diving.....	5 B2	General Store.....	15 A2
Oliver Hill Battery.....	6 C4	Marlins Restaurant.....	(see 14)
Quod.....	(see 14)	Rottnest Bakery.....	(see 15)
Rottnest Bike Hire.....	7 B2	Rottnest Tearooms.....	16 B2
Rottnest Museum.....	8 A2	Vlamingh's.....	(see 13)
Salt Store.....	9 A2	TRANSPORT	
Wadjemup Aboriginal Cemetery.....	10 A1	Main Bus Stop.....	17 A2

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Information

At the Thomson Bay settlement, behind the main jetty, there's a shopping area with ATMs, a general store and a bottle shop.

Post office (☎ 9am-1pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri) Inside the gift shop.

Ranger (☎ 9372 9788, after hours 0419-951 635)

Rottnest Island website (www.rottnest.wa.gov.au)

Visitors centre (☎ 9372 9752; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Sat-Thu, 7.30am-7pm Fri) At the main jetty.

Sights & Activities

All year-round, the small but informative **Rottnest Museum** (☎ 9372 9753; Kitson St; admission by gold coin donation; ☎ 10.45am-3.30pm) has exhibits about the natural and human history of the island.

The photographic exhibition at the 19th-century **Salt Store** (Colebatch Ave) deals with a different chapter of local history, when the island's salt lakes provided all of WA's salt. You can also wander around convict-built buildings such as the octagonal **Quod** (1864), where the prison cells are now hotel rooms and part of the Rottnest Lodge (see opposite). Not far away from Thomson Bay is **Vlamingh's Lookout** (unsigned) on Lookout Hill. Go up past the old cemetery for panoramic views of the island. Also of interest is the **Oliver Hill Battery**, 3.2km from the Thomson Bay settlement. This gun battery was built in the 1930s and played a major role in the defence of the WA coastline and Fremantle harbour.

Most visitors come for Rottnest's **beaches** and water activities. Surfing is big at Strickland, Salmon and Stark Bays at the west end of the island, while swimmers prefer the Basin (protected by a ring of reefs), Longreach and Geordie Bays. Excellent visibility in the temperate waters, coral and shipwrecks all appeal to snorkellers and scuba divers.

QUOKKA

The Aborigines knew the cute quokka as the *quak-a*, which was heard by Europeans as 'quokka'. These marsupials of the macropod family (along with kangaroos and wallabies) were once found throughout the southwest but are now confined to forest on the mainland and a population of 8000 to 12,000 on Rottnest Island. You will see plenty during your visit. Don't be surprised if one comes up to you looking for a titbit – many are almost tame.

Snorkelling and diving equipment, surfboards and bodyboards can be hired from **Malibu Diving** (☎ 9292 5111; www.rottnestdiving.com.au; Thomson Bay), which also runs daily snorkelling trips and four-day open-water scuba-diving courses (beginners \$395).

The **Family Fun Park** (☎ 9292 5156; adult/child/concession \$8/7/5, trampolines per 10min \$3; ☎ 9am-4pm) is the spot for putt-putt and trampolines. Hire bikes from **Rottnest Bike Hire** (multigear/single-gear bike per day \$24/17, bond \$25; ☎ 8.30am-4pm).

Tours

From the Salt Store you can join a volunteer guide on one of the **free daily walks** (☎ 11am, 1pm & 2pm) that take in the settlement's historic buildings, the Wadjemup Aboriginal cemetery, the sea wall and boat sheds, the chapel and the Quod, or the lighthouse or quokkas.

Hour-long **Indigenous Heritage Tours** (adult/child \$11/5; ☎ 1.15pm), leaving from outside the visitors centre, explain the Noongar people's connection with Rottnest and include the Quod (where many died), the cemetery and stories from the Dreamtime.

A two-hour **bus tour** (adult/child \$25/13; ☎ 11am, 1.30pm & 1.45pm) leaves from the visitors centre. There's also the **Oliver Hill Train & Guns tour** (adult/child \$17/9; ☎ 1.30pm), which takes you by train to the gun and tunnel on Oliver Hill, and one-hour **Wadjemup Lighthouse tours** (adult/child \$15/6; ☎ 10.45am & 11.45am).

From November to March, **Capricorn Kayak** (☎ 6267 8059; www.capricornseakayaking.com.au; half-day \$99) runs sea-kayaking tours around the Rottnest coastline.

Enjoy the reef and wrecks from above the water in a semisubmersible boat, the **Underwater Explorer** (www.underwaterexplorer.com.au; adult/child \$20/13). Tours last 45 minutes and leave from the main jetty four times daily September to May; contact the visitors centre for times. Underwater Explorer also runs snorkelling cruises (adult \$28, 90 minutes from 12.30pm, November to April).

Sleeping

Rottnest Island is wildly popular in summer and school holidays, when ferries and accommodation are booked out months in advance.

Kingston Barracks Youth Hostel (☎ 9432 9111; dm \$24; ☎) If you stay in these old army barracks you might find yourself fighting with school groups for a spot in front of the potbelly stove.

Check in at the accommodation office at the main jetty before you make the 1.8km walk, bike or bus trip to Kingston.

Rottnest Island Authority Cottages (☎ 9432 9111; Sun-Thu/Fri & Sat 4-bedroom ocean-front villas \$170/200, Sun-Thu/Fri & Sat 4-bedroom ocean-front cottages from \$210/260) There are more than 250 refurbished houses and cottages – some that have magnificent beachfront positions – for rent around the island. Linen provided. Note that there are off-season discounts.

Quokka Arms (☎ 9292 5011; quokkaarms@rottnestisland.com.au; 1 Bedford Ave; s/d \$180/200) This beachfront building (1864) was once the gubernatorial summer holiday pad but these days it's Rotto's most popular watering hole. The rooms are clean but nothing fancy; some have water views.

Rottnest Lodge (☎ 9292 5161; www.rottnestlodge.com.au; Kitson St; d/f from \$170/240; ☎) It's claimed there are ghosts in this comfortable complex, which is based around the former Quod and boys' reformatory school. If that worries you, ask for one of the cheery rooms with a view in the new section fronting onto a salt lake.

Allison camping ground (☎ 9432 9111; Thomson Bay; sites per person \$9) Camping is restricted to this leafy camping ground, which has BBQs. It's known as Tentland by the surfers and students who colonise this patch of Rotto. Be vigilant about your belongings.

Eating

There's no exceptional dining to be had on the island; in general, self-catering is your best option. The general store is like a small supermarket.

Rottnest Bakery (☎ 9292 5023; Thomson Bay) Next to the general store, this is the place to pick up your pie.

Rottnest Tearooms (☎ 9292 5171; Thomson Bay; mains \$18-30) Grab an oceanfront table on the veranda and keep the kids happy with a burger (if that fails, try the playground). Water views.

Vlamingh's (☎ 9292 5011; Quokka Arms, 1 Bedford Ave; mains \$18-30) After a sunset drink at the pub, wander a few metres over to this beachside restaurant, serving dishes like mushroom, pumpkin and fennel risotto.

There's also **Marlins Restaurant** (☎ 9292 5161; Rottnest Lodge, Kitson St; mains \$24-32)

Getting There & Away

Besides points of departure, all the ferry services are basically the same. Return trips

adult/child start at \$51/21 from Fremantle (25 minutes) and \$66/28 from Perth (1½ hours). There's an extra evening service on Friday.

Boat Torque (Rottnest Express; ☎ Fremantle 9335 6406, Northport 9430 5844, Perth 9421 5888; www.rottnestexpress.com.au) departs Fremantle (C Shed, Victoria Quay) about five times daily, and Northport terminal, Fremantle, about four times daily. There's a thrice-daily service from Perth. Secure parking is available at Northport, and you can arrange bike hire.

Oceanic Cruises (☎ Perth 9325 1191, Fremantle 9335 2666; www.oceaniccruises.com.au) departs Perth about three times daily. From Fremantle, there's a service from the East St jetty once in the morning and from the B Shed about four times daily.

Rottnest Fast Ferries (☎ 9246 1039; www.hillarysfastferries.com.au) runs trips from Hillarys Boat Harbour to Rotto three times daily from September to June.

Rottnest Air-Taxi (☎ 1800 500 006; www.rottnest.de) has a same-day return fare from Jandakot airport in Perth starting at \$240. Extended return is \$300. This price is for a four-seat plane (three passengers), so it can be a good deal.

Getting Around

Bicycles are the time-honoured way of getting around the island. Rotto is just big enough (and with enough hills) to make a day's ride good exercise. Hire a bike from one of the ferry companies or Rottnest Bike Hire (opposite). Helmets (compulsory) and locks (bicycles are often stolen) are provided.

There are two bus services. A free shuttle runs between the main accommodation areas and the airport, departing from the accommodation office at the main jetty roughly every 20 minutes, with the last bus at about 7pm. The Bayseeker (day pass adult/child \$8/4) is a jump-on, jump-off service that does a loop around the island. From Geordie Bay to the bus stop, it's free.

NORTH OF PERTH

The coast north of Perth is windswept and barren, and although the sprawling sands look inviting, these beaches are much better for water sports. Popular with day-trippers is **Yanchep National Park**, 51km north of Perth. It's a pretty bushland park with plentiful wildlife, including a protected colony of koalas. Visitors can explore the limestone **Crystal Cave**, paddle boats on **Loch McNess** and wander down the **Yaberoo Budjara Aboriginal Heritage Trail**.

Lancelin

☎ 08 / pop 800

What do you do when the beach is windy? Harness yourself to a really big kite and strap yourself to a surfboard, of course! Afternoon offshore winds and shallows protected by an outlying reef make for perfect kitesurfing and windsurfing conditions at Lancelin. The town (130km north of Perth) plays host to action-seekers from around the world for its consistently windy conditions in summer. In January it's a veritable festival of wind-worshippers during the Ocean Classic race, which starts at Ledge Point.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Head to the beach and watch the wind- and kitesurfers whoop it up. If you're inspired, **Werner's Hot Spot** (☎ 9655 1553) offers windsurfing (\$20) and kitesurfing (\$70) lessons. Werner also hires out the latest boards and gear from his Kombi parked at the beach from October to March (phone at other times and he'll come to meet you). There are gentle waves at the main beach for 'traditional' surfing.

Desert Storm Adventures (☎ 9655 2550; www.desertstorm.com.au; adult/child \$40/25) takes delighted (sometimes shrieking) travellers on a wild ride through the dunes daily. More dune action can be had by hiring an **off-road motorbike** (☎ 0417-919 550; 2-4-wheel bike per hr \$65/70).

SLEEPING & EATING

Lancelin Lodge YHA (☎ 9655 2020; www.lancelinlodge.com.au; 10 Hopkins St; dm \$23, d/f from \$60/80; 📺 📶) This award-winning hostel is well equipped and welcoming, with wide verandas and lots of communal spaces to spread about. Catering mainly to windsurfers, the excellent facilities include a big kitchen, BBQ, wood-fire pizza oven, decent-sized swimming pool, ping-pong table, volleyball court and free use of push-bikes and boogie boards!

Windsurfer Beach Chalets (☎ 9655 1454; kateandkim@bigpond.com.au; 1 Hopkins St; d \$110, extra person \$15) A great choice for groups of friends and families (each chalet sleeps six), these self-contained two-bedroom units look a lot better from the outside (a very stylish contemporary design) than they do inside, but this is the closest accommodation to the windsurfing beach. They're functional and well equipped, and have a sun terrace that backs onto a grassy area. There's also a communal BBQ area.

Lancelin Caravan Park (☎ 9655 1056; Hopkins St; unpowered/powerd sites per person \$10/12, on-site vans \$35) Sailboarders love camping out at this neat park – not for the facilities and amenities, which are rudimentary, but for the location. This is as close to the beach as you can get.

Endeavour Tavern (☎ 9655 1052; 58 Gingin Rd) A classic beachfront Aussie pub with a beer garden overlooking the ocean, and pool table, darts and a TAB. The casual eatery serves decent seafood, and the speciality is crayfish with chips and salad for \$35.

Offshore Café (☎ 9655 2828; Hopkins Rd; meals \$5-16) Does decent burgers and sandwiches for lunch.

There are two supermarkets and takeaways along Gingin Rd.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Catch-a-bus (☎ 9655 2020; \$25) is the only bus service to Lancelin. It's a private shuttle service ran by the Lancelin Lodge YHA offering drop-offs and pick-ups between Perth and Lancelin on demand.

Cervantes & Pinnacles Desert

☎ 08

The cruisy crayfishing town of **Cervantes** (pop 750), 245km north of Perth, makes a wise overnight stop to enjoy the **Pinnacles Desert** at sunset when the light is sublime and the crowds thin. Go during crayfishing season (mid-November to June), when the fresh sweet crustaceans provide a compelling reason to visit.

Get information on accommodation, wildflower and Pinnacles tours at Cervantes' **visitors centre** (☎ 9652 7700; www.turquoiseeast.org.au; Cadiz St; ☎ 10am-5pm). There's a general store, liquor shop, internet access and takeaway here too.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Nambung National Park (bus passenger/car \$4/9), 17km from Cervantes, is home to the spectacular otherworldly Pinnacles Desert, where thousands of limestone pillars are scattered across a moon-like landscape across a golden desert floor. The lime-rich desert sand originated from seashells, which compacted with rain and subsequently eroded, forming individual pillars, some towering up to 5m. A good gravel loop-road runs through the formations so you can stop to walk among them.

About 20km south of Cervantes at Thirsty Point, the white-sand beach at **Hangover Bay** is good for a dip and you can cook on the gas BBQs here and further north at **Kangaroo Point**.

TOURS

Australian Excursions (☎ 1800 048 000, 9455 3162; www.supporttours.com.au; adult/concession \$162/144) Offers daily full-day tours to the Pinnacles, taking in wildflowers and sandboarding.

Turquoise Coast Enviro Tours (☎ 9652 7047; 59 Seville St; 3hr Pinnacles tour \$40). These guided 2½-hour walks leave Cervantes at 8am and 2½ hours before sunset.

SLEEPING & EATING

Cervantes Lodge & Pinnacles Beach Backpackers (☎ 1800 245 232, 9652 7377; www.cervanteslodge.com.au; 91 Seville St; dm \$23, d without bathroom \$75, d with views \$95) Travellers love the communal kitchen and beach proximity, and the cleanliness of the place makes up for its lack of charm.

Cervantes Holiday Homes (☎ 9652 7115; roseknowles@bigpond.com.au; cnr Malaga Ct & Valencia Rd; 1-2-bedroom w linen \$80 per couple plus \$20 per person, 3-bedroom without linen \$75; 📺) These spotless, spacious, self-contained cottages are great value, with fully equipped kitchens, comfy lounge and TV.

Pinnacles Caravan Park (☎ 9652 7060; cervpinnaclepark@westnet.com.au; 35 Aragon St; unpowered/powerd sites \$22/25, on-site vans/cabins \$70/60) This shady park is in prime tent-pitching position next to the beach. Excellent facilities and a supermarket are a plus.

Seabreeze Cafe (Cadiz St; meals \$6-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) If it's cray season (November to June), Seabreeze has succulent crayfish from \$24.

Ronsard Bay Tavern (☎ 9652 7009; 1 Cadiz St; mains \$12-26; ☎ 11am-2pm & 6-8.30pm) Locals love the tavern for its fireplace, big-screen TV, dartboards, pool tables and jukebox. Not to mention its delicious counter meals – try the seafood basket.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Greyhound (☎ 13 20 30) has services from Cervantes to Perth (\$39, four hours, daily) and Geraldton (\$20, 2½ hours, daily). Buses continue up to Jurien (20 minutes) and Leeman (35 minutes).

SOUTH OF PERTH

Holiday homes, tranquil fishing spots and sleepy towns contour the soft lines of the coast south of Perth, where many Western Australians spend a lazy week at the beach each year.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Transperth city buses buzz back and forth between Perth and Rockingham many times a day. Catch bus 920 or 126 from Fremantle (\$6, 45 minutes), or bus 866 from Perth's City Busport (\$6, 60 minutes). For Mandurah, catch bus 107 from Perth (\$8, 70 minutes). **South West Coachlines** (☎ 08-9324 2333) also does drop-offs at Mandurah (\$14).

The *Australind* train service stops at Pinjarra (\$11, 1¼ hours) twice daily. Unfortunately, there's no public transport to Dwellingup.

Rockingham

☎ 08 / pop 81,000

The quiet seaside town Rockingham, some 47km south of Perth, was founded in 1872 as a port, although over time this function was taken over by Fremantle. Today, a number of British migrants call Rockingham home.

Rockingham itself doesn't have much to offer travellers. The nearby Shoalwater Marine Park, by contrast, is one of the greatest highlights of the region. Here you can watch dolphins, sea lions and fairy penguins in the wild in a pristine, beautifully preserved environment.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9592 3464; 43 Kent St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) has plenty of information.

TOURS

There are some 180 bottlenose dolphins that play with small groups of swimmers here. **Rockingham Wild Encounters** (☎ 9591 1333; www.rockinghamwildencounters.com.au) runs encounter tours:

Dolphin swim tour (\$185 from Perth's Wellington St coach stand or Val St jetty in Rockingham, \$205 with Perth hotel pick-up; ☎ 7am from Perth, 7.30am from Rockingham, Sep-May)

Dolphin-watch tours (adult/child \$75/38 from Perth's Wellington St coach stand, \$55/28 from Val St jetty in Rockingham; ☎ 7.45am from Perth, 8.45am from Rockingham, Sep-May) Cruise around with the dolphins on these two-hour tours.

Dolphin, penguin and sea lion day tour (adult/child \$112/66 from Perth's Wellington St coach stand, \$92/56 from Val St jetty in Rockingham; ☎ 7.45am from Perth, 8.45am from Rockingham) Includes dolphin-spotting, a cruise to Seal Island to observe sea lions and Penguin Island, where you can observe the fairy penguins in the wild and feeding at the discovery centre.

There's also the Penguin and Seal Island cruise (adult/child \$32/23), taking in both islands over 45 minutes. Or you can hop over to Penguin Island on the **ferry** (adult/child \$16/13; ☎ hourly 9am-3pm). The ferry ticket includes Penguin Discovery Centre entry. Tours depart from Mersey Point jetty, also the spot to buy tickets. To get to Mersey Point from Rockingham bus station, catch bus 113.

SLEEPING & EATING

Beachside Apartment Hotel (☎ 1800 888 873; beachside@iinet.net.au; Rockingham Beach Rd; 1-bedroom apt \$160, 2-bedroom apt with ocean view \$190, 2-bedroom apt \$180; 🍴) Right on the esplanade, with spacious, sunny and secure apartments. Reception is at 58 Kent St.

Peel Manor House (☎ 9524 2838; www.peelmanorhouse.com.au; Fletcher Rd, Baldvins; d \$180) A spacious, English-style manor that feels like a restful country retreat, if a little contrived. No kids. It's off Stakehill Rd.

Thai by the Sea (☎ 9591 1989; 224 Safety Beach Rd; mains \$15-22; 🍴 dinner) This friendly and popular spot is not far from Mersey Point.

Betty Blue (☎ 9528 4228; 3-4 The Boardwalk; mains \$15-24) The salty-sea-air vibe here is casual, the menu focused on seafood.

Anna's (☎ 9528 4228; 8 The Boardwalk; mains \$36; 🍴 dinner Wed-Sun) The recommended fine-dining experience, with European-style fare.

Mandurah

☎ 08 / pop 70,200

This formerly sleepy waterside town, 75km south of Perth on the Mandurah Estuary, has expanded into a bustling, developed spot that's relaxed and decidedly unaffected. It's one of the best places in the region for fishing, crabbing, prawning (March to April) and dolphin-spotting.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9550 3999; 75 Mandurah Tce; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun), on the estuary boardwalk, is well informed.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Take a dolphin-spotting cruise through the estuary, Peel Inlet and Murray River with **Mandurah Ferry Cruises** (☎ 9535 3324; www.mandurahferrycruises.com; Estuary Boardwalk; adult/child \$15/8; ☎ hourly 10.30am-2.30pm, 3.30pm in summer).

You don't need your own boat to go crabbing and fishing. Simply bring your own gear down and head to the accessible estuary for blue manna crabs and fish; you can also fish

on the beach. **Tuckey's Tackle** (☎ 9535 1228; 152 Mandurah Tce) sells fishing and crabbing gear (scoop net, bucket, measurer).

There's a designated, boat-free **swimming** area on the far side of the estuary, just north of Mandurah Bridge. Here dolphins have been known to swim up to unwitting kids for a frolic.

The regional **Mandurah Performing Arts Centre** (☎ 9550 3900; www.manpac.com.au; Ormsby Tce) is next to the **Reading Cinema** (☎ 9535 2800; 7 James Service Pl) on the boardwalk.

SLEEPING & EATING

Mandurah becomes congested with holiday-makers during summer and school holidays so you need to plan ahead.

Atrium Hotel (☎ 9535 6633; www.atriumhotel.com.au; 65 Ormsby Tce; d from \$119; 🍴 🍷) Once Mandurah's premier hotel, today it's looking dated and faded, but it's still good value. There are two swimming pools, including an indoor number in the atrium.

Quest Mandurah (☎ 9535 9599; www.questmandurah.com.au; 20 Apollo Pl; 2-person studio \$138, 2-bedroom apt \$202, 2-bedroom waterfront apt \$228, 3-bedroom apt with courtyard \$228; 🍴 🍷) With light blue weatherboards and white-painted gutters, the self-contained apartment complex backs directly onto the estuary. Rooms are clean, spacious and bright.

Yalgorup Eco Park (☎ 9582 1320; www.ecopark.com.au; 8 Henry Rd, Melros Beach; tents/caravan sites/chalets \$45/40/160; 🍷) Yalgorup Eco Park is a high-end caravan park on Melros Beach – great for fishing. There's a range of accommodation from camp sites to couples' cabins to family-friendly villas.

Cicerello's (☎ 9535 9777; 73 Mandurah Tce; mains \$11-27; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Seafood on the waterfront is a must-do in WA. While Cicerello's is famous for its simple fish and chips, dishes such as calamari, fish burgers and chilli mussels are just as appetising.

Brighton Hotel (☎ 9534 8864; 10-12 Mandurah Tce; mains \$17-29; 🍴 lunch & dinner) The locals treat this big curvaceous number as their local watering hole. Watch the sun set over the estuary with a glass of wine.

Dwellingup

☎ 08 / pop 550

Dwellingup is a small, forest-covered township with character. Primarily it's a base for hiking, cycling, swimming and canoeing on

the Murray – the surrounding area is filled with adventure. It's 97km south of Perth.

The **Bibbulmun Track** (www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au) passes through this timber town on its journey southwards, and the **Munda Biddi** (www.mundaiddi.org.au) bike trail passes through here to Collie and will eventually reach Albany. The **Hotham Valley Tourist Railway** terminates here from Pinjarra. See the **visitors centre** (☎ 9538 1108; Marrinup St; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) for more information.

Don't waste any time getting out to the beautiful Murray. **Dwellingup Adventures** (☎ 9538 1127; www.dwellingupadventures.com.au; 1-person kayaks & 2-person canoes \$28 per day; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) is the place to hire bikes and kayaks. Or join a paddling tour (half-day one-person kayak \$50); white-water rafting tours from June to October start at \$98.

The **Forest Heritage Centre** (☎ 9538 1395; Acacia St; adult/family \$5/10; ☎ 10am-5pm) is an interesting architect-designed rammed-earth building in the shape of three gum leaves. There's a woodwork gallery and three trails leading off from the centre.

Millhouse Café & Chocolate Company (☎ 9538 1122; McLarty St; mains \$9-18; 🍴 lunch Thu, lunch & dinner Fri-Sun) is a good spot to reboot yourself with a glass of wine and café-style treat such as the Millhouse chicken-and-mushroom pie.

Yalgorup National Park

Around 50km south of Mandurah is the beautiful Yalgorup National Park, a region of woodlands, tranquil lakes and coastal sand dunes. Ornithologists will be in their element and amateur scientists can visit the distinctive thrombalites on the shores of Lake Clifton.

THE SOUTHWEST

The green and lush southwestern corner of WA is one of the most rewarding areas of Australia to visit. Wild bottlenose dolphins and whales frolic offshore while devoted surfers search for the perfect line on perfect waves. On land magnificent wineries beckon. While the scenery is gorgeous, distances between the myriad attractions are short, a rare event in most of WA, so drive-time is mercifully limited, making it a fantastic area to explore for a few days.

Getting There & Away

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205) and **South West Coach Lines** (☎ Perth 08-9324 2333, Bunbury 08-9791 1955, Bus-

selton 08-9754 1666) run daily bus services from Perth to:

Destination	Price (\$)	Duration (hours)
Augusta	\$40	6
Bunbury	\$25	3
Busselton	\$29	4
Dunsborough	\$31	4½
Margaret River	\$33	5½

Transwa runs a service to Pemberton (\$42, eight hours) several times a week. South West Coach Lines also runs regular services to Bridgetown (\$31, 4½ hours), Manjimup (\$35, five hours) and Balingup (\$31, 5½ hours).

Goldrush Tours Golden Triangle Tour (☎ 1800 620 441; www.goldrushtravels.com.au) offers a hop-on hop-off bus pass (\$475) between Perth, Margaret River and the southwest coast and forests, Albany and Esperance on the south coast, and up to Kalgoorlie.

Transwa's *Australind* train service travels from Perth to Bunbury (\$24, 2½ hours) twice daily.

BUNBURY

☎ 08 / pop 56,180

Bunbury, 184km south of Perth, has started to transform its image from industrial port to seaside holiday destination.

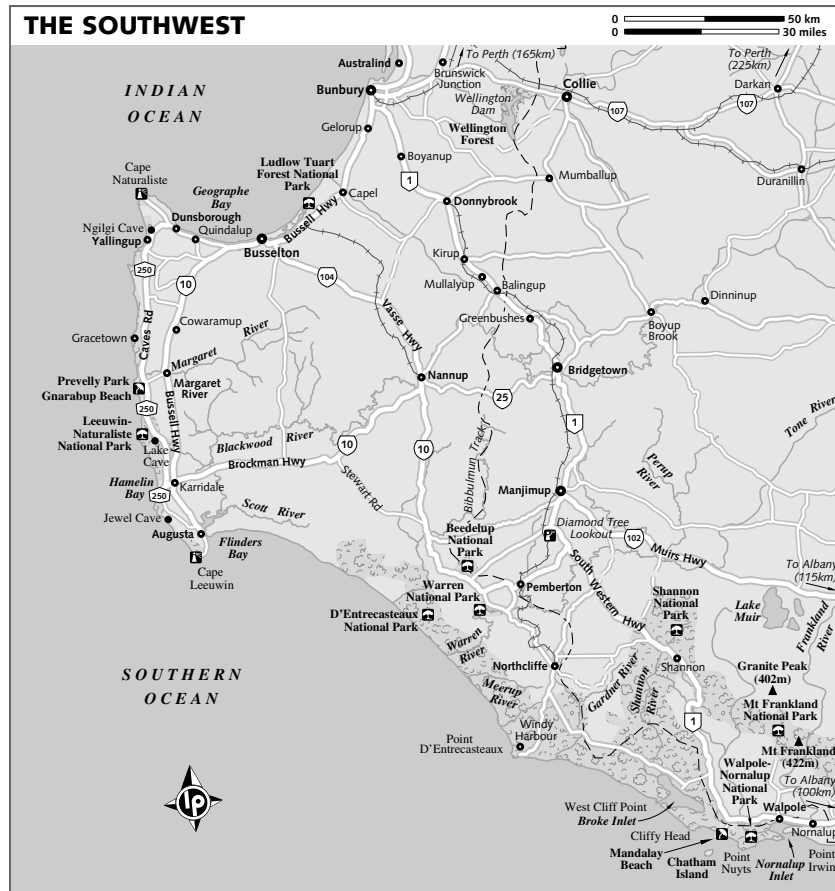
The **visitors centre** (☎ 9721 7922; Carmody Pl; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-4.30pm Sun) is in the old 1904 train station. Check your email in the Old Station Coffee Lounge next door. Nearby, **Bunbury City Transit** (☎ 9791 1955) will help you get around.

Start with a morning visit to the **Dolphin Discovery Centre** (☎ 9791 3088; www.dolphindiscovery.com.au; Koombana Beach; adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 8am-5pm), where three pods of about 100 bottlenose dolphins regularly feed in the inner harbour, most frequently between November and April. Nearby is the **Mangrove Boardwalk**, by the shores of bird-haven Leschenault Inlet.

Sleeping

Dolphin Retreat YHA (☎ 9792 4690; dolphinretreatbunbury@iinet.net.au; 14 Wellington St; dm/s/d \$19/29/48; 🍷) Just around the corner from the beach, this small hostel is well located with hammocks and a BBQ on the back veranda.

Wander Inn Backpackers (☎ 9721 3242; www.bunburybackpackers.com.au; 16 Clifton St; dm/s/d \$23/36/56; 🍷) Down a quiet side street, between the beach



and the main strip, this friendly hostel has good adventure tours and cruises. Look for the cheerful blue-and-yellow house.

Rose Hotel (☎ 9721 4533; www.rosehotel.com.au; cnr Victoria & Wellington Sts; hotel s/d \$58/78, motel s/d \$92/99) From the chandeliers hanging in the halls to the bloke wearing the armour in the lobby, the 1865 Rose Hotel oozes character. Go for the old-style hotel rooms – they're charming, even with a share bathroom.

Lighthouse Beach Resort (☎ 9721 1311; www.lighthousehotel.com.au; Carey St; r \$90-140, apt \$130; ♿ ♿) In a fabulous setting above (funnily enough) Lighthouse Beach, the two-room self-contained apartment in this hotel is terrific value. Renovations of the property were ongoing when we visited.

Eating & Drinking

Fitzgerald's (Victoria St; ☎ 6pm-late Thu-Sun) Big beer garden, traditional meals and an easy, laid-back vibe – go for the Sunday session.

Rose Hotel (☎ 9721 4533; cnr Victoria & Wellington Sts; mains \$13; ☎ lunch & dinner) The delightfully old-fashioned dining room here serves tasty and filling classics and counter meals.

Walkabout Café (☎ 9791 6922; Victoria St; mains \$22; ☎ lunch & dinner) Themed around bush Australiana, you can try kangaroo sausages.

At Boat Harbour, check out **VAT Two** (☎ 9791 8833; 2 Jetty Rd; mains \$26-32; ☎ lunch & dinner), the Bunbury sibling of Margaret River's see-and-be-seen VAT 107. Be sure to eat fish and chips on the deck at **Aristos Waterfront** (☎ 9791 6477; fish & chips \$10; ☎ lunch & dinner).

For good coffee, breakfast or light lunch try **Benesse** (Victoria St), **Caf-fez** (20 Prinsep St) or **Café 140** (140 Victoria St).

BUSSELTON

☎ 08 / pop 24,000

On the shores of Geographe Bay, 230km south of Perth, Busselton is a popular holiday resort with a slightly faded air. Surrounded by calm waters and white-sand beaches, the famous 2km-long jetty is the main attraction. Still family-friendly, Busselton has plenty of diversionary activities for lively kids; think playgrounds on the foreshore, sheltered beaches, waterslides, animal farms and even a classic drive-in cinema. During school holidays the population increases fourfold, accommodation is fully booked and pricey, and the beaches and restaurants are crowded.

Busselton's **visitors centre** (☎ 9752 1288; www.geographebay.com; Causeway Rd & Peel Tce; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) has a huge range of tourist information.

Sights & Activities

The town boasts the longest timber jetty in the southern hemisphere, at 2km. Constructed in 1865, a mammoth planned renovation programme will likely close the jetty for many months in 2007; check at www.busseltonjetty.com.au. At the shore end is a free and friendly small **museum**, at the ocean end is the **underwater observatory** (adult/child \$20/12; ☎ 10.30am-3.30pm).

Diving is popular, especially on Four Mile Reef (a 40km limestone ledge about 6.5km off the coast) and on the scuttled Navy vessel HMAS *Swan* off Dunsborough. The **Dive Shed** (☎ 9754 1615; www.diveshed.com.au; 21a Queen St) can take you out.

Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

A number of guesthouses are within walking distance of the jetty.

Observatory Guesthouse (☎ 1800 180 343; www.observatory-guesthouse.com; 7 Brown St; s/d \$77/88) A five-minute walk from the jetty, this friendly B&B guesthouse has bright, cheerful rooms and a communal sea-facing balcony.

Blue Bay Apartments (☎ 9751 1796; www.bluebayaapartments.com; cnr Brown & Adelaide Sts; apt from \$90) Just a stone's throw from the beach, these self-contained apartments are bright and cheery, each with private courtyard and BBQ.

Kookaburra Caravan Park (☎ 9752 1516; kookpark@compwest.net.au; tents \$24, cabins \$50-65) In a great location on the waterfront and a short walk from town, this is a good option for campers.

Goose (☎ 9754 7700; www.thegoose.com.au; Jetty foreshore; mains \$25; ☎ Tue-Sat) At the end of the jetty, this stylish restaurant offers an eclectic and interesting menu; tapas (\$9) is served all day.

Equinox Cafe (☎ 9752 4641; www.theequinox.com.au; Jetty foreshore; lunches \$15) Lower-key and somewhat relaxed than its goosy neighbour, this is a fine waterfront hang-out.

Vasse (☎ 9754 8560; 44 Queen St; mains \$20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Join the locals and sit outside eating good café fare and drinking beer, wine or coffee; evenings have more of a busy bar than café atmosphere.

DUNSBOROUGH

☎ 08 / pop 3300

Dunsborough, west of Busselton, is a pleasant coastal town. Fast developing into an increasingly chichi destination, it's now too expensive for the local family holidays that used to be its mainstay. It's also popular with school leavers, thousands of whom descend to party for a couple of weeks in late November/early December.

The cheerful staff at the **visitors centre** (☎ 9755 3299; www.geographebay.com; Naturaliste Tce; ☎ 9am-5pm) have a wealth of regional information.

Sights & Activities

Northwest of Dunsborough, Cape Naturaliste Rd leads to the excellent beaches of **Meelup**, **Eagle Bay** and **Bunker Bay** (take a coffee break and absorb the stunning view at **Bunkers Beach Café** on the way), some fine coastal walks and lookouts, and the **Cape Naturaliste lighthouse** (☎ 9755 3955; adult/child \$9/5; ☎ 9.30am-4pm), built in 1903.

Whale watching for humpbacks and southern rights is a regular pastime between September and December. **Naturaliste Charters** (☎ 9755 2276; www.whales-australia.com) offers two-hour whale-watching tours by boat (adult/child \$60/33). The southernmost nesting colony of the red-tailed tropicbird is at scenic **Sugarloaf Rock**.

There has been excellent diving in Geographe Bay since the decommissioned Navy destroyer HMAS *Swan* was purpose-scuttled in 1997 for use as a dive wreck. Marine life

has colonised the ship that lies at a depth of 30m, 2.5km offshore. **Cape Dive** (☎ 9756 8778; www.capedive.com; 222 Naturaliste Tce; two-tank dive from \$175) offers dives and dive courses.

Sleeping & Eating

Dunsborough Beachouse (☎ 9755 3107; www.dunsboroughbeachouse.com.au; 205 Geographe Bay Rd; dm/s/d \$25/36/56; 📺) On the Quindalup beachfront, this friendly hostel has the best beach location in town; it's an easy 2km cycle from the centre.

Dunsborough Inn (☎ 9756 7277; www.dunsboroughinn.com; 50 Dunn Bay Rd; dm/d \$25/50, units \$90-139; 📺) Budget rooms are fine here, but while it's central the surroundings aren't exactly the most scenic. Ask for a room away from the road.

Dunsborough Rail Carriages & Farm Cottages (☎ 9755 3865; Commonage Rd; rail carriage \$90-100, cottages \$125-160) Refurbished rail carriages are dotted about this lovely bush block near Quindalup. The self-contained timber cottages may not be as fun as the carriages, but they're spacious for families and kids will enjoy the friendly sheep.

Cape Wine Bar (☎ 9756 7650; 239 Naturaliste Tce; mains from \$20; 🍷 dinner Mon-Thu, tasting-plates at the bar Fri & Sat, tapas Sun) Buzzing most nights, the wine bar has a well-deserved reputation for fresh seasonal food.

Artezen (☎ 9755 3325; 234 Naturaliste Tce; mains from \$20; 🍷 7am-5pm Sun-Thu, 7am-9pm Fri & Sat) This super-cool café serves everything from great breakfasts to interesting Asian-influenced dishes like squid salad with soba.

Within a five-minute walk of the town centre you'll also find En Joia (wood-fired pizza, paper tablecloths and crayons for the kids); Inji Bar at the Dunsborough Hotel (good counter food and sports TV); Bambooe (cheap and cheerful, serving a mean bowl of laksa); Evviva Café (fresh juices and salads); Assisi (classic Italian dishes); and Yallingup Coffee Roasting Company (great coffee, no food).

YALLINGUP

☎ 08 / pop 810

Yallingup, surrounded by scenic coastline and fine beaches, is a surfing Mecca (see the boxed text, p914); if you prefer dry land, a series of beautiful **walking trails** track the coast between here and Smith's Beach. In the local Noongar language, '-up' means 'place of', and Yallingup means 'place of love'.

Between Dunsborough and Yallingup is the mystical **Ngilgi Cave** (☎ 9755 1288; ngilgi@geographebay.com; adult/child \$16/7; 🍷 9.30am-4.30pm, last entry 3.30pm); a series of well-marked bushwalks also start here. The **Wardan Cultural Centre** (☎ 9756 6566; www.wardan.com.au; adult/child \$12/6; 🍷 10am-4pm Sep-Mar, closed Tue & Sat Apr-Aug, closed Jul), 6km south, is a place of stories, bush tucker, dancers, didgeridoo and other aspects of the local Wardandi culture.

Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

Seashells Caves House Yallingup (☎ 9750 1500; www.seashells.com.au; Yallingup Beach Rd; r \$175-395) Built in the 1930s, this splendid lodge has recently undergone a major shift upmarket. Impeccably renovated – think high ceilings, polished wood, comfortable leather sofas – the rooms are gorgeous.

Yallingup Beach Caravan Park (☎ 9755 2164; www.yallingupbeach.com.au; Valley Rd; sites/vans/cabins \$20/50/100) You'll sleep to the sound of the surf here, with the beach just across the road from the rolling lawns.

Surfside Café & Restaurant (☎ 9755 2133; Valley Rd; mains \$22-30; 🍷 dinner Thu-Sun) Wolf down after-surf brekky or, at the other end, watch the sunset sky over a steak. The adjoining kiosk does a mean burger during the day.

Wicked Ale Brewery (☎ 9755 2848; www.wickedalebrewery.com.au; 🍷 10am-5pm) A small-scale and eccentric brewery in a great bush setting.

MARGARET RIVER

☎ 08 / pop 5600

The ample attractions of Margaret River – top surf, undulating bushland, some of Australia's best wineries – make it one of WA's most popular destinations. Margaret River gets very, very busy at Easter and Christmas (when you should book weeks, if not months, ahead), during the annual food and wine bash in November (www.mrwinestest.org.au), during surf competitions in March and November, and at the time of the renowned Leeuwin Estate open-air concerts in February.

Information

Cybercorner Cafe (2/72 Willmott Ave) Check your email here.

Visitors centre (☎ 9757 2911; www.margaretriver.com; cnr Bussell Hwy & Tunbridge St; 🍷 9am-5pm)

The sleek visitors centre has wads of information, plus an on-site wine centre.

Sights & Activities

You'll find yourself zipping up and down Caves Rd (stretching from Yallingup to Augusta) and the Bussell Hwy, taking in countless attractions on the way. There are galleries, caves and, of course, a cloistered vineyard at the end of many a dirt turn-off.

We know what you're here for – wine tasting! Drop by the **Margaret River Regional Wine Centre** (☎ 9755 5501; www.mrwines.com; 9 Bussell Hwy, Cowaramup; 🍷 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun), where the knowledgeable staff can plan a vineyard itinerary for you and will ship wine almost anywhere in the world.

Eagles Heritage Raptor Wildlife Centre (☎ 9757 2960; www.eaglesheritage.com.au; adult/child \$10/5; 🍷 10am-5pm), 5km south of Margaret River on Boodjidup Rd, rehabilitates birds of prey. There are free-flight displays at 11am and 1.30pm.

At the **Margaret River Chocolate Company** (☎ 9755 6555; Harman's South Rd, Willyabrup; 🍷 9am-5pm), sample a bag of red-gum honey crunch or a rum-rebellion truffle, but try not to loiter by the choc buds.

A beautiful National Trust property 8km northwest of town, the 1857 **Ellensbrook Home-**

stead (adult/child \$4/2; 🍷 house open Sat, Sun & public holidays 10am-4pm, grounds open daily) was the first home of pioneer settlers Alfred and Ellen Bussell, led by local Noongar people to this sheltered but isolated site, with its supply of fresh water.

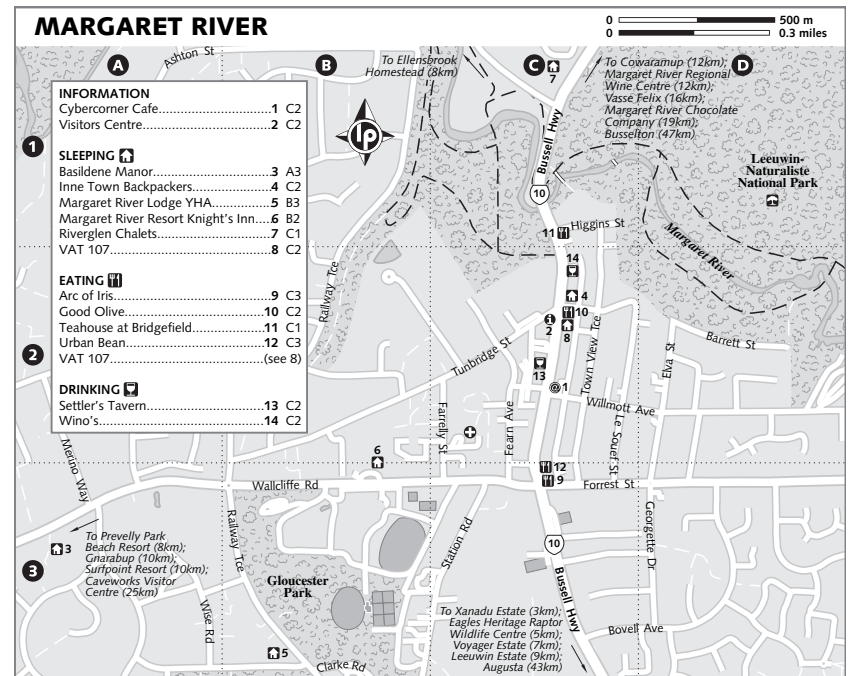
Another popular activity around here is exploring the many caves of the region. **Cave-walks visitor centre** (☎ 9757 7411; www.margaretriver.com; Caves Rd; 🍷 9am-5pm), about 25km from Margaret River, has excellent screen displays about caves and cave conservation, an authentic model cave and a 'cave crawl' experience.

Tours

Book at the visitors centre for your designated driver and guide to the sensational wineries.

Bushtucker Tours (☎ 9757 1084; www.bushtuckertours.com; adult/child \$60/30) The four-hour trip combines walking and canoeing up the Margaret River, and features aspects of Aboriginal culture along with uses of flora and tasting of bush tucker.

Margaret River Tours (☎ 0419-917 166; www.margaretrivertours.com) One of the longest-standing local operators, runs combined wineries-sightseeing tours (half/full day \$60/95) or can arrange charters.



Wine for Dudes (☎ 9758 8699; www.winefordudes.com; tour \$60) Includes pick-up and drop-off, a tour of a working winery, lunch and *booles* – awesome.

Sleeping

Book well in advance, especially around Easter and Christmas, and, except for budget accommodation, expect to pay at least \$30 a night more than in other country towns; low-season rates are given here.

Inne Town Backpackers (☎ 1800 244 115; www.inne.town.com; 93 Bussell Hwy; dm/s/d \$23/50/60; 📺) In a converted house between the river and town, this smallish hostel is in a great location; check its noticeboards for work opportunities in town.

Surfpoint Resort (☎ 1800 071 777, 9757 1777; www.surfpoint.com.au; Gnarabup Beach; dm/d/unit \$24/79/165; 📺) Offers the beach on a budget, and you can hire boogie and surf boards or take a lesson from an expert.

Margaret River Lodge YHA (☎ 9757 9532; www.mr.lodge.com.au; 220 Railway Tce; dm/s/d/f \$25/55/63/73; 📺) About 1.5km southwest of the town centre, this YHA hostel is clean and modern with a pool and volleyball court in sizable gardens.

Riverglen Chalets (☎ 9757 2101; www.riverglenchalets.com.au; Carters Rd; chalets \$130-250; 📺) Just north of town, these good-value timber chalets are spacious and fully self-contained, with verandas looking out onto bushland; there's full disabled access to a couple of them.

VAT 107 (☎ 9758 8877; www.vat107.com.au; 107 Bussell Hwy; r \$150-180; 📺) In a purple building in town, the four big rooms are comfortable, contemporary and ooze urban style.

Margaret River Resort Knight's Inn (☎ 9757 0000, www.margaret-river-resort.com.au; 40 Wallcliffe Rd; motel/

hotel/villa \$160/180/330; 📺) Ignore the dinky exterior: the jarrah-dense hotel rooms here are big and gorgeous, and the motel rooms luxurious. There's a Thai restaurant attached.

Basildene Manor (☎ 9757 3140; www.basildene.com.au; Wallcliffe Rd; d \$249-389; 📺) Basildene – a historic 1912 home converted into a luxury B&B hotel, set in the middle of landscaped gardens with views to karri forest – is simply magnificent.

Prevelly Park Beach Resort (☎ 9757 2374; sites per person \$11-17, vans \$50-70, cottage \$70-120) It's a good budget option on the hill above the beach though you'll want your own transport to get to the water.

Eating & Drinking

Sniff out a feast along the Bussell Hwy, which is the town centre. The wineries also go hand in hand with their beloved fine foods (see the boxed text, opposite).

Urban Bean (☎ 9757 3480; 157 Bussell Hwy; lunches \$7-10; ☕ 7.30am-4pm) A funky little place serving bleary-eyed locals their first daily brew, selling loose-leaf tea and coffee, and making good quiche-y things for lunch.

Teahouse at Bridgefield (☎ 9757 3007; 73 Bussell Hwy; lunch \$10-15; ☕ breakfast & lunch) Good country cooking here, with hearty pea and ham soup to warm the cockles in winter, and great morning and afternoon teas served on the sheltered veranda.

Good Olive (☎ 9758 7877; www.tgo.com; 97 Bussell Hwy; mains \$15; ☕ breakfast & lunch) An informal café serving local produce; try the platter of olives and cheeses.

Arc of Iris (☎ 9757 3112; 151 Bussell Hwy; mains \$25; 🍷 dinner) This old favourite is an eclectic, lively throwback to the hippy generation.

SURFING THE SOUTHWEST

Known colloquially to surfers as 'Yal's' and 'Margaret's', the beaches between Capes Naturaliste and Leeuwin offer powerful reef breaks, mainly left-handers (the direction you take after catching a wave). The surf at Margaret's has been described by surfing supremo Nat Young as 'epic', and by world surfing champ Mark Richards as 'one of the world's finest'.

The better locations include Rocky Point (short left-hander), the Farm and Bone Yards (right-hander), Three Bears (Papa, Mama and Baby, of course), Yallingup (breaks left and right), Injidup Car Park and Injidup Point (right-hand tube on a heavy swell; left-hander), Guillotine/Gallows (right-hander), South Point (popular break), Left-Handers (the name says it all) and Margaret River (with Southside or 'Suicides').

Pick up a surfing map (\$5) from the Dunsborough visitors centre on the way through, and check out **Yallingup Surf School** (www.yallingupsurfschool.com) if you need some help with your technique.

WINING AND DINING

A number of great vineyards in Margaret River have an equally good name for their dining. The region produces highly regarded Cabernets and dry whites. Here's some that do both very well: **Leeuwin Estate** (☎ 9759 0000; www.leeuwinestate.com.au; Stevens Rd, Margaret River) A brilliant estate, with excellent wines (taste the Art Series Chardonnay), a stylish cellar door, highly regarded restaurant and an annual sell-out concert series.

Vasse Felix (☎ 9756 5000; www.vassefelix.com.au; cnr Caves & Harmans Rds, South Cowaramup) Good all-round winery and a must-see on any Margaret River winery tour.

Voyager Estate (☎ 9757 6354; www.voyagerestate.com.au; Stevens Rd, Margaret River) A true gem, with great wines across the board and an elegant cellar door and restaurant.

Xanadu Estate (☎ 9757 2581; www.xanaduwines.com; Terry Rd, Margaret River) Broad range (including its popular Secession label), decent cellar door and restaurant.

VAT 107 (☎ 9758 8877; 107 Bussell Hwy; entrée/mains \$20/35) Retaining its trendy reputation, the food here remains inventive and excellent, and a simple coffee on the veranda makes for great people-watching.

Settler's Tavern (☎ 9757 2398; 114 Bussell Hwy; 🍷 11am-late) There's live music regularly at Settler's, so settle in for the evening with good pub grub and a choice of 13 beers and 18 wines by the glass.

Wino's (☎ 9758 7155; 85 Bussell Hwy; 🍷 3pm-late) Leather lounges, bentwood chairs and plenty of local wines to sample (choose a taste, a glass or a bottle) make this modern wine bar a great place to drink at.

AUGUSTA

☎ 08 / pop 1700

Augusta is 5km north of Cape Leeuwin, where the Indian Ocean meets the Southern Ocean and the magnificent Blackwood River rolls into the sea. The cape, which took its name from a Dutch ship that passed here in 1622, is the most south-westerly point in Australia and on a wild day you fear being blown off the edge of the earth.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9758 0166; www.margaret-river.com; cnr Blackwood Ave & Ellis St; 🍷 9am-5pm) has a range of information.

Sights & Activities

Whale watching happens at Cape Leeuwin between June and September. **Naturaliste Charters** (☎ 9755 2276; www.whales-australia.com) offers two-hour whale-watching tours by boat (adult/child \$60/33). **Sea Dragon** (☎ 9758 4003; stephenhughes@wn.com.au) and **Miss Flinders** (☎ 0439-424 455; www.missflinders.com) operate daily Blackwood River 'eco-cruises' (adult/child \$25/10), usually leaving mid-morning.

The **Cape Leeuwin lighthouse** (adult/child \$10/6; 🍷 8.45am-5pm), opened in 1896, has magnificent views of the coastline. Entry fee includes a tour of the lighthouse; only 10 people at a time can enter, so be prepared to wait a while in holiday season and enjoy a coffee and the view at the attached café.

The **Augusta Historical Museum** (Blackwood Ave; adult/child \$3/2; 🍷 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sep-Apr, 10am-noon May-Aug) has interesting local exhibits.

Sleeping & Eating

Baywatch Manor Resort (☎ 9758 1290; www.baywatchmanor.com.au; 88 Blackwood Ave; dm/s \$23/45, d with/without bathroom \$70/55; 📺) While there's no sign of David Hasselhoff, standards are being maintained here with lots of clean, modern rooms and great facilities (including a room equipped for disabled travellers). Ask about its self-contained holiday cottages around town.

Riverside Cottages (☎ 9758 1545; www.riversidecottagesaugusta.com.au; Molloy St; cottages \$60-95) A tad tatty but clean and great value, various-sized self-contained cottages sit on the riverbank. Cottage number eight is perfect for two, with a small balcony overlooking the water.

Georgiana Molloy Motel (☎ 9758 1255; www.augustaaccommodation.com.au; 84 Blackwood Ave; r \$99-115) Good-sized, clean, well-equipped self-contained units are stand-out value here, each with a small garden area.

Hamelin Bay Caravan Park (☎ 9758 5540; hamelinbay@bordernet.com.au; tents \$18-20, powered sites \$20-25, cabins \$90-110) Right on the beach a few kilometres north of Augusta, this secluded gem of a place gets very busy at holiday times.

Colourpatch Café (☎ 9758 1295; 38 Albany Tce; takeaway/dine-in \$10/25; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Watch the Blackwood River meet the waters of Flinders

Bay at the self-styled 'last eating house before the Antarctic' that sells fantastic fish, fresh from the ocean.

Augusta Bakery & Cafe (☎ 9758 1664; 121 Blackwood Ave; snacks/meals \$5-16; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Also has a café-with-a-view, where local venison sausages replace the usual bangers and mash.

SOUTHERN FORESTS

The tall forests of WA's southwest are world famous, and rightly so. They are simply magnificent, with towering gums – karri, jarrah, marri – sheltering cool undergrowth. Between the forests, small towns bear witness to the region's history of logging and mining; most, like Pemberton, have redefined themselves as small-scale tourist centres from where you can bushwalk, take wine tours, canoe trips and trout- and marron-fishing expeditions. The backdrop to the townships is verdant farmland and meandering rivers such as the Blackwood making their way through the landscape.

The area of 'tall trees' lies between the Vasse Hwy and the South Western Hwy, and includes the timber towns of Bridgetown, Manjimup, Nannup, Pemberton and Northcliffe. The drives between the towns are truly spectacular.

DEC (Nannup ☎ 08-9756 1101; Warren Rd; Pemberton ☎ 08-9776 1207; Kennedy St) offices can help with maps and information on new national parks.

Nannup

☎ 08 / pop 1200

Nannup's idyllic bush setting, 290km from Perth on the Blackwood River, appeals to bushwalkers and people wanting to chill out. The **Nannup Music Festival** (www.nannupmusicfestival.org) is held in early March.

The area is home to the legendary Nannup tiger. Similar to the (thought to be extinct) Tasmanian tiger, it's a striped wolflike animal, sighted so rarely that it has become almost mythical. Check out the tiger press clippings in the **visitors centre** (☎ 9756 1211; www.nannupwa.com; Brockman St; ☺ 9am-5pm), in the 1922 police station.

Garden-lovers should head to **Blythe Gardens** (admission by donation), opposite the tourist office, which has a wonderful mix of native and exotic plants. You can walk, cycle, swim and camp in pretty **St John Brook Conservation Park**, 8km west of Nannup; pick up a brochure from the visitors centre.

SLEEPING & EATING

Accommodation in Nannup tends towards B&Bs (check with the visitors centre) and longer-term self-contained cottages.

Black Cockatoo (☎ 9756 1035; 27 Grange Rd; d \$20) This quirky guesthouse is full of eclectic objects and surrounded by a vibrant garden that encroaches on the verandas.

Maranup Ford (☎ 9761 1200; www.maranupford.com.au; powered sites/cabins \$16/60) Out of town, this working farm is part of the 'Land for Wildlife' network. It supports sustainable farming practices and has a small camping area close to the river; canoes are available. It's 30km from Nannup, off the Bridgetown road.

Head to Nannup's visitors centre to book a site at the **caravan park** (unpowered/powerd sites \$17/19, cabins \$55) on the riverbank next door.

Koala Thai (☎ 9756 0075; 10 Warren Rd; Thai mains \$13; ☺ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri-Sun) Unlikely as it may seem, this pretty café transforms itself into a Thai restaurant for eat-in or takeaway dinner at the weekend.

Hamish's Café (☎ 9756 1287; 1 Warren Rd; mains \$22-33; ☺ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Mon & Thu-Sat) When you can start the day with a brunch of poached egg and kippers, and end it with carpetbag steak, you know you're not eating in your average country restaurant.

Bridgetown

☎ 08 / pop 5930

In an idyllic setting of karri forests, farmland and the Blackwood River, Bridgetown is one of the loveliest little towns in the southwest. Despite being overrun with visitors on the second weekend of November during its annual **Blues at Bridgetown Festival** (www.bluesatbridgetown.com), it retains a great community feel.

The town's **visitors centre** (☎ 9761 1740; www.bridgetown.com.au; 54 Hampton St; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) has a collection of apple-harvesting and cider memorabilia, and a curious jigsaw collection. Bridgetown's old buildings include **Bridgedale House** (☎ 9761 1740; Hampton St; admission \$3; ☺ 10am-2pm Fri-Sun), which was built of mud and clay by the area's first settler in 1862 and has been restored by the National Trust.

Between Balingup and Bridgetown, drop into the historic mining and timber township of **Greenbushes**. Some splendid, decaying buildings from the boom-days line the road, and heritage memorabilia is dotted through town.

Nearby **Boyup Brook** is the centre of country music in WA. The **Harvey Dickson's Country Music Centre** (☎ 9765 1125; www.geocities.com/harveydickson) comes complete with a life-size Elvis, an Elvis room and three 13.5m-tall guitar-playing men. It hosts regular rodeos as well as the **WA Country Music Festival** in February.

SLEEPING & EATING

Bridgetown Valley Lodge (☎ 9761 4144; cnr Phillips & Spencer Sts; tw/d \$55/60) In an old building originally used by railway workers, this place offers basic accommodation.

Bridgetown Riverside Chalets (☎ 9761 1040; www.bridgetownchalets.com.au; 1338 Brockman Hwy; chalets \$90) On a spectacular property on the road to Nannup, these four spacious stand-alone chalets (complete with potbellied stoves and washing machines) have wide views and friendly cows wandering around.

Nelsons of Bridgetown (☎ 9761 1645; www.nelsonsofbridgetown.com.au; 38 Hampton St; r\$95-175) The central location is great, but go for the spacious new rooms built to the side of this old Federation-style hotel.

Cidery (☎ 9761 2204; 43 Gifford Rd; ☺ lunch, closed Tue) Sample the local drops (alcoholic and non-alcoholic ciders), which taste deliciously of Pink Lady apples. The outdoor tables by the river are a lovely spot for light lunches.

Riverwood House (☎ 9761 1862; South Western Hwy; ☺ lunch Thu-Sun) Just over the bridge, this 1880 house with its balcony overlooking the river is a top spot for coffee or light lunch.

Bridgetown Hotel (☎ 9761 1034; Hampton St; ☺ lunch & dinner) The mix of restaurant, bar, veranda, gorgeous beer garden and regular live bands make this the place to hang out of an evening.

Pemberton

☎ 08 / pop 950

Deep in the karri forests, and at the centre of yet another promising wine industry, is the delightful town of Pemberton; a few days here is time well spent.

INFORMATION

DEC (☎ 9776 1207; Kennedy St; ☺ 8am-4.30pm) Has detailed information on the many local parks, and also stocks the useful Pemberton Bushwalks brochure (\$4).

Pemberton Telecentre. (Brockman St) Check your email here, next door to the visitors centre.

Visitors centre (☎ 9776 1133; www.pembertontourist.com.au; Brockman St; ☺ 9am-5pm) Includes a pioneer

museum and karri-forest discovery centre; it's also the place for Transwa bookings.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The national park forests around Pemberton are simply stunning. Aim to spend at least a day, or preferably two, driving the well-marked **Karri Forest Explorer** tracks, walking the trails and picnicking in the green depths. Its popular attractions include the **Gloucester Tree**, laddered with a daunting metal spiral stairway that winds 60m climb to the top. The **Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree**, tallest of the 'climbing trees' at 68m, is in Warren National Park, 11km south of Pemberton. The Bicentennial Tree one-way loop leads via **Maiden Bush** to the **Heartbreak Trail**. It passes through 400-year-old karri stands, and nearby **Drafty's Camp** and **Warren Campsite** are delightful for overnighting or picnics.

The enchanting **Beedelup National Park**, 15km west of town on the Vasse Hwy, shouldn't be missed. There's a short but scenic walk that crosses Beedelup Brook near **Beedelup Falls**; the bridge was built from a karri log. North of town, **Big Brook Arboretum** features 'big' trees from all over the world and from Australia's eastern states.

Wend through marri and karri forests on the scenic **Pemberton Tramway** (☎ 9776 1322; www.pemtram.com.au; Pemberton Railway Station). Trams leave for Warren River (adult/child \$18/9) at 10.45am and 2pm daily.

The **Lavender-Berry Farm** (☎ 9776 1661; Browns Rd) is purple to all people, with berry, lavender or honey ice cream (\$3); lavender soap, oils and ornaments; and hundreds of miniature lavender mice.

In lush gardens, the **Fine Woodcraft Gallery** (☎ 9776 1399; Dickinson St; ☺ 9am-5pm) has furniture made by clever people with lathes.

Last but by no means least, the wines (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz) of Pemberton's burgeoning wine industry attract favourable comparison to those from Burgundy; check at the visitors centre for wineries that are open to visitors. The **Pemberton Wine Centre** (☎ 9776 1211; www.marima.com.au; ☺ 9am-5pm), in Warren National Park, offers tastings of most local wines, and can pack a mixed box to your taste. Its attached café makes a mean local cheese platter.

TOURS

Pemberton Discovery Tours (☎ 9776 0484; www.pembertondiscoverytours.com.au) Operates half-day

BONZA BACKROADS – D'ENTRECASTEAUX NATIONAL PARK

This quiet gem of a national park, named for French Admiral Bruny D'Entrecasteaux who led an exploratory expedition here in 1792, stretches for 130km along the coast 60km south of Pemberton. It's a complete contrast to the tall forests, with its wild stretches of heath, sand dunes, cliffs and beaches.

Windy Harbour is a collection of ramshackle holiday shacks with names like 'Wywurk', where you can camp as long as you have your own provisions, and a wild and (you guessed it) windy coastal walk stretches about 3km from Windy Harbour to Point D'Entrecasteaux. The roads around this section of the park are sealed.

A series of decent 4WD tracks lead in from the Pemberton-Northcliffe Rd to bush and beach camp sites; locals regularly go in to fish. On the way, the tiny timber town of **Northcliffe** has forest walks and a friendly cluster of library-cum-information-cum-museum buildings on the junction.

4WD tours to the Warren and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks and other parks around Pemberton (adult/child \$75/50). If you have your own 4WD you're welcome to tag along.

Pemberton Hiking Company (☎ 9776 1559; www.pembertonwa.com) Runs well-regarded (and environmentally sound) walks through forest, clear rivers and sand dunes; half-day tours start at \$40 per person.

SLEEPING

Pemberton Backpackers YHA (☎ 9776 1105; pembertonbackpackers@wn.com.au; 7 Brockman St; dm/s/d \$19/35/51, cottage \$70; 📺) This friendly backpackers, right in the centre of town, has a self-contained cottage that can sleep up to eight people over the road; the cottage is popular, so book ahead if you can.

Gloucester Motel (☎ 9776 1266; Ellis St; s/d \$75/85) Best choice of the motels in town. Sadie's restaurant on-site is locally popular and there's a decent choice on the bar menu (try 'Ian's Butt Kickin Chili').

Marima Cottages (☎ 9776 1211; www.marima.com.au; Old Vasse Rd; cottages \$150-180) Right in the middle of Warren National Park, these country-style rammed-earth and cedar cottages with potbelly stoves are a true getaway.

Pemberton Caravan Park (☎ 9776 1300; fax 9776 1800; Pump Hill Rd; sites \$22, cabins \$60-80) Set in a shady clearing beside a creek, this pretty camping area has good-value cabins and is just a walk away from Pemberton's natural swimming pool.

You can also get away from it all at camp sites in Warren National Park; contact **DEC** (☎ 9776 1207) for details.

EATING

It's a rare menu around Pemberton that doesn't feature the local specialities: trout and marron.

Coffee Connection (☎ 9776 1159; Dickinson St; mains \$8-10; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Attached to the Fine Woodcraft Gallery, this garden café has good coffee and inexpensive meals.

King Trout Restaurant & Marron Farm (☎ 9776 1352; nr Northcliffe & Old Vasse Rds; ☺ 9.30am-5pm) The menu at this café showcases trout and marron prepared in more ways than seems possible, and you can even hire a rod and hook your own lunch; it can be cleaned and cooked on site for a small fee

Gloucester Ridge Wines (☎ 9776 1035; www.gloucester-ridge.com.au; Burma Rd; mains \$25; ☺ lunch) This restaurant produces some of the finest food in the region.

Shannon National Park

The 535-sq-km Shannon National Park is on the South Western Hwy, 53km south of Manjimup. The Shannon was once the site of WA's biggest timber mill (which closed in 1968), and exotic plants, including deciduous trees from the northern hemisphere, are some of the few reminders of the old settlement.

The 48km **Great Forest Trees Drive** takes in pretty country – tune in to 100FM for a commentary or buy the **Great Forest Trees Drive** (\$15) from DEC. It's a one-way loop, split in two by the highway; start at the park day-use area on the north of the highway. From here you can also take an easy 3.5km walk to the Shannon Dam (checking out the quokka observation deck on the way), and a steeper 5.5km circuit to Mokare's Rock, where there is a boardwalk and great views; further along, the 8km-return **Great Forest Trees Walk** crosses the Shannon River. Off the southern part of the drive, boardwalks give access to stands of giant karri at **Snake Gully** and **Big Tree Grove**.

There is one fine and sizable camping area in the spot where the original timber-milling town used to be, and the self-contained bunkhouse Shannon Lodge is available for groups of up to eight people. For information and bookings contact **DEC** (☎ 08-9776 1207) in Pemberton.

SOUTH COAST

The South Coast, or 'Great Southern', is a unique wilderness area. Stunning coastline, 386,000 hectares of forest and the famous Valley of the Giants are the highlights. Stretching from Walpole-Nornalup in the west to Cape Arid, east of Esperance, the area is a nature-lover's paradise, with spectacular (and often empty) beaches and some of the best mountainous national parks in Australia, exemplified by the ecological 'islands' of the dramatic Stirling Range and the ancient granite spires of the Porongurups.

Getting There & Away

SkyWest Airlines (☎ 1300 660 088) flies daily from Perth to both Albany and Esperance.

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205) runs bus services between Perth and Denmark (\$57, eight hours), Albany (\$48, six hours) and Esperance (\$72, 10 hours); some services go via Walpole. You can also travel by train from Perth to Bunbury, then by coach from Bunbury to Albany.

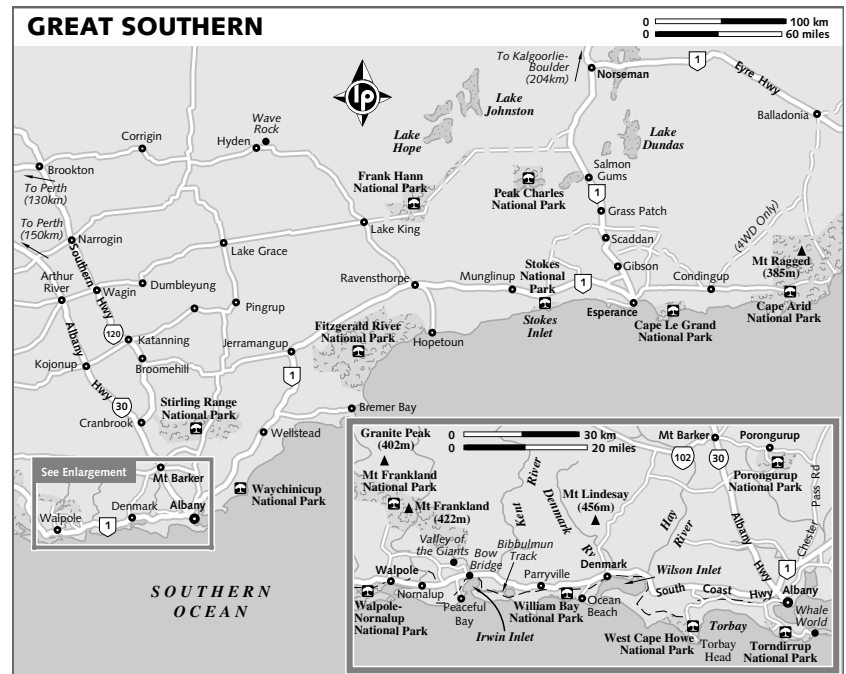
Transwa runs a service several times a week between Kalgoorlie-Boulder to Esperance (\$46, five hours).

Goldrush Tours Golden Triangle Tour (☎ 1800 620 441; www.goldrushstours.com.au) offers a hop-on hop-off bus pass (\$475) between Perth, Margaret River and the southwest coast and forests, Albany and Esperance on the south coast, and up to Kalgoorlie.

To make the most of your time in the region, especially its national parks, your own wheels really are the best option.

WALPOLE-NORNALUP AREA

The peaceful twin inlets of Walpole and Nornalup are close to majestic forests of giant tingle trees, including the famous Tree Top Walk. The heavily forested Walpole-Nornalup National Park, covering 180 sq km around Nornalup Inlet and the town of Walpole,



contains beaches, rugged coastline, inlets, the Nuyts Wilderness area and the magnificent Valley of the Giants (when you're under the tall forest canopy, you'll understand the name). The South Western Hwy almost meets the coast at the two inlets, then becomes the South Coast Hwy.

Information

DEC (☎ 08-9840 1027; South Coast Hwy, Walpole) Contact the DEC for detailed national park and bushwalking information.

Visitors centre (☎ 08-9840 1111; www.southernforests.com.au; South Coast Hwy, Walpole; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) The helpful Walpole visitors centre is in Pioneer Cottage.

Sights & Activities

The **Tree Top Walk** (☎ 08-9840 8263; adult/child \$6/3; ☎ 9am-4.15pm, Christmas school holidays 8am-5.15pm) has become Walpole's main drawcard. A 600m-long ramp gently rises from the floor of the **Valley of the Giants**, allowing visitors access high into the canopy of the giant tingle trees. At its highest point, the ramp is 40m above the ground and the views are simply stunning. The ramp is an engineering feat in itself, though vertigo sufferers might have a few problems; it's designed to sway gently in the breeze, mimicking life in the tree tops.

At ground level, the **Ancient Empire** boardwalk meanders around and through the base of veteran red tingles, some of which are 16m in circumference, including one that soars to 46m.

The Valley of the Giants is part of the **Walpole-Nornalup National Park**: inland giants

are the tingle trees, and closer to the coast is the red flowering gum. Pleasant, shady paths lead through the forests, which are frequented by bushwalkers.

There are numerous good walking tracks around, including a section of the **Bibbulmun Track** (see p873), which passes through Walpole to Coalmine Beach (two hours). There are a number of **scenic drives**, including the Knoll Drive, 3km east of Walpole; the Valley of the Giants Rd; and through rolling pastoral country to Mt Frankland, 29km north of Walpole, where you can climb to the summit for panoramic views or walk around the trail at its base. Opposite Knoll Drive, Hilltop Rd leads to a giant tingle tree; this road continues to the **Circular Pool** on the Frankland River, a popular canoeing spot.

A trip to Walpole should include the popular **WOW Wilderness Cruise** (☎ 08-9840 1036; www.wowwilderness.com.au), through the inlets and river systems. This magnificent landscape and its ecology are brought to life with anecdotes about Aboriginal settlement, salmon fishers and shipwrecked pirates. A 2½-hour trip (adult/child \$35/15) leaves daily at 10am and is highly recommended.

The Frankland River, lined with karri and tingle trees, is peaceful and great for canoeing. Hire canoes from **Nornalup Riverside Chalets** (☎ 08-9840 1107; South Coast Hwy, Nornalup) for \$20 per hour or \$45/60 per half-/full day.

Midway between Nornalup and Peaceful Bay, check out **Conspicuous Cliffs**. It's a great spot for whale-watching from July to November, with a boardwalk, hilltop lookout and steep-ish 800m walk to the beach.

Sleeping & Eating

Walpole Lodge (☎ 08-9840 1244; www.walpolelodge.com.au; cnr Pier St & Park Ave, Walpole; dm/s/d \$20/35/65; ☎) This popular place is open-plan and informal, with great info boards around the walls and casual, cheery owners.

Tingle All Over YHA (☎ 08-9840 1041; tingleallover2000@yahoo.com.au; Nockolds St, Walpole; dm/s/d \$22/38/50) Exercise your brain with the giant chess set in the garden at this clean, basic option near the highway.

Nornalup Riverside Chalets (☎/fax 08-9840 1107; Riverside Dr, Nornalup; chalets \$80-125) Stay a night in sleepy Nornalup in these comfortable, colourful self-contained chalets, just a rod's throw from the fish in the Frankland River. One is adapted for disabled access.

Riverside Retreat (☎ 08-9840 1255; www.riversideretreat.com.au; chalets \$99) Set up off the road and on the banks of the Frankland River, these quiet, private and well-equipped chalets are great value, with potbellied stoves for cosy winter warmth.

Coalmine Beach (☎ 08-9840 1026; www.coalminebeach.com.au; Knoll Dr, Walpole; unpowered/powerd sites per person from \$13/16, cabins from \$65) You couldn't get a better location than this, under shady trees above the beach.

Rest Point Holiday Village (☎ 08-9840 1032; www.restpoint.com.au; Rest Point; sites \$22, cabins from \$65) On wide lawns with direct waterfrontage, this is a light and bright camping area.

See the Walpole office of **DEC** (☎ 08-9840 1027) for camping options in the Walpole-Nornalup National Park.

In Walpole, stop by for a casual coffee at the Top Deck Café or a filling counter meal at the Walpole Hotel Motel. Better still, head to **Thurlby Herb Farm** (☎ 08-9840 1249; www.thurlbyherb.com.au; Gardiner Rd), 14km north of town, which distils its own essential oils, makes herb-based products including soap, and serves up delicious light lunches and cakes – accompanied by fresh-picked herbal teas – in a pretty café overlooking the garden.

DENMARK

☎ 08 / pop 4000

At idyllic Denmark, where the forest meets the sea and hippies meet each other, you can fish, surf or drop out for a while – who could blame you when there is a gorgeous coastline, rolling hills, magnificent forests and a creative artistic community.

Denmark was established to supply timber for the goldfields. Known by Noongar people as Koorabup ('place of the black swan'), there's evidence of early Aboriginal settlement in the 3000-year-old fish traps found in Wilson Inlet.

Information

Denmark Environment Centre (☎ 9848 1644; Strickland St) Has an extensive library and bookshop.

Telecentre (☎) 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) Internet access; next door to the visitors centre.

Visitors centre (☎ 9848 2055; Strickland St; ☎) 9am-5pm) The friendly visitors centre is housed in an old church.

Sights & Activities

Surfers and anglers usually waste no time in heading to rugged **Ocean Beach**. If you're keen

to try surfing, accredited local instructor Mike Neunuebel gives **surf lessons** (☎ 9848 2057; from \$40). More placidly, **Denmark Dingy Hire** (☎ 0429-421786; ☎ Sep-May) can set you up with boats for messing about on the river.

To get your bearings, walk the **Mokare Heritage Trail** (3km along the Denmark River) or the **Wilson Inlet Trail** (6km starting at the river mouth). Put everything into perspective at **Mt Shadforth Lookout**, with its view of fine coastal scenery. The lush **Mt Shadforth Rd**, running from the centre of town and finishing up on the South Coast Hwy west of town makes a great scenic drive, as does the longer pastoral loop of **Scotsdale Rd**. Potter along these, taking your pick of attractions including alpaca farms, wineries, cheese farms, and art and craft galleries.

If you need some sweetening, swing by **Bartholomews Meadery** (☎ 9840 9349; South Coast Hwy; ☎) 9am-4.30pm), about 16km west of Denmark. The house mead – honey wine – is internationally award-winning, the honey ice cream is delicious, and the showroom takes a holistic approach to bees and beeswax for health.

Little River Discovery Tours (☎ 9848 2604) has 4WD day trips to the Valley of the Giants (\$81).

Sleeping

Blue Wren Travellers' Rest YHA (☎ 9848 3300; http://bluewren.batacave.net; 17 Price St; dm/tw/d \$19/48/55; ☎) Chooks live under this little timber house and everyone spoils the goofy house dog. Great info panels cover the walls, and it's small enough to have a homey feel.

Denmark Waterfront (☎ 9848 1147; www.denmarkwaterfront.com.au; 63 Inlet Dr; lodge \$75, motel \$85-110, cottages from \$130) The four quiet lodge rooms are good value – tucked off the road, with a communal kitchen and great views from the balconies.

Karri Mia Resort (☎ 9848 2233; www.karrimia.com.au; Mt Shadforth Rd; bungalows from \$180; ☎) With magnificent views, this property boasts tastefully furnished, self-contained bungalows.

Chimes Spa Retreat (☎ 9848 2255; www.chimes.com.au; Mt Shadforth Rd; r \$230-355; ☎) In the same grounds as Karri Mia, this luxurious, architect-designed and tastefully decorated resort is outfitted with Indonesian furniture.

Riverbend Caravan Park (☎ 9848 1107; rivabend@omninet.net.au; East River Rd; unpowered sites \$14-20, powered sites \$17-23, cabins from \$80) On a quiet stretch of river 2km from town, this lovely shaded

BONZA BACKROADS – MANDALAY BEACH

About 13km west of Walpole, at Crystal Springs, is a good 8km gravel road to **Mandalay Beach**, where the *Mandalay*, a Norwegian barque, was wrecked on the beach in 1911. As the sand gradually builds and erodes with storms, the wreck eerily appears every 10 years or so, in shallow water that is walkable at low tide (check out the photos at Walpole visitors centre). The beach is glorious, often deserted, and accessed by an impressive boardwalk across sand dunes and cliffs. It's now part of D'Entrecasteaux National Park.

sites has excellent, well-equipped cabins with private verandas.

Eating

McSweeney's Gourmet (☎ 9848 2362; Strickland St; sandwiches from \$6; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Stop here for the best coffee in town and beautiful gourmet sandwiches.

Fig Tree Café (☎ 9848 2051; 27 Strickland St; lunches \$12; ☺ breakfast & dinner) Unhurried best describes the style at this coffee shop, popular with locals for long weekend breakfasts in the courtyard. Denmark Bakery, next door, is open daily and makes a mean spinach pie.

Café Bazzo (☎ 9848 3799; Hollings Rd; lunches \$15; ☺ breakfast & lunch, dinner Fri & Sat) A funky café this, with African drums and artwork on the walls, and a pretty garden courtyard; sometimes there's live music.

Observatory (☎ 9848 2600; Mt Shadforth Rd, Karri Mia; mains \$20-29; ☺ lunch & dinner) With views to the edge of the world, this eatery is a treat. Light lunches (\$13) or at least coffee and cake are a must; check out the occasional Sunday-afternoon live music sessions.

MT BARKER

☎ 08 / pop 1730

Bare as a babe's bum, Mt Barker (50km north of Albany) is nevertheless the gateway town to the increasingly visited Porongurup and Stirling Range National Parks. It's also the hub for the rapidly growing local wine industry. **Plantagenet Wines** (☎ 9851 3111; www.plantagenetwines.com; Albany Hwy) is in the middle of town, **Goundrey Wines** (☎ 9851 1777; www.goundrey.com; Muir Hwy) is 10km west. For a list of vineyards and cellar-door opening times, see the **visitors centre** (☎ 9851 1163; www.mountbarkertourismwa.com.au; 622 Albany Hwy; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) in the restored train station.

There's a panoramic view of the area from the **Mt Barker Lookout**, 5km south of town.

The town has been settled since the 1830s and the convict-built 1868 police station and gaol have been preserved as a **museum** (Albany Hwy; adult/child \$5/free; ☺ 10am-4pm Sat, Sun & school holidays).

All 77 species of banksia have found a home at the **Banksia Farm** (☎ 9851 1770; www.banksiafarm.com.au; Pearce Rd; adult/child \$6/2; ☺ 9.30am-4.30pm). You can wander around alone or take a guided 'touch, taste and observe' tour at 10.30am and 2.30pm.

Southwest of Mt Barker, on the Egerton-Warburton estate, is the gorgeous **St Werburgh's Chapel**, built between 1872 and 1873. The wrought-iron chancel screen and altar rail were shaped on the property.

PORONGURUP & STIRLING RANGE

The region north of Albany is one of spectacular natural beauty with two rugged, mountainous national parks to explore. National park fees apply to vehicles entering both parks. For further information contact Albany's **DEC office** (☎ 08-9842 4500; 120 Albany Hwy) or the rangers at **Porongurup National Park** (☎ 08-9853 1095) and **Stirling Range National Park** (☎ 08-9827 9230).

Porongurup National Park

The 24-sq-km, 12km long Porongurup National Park has 1100-million-year-old granite outcrops, panoramic views, beautiful scenery, large karri trees and some excellent bushwalks.

The bushwalks range from the 100m **Tree-in-the-Rock** stroll (just what it sounds like) to the harder **Hayward and Nancy Peaks** (four hours). The **Devil's Slide** (two hours) is a walk of contrasts that takes you through a pass of karri forest and onto the stumpy vegetation of the granite. These walks start from the main day-use area, and the **Castle** and **Balancing Rocks** (two hours) are 2km further north. A 6km **scenic drive** along the northern edge of the park starts near the ranger's residence.

There is no camping allowed within the national park but you can camp on its doorstep at pretty **Porongurup Range Tourist Park** (☎ 08-9853 1057; www.poronguruprangetouristpark.com.au; unpowered/powered sites \$15/20, cabins \$65 ☺); no credit cards. The **Porongurup Shop & Tearooms** (☎ 08-9853 1110; www.porongurupinn.com.au; d/apt/cottage \$25/60/80) has grown higgledy-piggledy over the years to include great home-cooked food (lunches \$13) with veggies from the organic garden.

The comfortable A-frame **Porongurup Chalets** (☎ 08-9853 1255; www.porongurup.com; chalets from \$70 per night or \$350 per week) in their forest setting are great weekly value.

One of the oldest country retreats in WA, **Karribank Country Retreat** (☎ 08-9853 1022; www.karribank.com.au; r \$90, chalets from \$100, cottages from \$164) offers beautifully decorated rooms in the historic house and its surrounding cottages.

If you're a fan of authentic Thai food, don't miss **Maleeya's Thai Café** (☎ 08-9853 1123; 1376 Po-

rongurup Rd; mains \$20; ☺ Thu-Sun). It's just before Porongurup township on the Mt Barker road.

Stirling Range National Park

Ever seen a Queen of Sheba orchid or a Stirling Bell? The spectacular wildflower season blooms from late August to early December. Rising abruptly from the surrounding flat and sandy plains, Stirling Range's propensity to change colour through blues, reds and purples will captivate photographers. Try to squeeze in at least one half-day walk to **Toll Peak** (plentiful wildflowers), **Toolbrunup Peak** (for views and a good climb) or **Bluff Knoll** (1073m, the highest peak in the range).

The well-run **Stirling Range Retreat** (☎ 08-9827 9229; www.stirlingrange.com.au; Chester Pass Rd; tent/caravan sites \$9/22, budget dm/d \$19/45, cabins \$79-115) is on the park's northern boundary. There's a wide range of accommodation, from a backpackers lodge to self-contained, rammed-earth cabins.

You can stay and eat at **Lily** (☎ 08-9827 9205; www.thelily.com.au; Chester Pass Rd, Borden; cottage from \$119; ☺ closed Mon), where lunch in the restaurant is a delight, and may be your only chance to eat real Dutch apple cake (\$7) in rural WA.

Camping in the national park is at **Moingup Springs** on Chester Pass Rd, near the Toolbrunup Peak turn-off. Another good option is **Mt Trio Bush Camping & Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9827 9270; www.mounttrio.com.au; Salt River Rd; unpowered/powered sites per person \$10/12), a big bush block on a farm property close to the walking tracks of the western half of the park. There are decent

facilities, including wheelchair access to the showers.

ALBANY

☎ 08 / pop 28,600

Albany is a city of two tales: the stately, peeling old quarter and its rampant offspring to the north, a new, hectic sprawl of malls and fast food. Established shortly before Perth in 1826, the oldest European settlement in the state is now the bustling commercial centre of the southern region.

This is a place that's seen weather and the violence of whaling on its white beaches and rugged coastline. Whales are still a part of the Albany experience, but these days as seen through a camera lens rather than at the business end of a harpoon.

Information

You can check your email at several places around town.

DEC (☎ 9842 4500; 120 Albany Hwy). For national parks information.

Visitors centre (☎ 1800 644 088, 9841 1088; www.amazingalbany.com; Proudlove Pde; ☺ 9am-5pm) The informative visitors centre is in the old train station.

Sights

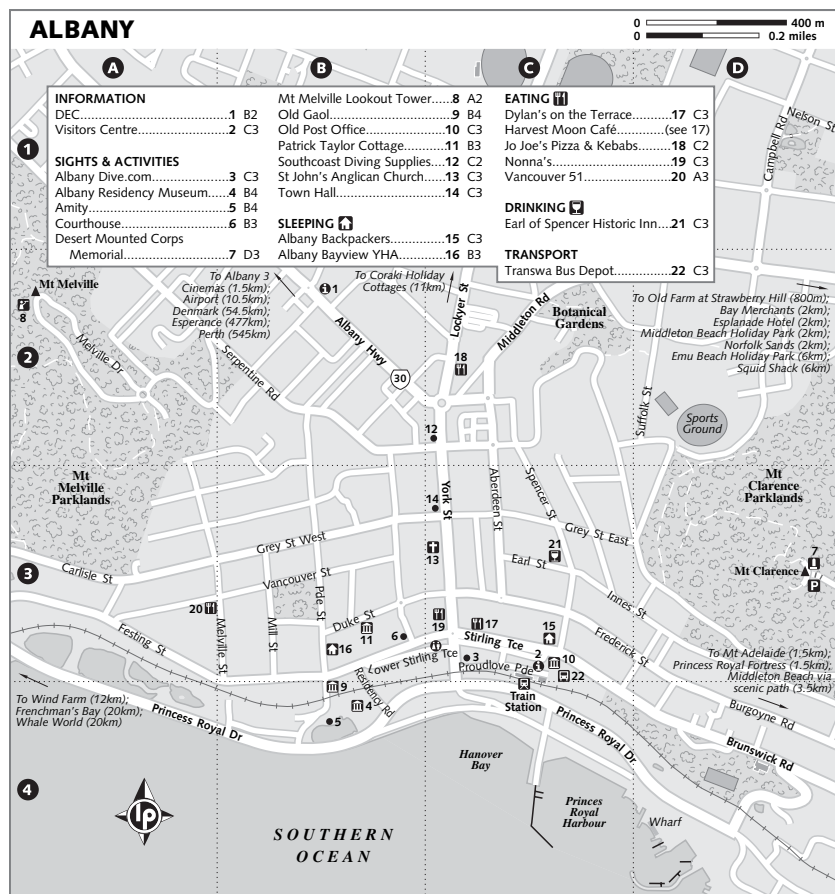
HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Near the foreshore you'll see the buildings of the old historic precinct. This area is relatively quiet, as if the town's boom years belong to another time. Take a stroll down Stirling Tce – noted for its **Victorian shopfronts**, the **Old Post Office** and **Courthouse** – and up York St, where you'll see the lovely **St John's Anglican Church** and

FAMILIAR LANDSCAPES

Beloved Australian author Tim Winton makes no secret of his love for WA. Its coast and people wind and spark through the majority of his couple of dozen books. The following in particular will give you a strong sense of place:

- *Shallows* (1984) – the fictional town of Angelus is based on the real-life southwestern community of Albany, where Tim spent his late childhood and teenage years. The novel explores the conflict here between whaling and conservation, and the town's convict history.
- *Cloud Street* (1991) – a magnificent, funny, ambitious, beautiful, brawling family saga set in the suburbs of Perth, including Mt Lawley where Winton was born. Somehow this book is familiar territory for all Australians. It bottles and shelves the essence of this country.
- *Dirt Music* (2001) – fictional White Point is probably based on a coastal cray-potting town ('fish deco') north of Perth, where Winton lived with his family. This is a novel of loneliness, regret, redemption...and music! The CD soundtrack to the book charts the Western Australian landscape and a northbound passage all the way up to Cape Leveque.



the **town hall**. A guided walking-tour brochure of colonial buildings is available from the visitors centre.

One of the most impressive buildings was turned into the **Albany Residency Museum** (☎ 9841 4844; www.museum.wa.gov.au; Residency Rd; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-5pm). Built in the 1850s as the home of the resident magistrate, the museum's displays tell seafaring stories, and explain local flora and fauna, and Aboriginal artefacts. Next to the museum is a full-scale replica of the brig **Amity** (adult/child \$3/1; ☎ 9am-5pm), the ship that carried Albany's founding party to the area from Sydney in 1826.

Opposite the museum, the 1851 **Old Gaol** (☎ 9841 1401; Lower Stirling Tce; adult/child \$4/3; ☎ 10am-4.15pm) was constructed as a hiring depot for

ticket-of-leave convicts. Most were in private employment by 1855 so it was closed until 1872, when it reopened as a civil gaol. These days it's a folk museum. Nearby is the wattle-and-daub **Patrick Taylor Cottage**, believed to be the oldest colonial dwelling in WA (1832).

The National Trust-owned **Old Farm at Strawberry Hill** (☎ 9841 3735; 170 Middleton Rd; adult/child \$5/3; ☎ 10am-5pm) is one of the oldest farms in the state. The homestead features antiques and artefacts that belonged to the original owner, and has beautiful gardens and tearooms.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The **Desert Mounted Corps Memorial** sits atop Mt Clarence, which you can climb along a track accessible from the end of Grey St East. Enjoy

panoramic views from the **lookout tower** on Mt Melville; there's a signposted turn-off from Serpentine Rd. There's also a **whale-watching walk** from Marine Dr on Mt Adelaide to the harbour entrance (45 minutes return).

The **Princess Royal Fortress** (Marine Dr; adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 9am-5pm) on Mt Adelaide was built in 1893 as a strategic defence post, and today boasts restored buildings, gun emplacements and fine views.

Activities

Albany's appeal as a top-class diving destination grew after the 2001 scuttling of the warship HMAS *Perth* to create an artificial reef for business among the companies in town. Try **Albany Dive.com** (☎ 9842 6886; www.albanydive.com; cnr York St & Proudlove Pde) or **Southcoast Diving Supplies** (☎ 9841 7176; www.divealbany.com.au; 84b Serpentine Rd). Two-tank dives cost around \$130.

Tours

Kalgan Queen (☎ 9844 3166; www.albanyaustralia.com) offers a four-hour cruise up the Kalgan River in a glass-bottomed boat from Emu Point.

Albany Whale Tours & Sail-A-Way (☎ 0409-107 180) and **Silver Star Cruises** (☎ 0428-936 711; www.whales.com.au) both run regular whale-watching trips (adult/child around \$55/40).

Sleeping BUDGET

Albany Backpackers (☎ 9842 5255; www.albanybackpackers.com.au; cnr Stirling Tce & Spencer St; dm/s/d \$23/40/56; ☎) Bright, cheery and with a reputation for partying, this hostel knows how to keep its guests happy with extras like coffee and cake each afternoon, complimentary bike hire and (limited) free internet access.

Albany Bayview YHA (☎ 9842 3388; albayyha@westnet.com.au; 49 Duke St; dm/s/d \$23/40/52; ☎) In a quiet street 400m from the centre, this rambling backpackers has a lazy feel and is less frenzied than the hostel in town.

MIDRANGE

Norfolk Sands (☎ 9841 3585; www.norfolksands.com.au; 18 Adelaide Cres, Middleton Beach; s/d \$55/80) Just a few minutes' walk from Middleton Beach, this is simple accommodation with a touch of class. The share-facility rooms are tastefully decorated with Asian-style furnishings and breakfast is served at the fantastic Bay Merchants café next door.

Coraki Holiday Cottages (☎ 9844 7068; www.corakicottages.com.au; Lower King Rd; cottages from \$115) On the edge of Oyster Bay, between the King and Kalgan Rivers, these light, bright, private cottages with plenty of bush surrounds are great value.

TOP END

Esplanade Hotel (☎ 9842 1711; www.albanyesplanade.com.au; cnr Adelaide Cres & Flinders Pde; d \$182-255; ☎) This *grande dame* of Albany accommodation, while not exactly full of character, is very comfortable.

CAMPING

Middleton Beach Holiday Park (☎ 1800 644 674; www.holidayalbany.com.au; Middleton Beach; tent/caravan sites \$25/27, cabins \$99-105, chalets \$150-160; ☎) This beachfront caravan park is sheltered by high sand dunes (a good thing when a gale is raging). Book early.

Emu Beach Holiday Park (☎ 1800 984 411, 9844 1147; www.emubeach.com; Emu Point; tent/caravan sites \$25/30, chalets \$110-140, villas \$140-160) Families love the relaxed Emu Beach area and this holiday park, close to the beach, has good facilities, including free BBQs and a kids' playground.

Eating & Drinking

Jo Joe's Pizza & Kebab (☎ 9842 6000; 362 Middleton Rd; mains \$5-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is a great place for late-night souvlaki or falafel, and is still the locals' most popular pizza joint.

Bay Merchants (☎ 9841 7821; 18 Adelaide Cres, Middleton Beach; mains \$10-14, ☎ breakfast & lunch) Just a sandy-footed stroll from the beach, this café-cum-providore makes the best coffee in town and to-die-for gourmet sandwiches.

Dylan's on the Terrace (☎ 9841 8720; 82 Stirling Tce; mains \$12-20) With its 1950s ambience and menu of hamburgers, pancakes and the like, Dylan's is forever family friendly.

Squid Shack (☎ 0417-170 857; Emu Beach; fish & chips \$12; ☎ lunch & dinner) This local institution serves fish straight from the ocean from what is literally a shack on the beach; take a bottle of wine and have a sunset picnic.

Harvest Moon Café (☎ 9841 8833; 86 Stirling Tce; mains \$13; ☎ lunch) does a great line in vegetarian food and fresh juices, in an informal bookish café setting.

Vancouver 51 (☎ 9841 2475; 65 Vancouver St; lunches \$13; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat, closed Mon) This great little café is perched above the coast,

with balcony views and creative fusion food like Szechuan duck with spicy plums.

Nonna's (☎ 9841 4626; 135 Lower York St; lunch special \$15; ☎ lunch & dinner) Classic Italian food served at reasonable prices in a cosy setting.

Earl of Spencer Historic Inn (☎ 9841 1322; cnr Earl & Spencer Sts; mains \$20; ☎ lunch & dinner) On a cold Albany night, you can't beat the warming qualities of the Earl's famous pie and pint or hearty lambshanks. It's popular for a quiet drink or, on the weekends, for catching a live band.

Getting Around

Love's (☎ 9841 1211) runs local bus services (adult/child \$2/1) around town on weekdays and Saturday morning. The visitors centre has routes and timetables.

You can rent a car locally from **Rainbow Coast Car Rentals** (☎ 9841 7130) and both **Avis** (☎ 9842 2833) and **Budget** (☎ 9841 7799) have agencies out at the airport.

AROUND ALBANY

Whale World Museum

The **Whale World Museum** (☎ 08-9844 4021; www.whaleworld.org; Frenchman's Bay; adult/child/family \$18/9/45; ☎ 9am-5pm), 21km from Albany, is based in Frenchman's Bay at Cheynes Beach Whaling Station, which ceased operations in November 1978. There's the rusting *Cheynes IV* whale chaser and station equipment to inspect outside. The museum screens several 3-D gore-spattered and other films about whaling operations and displays harpoons, whaleboat models and scrimshaw (etchings on whalebone). There are free guided tours on the hour.

En route to Whale World, about 12km from Albany, stop off to take a look at the **Albany Wind Farm** (Frenchman's Bay Rd), the biggest in the southwest and an eerily striking sight as you get closer.

National Parks & Reserves

West Cape Howe National Park, 30km west of Albany, is a 35-sq-km playground for naturalists, bushwalkers, rock climbers and anglers. Inland, there are areas of coastal heath, lakes, swamp and karri forest. With the exception of the road to Shelley Beach, access is restricted to 4WDs.

Torndirrup National Park includes two very popular attractions: the often windswept and elemental **Natural Bridge** and **The Gap**. Nearby,

the **Blowholes** can put on a show when the surf's up, worth the 80-step stairway up and down. Beautiful **Misery Beach** is often deserted and has an easy drive in/walk down. At **Stony Hill**, a short heritage trail leads around the site of an observatory station from both World Wars. Keen walkers can tackle the hard 10km-return **bushwalk** (over five hours) over Isthmus Hill to Bald Head, at the eastern edge of the park. The views are spectacular pretty much everywhere – look out for the whales!

Some 20km east of Albany, **Two Peoples Bay** is a 46-sq-km nature reserve with a good swimming beach and scenic coastline.

ALBANY TO ESPERANCE

From Albany, the South Coast Hwy (Hwy 1) runs northeast along the coast before turning inland to skirt the Fitzgerald River National Park and end in Esperance.

Fitzgerald River National Park

This 3300-sq-km park contains half of the orchid species in WA (more than 80 species, 70 of which occur nowhere else), 22 mammal species, 200 species of birds and 1700 species of plants. It's also the blossoming ground of the royal hakea (*Hakea victoria*) and qualup bell (*Pimelia physodes*) flowers. Walkers will discover beautiful coastline, sand plains, the rugged coastal hills (known as 'The Barrens') and deep, wide river valleys. You might be lucky enough to see whales and their calves from the shore at Point Ann.

The wilderness route from Fitzgerald Beach to West Beach is for serious walkers – there is no trail and no water (you need to plan water drops on access roads), but camping is permitted. You'll need to register with the ranger on Quiss Rd, **Jerramungup** (☎ 08-9835 5043); Murray Rd, just north of **Bremer Bay** (☎ 08-9837 1022); or at **East Mt Barren** (☎ 08-9838 3060).

The three main 2WD entry points to the park are from the South Coast Hwy (Quiss Rd and Pabelup Dr), Hopetoun (Hamersley Dr), and Bremer Bay (along Swamp & Murray Rds). This last is the prettiest route, winding through acres of flowering shrubs. It's also likely to be impassable after rain, so check locally before you set out.

There are 2WD **camp sites** at St Mary Inlet (near Point Ann) and Four Mile Beach, while camping at Hamersley Inlet, Whale Bone Beach, Quoin Head and Fitzgerald Inlet is by 4WD only.

Hopetoun

☎ 08 / pop 350

Windswept, remote Hopetoun, 50km south of Ravensthorpe, was once the port for the Phillips River goldfield and served sealers, whalers and early settlers. These days it's a favourite with retirees who love the heat. The eastern gateway to the Fitzgerald River National Park, Hopetoun has fine beaches and bays. In September there's a wildflower show here with over 800 species.

You'll find visitor information brochures in **Taste of the Town Café** (Veal St).

To the west of town is the landlocked **Culham Inlet** (great for fishing – especially for black bream) and east of town is the scenic **Southern Ocean East Drive** – in 2006 in the process of being sealed – which features camping beaches at Mason Bay and Starvation Bay. The old railway track between Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun is now a **heritage walking track**.

The 1833km-long **No 1 rabbit-proof fence** enters the sea in the south at Starvation Bay, east of Hopetoun; it starts at Eighty Mile Beach on the Indian Ocean, north of Port Hedland. The fence was built during the height of the rabbit plague between 1901 and 1907. However, the story goes that the bunnies beat the fence-builders to the west side so it wasn't as effective a barrier as hoped.

You'll find plenty of time for contemplation at the **Hopetoun Motel & Chalet Village** (☎ 9838 3219; cnr Veal & Canning Sts; s/d \$85/95, chalets \$150), a quiet little rammed-earth complex set in bushland. Eat at the **Port Hotel** or the **Deck** (☎ Sep-May) in the old post office, a welcome addition to the Hopetoun summer scene with its hard-to-resist ice cream.

ESPERANCE

☎ 08 / pop 13,000

Esperance sits quietly on the Bay of Isles, a clear landscape of aquamarine waters and squeaky white beaches. At first glance, the Norfolk Pines are the only stately reminder that Esperance has been around just as long as Perth (1863). Many of the buildings were shifted to Esperance from other locales. A port during the gold rush of the 1890s, it was quiet in the years afterwards, becoming a farming centre only when trace elements were added to the soil in the 1950s.

Esperance is a favourite holiday destination for people who enjoy the sense of community here. The pristine coastal environment

of the Recherche Archipelago is also home to colonies of fur seals, penguins and a variety of sea birds.

Information

Computer Alley (☎ 9072 1293; 69c Dempster St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Check your email here.

Visitors centre (☎ 9071 2330; www.visitesperance.com; Dempster St; ☎ 9am-5pm) In the museum village. The helpful staff can book tours and transport.

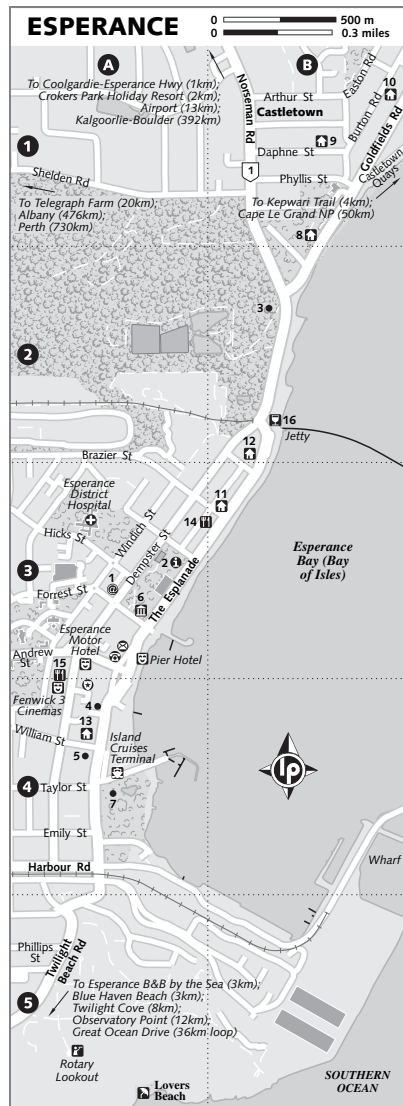
Sights & Activities

When you hit Esperance, a must is the 36km **Great Ocean Drive**, which includes spectacular vistas from **Observatory Point** and the lookout on **Wireless Hill**; the popular swimming spots at **Blue Haven Beach** and **Twilight Cove**; the **Pink Lake**, stained by salt-tolerant algae; and a **wind farm**. There's a walking track among the turbines, quite surreal when it's windy; and it often is windy here, with the farm supplying about 23% of Esperance's electricity.

About 100 small islands are in the **Archipelago of the Recherche**; you'll see many of them from the waterfront in town. Colonies of seals, penguins and a variety of water birds live on the islands. **Woody Island** is a wildlife sanctuary which you can visit on cruises and even stay on (see p929).

The **Museum Village** (James St; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) consists of various restored heritage buildings, including a gallery, smithy's forge, café and craft shop. The **Esperance Museum** (adult/child \$4/1; ☎ 1.30-4.30pm) contains among its local history collection a Skylab display – when the USA's Skylab crashed to earth in 1979, it made its fiery re-entry at Balladonia, east of Esperance. The **Cannery Arts Centre** (☎ 9071 3599; Norseman Rd; ☎ 1-4pm) has artists' studios, occasional exhibitions and a shop selling creative local artwork.

Kids will enjoy **Telegraph Farm** (☎ 9076 5044; South Coast Hwy; adult/child \$10/5; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Mon, closed Jun-Aug), 21km west of town. This commercial protea farm has a host of animals, including water buffalo, camels and birds. Also fun for kids is **Ralph Bower Adventureland Park**, near the Taylor St Jetty, where kids can ride about on a miniature train or climb all over the playground. The **Esperance Aquarium** (☎ 9071 7222; 53 the Esplanade; adult/child \$9/7; ☎ 10am-5pm, closed Wed May-Sep) has a small marine discovery trail, and a touchpool.



Lake Warden wetland's **Kepwari Trail**, off Fisheries Rd in town, has a boardwalk across the lake, interpretive displays and excellent bird-watching.

Tours

Cruises on the Bay of Isles are a must. **Eco-Discovery Tours** (☎ 0407-737 261; www

INFORMATION	
Computer Alley.....	1 A3
Visitors Centre.....	2 A3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Cannery Arts Centre.....	3 B2
Esperance Aquarium.....	4 A4
Esperance Diving & Fishing.....	5 A4
Esperance Museum.....	6 A3
Kepa Kurl Eco Cultural Discovery Tours.....	(see 2)
Mackenzie's Island Cruises.....	(see 5)
Museum Village.....	(see 2)
Ralph Bower Adventureland Park.....	7 A4
SLEEPING	
Blue Waters Lodge YHA.....	8 B1
Esperance Guesthouse.....	9 B1
Goldie's Place.....	10 B1
Island View Esperance.....	11 B3
Jetty Resort.....	12 B2
Old Hospital Motel.....	13 A4
EATING	
Ocean Blues.....	14 A3
Onshore Traders.....	15 A3
Taylor Street Tearooms.....	(see 7)
DRINKING	
Coffee Cat.....	16 B2

.esperancetours.com.au) Runs 4WD day tours to the coastal national parks of Cape Le Grand and Cape Arid (\$138 per person, minimum of four).

Esperance Diving & Fishing (☎ 9071 5111; www.esperancedivingandfishing.com.au; 72 the Esplanade) Takes you diving off the wreck of the *Sanko Harvest* (two-tank dive including all gear plus lunch \$195) or charter fishing throughout the archipelago.

Kepa Kurl Eco Cultural Discovery Tours (☎ 9072 1688; www.kepakurl.com.au; Museum Village) Eco-Discovery Tours' associated company explores the country from an Aboriginal perspective (half-/full day \$76/145 per person, minimum of two).

Mackenzie's Island Cruises (☎ 9071 5757; www.woodyisland.com.au; 71 the Esplanade) A power catamaran regularly tours Esperance Bay and Woody Island (adult/child half-day \$65/24). Runs morning wildlife tours that get close to wild fur seals, sea lions, Cape Barren geese and (if luck's on their side) dolphins. After morning tea, watch sea eagles swoop down to seize hand-fed fish. Full-day trips (\$80/35) are available on Wednesday and Sunday.

Sleeping BUDGET

Esperance Guesthouse (☎ 9071 3396; 23 Daphne St; dm/d \$20/45; ☑) Still popular, this casual, comfortable place supplies homemade bread and brewed coffee (gasp!) for breakfast.

Blue Waters Lodge YHA (☎ 9071 1040; yhaesperance@hotmail.com; 299 Goldfields Rd; dm/s/d \$20/30/50; ☑) On the beachfront about 1.5km from the

centre, this is a rambling place with views over the water, a green back yard and wood fires in winter.

Goldie's Place (☎ 9071 2879; www.goldiesplacesperance.com; 51 Goldfields Rd; d \$70) A stand-out in comfort and value, Goldie's is a sizable, spotless and well-equipped two-bedroom unit with cheery young owners living upstairs and their friendly dog living in the garden.

MIDRANGE

Esperance B&B by the Sea (☎ 9071 5640; www.esperancebb.com; Stewart St; s/d \$75/110) The views from the deck overlooking Blue Haven Beach are breathtaking, especially at sunset. This big, new beachhouse with private guest wing is just a stroll from the ocean and a five-minute drive from Dempster St.

Old Hospital Motel (☎ 9071 3587; 1a William St; r from \$90) Named after the 1896 old hospital building on site, the pleasant motel-style rooms are well equipped; the spacious two-room units upstairs are particularly good value.

Jetty Resort (☎ 9071 3333; www.thejettyresort.com.au; 1 the Esplanade; d \$105-189, ste \$249 ☑ ☑) You can't miss this blindingly white balconied building as you drive along the beachfront Esplanade. More-expensive rooms come with beach views, balconies or spas. There's a pool with a BBQ, comfy seats and a giant chess set in its garden, and a great kids' playground.

TOP END

Island View Esperance (☎ 9072 0044; www.esperanceapartments.com.au; 14-16 the Esplanade; apt \$140-270) It's easy-living in these architect-designed and tastefully furnished units, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the beach across the road. The kitchens have all mod cons, and there's a spacious living area.

CAMPING

Woody Island (☎ 9071 5757; www.woodyisland.com.au; tent sites \$12, on-site tents \$25-45, huts \$66-97; ☑) late Sep to end Apr) It's not every day you get to stay in an A-class nature reserve. Choose between leafy camp sites or timber bush cabins; a few have private deck and their own lighting. Power is mostly solar, and rainwater only supplies the island – both are highly valued.

Crokers Park Holiday Resort (☎ 9071 5100; www.acclaimparks.com.au; 817 Harbour Rd; powered sites \$22, cabins \$53-72; ☑) Of the several very ordinary camp sites in town, this stands apart for its clean, shady and decent-sized grounds and pretty

pool area. It's absolutely worth being a five-minute drive from town and the water.

Eating

Keep an eye out for the Coffee Cat, a mobile red-and-black van often parked opposite the Jetty Resort – reportedly the best coffee in town.

Onshore Traders (☎ 9071 2575; 105 Dempster St; mains \$7-13; ☑) breakfast & lunch, closed Sun) A home-ware store and providore-cum-café in a breezy modern space, this place has lunch specials, salads and Turkish breads, as well as decent coffee.

Taylor Street Tearooms (☎ 9071 4317; Taylor St Jetty; mains \$12-24) This attractive, sprawling café by the jetty serves good, reliable fare; the salt-and-pepper squid is becoming an institution. Locals hang out at the tables on the grass or on the covered terrace, and it's very much a child-friendly zone.

Ocean Blues (☎ 9071 7107; 19 the Esplanade; mains \$20; ☑) closed Mon) Wander in sandy-footed and order some simple fare (try the classic steak sandwich) for lunch, or shelter from the sea breeze over an afternoon coffee and cake. Early dinner is served until 8.30pm.

CAPE LE GRAND & CAPE ARID

There are four national parks in the Esperance region; **DEC** (☎ 08-9071 3733) in Esperance has information on each.

The closest and most popular is **Cape Le Grand National Park**, which extends 60km east of Esperance and boasts spectacular coastal scenery, beautiful white-sand beaches and excellent walking tracks. There are fine views across the park from **Frenchman Peak**, at the western end of the park, good fishing and swimming at **Lucky Bay** and **Helffire Bay**, and a sheltered bush camp site at **Le Grand Beach**. Make the effort to climb Frenchman Peak (a steep 3km return walk) as the views from the top and through the 'eye' (the huge open cave at the top), especially during the late afternoon, are superb. **Rossiter Bay** is where explorers Edward John Eyre and the Aborigine Wylie, during their epic overland crossing in 1841, fortuitously met Captain Rossiter of the French whaler *Mississippi*, on which the pair spent two weeks resting. On the roads to all these places are sealed. A 15km one-way **coastal walking track** links Rossiter Bay and Le Grand Beach; you can do shorter stretches between beaches. Be sure to stop on the way

to or from the park at the wonderful **Hellfire Gallery** (☎ Thu-Mon), 20km out of Esperance, for great coffee, cake, artworks and the lavender garden.

Further east, at the start of the Great Australian Bight and on the fringes of the Nullarbor Plain, is the coastal **Cape Arid National Park**. If the sand at Cape Le Grand is like sugar, that at Cape Arid is the texture of flour, so smooth that it squeaks when you walk on it. The park is rugged and isolated, with good bushwalking, great beaches and camp sites. Whales (in season), seals and Cape Barren geese are seen regularly here. Most of the park is 4WD only, although the Poison Creek and Thomas River sites are accessible in conventional vehicles. For the hardy, there is a tough walk to the top of **Tower Peak**, adjacent to Mt Ragged (3km return, three hours), where the world's most primitive species of ant was found thriving in 1930.

Other national parks in the area include pretty **Stokes National Park**, 90km west of Esperance, with an inlet, long beaches and rocky headlands backed by sand dunes and low hills, and with a bush camping ground. It's popular for fishing and is 2WD accessible. **Peak Charles National Park**, 130km to the north, is a granite wilderness area with no visitor facilities.

The **Orleans Bay Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9075 0033; orleansbay@bigpond.com; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/20, cabins \$40, chalets \$70), at Duke of Orleans Bay between Cape Le Grand and Cape Arid National Park, is a shady, child-friendly place to stay, 2km from stunning Wharton Beach with its surfing, swimming, fishing and 4WD beach tracks.

For those heading east across the Nullarbor, the Balladonia Track and Parmango Rd, north of Capes Le Grand and Arid, offer alternative routes to the Eyre Hwy (see the boxed text, p938).

SOUTHERN OUTBACK

Stretching across to SA via the relentless Nullarbor Plain and up to the Northern Territory (NT), this is the outback Australia that many travellers come to see – a remote, dry land of dramatic landscapes and sprinkles of gold-rush history, with Kalgoorlie-Boulder as its centrepiece. While the red desert landscape might appear barren, the Aboriginal people have lived here for an age. The early

colonists found this region hard going – until the prosperity of the gold rush made the harsh landscape no less forgiving, but more rewarding.

History

The government in long-suffering Perth was in raptures when gold was discovered at Southern Cross in 1887. In one of the world's last great gold rushes, the next few years drew prospectors from other states – and other nations. Some 50 towns immediately rose up in the Eastern Goldfields, but the area's population dwindled along with the gold itself, and these days Kalgoorlie-Boulder is the only real survivor. In diminished towns, prodigious structures from early last century still stand unwavering in the heat. The region is fascinating to explore.

It was a harsh life on the goldfields. Enthusiasm, or greed, sometimes outweighed commonsense. Diseases like typhoid ran through mining camps. Inadequate water, housing, food and medical supplies led to a dusty death for many.

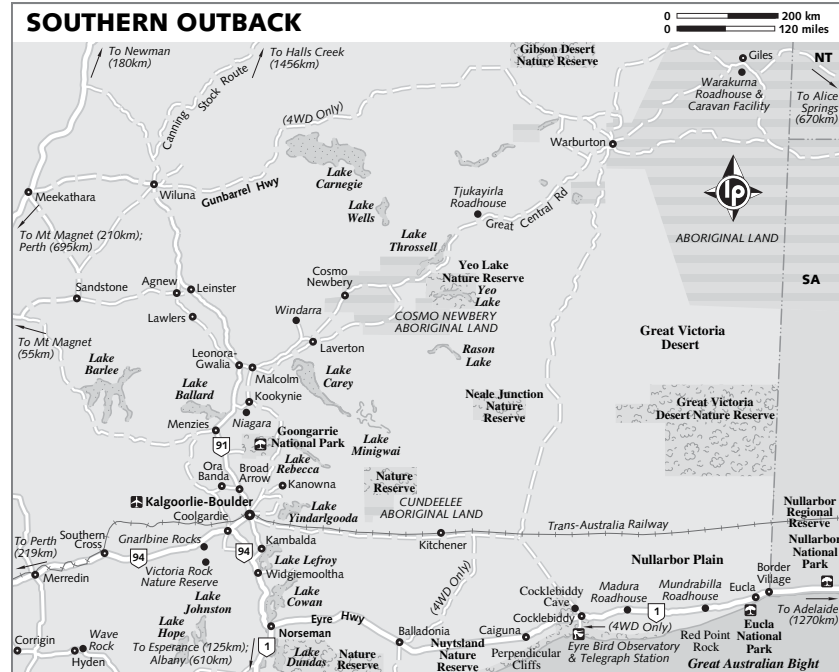
The 1903 Golden Pipeline brought water to the goldfields, stretching 560km from the Perth foothills. It was a lifeline for the towns it passed through and filled Kalgoorlie with the sense of a future, with or without gold.

COOLGARDIE

☎ 08 / pop 1500

Today you wouldn't pick that the quiet, dusty town of Coolgardie was the third-biggest town in WA in 1898. These days it's a pause in the long journey to or from the Nullarbor Plain; or a day trip from Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 39km to the east. Just hours after Arthur Bayley rode into Southern Cross in 1892 and dumped 554 ounces of gold on the mining warden's counter, the greatest movement of people in Australian history began. Bayley had found the gold at Fly Flat, the site that became Coolgardie, and is now the turn-off for Kalgoorlie.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9026 6090; Warden's Court, Bayley St; ☎ 9am-noon & 12.30-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) also sells a decent selection of local history books. The **Goldfields Museum** (adult/child \$4/2), in the same building and with the same hours, has a sizable display of goldfields memorabilia, along with information about former US President Herbert Hoover's days on the WA goldfields in Gwalia.



Warden Finnerty's Residence (☎ 9026 6028; 2 McKenzie St; ☎ 11am-4pm, closed Wed) was built for Coolgardie's first mining warden and magistrate, John Michael Finnerty, and the National Trust has restored the house beautifully.

One kilometre west of Coolgardie is the **town cemetery**, which includes the graves of explorer Ernest Giles (1835-97) and several Afghan camel drivers. The old **pioneer cemetery** (Forrest St) was used from 1892 to 1894.

At the **Camel Farm** (☎ 9026 6159; Great Eastern Hwy; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 10am-4pm school & public holidays, or by appointment), 3km west of town, you can take short camel rides (from \$6 per person) or organise longer treks.

About 30km south of Coolgardie, on Rock Rd, is **Gnarlbine Rocks**, an important watering point for the early prospectors. **Victoria Rock Nature Reserve**, with primitive camping, is a further 18km south.

It's best to use your own wheels to get to and around Coolgardie, but you can hook up with the daily **Goldfields Express** (☎ 1800 620 440; www.goldrushtours.com) on its way to and from Perth, or get a ride with **Goldfields Transport** (☎ 9021 2655) that runs a school bus be-

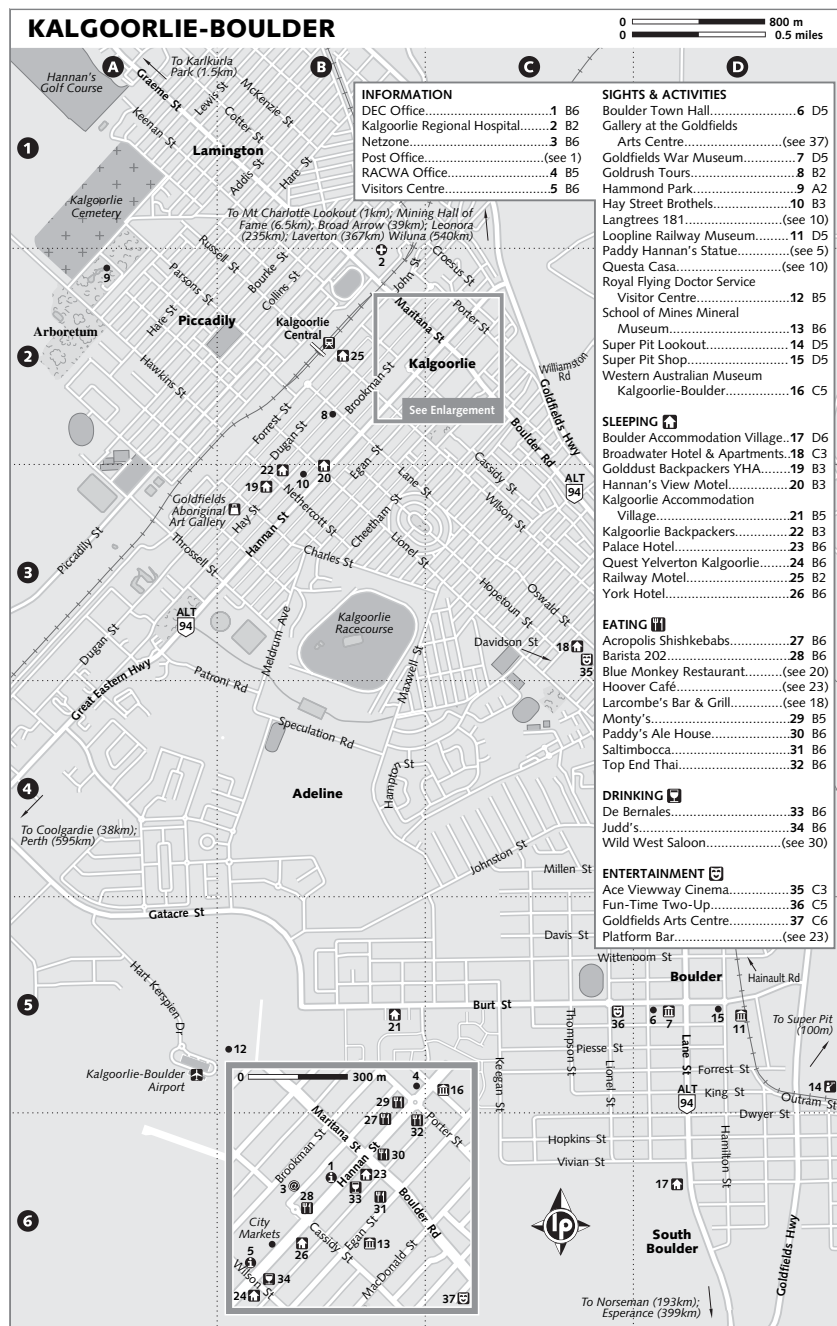
tween Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie (adult/child \$6/3).

KALGOORLIE-BOULDER

☎ 08 / pop 28,900

Kalgoorlie-Boulder ('Kal' to the locals), some 600km from Perth, is an outback success story. It's a prosperous, humming metropolis and the state's second-largest town, with wide streets and well-preserved historic buildings. The most enduring and productive of WA's gold towns, today it's the centre for mining in this part of WA.

Kal still feels like the wild west: a frontier town where workers come straight from the mines to spend their disposable income and sit at the bars in their overalls. The 'skimpie' staff serve beer in their underwear. There are tattoos and gambling and brothels. The electronic display high on the Palace Hotel constantly flicks shares and the price of gold and nickel in a red horizontal stream. But ultimately this is still a country town, with churches, schools and a community that these days relies as much on tourist gold as the mines'.



Due to eastern Australians migrating here for some warmth, Kal's peak season is actually in winter.

History

Long-time prospector Paddy Hannan set out from Coolgardie in search of another gold strike, and proved that sometimes beggars can be choosers. He stumbled across the surface gold that sparked the 1893 gold rush, and inadvertently chose the site of Kalgoorlie for a township.

When surface sparkles subsided, the miners dug deeper, extracting the precious metal from the rocks by costly and complex processes. Kalgoorlie quickly prospered, and the town's magnificent public buildings, constructed at the end of the 19th century, are evidence of its fabulous wealth.

Despite its slow decline after WWI, Kal is still the largest producer of gold in Australia, with giant mining conglomerates operating open-cut mines in the Golden Mile. Gone are the old headframes and corrugated-iron shacks – instead, enormous homes on the approach to Kalgoorlie attest to the ongoing profitability of modern mining.

Orientation

Although Kalgoorlie sprang up close to Paddy Hannan's original find, the mining emphasis soon shifted a few kilometres away to the Golden Mile, and the satellite town of Boulder developed to service this area. In August 1989 the two towns formally merged into the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

The town centre in Kalgoorlie is a grid of broad, tree-lined streets. Hannan St, the main street flanked by imposing public buildings, is wide enough to turn a camel train – a necessity in turn-of-the-century goldfield towns. You'll find most of the town's hotels, restaurants and offices on or close to Hannan St.

Information

DEC (☎ 9021 2677; Post Office Bldg, 204 Hannan St)

Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital (☎ 9080 5888; Piccadilly St)

Netzone (☎ 9022 8342; St Barbara's Sq) Fast internet access in a central location.

Post office (204 Hannan St)

Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia

(RACWA; ☎ 131 703; cnr Hannan & Porter Sts)

Visitors centre (☎ 9021 1966; www.kalgoorlie.com; cnr Hannan & Wilson Sts (☎ 8.30am-5pm, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun)

Sights & Activities

MINING HALL OF FAME

A shortcut to understanding this town is the excellent **Mining Hall of Fame** (☎ 9026 2700; www.mininghall.com; Eastern Bypass Rd; adult/child \$17/9, plus underground \$24/14; ☎ 9am-4.30pm). Located on Hannan's North Heritage Mining Reserve, the site of Paddy Hannan's original lease and a working mine until 1952, it explores the mining industry from the underground up. You can go 36m below the surface in a mine shaft (and see why claustrophobics don't make good miners), pan for gold and be mesmerised by a gold pour. Kids of all ages will be kept well occupied in the interactive Exploration Zone. A Garden of Remembrance, dedicated to the immigrant Chinese who worked the goldfields, is due to open here.

If you're into mining history, allow yourself a half-day here. There are underground tours at 10am, 12.15pm and 2.45pm daily (where you need to wear fully enclosed shoes).

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM KALGOORLIE-BOULDER

The impressive Ivanhoe mine headframe at the northern end of Hannan St marks the entrance to this excellent **museum** (☎ 9021 8533; www.museum.wa.gov.au; 17 Hannan St; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4.30pm). Check out the wide range of exhibits, including an underground gold vault and historic photographs, or join the twice-daily tours at 11am and 2pm. A lift takes you to a viewing point on the headframe, where you can look out over the city and mines, and down into delightfully untidy backyards.

LOOPLINE RAILWAY MUSEUM

The Loopline railway was once the most important urban transport for Kalgoorlie and Boulder, with Boulder's Golden Mile station (1897) once the busiest in WA. While the railway closed – hopefully only temporarily – in 2004, its story is told in the **railway museum** (☎ 9093 3055; www.loopline.com.au; cnr Burt & Hamilton Sts; adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 9am-1pm), operating out of the old train station.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Along Hannan St, you'll find the imposing **town hall** and the equally impressive **post office**. There's an art gallery upstairs in the decorative town hall, while outside is a drinking fountain in the form of a **statue** of Paddy Hannan holding a water bag.

Northwest of Hannan St in Hay St is one of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's most notorious and popular attractions, the **Hay St brothels**, now quietly acknowledged in tourist brochures. Brothel tours have become *de rigueur* for many visitors to Kal, at **Langtrees 181** (☎ 9026 2181; www.langtrees.com; 181 Hay St; admission \$25; ☹ 1pm, 3pm & 6pm) and at Australia's oldest operating brothel **Questa Casa** (☎ 9021 4897; 133 Hay St; admission \$18; ☹ 2pm).

See how the flying doctors look after the outback with the hourly tours at the **Royal Flying Doctor Service Visitor Centre** (☎ 9093 7595; Kalgoorlie-Boulder Airport; admission by donation; ☹ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri). Be generous with your donation if you can, as they do a fabulous job.

The **School of Mines Mineral Museum** (☎ 9088 6001; cnr Egan & Cassidy Sts; ☹ 8.30am-noon Mon-Fri, closed school holidays) has a geology display including replicas of big nuggets discovered in the area.

The **Goldfields War Museum** (☎ 9093 1083; 106 Burt St; ☹ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) has a collection of local war memorabilia and military vehicles.

At the **Gallery at the Goldfields Arts Centre** (☎ 9088 6905; Cheetham St; ☹ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sun) you'll find monthly exhibitions by local, state and national artists.

The view from the **Super Pit Lookout** (www.superpit.com.au; Outram St; ☹ 6am-7pm), just off the Goldfields Hwy in Boulder, is awesome, with the big trucks at the bottom of the huge hole looking like kids' toys. Good info is given in the on-site signs, and the **Super Pit Shop** (☎ 9093 3488; 2 Burt St; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) sells souvenirs and offers more detailed information.

The Goatcher Theatre Curtain in the 1907 **Boulder Town Hall** (☎ 9021 9600; cnr Burt & Lane Sts, Boulder) has recently been restored. Englishman Philip W Goatcher, one of the great theatrical scene artists of the Victorian era, painted the Neapolitan scene in 1908. The *trompe l'oeil* curtain creates an extraordinary illusion of 3-D space, and is dropped from 10am to 3pm Wednesday, and on the third Sunday of each month (Boulder's market day) from 9.30am to 12.30pm.

Hammond Park (☹ 9021 1209; Lyall St; ☹ 9am-5pm), in the west of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, is a small fauna reserve with a miniature Bavarian castle, a 1903 rotunda and open-air movie screenings during summer.

If you've had enough of holes in the ground, you can do your bit towards revegetating the

bush in **Karlkuria Park**, northwest of town, by scattering a packet of native Silky Pear seeds (available at the visitors centre) while you enjoy the 4km of walking tracks.

Tours

Goldrush Tours (☎ 9021 2954; www.goldrushtours.com.au; cnr Lane & Hay Sts) runs all sorts of tours, including half-day jaunts around Kalgoorlie-Boulder (adult/child \$25/5), and longer outback explorations.

You can see Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Golden Mile mining operations from the air with **Goldfields Air Services** (☎ 9093 2116; www.goldfieldsairservices.com). Prices for trips start from \$50 per person, with a minimum of two people.

Festivals & Events

The highlight of the social calendar is the annual **Kalgoorlie-Boulder Racing Round** in early September, where locals and a huge influx of visitors dress up to the nines to watch horses race on the red dirt. On the third Sunday of the month, Boulder's Burt St is busy with the pleasantly low-key and community-centred **Boulder Market Day**, where morning tea with homemade scones, jam and cream in the town hall is a must.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Kalgoorlie Backpackers (☎ 0412-110 001, 166 Hay St; dm/s/d \$20/35/50; ☹ ☹ ☹) Partly located in a former brothel, this well-run hostel with a comfy TV lounge was part-occupied by long-stay contractors when we last visited and, like the YHA, is a good place to find out about work opportunities.

Golddust Backpackers YHA (☎ 9091 3737; golddust@westnet.com.au; 192 Hay St; dm/s/d \$24/35/55; ☹ ☹ ☹) Also close to the Hay St strip, this hostel has clean, basic rooms, good communal areas including a games room, and noticeboards of info about available work in town.

York Hotel (☎ /fax 9021 2337; www.yorkhotelkalgoorlie.com; 259 Hannan St; s/d \$45/75) One of Kalgoorlie's most unique heritage buildings, this is a fascinating labyrinth of high rooms and wooden staircases. It's good-value accommodation, with breakfast included.

MIDRANGE

Palace Hotel (☎ 9021 2788; www.pacc.com.au/~palace; cnr Hannan & Maritana Sts; s/d \$55/85, balcony s/d \$90/120,

apt \$105; ☹) Climb the magnificent old staircase to reach the accommodation wing, a rabbit warren of various styles of rooms.

Hannan's View Motel (☎ 9091 3333; www.hannansview.com.au; 430 Hannan St; r \$105; ☹) If you're in town for a while, this is a good central location with self-contained units, free in-house movies, and access to the town's Olympic-sized pool and gym, a five-minute drive away.

Railway Motel (☎ 9088 0000; www.railwaymotel.com.au; 51 Forrest St; s/d/apt \$130/142/120; ☹ ☹) This complex, opposite the train station and built on the site of the old hotel of the same name, is a cut above the average with bright, spruced-up rooms and comfy reclining chairs. Its two-bedroom apartments dotted around town are excellent value.

TOP END

Quest Yelverton Kalgoorlie (☎ 9022 8181; www.theyelverton.com.au; 210 Egan St; s/d \$165; ☹ ☹) Close enough to Hannan St to walk but far enough away to get a quiet night, the Yelverton's stylish fully self-contained and serviced apartments have all you need – even a lap pool.

Broadwater Hotel & Apartments (☎ 9080 0800; www.broadwaters.com.au; 21 Davidson St; s/d from \$160; ☹ ☹ ☹) This stylish complex, in a residential area between Kalgoorlie and Boulder, boasts chichi rooms with big bathrooms and garden views.

CAMPING

Kalgoorlie Accommodation Village (☎ 9039 4800; www.resortparks.com.au; 286 Burt St; tent/caravan sites \$25/26, chalets/units \$89/95; ☹ ☹ ☹) and **Boulder Accommodation Village** (☎ 9093 1266; 201 Lane St; tent/caravan sites \$25/26, chalets/units \$89/95; ☹ ☹ ☹) are sister complexes 6km south of Kalgoorlie. Both have great A-frame cabins, grassy sites, a kids' playground and pool, and are fully equipped for disabled travellers.

Eating

Barista 202 (☎ 9022 2228; 202 Hannan St; ☹ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat, breakfast Sun) This buzzing café is a welcome addition to the Kal scene; it serves Italian sandwiches and baked goodies to accompany the good coffee.

Hoover Café (☎ 9021 2788; cnr Hannan & Maritana Sts; mains \$10; ☹ lunch) Attached to the Palace Hotel, this café serves great-value home-cooked lunches, and morning and afternoon teas with fresh-baked scones, until 6pm.

Acropolis Shishkebabs (86 Hannan St; mains \$8; ☹ dinner) Racing-round regulars swear by these kebabs as partying fuel.

Top End Thai (☎ 9091 4027; 71 Hannan St; mains \$15-19; ☹ dinner Mon-Sat) Eccentric service and tongue-tingling Thai await at this stalwart of the Kal dining scene.

Monty's (☎ 9022 8288; cnr Hannan & Porter Sts; mains \$15-30; ☹ 24hr) The servings of standard café fare here are massive and, even better, available round the clock.

Paddy's Ale House (☎ 9021 2833; Exchange Hotel, 135 Hannan St; mains \$15-28) With a wide range of tap beers, Paddy's serves up classic counter meals like bangers and mash to the hordes.

Saltimbocca (☎ 9022 8028; 90 Egan St; mains \$25; ☹ dinner Mon-Sat) With starched white tablecloths, original artworks and a classic Italian menu, this bistro-style place is an appealing upmarket option.

Larcombe's Bar & Grill (☎ 9080 0800; Broadwater Hotel & Apartments, 21 Davidson St; mains \$18-28) It's worth the drive from the centre of town to sip a decent coffee or wine on the veranda, and eat at this award-winning restaurant.

Blue Monkey Restaurant (☎ 9091 3311; 418 Hannan St; mains \$23-33; ☹ breakfast & dinner Mon-Sat, breakfast & lunch Sun) Start the day in the courtyard with a generous cooked breakfast (\$15) and creamy coffee, and end it with a good glass of wine and Mod Oz meal.

Drinking

Even at the height of a drought there's never been a shortage of watering holes in Kal, where some 30 pubs await your custom. What also awaits are female bar staff clad in underwear, suspenders and high heels – 'skimpies' are the norm here. You'll need to pick your venue carefully if you prefer your bar staff fully clothed.

Wild West Saloon (☎ 9021 2833; Exchange Hotel, 135 Hannan St) For an anthropological experience, the front bar at the Exchange Hotel provides a window into some locals' lives at all hours of the day, with skimpies, TV sports and mine workers furiously refuelling.

Judd's (☎ 9021 3046; Kalgoorlie Hotel, 319 Hannan St) With hot-pink walls and windows that open onto the street, this bar is great for catching live bands.

De Bernales (☎ 9021 4534; 193 Hannan St) For as long as we can remember, De Bernales has been the place for a quiet tipple amid the Hannan St hoopla.

Entertainment

You can catch a flick in air-conditioned comfort at the **Ace Viewway Cinema** (☎ 9021 2199; Oswald St) or watch them under the stars at **Hammond Park** (☎ 9021 1209) during summer.

Visiting artists perform regularly at the **Goldfields Arts Centre** (☎ 9088 6900; Cheetham St).

The gambling game two-up, beloved in the bush, is usually played somewhere in town each week; check at the visitors centre or see if **Fun-Time Two-Up** (☎ 9093 3467; Sheffield's Bar & Grill, cnr Burt & Lionel Sts, Boulder) is happening.

Platform Bar (☎ 9021 2788; cnr Hannan & Maritana Sts) is where big nights out in Kalgoorlie inevitably end, boogieing at this late-night bar.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au) and **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) fly between Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Perth at least twice daily.

BUS

Perth-Goldfields Express (☎ 1800 620 440; www.goldrushtravels.com.au) does the Perth-Kalgoorlie-Perth trip (adult/child \$70/43 one way) every day except Saturday. On Thursday and Sunday it goes on to Leonora and Laverton, returning Friday and Monday. The same company offers the **Goldrush Tours Golden Triangle Tour** (\$475), a hop-on hop-off bus pass between Perth, Margaret River and the southwest coast and forests, Albany and Esperance on the south coast, and up to Kalgoorlie.

TRAIN

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) runs the *Prospector* from Perth to Kalgoorlie-Boulder daily (adult/child \$72/35, seven hours). It's wise to book, as this service is popular.

The **Indian Pacific** (☎ 13 21 47; www.trainways.com.au) train also goes through Kalgoorlie-Boulder four times a week, twice to Perth and twice from Perth.

Getting Around

Between Kalgoorlie and Boulder there's a regular bus service from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and Saturday morning with **TransGoldfields** (☎ 9021 2655; adult/child \$2/1).

NORTH OF KALGOORLIE-BOULDER

The road north is surfaced from Kalgoorlie-Boulder to the three 'Ls' – the mining towns of Laverton (367km northeast), Leinster (372km

north) and Leonora (237km north). Off the main road, however, traffic is virtually non-existent and rain can quickly close unsealed roads.

Head 18km east along an unsealed road to the cemetery and the processing plant at **Knowna**. One hundred years ago it swarmed with miners, and had 16 hotels and an hourly train service to Kal.

Broad Arrow was featured in *The Nickel Queen*, the first full-length feature film made in WA. It is a shadow of its former self – at the beginning of the 20th century it had a population of 2400; now there's just one pub and a couple of derelict-looking houses.

The largest service centre for mining exploration and the pastoral industry in the area is **Leonora** (population 1500). Climb Tank (Smoodgers) Hill for a good view of the town, and check out the old public buildings on the main street near the **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9037 6044; www.leonora.wa.gov.au; Tower St; ☎ 9am-5pm). Hit the telecentre next door for email. **Perth-Goldfields Express** (☎ 1800 620 440) does a Perth-Kalgoorlie-Leonora run on Thursday and Sunday, returning Friday and Monday.

Just 4km southwest of town, **Gwalia Historic Site** was occupied in 1896 and deserted pretty much overnight in 1963, after the pit closed. With houses and household goods intact, it's a strange, eerie, fascinating ghost town. The **museum** (☎ 08-9037 7122; adult/child \$5/2) has more weird and wonderful *stuff* in it than we've ever seen, and **Hoover House** – the beautifully restored 1898 mine managers' house, named for Herbert Hoover, the first Gwalia mine manager, who later became 31st President of the United States – is stunning.

South of here, 25km off the main road to Laverton, is **Kookynie**, where a true outback pub experience can be had at the 1901 **Grand Hotel** (☎ 08-9031 3010; Menzies-Kookynie Rd; s/d \$58/93). Have a serious breakfast before setting out in the morning.

The surfaced road ends at the town of **Laverton** (population 1100). 'The gateway to the desert' crouches on the edge of the Great Victoria Desert. The cheery **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9031 1750; lavertontourist@westnet.com.au; Laver Pl) is combined with library and internet access at the telecentre. Laverton marks the start of the Great Central Rd (Outback Way) to Yulara (near Uluru, formerly Ayers Rock) via Warburton. Expect to overnight and/or stock up on supplies of fuel and water here,

and *definitely* check at the visitors centre for current road conditions.

Great Central Road (Outback Way)

For those interested in a genuine outback experience, the unsealed Great Central Rd (officially renamed, in 2005, 'Outback Way' but as yet rarely known as such) provides rich scenery of red sand, spinifex, mulga and desert oaks. From Laverton it is a mere 1132km to Yulara and 1710km to Alice Springs.

The road, while sandy and corrugated in places, is suitable for all vehicles, though it can be closed for several days after rain. Diesel is available at roughly 300km intervals on the WA side, as is Opal fuel, which, at the Warburton and Warakurna roadhouses, can be used instead of unleaded petrol. (Opal is un-sniffable, and its provision is one of the measures in place to counteract petrol-sniffing problems in local communities. See p794 for more information.)

Coming from Laverton, the three WA roadhouses – all of which provide food, fuel and limited mechanical services – are **Tjukayirla** (☎ 08-9037 1108; tjukayirla@bigpond.com) at 315km, **Warburton** (☎ 08-8956 7656) at 567km and **Warakurna** (☎ 08-8956 7344) at 798km. All have a range of accommodation, from camping (around \$10 per person) to budget rooms (around \$40) and self-contained units (around \$100); you should book ahead, as rooms are limited.

At Warburton take time to visit the **Tjulyuru Cultural & Civic Centre** (☎ 08-8956 7966; www.tjulyuru.com; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), near the roadhouse; the art gallery contains an extensive collection of Warburton Aboriginal paintings. At **Giles**, 231km northeast of Warburton and 105km west of the NT border, there is a meteorological station which runs an 8am tour daily.

Note that Warakurna, Warburton and Giles run on NT time, 1½ hours ahead of WA time.

SOUTH OF KALGOORLIE-BOULDER Norseman

☎ 08 / pop 1600

From Norseman you can head south to Esperance or north to Kalgoorlie, or begin the intrepid trek across the Eyre Hwy (Nullarbor). Don't be surprised if you see taxis with bull bars and families of emus crossing the road.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9039 1071; www.norseman.info; 68 Roberts St; ☎ 9am-5pm) has good public showers and is a mine of information about

the Nullarbor trek; if you've just done the big trip, staff can issue you with your very own certificate to show the folks back home. A telecentre is close by for email.

The **Historical & Geological Collection** (☎ 9039 1593; Battery Rd; adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon, Wed, Thu & Fri or by request), in the quaint old School of Mines building, has items from the gold-rush days.

There's an excellent view of the town and surrounding salt lakes from the well-signposted **Beacon Hill Mararoa Lookout**, over the more than 4.2 million tonnes of mountainous tailings.

SLEEPING & EATING

Lodge 101 (☎ 9039 1541; 101 Prinsep St; dm/s/d \$25/\$35/\$55) After the relentless road, this colourful house – with friendly owners, clean and comfortable rooms, and knick-knacks galore – is a cheery place to rest your cramped bones.

Great Western Motel (☎ 9039 1633; Prinsep St; s/d \$90/140; ☎ ☎) If you're looking for cool respite, try these motel rooms with rammed-earth walls and a leafy setting. There's a restaurant on-site.

Gateway Caravan Park (☎ /fax 9039 1500; 23 Prinsep St; tents/caravan sites/vans \$19/23/49, cabins \$69-89; ☎ ☎) Good cabins and a bushy atmosphere make this a reliable option.

There's not exactly a huge choice of eating options here, but try the reliable **Tin Camel Café** on Prinsep St (beside the tin camels on the roundabout, of course) or the 24-hour café at the BP Service Station, where the food ain't exotic but it's available round the clock and eaten in a 1950s-style area with red vinyl booths.

EYRE HIGHWAY

London to Moscow, or Perth to Adelaide? There's not much difference, distance wise. The 2700km Eyre Hwy crosses the southern edge of the vast **Nullarbor Plain** – a place travellers seem to want to cross just to prove they can. Be prepared for an almost meditative drive that takes days and needs a damn good supply of water and plenty of compilation CDs. North of the Eyre Hwy, the **Trans-Australia Railway** runs across the Nullarbor. One stretch of the railway runs dead straight for 478km – the longest piece of straight railway line in the world.

John Eyre deserves having a highway named after him because he was the first of

BONZA BACKROADS – TO/FROM BALLADONIA TO ESPERANCE

For those travelling east across the Nullarbor, two back roads, which meet about 80km south of the Eyre Hwy, lead from east of Esperance to Balladonia. The **Balladonia Track** via Mt Ragged (299km total from Esperance) is a *really* rough 4WD route north of Cape Arid; heavy rain can close this road, so check before setting out, and be well prepared. The **Parmango Rd** (262km total from Esperance) starts at Condingup. It's bumpy but passable to 2WD when dry (watch out for bull-dust in the potholes), but becomes instantly impassable except for 4WD after rain; check its condition with DEC before heading out. It's a good bush road, with the possibility of brumbies and camels alongside the track and the old Balbinia Homestead 20km off the track. Enjoy the (interactive, if you choose) underwear artwork on the gates! There's no fuel or water on either of these roads, and **DEC** (☎ 08-9071 3733) in Esperance has a good set of informal notes – practicalities and history – on each.

his kind to cross the stretch in 1841. After a telegraph line was laid (1877), miners en route to the goldfields trekked across the vacuous plain under its negligible shade. In 1912 the first car made it across. By 1941 the rough-and-ready transcontinental highway carried a handful of vehicles a day. In 1969 the WA government surfaced the road as far as the South Australian border. Finally, in 1976, the last stretch was surfaced and now it runs close to the coast on the SA side, with the Nullarbor region ending dramatically at the cliffs of the Great Australian Bight.

From Norseman it's 725km to the South Australian border, near Eucla, and a further 480km to Ceduna (meaning 'a place to sit down and rest' in the local Aboriginal language) in SA. They aren't kidding! From Ceduna, it's still another 793km to Adelaide (a long day's drive) via Port Augusta.

Crossing the Nullarbor

Do outback rescue services a big favour and take some simple precautions if heading into the outback. This is not the place to run out of petrol: high fuel prices range from 15 to 30 cents a litre above city prices and the longest distance between fuel stops is about 200km. Carry some drinking water (an active adult needs 5L per day in hot weather) in the unfortunate case you do have to sit it out by the roadside. Getting help for a mechanical breakdown can be expensive and time consuming, so make sure your vehicle is in good shape, you've got good tyres and at least a basic kit of simple spare parts. Be sure to book ahead if you're going to break up the drive with an overnight stay at one of the roadhouses. Check out www.nullarbornet.com.au for more information.

Norseman to Eucla

The first settlement you reach from Norseman is **Balladonia**, 193km to the east. The **Balladonia Hotel Motel** (☎ 08-9039 3453; www.users.bigpond.com/balladonia; tent & caravan sites/dm \$13/17, s/d from \$85/99; 🚰 🚿) offers a decent plate of daily specials for \$13.

Balladonia to Cocklebidy, some 210km, is a lonely section. The first 160km to **Caiguna** includes one of the world's longest stretches of straight road – 145km, the so-called Ninety Mile Straight. If you can't face any more road, stay the night at the **John Eyre Motel** (☎ 08-9039 3459; tent/caravan sites \$12/18, s with/without bathroom \$83/58, d with/without bathroom \$99/73; 🚰).

There's a decent playground for kids and shaded picnic tables at **Cocklebidy**. The **Cocklebidy Wedgetail Inn** (☎ 08-9039 3462; tent/caravan sites \$13/19, standard s/d \$82/99; 🚰) has fuel, a licensed restaurant and snack bar; some budget rooms are also planned. Cocklebidy runs on Central Western time, 45 minutes ahead of Perth time, and 45 minutes behind Adelaide time.

Birds Australia's **Eyre Bird Observatory** (☎ 08-9039 3450; www.eyrebirds.org) is housed in the former Eyre Telegraph Station, which is located 50km south of Cocklebidy on the Bight. Day visitors are welcome (\$10 per vehicle), but the last 10km are soft sand and are 4WD accessible only. If you are in a 2WD and are over-nighting, the wardens will pick you up from the observatory car park, 14km off the Eyre Hwy; bookings are essential. Accommodation is \$85 per person per night and includes all meals; Birds Australia, YHA members and seniors get a discount.

Madura, 83km east of Cocklebidy, has a population of seven and is close to the Hampton Tablelands (just out of town is a scenic lookout). If you need a cool night's sleep, the

standard rooms at the **Madura Pass Oasis Inn** (☎ 08-9039 3464; tent/caravan sites \$12/20, budget s/d \$63/73, standard s/d \$84/105; 🚰 🚿) are air-conditioned, the camp site is shady and the pool is welcome in summer.

In **Mundrabilla**, 116km to the east, is the friendly **Mundrabilla Motel Hotel** (☎ 08-9039 3465; Eyre Hwy; motel s/d \$69/85; 🚰).

Just before the SA border is **Eucla**, surrounded by stunning sand dunes and pristine beaches. Around 5km south of town are the photogenic ruins of an old **telegraph station** (1877), gradually being engulfed by the dunes. Camp sites and spacious rooms are available at the **Eucla Motor Hotel** (☎ 08-9039 3468; tent/caravan sites \$6/18, budget s/d \$30/50, s/d with bathroom \$82/98; 🚰 🚿).

Eucla to Ceduna

See p771 for details of the section of highway between the border and Ceduna.

THE MIDLANDS & WHEATBELT

This massive rural region expands from the base of the Pilbara down to the Wheatbelt towns some 300km or so south of the Great Eastern Hwy. Visitors come to see its vast empty landscapes, glorious displays of spring wildflowers and dramatic geological formations, particularly the iconic Wave Rock (Map p931).

Getting There & Away

With your own wheels you can move at your own pace through the Central Wheatbelt towns on your way to the Goldfields. The **Perth-Goldfields Express** (☎ 1800 620 440; www.goldrushtours.com.au) calls in 10 times per week en route to or from Kalgoorlie. Leaving Perth at 7.45am, it stops at Cunderdin (two hours), Kellerberrin (2¼ hours), Merredin (three hours) and Southern Cross (five hours), arriving in Kalgoorlie at 3pm. On Sunday it leaves Perth at 2pm, arriving in Kalgoorlie at 9.15pm.

CUNDERDIN TO SOUTHERN CROSS

Sleepy **Cunderdin** (pop 1255), 156km from Perth, is a fine spot to stretch your legs. The visitors centre is handily situated in the **museum** (☎ 08-9635 1291; 100 Forrest St; entry by donation;

🕒 10am-4pm), which features a restored steam water pumping station on the old goldfields pipeline.

If you're looking to rest your head, do it with your tongue firmly in your cheek at Cunderdin's **Ettamogah Pub** (☎ 08-9635 1777; cunderdinp@westnet.com.au; 75 Main St; s/d \$70/80; 🚰). This wonky waterhole is a replica of an Albury-Wodonga hotel named after the pub that starred in Aussie cartoonist Ken Maynard's long-running comic for *Australasian Post* magazine. The Ettamogah does great-value counter meals and tasty steak sandwiches (\$9-20).

It's worth stopping at **Kellerberrin** (pop 1151), 203km from Perth, to take in the latest exhibition at the cutting-edge **International Artspace Kellerberrin Australia** (IASKA; ☎ 08-9228 2444; 88-90 Massingham St; admission free; 🕒 1-5pm Thu, Fri & Sun, 10am-5pm Sat). The **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9045 4006; www.kellerberrin.wa.gov.au; 110 Massingham St; 🕒 9am-4.30pm) has info on other attractions.

Merredin (pop 3428), 260km east of Perth, is a good place to refuel, and if you want a driving break the **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9041 1666; www.wheatbelttourism.com; Barrack St; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) has info on wildflower and town tours, and where to see 2500-million-year-old granite rock formations.

If you've done enough kilometres for one day, try Merredin's **Commercial Hotel** (☎ 08-9041 1052; commercialhotel@westnet.com.au; 62 Barrack St; s/d \$30/40) for basic rooms with shared bathroom or the agreeable **Merredin Caravan Park** (☎ /fax 08-9041 1535; 2 Oats St; unpowered/power sites \$18/22).

Southern Cross (pop 1200), 370km east of Perth, is the last Wheatbelt town and the first Goldfields town, making a fine living from both. Named after the stars which prospectors Tom Riseley and Mick Toomey used to guide them to discover gold here in 1888, Southern Cross was the state's first gold-rush town. Its spacious streets also inherited their names from stars and constellations. The **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9049 1001; www.southern-cross.info; Shire of Yilgarn, Antares St; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) can organise bush tours and make transport bookings.

WAVE ROCK & HYDEN

☎ 08 / pop 190

Perfectly shaped like a wave about to break, the 15m-high and 110m-long multicoloured granite **Wave Rock** is worth the 350km journey from Perth – we dare you not to strike a surfing

pose on this rock of a wave! Formed some 60 million years ago by weathering and water erosion, Wave Rock's wonderful streaks of colour that flow down its face have been caused by run-off from local mineral water springs.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9880 5182; Wave Rock; ☹ 9am-5pm), at the Wildflower Shoppe and Country Kitchen, has plenty of information and souvenirs and can organise Aboriginal cultural tours.

If you plan to stay, make sure you phone ahead – accommodation can fill with tour groups. Camp amid the gum trees near the rock at **Wave Rock Resort & Caravan Park** (☎ 9880 5022; waverock@waverock.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites \$22/25, cabins \$85, linen \$12; 📶).

In **Hyden**, 4km east, the **Wave Rock Motel** (☎ 9880 5052; hotelmotel@waverock.com.au; 2 Lynch St; d \$117; 📶 📶) has well-equipped rooms, a comfy lounge with fireplace, and an indoor bush bistro. The **Hyden visitors centre** (☎ 9880 5182; 20 Marshall St; ☹ 9am-5pm) has information on local wildflower specialities, including stunning spring orchids.

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205) runs a bus from Perth to Hyden every Tuesday (\$42, five hours), with the return service to Perth each Thursday.

OTHER WHEATBELT TOWNS

Narrogin (population 4500), 189km southeast of Perth, is an agricultural centre with a **court-house museum** (☎ 08-9881 2064; Egerton St; ☹ 9.30am-

4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-noon Sat). The **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9881 2064) is next door.

Eucalypt woodlands once covered most of the Wheatbelt. Some 26km north of Narrogin is the magnificent **Dryandra Woodland**, the remnants of an environment in which numbats, many species of birds and wildflowers survive today. For the full escapist experience, stay at the 1920s forestry settlement of **Lions Dryandra Village** (☎ 08-9884 5231; www.dryandravillage.org.au; mid-week child/adult \$10/25, weekends & holidays 2-4/-8-12-person cabins \$50/75/100), 8km from the animal enclosure, in rustic woodcutters' cabins.

Wickepin, about 45km northeast of Narrogin, is the setting of *A Fortunate Life*, the much-loved, school-of-hard-knocks autobiography of Albert Facey. The **Albert Facey Homestead** (☎ 08-9888 1005; Wogolin Rd; adult/child \$3/1; ☹ 10am-4pm Mar-Nov, Fri, Sat & Sun Dec-Feb) is worth a visit for anyone who's read it.

Rammin' home Australia's record in the area of kitsch big things is the 9m-high fibreglass merino, 228km southeast of Perth in **Wagin** (population 1350). It has a rival in Goulburn, New South Wales (see p247). The visitors centre is at **Wagin Historical Village** (☎ 08-9861 1232; Showground Rd).

Kojonup (pop 2119), 39km southwest of Katanning, was established in 1837 as a military outpost to protect travellers taking the mail run from the Swan Settlement (Perth) to Albany. Still a popular pie stop on the

A FORTUNATE LIFE

The story of AB Facey (1894–1982) is a remarkable and heartrending one. Before Facey turned two his father died and his mother abandoned him soon after, leaving his grandmother to raise him until he was eight – at which time he went off to work.

Spent mainly working in the outback of WA as a farm labourer, his tough childhood saw him cheated by employers and one time whipped so badly that he was presumed to be on his deathbed. Later he fought in a boxing troupe before signing up to fight in WWI, landing at Gallipoli where two of his brothers were killed.

Facey was badly injured in WWI, struggled through the Great Depression and lost a son in WWII. However, his optimism rarely wavered. Facey didn't teach himself to write until his return from Gallipoli, but after this he kept copious notes about his experiences. He only stopped writing after the death of Evelyn, his wife of nearly 60 years. In 1979, at the age of 85, Facey had his manuscript accepted for publication by the Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

His autobiography, *A Fortunate Life*, was released in 1981 and Facey passed away nine months later, just long enough for him to see how deeply affecting the book was to anyone who read it. Apart from its emotional resonance, it's an important historical document, as Facey experienced many of the significant events that helped shape Australia's cultural identity. While he saw his life as a fortunate one, Australia is more fortunate that AB Facey so simply yet so powerfully documented his life and the events that helped shaped a nation.

BLOOMING WILDFLOWERS

WA is famed for its 8000 species of wildflower, which bloom in greatest numbers between August and October. Even some of the driest regions put on a colourful display after a little rainfall, and at any time of the year.

The southwest has over 3000 species, many of which are unique to this region. They're commonly known as everlastings because the petals stay attached after the flowers have died. You can find flowers almost everywhere in the state, but the jarrah forests in the southwest are particularly rich. Coastal national parks such as Fitzgerald River and Kalbarri also have brilliant displays, as do the Stirling Ranges. Near Perth, the Badgingarra, Alexander Morrison, Yanchep and John Forrest National Parks are excellent choices. There's also a wildflower display in Kings Park, Perth. As you go further north, they tend to flower earlier in the season. Common flowering plants include various species of banksia, wattle, mountain bell, Sturt's desert pea, kangaroo paw and many orchids.

Perth–Albany drive, Kojonup has a cutting-edge museum, the interactive **Kodja Place Interpretive Centre** (☎ 08-9831 0500; www.kodjaplace.net.au, www.kojonupvisitors.com; Albany Hwy; adult/child \$6/3; ☹ 9am-5pm). You can sit around a Noongar campfire, ride an old school bus and drive a farm ute. Noongar guide Jack Cox also offers excellent indigenous cultural tours (\$5).

WILDFLOWER WAY

Between August and October, one of the best places to see WA's famous carpet of wildflowers is in the Midlands area north of Perth, where three roads run roughly parallel towards Geraldton. This area is notable for its varieties of everlasting daisy, kangaroo paw, foxgloves, wattles, featherflowers, banksias and the gorgeous low-lying wreath *Leschenaultia* (see also the boxed text, above). Multi-day tours are available, but only botany freaks would enjoy them – most folk are better off with their own wheels and planning their own blooming adventure.

Notable stops along the Brand Hwy between Midland and Dongara include **Moore River National Park**, **Badgingarra National Park**, **Coomallo Nature Reserve** and **Lesueur National Park**, which requires a 4WD. Towns along the way include Cataby, Badgingarra and Eneabba. This road also connects you to the Pinnacles and several coastal towns, which have the area's best accommodation; see p945.

From Bindoon on the Great Northern Hwy, the Midland Rd heads to Dongara, passing **Alexander Morrison National Park**, **Capamauro Nature Reserve** and **Depot Hill Reserve**, and the towns of Moora, Watheroo, Coorow and Mingenew. The **Yarra Yarra Lakes**, near Carnamah, are noted for their bird life.

The stretch between Wubin, on the Great Northern Hwy, and Mullewa, east of Geraldton, has fewer formal wildflower areas, but there's plenty to see in the fields and along the verges as you drive. The surrounds of the tiny towns of **Mullewa**, **Moora**, **Morawa**, **Wongan Hills** and **Perenjori** are the best places to look.

Pick up a free copy of the *Wildflower Holiday Guide* from the **Western Australian Visitors Centre** (☎ 1300 361 351, 9483 1111; www.westernaustralia.com; cnr Forest Pl & Wellington St, Perth) for more information, or pop into the local visitors centres.

GREAT NORTHERN HIGHWAY

Stretching from Perth to Port Hedland via a succession of small mining and agricultural towns, this highway is the quickest way to get up north. It's also the designated route for long-haul road trains, so be prepared for gruesome roadkill. On the city's outskirts, Perth's suburban spaces are quickly replaced by gently undulating pastureland dotted with eucalypts; but you've really left the urban grime behind when you hit the red dirt scrubland that characterises the Pilbara. New Norcia, with its monastic heritage and fabulous pub, is an excellent place to stay overnight. Unless you're in a hurry or have a love of mining towns, the coastal road has more sights. The highlight is the awesome gorge country of Karijini National Park, which is worth a couple of days' exploration.

Getting There & Away

Integrity (☎ 1800 226 339) has a service along the Great Northern that leaves Perth on Thursdays.

It passes through New Norcia (\$20, two hours), Mt Magnet (\$80, seven hours), Cue (\$90, eight hours) and Meekatharra (\$105, 10 hours).

Transwa (☎ 13 1053) coaches leave Perth on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday, arriving in New Norcia two hours later; they return to Perth on Tuesday and Thursday (\$20).

NEW NORCIA

☎ 08 / pop 51

The splendid monastery settlement of New Norcia, 132km from Perth, consists of a cluster of ornate Spanish-style buildings set incongruously in the Australian bush. Established in 1846 by Spanish Benedictine monks as an Aboriginal mission, today the working monastery holds prayers and retreats, alongside a multimillion-dollar business producing boutique breads and gourmet goodies.

New Norcia Museum & Art Gallery (☎ 9654 8056; www.newnorcia.com; Great Northern Hwy; combined museum, tour & tastings ticket adult/child \$23/12; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Aug-Oct, 10am-4.30pm Nov-Jul) traces the intriguing history of the monastery and houses impressive art, including works by Charles Blackman and Pro Hart, and one of the country's largest collections of post-Renaissance religious art. The gift shop sells kitsch souvenirs (dig those monk figurines!), Abbey Wines, cold-pressed olive oils, honeys, preserves, Pan Choccolatti, *biscotti*, nutcakes and over 20 different types of breads baked in the monks' 100-year-old wood-fired oven.

Guided **town tours** (adult/child \$13/6; ☎ 9am, 11am & 1.30pm) enable you to get a look inside the monk's private chapel within the monastery, the abbey chapel and the frescoed college chapels; purchase tickets from the museum. **Meet a Monk** (adult/child \$13/6; ☎ 10.30am Mon-Fri, 4.30pm Sat) gives you the chance to find out what it's like to be a monk. Choral concerts and organ recitals are also held.

The grand **New Norcia Hotel** (☎ 9654 8034; hotel@newnorcia.com; Great Northern Hwy; s/d without bathroom incl breakfast \$70/85) has sweeping staircases, high ceilings and atmospheric public spaces. The understated rooms open onto an enormous veranda. An international menu (\$18 to \$25) is available at the bar or in the elegant dining room.

You can also stay at the **Monastery Guesthouse** (☎ 9654 8002; guesthouse@newnorcia.wa.edu.au; full board \$75) within the walls of the southern cloister, in gender-segregated rooms.

NEW NORCIA TO NEWMAN

More than 400km to the north of New Norcia is **Mt Magnet** (pop 1180), where mining is the town's lifeblood. Some 11km north of town are the ruins of **Lennonville**. Approximately 80km further north is the old gold-mining town of **Cue** (pop 350), the route's architectural highlight. It's a pretty little town of stone buildings, corrugated-tin roofs and a sense of time gone by. **Walga Rock** (see the boxed text, opposite), 48km to the west, has a gallery of Aboriginal art, and **Wilgie Mia**, 64km northwest of Cue via Glen Station, is the site of a 30,000-year-old Aboriginal red-ochre quarry.

Another 116km north of Cue, **Meekatharra** makes a good refuel and stretch stop. Further north, the mining town of **Newman** is an incongruous piece of modern suburbia. It's bland, but has all the facilities and is the place to stock up for further travels. The swish **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9175 2888; www.newman-wa.org; Fortescue Ave; ☎ 9am-5pm, shorter hr Oct-Apr) has excellent books on indigenous culture, Australian history, and travel (including Lonely Planet guides). The friendly staff can provide information, book accommodation and get you on tours to the enormous open-cut **Mt Whaleback iron-ore mine** (adult/child \$10/7; ☎ 8.30am & 10.30am Apr-Oct) to see some colossal equipment and one seriously big hole (book ahead).

Sleeping & Eating

Outback Gold (☎ 08-9963 4433; 12 Scott Close, Mt Magnet; dongas \$35, s/d without bathroom \$55/66, s/d self-contained unit \$77/88; ☎) Miners and backpackers exchange stories in the communal kitchen and BBQ areas at this good-value place.

Mt Magnet Caravan Park (☎ 08-9963 4198; Hepburn St, Mt Magnet; unpowered/poweredsites \$12/17) Can provide a patch of dirt to park for the night.

Queen of the Murchison Hotel (☎ 08-9963 1625; Austin St, Cue; s/d \$77/110; ☎) This classic hotel received a multimillion-dollar facelift a few years ago, but while its rooms are cosy and clean, the teddy bears and dolls scattered about the hotel are somewhat disconcerting.

Murchison Club Hotel (☎ 08-9963 1020; Austin St, Cue; hotel s/d without bathroom \$60/85, motel s/d \$88/110; ☎) Budget rooms upstairs and hearty counter meals (mains \$16 to \$28).

Cue Caravan Park (☎ 08-9963 1107; Austin St, Cue; unpowered/poweredsites \$15/18) This dusty caravan park has basic facilities.

Commercial Hotel (☎ 08-9981 1020; 77 Main St, Meekatharra; hotel s/d without bathroom \$35/45, motel s/d

BONZA BACKROADS – FROM CUE TO A VIEW

From Cue, with a 4WD, you can take the red sand road to the massive red granite monolith of **Walga Rock**, also known as Walganna, 48km west of Cue. This mini-Uluru is a significant Aboriginal-art site – *walga* means 'ochre painting' in the local Warragi language – with an impressive 'gallery' of 10,000-year-old desert-style paintings of animals, hands and, mysteriously, a sailing ship. Along the way you'll see plenty of eagles, emus, kangaroos and wild goats.

\$75/90) Great-value and well-maintained motel rooms, and delicious counter meals (\$10 to \$22) – the burgers and steaks are memorable. **Meekatharra Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9981 1253; Main St, Meekatharra; powered sites s/d \$75/85, d cabins \$70) Tents pay for powered sites here.

Seasons Hotel Newman (☎ 08-9177 8666; www.seasonshotel.com.au; Newman Dr, Newman; budget s/d \$46/64, motel d/tr/f \$147/162/174; ☎) The best option in town and a rather smart motel for these parts, with spotless, comfortable rooms, a contemporary-designed restaurant, and an inviting pool among tropical gardens.

Dearlove's Caravan Park (☎ 08-9175 2802; Cowra Dr, Newman; unpowered/poweredsites \$18/24, cabins \$80; ☎) A sprawling, shady, central park with decent facilities, including a campers kitchen and gas BBQs.

Red Sands Tavern (☎ 08-9177 8866; Newman Dr, Newman; mains \$15-26) Hearty counter meals keep the locals happy – as do the pool tables and occasional live bands.

KARIJINI NATIONAL PARK

Given its breathtaking gorges, spectacular waterfalls, idyllic swimming holes, stunning wildflowers and myriad wildlife, it's no wonder that Karijini National Park, just 50km or so east of Tom Price, is the region's most popular attraction.

Most of Karijini's splendid attractions are easily accessible, located in the park's north, off the 67km-long Banyjima Dr. The quality of this unsealed road varies, depending on how deep into the tourist season it is; it's not easy-going for conventional vehicles and it's advisable to do it in a 4WD. Entry is the standard national park fee of \$10/4 per car/bus passenger.

The state-of-the-art Karijini **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9189 8121; Banyjima Dr; ☎ 9am-4pm, 10am-4pm in the Wet), in the northeastern corner of the park, is managed by the traditional owners of Karijini, the Banyjima, and it's a stunner! The slick interpretive displays give a thought-provoking overview of the natural and cultural history of the park, and is well worth an hour or two of your time.

Make sure you get a copy of DEC's *Karijini: Visitor Information & Walk Trail Guide* here. It's important to choose the walks to suit your level of fitness, and take care: the trails through the park are more dangerous than they appear – particularly after rain when they get slippery, and flash flooding can occur.

Entering Banyjima Dr from the east, you soon reach the turn-off to beautiful **Dales Gorge**, where you can camp. A short, sharp descent takes you to **Fortescue Falls**, the beautiful swimming hole of **Fern Pool**, and through to **Circular Pool**, where there's a pleasant walk along the cliff top.

From Kalimina Rd a 30-minute walk takes you into the depths of **Kalimina Gorge**, where there's a small tranquil pool. Another 11km along is Joffre Falls Rd that leads to **Knox Gorge**, passing the lookout over the spectacular **Joffre Falls**.

The final turn-off is Weano Rd, which takes you to the park's signature attraction, the breathtaking **Oxers Lookout**, where there are extraordinary views of the junction of the Red, Weano, Joffre and Hancock Gorges. It's one of WA's most spectacular sights.

While it's technically possible to climb down into **Hancock Gorge** from here, locals advise against it, and guides will no longer take you. You'll notice a touching memorial to Jim Regan, a volunteer SES rescuer who died on 3 April 2004 rescuing a couple of backpackers here. Unfortunately, even the most experienced people can get themselves into trouble, particularly if there's a flash flood as there was on that day. And sadly other people can die trying to save them.

Other attractions include **Hammersley Gorge** off Nanutarra-Wittenoom Rd in the park's northwest and **Wittenoom** (see the boxed text, p945).

Tours

Given Karijini's remote location and unforgiving roads, you might want to head here on

a tour. Local company **Lestok Tours** (☎ 08-9189 2032; www.lestoktours.com.au; full day Karijini \$130, 1.5hr Pilbara Iron Mine \$19) runs comprehensive tours to Karijini from Tom Price that get consistently good feedback.

Sleeping & Eating

Auski Tourist Village (☎ 08-9176 6988; Great Northern Hwy; s/d \$45/50, motel d \$120; 🍴) On the highway, 35km north of the Karijini Dr turn-off, this convenient option serves typical roadhouse fare. The Greyhound bus stops here.

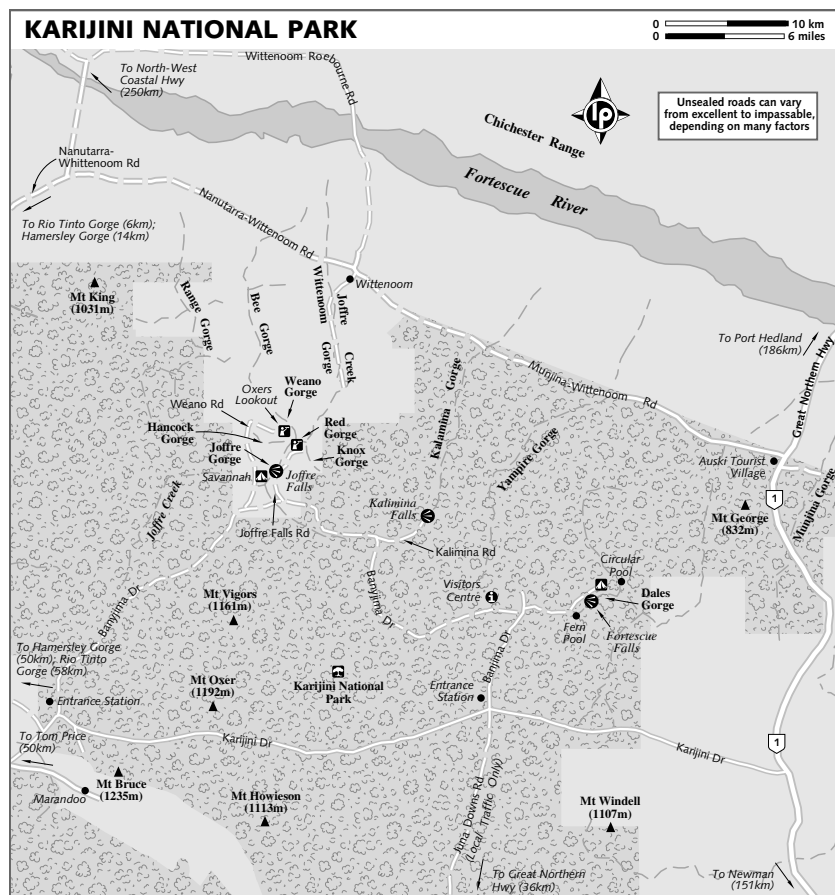
Within Karijini there are two basic **camping grounds** (☎ 08-9189 8157; sites \$12), one at Dales Gorge and the other at Savannah, about 4km up Weano Rd, although at the time of research Savannah was undergoing

redevelopment to construct luxury-tented accommodation.

Getting There & Away

Most travellers will make their way here on their own wheels, the best way to explore the region. Access to the Karijini National Park is via Karijini Dr, which leaves the Great Northern Hwy 226km south of Port Hedland and 162km northwest of Newman. Greyhound buses stop at the Auski Tourist Village, 35km north of the turn-off, on Saturday.

The unsealed Pilbara Rail Rd takes you between Tom Price and Karratha, but it's a private road and you must get a (free) permit from the visitors centres at **Tom Price** (☎ 08-9188 1112; 497 Sirius St) or **Karratha** (☎ 08-9144 4600; Karratha Rd).



WHISPER QUIET WITTENOOM

The drive into the town of Wittenoom along the Munjina–Wittenoom road takes you past some spectacular views of the Hamersley Range. It's eerily quiet here, but in its heyday of the 1950s Wittenoom was a prosperous mining town and at one stage the biggest in the region. Between 1937 and 1966 blue asbestos, or crocidolite, was mined here. Blue asbestos was seen as a remarkable material – strong, heat resistant, with excellent flame-retardant and insulating properties, and a high resistance to chemicals. There was only one problem: the asbestos dust fibres were making people ill.

While the potential danger was known internationally as early as the 1920s, it wasn't until workers started dying of mesothelioma – a rare lung cancer – that the mines were closed. Since 1979 the WA government has tried to shut Wittenoom down – in the past by bulldozing empty buildings and turning off the water supply, and most recently by cutting the power.

Local tourism offices are told not to promote Wittenoom as a tourism destination, due to the risk of visitors stirring up and inhaling asbestos fibres – which are too small to be seen. Shutting the town down will reduce the risk of visitors contracting a lethal disease; however, the questions about the long-term future of Wittenoom will need to be answered. Simply trying to wipe the town off the map doesn't adequately give closure to the many of the mine's workers and former residents who are facing a long, slow death. If you are curious and want to see for yourself, keep your windows closed on windy days and avoid disturbing asbestos tailings.

CENTRAL WEST COAST

The sunny Central West Coast extends north from the seaside fishing towns of Dongara-Port Denison on the Batavia Coast through splendid Shark Bay to fertile Carnarvon and the arid Gascoyne region. It's an enormous area incorporating scenery as varied as rugged coastline, rolling green country, craggy bushland and tropical plantations.

The windswept Batavia Coast and fishing town of Geraldton is beloved by windsurfers and anglers. Sun worshippers are happier heading to the beaches of Monkey Mia or Kalbarri, which has the added attraction of a stunning national park surrounding it, with deep river gorges and steep sea cliffs, awash with wonderful wildflowers in spring.

Shark Bay's World Heritage listing recognises its unique natural conditions – pristine turquoise waters, submerged seagrass meadows, and prolific marine life and wildlife. Famous for Monkey Mia's visiting dolphins and its large dugong population, and, more significantly for geologists, its ancient stromatolites, the area also has a rich Aboriginal history and culture that's equally as precious.

Getting There & Away

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088) links Perth with Carnarvon daily and has several daily flights from Perth to Geraldton, with a link to Exmouth.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 1499) has daily buses between Perth and Dongara (\$44, 5½ hours), Geraldton (\$50, six hours), Overlander Roadhouse (for Denham and Monkey Mia; \$149, 10¾ hours) and Carnarvon (\$139, 13 hours). The Perth to Kalbarri (\$108, eight hours) service runs three times weekly. **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205) follows three routes to Geraldton: via the Brand Hwy, Mullewa and Mingenew.

JURIEN BAY TO DONGARA-PORT DENISON

A newish road runs straight up the coast from Cervantes, passing through the small coastal towns of **Jurien Bay**, **Green Head** and **Leeman** on the way to Dongara-Port Denison. Stop off at the Molah Hill Lookout, 11km north of Cervantes, to drink in some truly awesome 360-degree views of the countryside. (It's wheelchair accessible too.)

Apart from an unbroken run of magnificent white-sand beaches and great fishing, the main attractions are the **Lesueur National Park**, which is home to one of the most diverse and rich wildflower areas of WA (access is via a 4WD track off Cockleshell Gully Rd), and excellent tours to Australian sea-lion populations on offshore islands.

You can snorkel with sea lions and watch humpback whales migrate south (September to December) with **Jurien Sealion Charters** (☎ 08-9652 1109; www.juriencharters.com; Jurien Marina; 2½hr sea lion tour adult/child \$80/40).

The popular local watering hole, **Jurien Bay Hotel Motel** (☎ 08-9652 1022; jurienhotel@wn.com.au; 5 White St; s/d \$80/95; ♿ ♿), has comfy, spotlessly clean motel rooms out back, with the added bonus of tempting fresh crayfish on the menu.

Pitch your tent or camp your van on the very edge of the beach at the **Jurien Bay Tourist Park** (☎ 08-9652 1595; www.jurienbaytouristpark.com.au; Roberts St; unpowered/powerd sites \$23/25, d on-site vans \$70, 1-/2-bedroom chalets \$110/140) then cook your own freshly caught fish in the campers kitchens.

DONGARA-PORT DENISON

☎ 08 / pop 3000

The tranquil seaside towns of Dongara and Port Denison, 359km from Perth, are treasured for their pristine beaches and laid-back atmosphere. Dongara's charming main street, Moreton Tce, is shaded by its beloved century-old fig trees, which set this old town apart from its younger sibling. There are superlative beaches for swimming, surfing, fishing and strolling, such as South Beach, Seaspray Beach and Surf Beach.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 9927 1404; www.irwin.wa.gov.au/tourism; 9 Waldeck St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) is in Dongara's old post office. Moreton Tce has several banks with ATMs and a **telecentre** (☎ 9927 2111; 11 Moreton Tce; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri).

Pick up the *Walk Dongara-Denison* brochure from the visitors centre and choose from 12 historic- or nature-based rambles. Wildlife-lovers should amble the **Irwin River Nature Trail** for black swans, pelicans and cormorants.

Wonderful historic buildings include restored **Russ Cottage** (Pt Leander Dr; adult/child \$3; ☎ 10am-noon Sun), built in the late 1860s, with a kitchen floor made from compacted anthills, and the sandstone **Royal Steam Flour Mill** (Brand Hwy). Its steam engines ground wheat from surrounding farms between 1894 and 1935. In the old police station, the cells of the **Irwin District Museum** (☎ 9927 1404; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) hold interesting historical displays.

Denison Beach Marina brims with boats that haul crayfish, the towns' livelihood. Join the tours of the bustling **Live Lobster Logistics Centre** (☎ 2pm Nov-Jan) in season and enjoy the gorgeous views from the **Fisherman's Lookout Obelisk** at Port Denison.

Sleeping & Eating

Midcoast Dongara Backpackers (☎ 9927 1581; dongarabackpack@westnet.com.au; 32 Waldeck St, Dongara; dm/s/d \$20/30/50, train s/d/carriage \$20/50/90) The highlight of this friendly, relaxed hostel, with pleasant gardens, is the opportunity to stay in an atmospheric 1906 train carriage – it's very cool! And a great deal if a group of friends rent the whole thing (they sleep up to eight people).

Port Denison Holiday Units (☎ 9927 2544; 14 Carnarvon St; Port Denison; d \$90; ♿) These spotless, spacious units are just a block from the beach; ask for a room at the back with marina views.

our pick Priory Lodge (☎ 9927 1090; priory@dodo.com.au; 11 St Dominics Rd, Dongara; d/f \$70/90; ♿) The Priory Lodge started life as a hotel in 1881, before being bought by the Dominican sisters in 1890 to serve as a nunnery and, from 1928, a ladies college. Today it boasts charming period furniture, polished floorboards, wonderful old black-and-white photos, and wide verandas. There's a big swimming pool, leafy grounds, and an atmospheric restaurant and bar to relax in as well.

Dongara Denison Beach Holiday Park (☎ 9927 1131; www.dbeachholidaypark.com; 250 Ocean Dr, Port Denison; unpowered/powerd sites \$30/35, on-site vans/chalets \$80/135) Waterfront chalets have splendid sea views of the beach just a few steps away, but equally impressive are the van sites with power/TV sockets, private bathrooms and storage! Discounts midweek.

Southerleys (☎ 9927 2207; Point Leander Dr, Port Denison; mains \$17-28; ☎ noon-2pm & 6pm-late) Soak up the rays on the sun terrace while you enjoy fresh seafood at this casual seafood bistro. Licensed and BYO.

Toko's (☎ 9927 1497; 38 Moreton Tce, Dongara; mains \$16-25; ☎ Wed-Sun) This rustic corner BYO restaurant does great global standards for lunch and dinner, from Asian snacks (samosas, tempura etc) to Italian pastas, plus seasonal seafood. Try the local farmed marron with honey, chilli and ginger sauce (\$15).

GREENOUGH

☎ 08 / pop 100

Historic, windswept Greenough was an active administrative centre in its 1860s heyday. Its traditional stone buildings have been preserved at the charming **Central Greenough Historic Settlement** (☎ 9926 1084; Brand Hwy; adult/child/family \$5/3/12; ☎ 9am-4pm), which also serves as a visitors centre. Buy the *Greenough Walka-*

way Heritage Trail booklet (\$4) to get the most out of your meander around the atmospheric hamlet. The visitors centre has a stylish café serving light meals and delicious cakes; it also sells local products, from beeswax candles to handmade soaps, and houses a slick interpretative display.

The **Pioneer Museum** (☎ 9926 1058; Phillips Rd; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 10am-4pm) re-creates a day in the life of an 1880s homestead with kitsch displays featuring mannequins representing the Maley family, the original owners.

Hampton Arms Inn (☎ 9926 1057; hamptonarms@westnet.com.au; Company Rd; s/d \$65/85) is a classic Aussie inn (1863) with delightfully old-fashioned rooms, a cluttered bookshop crammed with rare and out-of-print books, a quaint restaurant (mains \$21 to \$32), and one of those old bars you don't want to leave.

Transwa (☎ 1300 6622 05) services along the Kalbarri-Geraldton route stop at Greenough on the Brand Hwy daily.

GERALDTON

☎ 08 / pop 19,054

Capital of the midwest, Geraldton has a unique ambience that we attribute to its odd combination of architecture – classic 19th-century pubs, a European-influenced cathedral, faded 1950s rural vernacular architecture and sleek contemporary design. Ultimately, though, it still feels like a seaside holiday town, especially when you spot the candy-striped lighthouse, set your eyes on the catch of the day, wander the windswept beaches – a paradise for wind- and kitesurfers – and breathe in that salty sea air.

Information

There are several banks with ATMs along the main street, Marine Tce.

Book Tree (176 Marine Tce; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Scour the floor-to-ceiling shelves of preloved books for some road-reading.

Cup of Life Book Café (☎ 9965 5088; Marine Tce Mall; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Good selection of books, kids' playpen, café and internet terminals.

Geraldton Regional Hospital (☎ 9956 2222; Shenton St) Has 24-hour emergency facilities.

Visitors centre (☎ 9921 3999; www.geraldtontourist.com.au; Bill Sewell Complex, Chapman Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) There's lots of great info here and the helpful staff will book accommodation, tours and transport.

Sights & Activities

The slick, regional **Western Australian Museum Geraldton** (☎ 9921 5080; www.museum.wa.gov.au; 1 Museum Pl; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4pm) is unmissable. Its Midwest Gallery has engaging displays on the area's indigenous, pioneer, natural, social and economic histories, while the wonderful Shipwreck Gallery documents the tragic story of the *Batavia* (see the boxed text, p953). The museum shop has an excellent range of books.

The elaborate **Cathedral of St Francis Xavier** (Cathedral Ave) is the finest example of the architectural achievements of the multiskilled Monsignor Hawes. Construction began in 1916, but the plans were so grandiose for what was essentially a country-town church that it wasn't completed until 1938. Its most striking features include imposing twin towers with arched openings, a central dome, Romanesque columns and boldly striped walls.

Geraldton Regional Art Gallery (☎ 9964 7170; 24 Chapman Rd; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, 1-4pm Sun) has an excellent permanent collection, including paintings by Norman Lindsay and Elizabeth Durack, provocative contemporary work and engaging changing exhibitions.

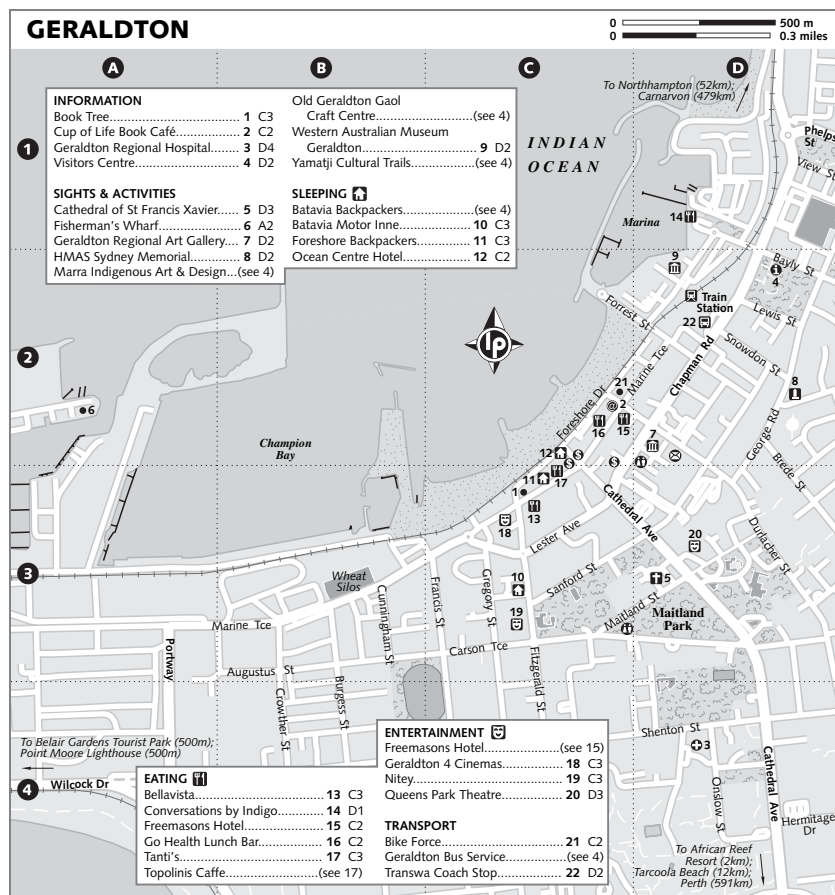
Yamatji Cultural Trails (☎ 9956 1126; www.yamatji.culturaltrail.com.au) will open your eyes to the customs, traditional practices, history and contemporary issues affecting the midwest's indigenous Yamatji people. The 2½-day tours take in significant sites around Geraldton, and you get to sleep under the stars and hear Dreamtime stories.

If you want to take a bit of Yamatji culture home with you, check out **Marra Indigenous Art & Design** (☎ 9965 3440; www.marra.com.au; Bill Sewell Complex, Chapman Rd; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which sells vibrant paintings, woven bowls, wooden artefacts, didgeridoos, beaded necklaces and CDs.

Old Geraldton Gaol Craft Centre (☎ 9921 1614; Bill Sewell Complex, Chapman Rd; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm) has local crafts for sale, but more compelling are the gloomy cells that housed prisoners from 1858 to 1986, and the historic documents detailing their grim circumstances.

At **Fisherman's Wharf** (☎ 9921 3999; Geraldton Harbour; tours adult/child \$5/3; ☎ 9.30am Mon-Fri Nov-Jun) you can do a tour following the lobsters' journey from fishing boat to restaurant table and buy fresh seafood from the market.

The striking monument on the hill overlooking town is the **HMAS Sydney Memorial**



(signposted from George St), commemorating the 1941 loss of the ship and its 645 men after a skirmish with a German ship.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Batavia Backpackers (☎ 9964 3001; Bill Sewell Complex, Chapman Rd; dm/s/d \$18/22/38; ☑) While it can't compete with Foreshore Backpackers, its location in a beautiful building behind the visitors centre makes it a convenient choice if you're arriving by bus, although reception hours are limited (8.30am to 11.30am and 3pm to 7pm).

Foreshore Backpackers (☎ 9921 3275; 172 Marine Tce; dm/s/d/tr \$22/30/50/50; ☑) The charm of this elegant old building with its high ceilings and

wooden floors, and the manager's thoughtful touches such as a lovely old water jug or flowers on the sideboard, are appealing. But then there's the central location, great sea views, budget tours, a BBQ area, hammocks, big kitchen and a games room with pool tables.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

African Reef Resort (☎ 9964 5566; www.africanreef.com.au; 5 Broadhead Ave; s/d from \$95/115; ☑) If you have a car this beautiful Tarcoola Beach location, just a five-minute drive into town, won't bother you at all, especially when you see the sweeping coastal vistas! The self-contained rooms are the best bet – ask for ocean views.

Batavia Motor Inne (☎ 1800 014 628, 9921 3500; 54 Fitzgerald St; d \$98, self-contained r \$110; ☑) A

typical Aussie motel, the Batavia has spacious, clean and comfortable rooms with tea and coffee facilities and TV, and self-contained rooms with kitchens.

Ocean Centre Hotel (☎ 9921 7777; www.oceancentrehotel.com.au; cnr Foreshore Dr & Cathedral Ave; standard/deluxe/deluxe with view \$110/120/150; ☑) The spacious rooms, sunset views from the balcony, convenient central location and high-speed in-room internet (although it costs) go some way to make up for the curt service.

CAMPING

Belair Gardens Tourist Park (☎ 9921 1997; www.belairbig4geraldton.com.au; Wilcock Dr; unpowered/powerd sites \$19/23, cabins \$55; ☑) Just by the lighthouse and across from Point Moore beach, this shady park has great facilities, including campers kitchen, BBQ area and tennis court.

Eating & Drinking

Go Health Lunch Bar (☎ 9965 5200; 122 Marine Tce; light meals \$5-13; ☑) Fresh juices and smoothies, excellent espresso, and healthy sandwiches and light meals are served over the cool corrugated-iron counter of this friendly café.

Bellavista (☎ 9964 2681; cnr Marine Tce & Cathedral Ave; meals \$7-19; ☑) 10am-9pm Tue-Sat) Former Melbourne John Todaro brings some badly needed city style and authentic Italian – filling focaccias, delicious risottos and handmade pasta (try the prawn linguini) – to Geraldton.

Tanti's (☎ 9964 2311; 174 Marine Tce; mains \$8-20; ☑) lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) This casual BYO restaurant is packed every night with regulars who keep returning for their tasty Thai favourites. Takeaway also available.

Topolinis Caffe (☎ 9964 5866; 158 Marine Tce; mains \$11-30; ☑) 8.30am-late) The home-style Italian at this relaxed licensed eatery keeps the locals happy, along with the \$26 dinner and movie deal and half-price pasta on Monday.

Freemasons Hotel (☎ 9964 3467; cnr Marine Tce & Durlacher St; meals \$12-32; ☑) 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) This classic old Aussie pub has a modern brasserie with seafood, steak and Asian dishes – to varying degrees of success. There are great WA beers like the honeyed Beez Neez on tap and a decent wine list.

Conversations by Indigo (☎ 9965 0800; Bayly St, Batavia Coast Marina; mains \$14-32; ☑) 10am-late Mon-Sat, 8am-late Sun) In a stunning contemporary build-

HAWES' HOLY HERITAGE TRAIL

The architect and priest Monsignor John Hawes is a distinctive and enigmatic figure in the region's history. Born in Surrey, England, in 1876, Hawes showed a love of architecture at an early age, later studying the subject and becoming intrigued by the Arts and Crafts Movement, which eschewed the complexities of Victorian style for a more organic simplicity – ideas which later served Hawes well.

On the cusp of a successful career in 1901, Hawes converted to the Anglican faith, became ordained in 1903 and was called to the Bahamas, where he utilised his architectural skills in rebuilding storm-damaged churches. Another dramatic conversion, to Catholicism, saw Hawes ordained as a Catholic priest a couple of years later. While studying in Rome, Hawes met the Bishop of Geraldton and arrived in Australia in 1915 to work as the Murchison goldfields pastor. Working tirelessly for the next 24 years as a parish priest at Mullewa and Greenough, he also designed 24 buildings – 16 of which were realised.

His notable buildings include the **Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel** and **Priest House** in Mullewa, the **Church of the Holy Cross** in Morawa and the **Church of St Joseph** in Perenjori (all Midland towns along the Wildflower Way, see p941), along with the imposing **Cathedral of St Francis Xavier** (p947) in Geraldton. Working on these buildings was often a struggle for Hawes, as skilled labour and materials were hard to come by, and in many instances the tenacious monsignor did much of the building himself.

Hawes was never completely at home in Australia and harboured a yearning to return to the Bahamas. Under the pretext of taking a sabbatical in Europe, Hawes left Australia in 1939 and headed for the Bahamas, where he lived on the remote island of Cat as a virtual recluse until he was moved to a hospital in Miami, where he died in 1956. His body was taken back to his final construction – the tomb he had built on Cat Island.

The *Monsignor Hawes Heritage Trail* pamphlet (\$5) is available from the visitors centre in Geraldton.

ing overlooking the new marina, Geraldton's best restaurant has an inventive global menu and a great selection of WA wines. The Indigo Oysters in chilli, coriander and lime-spiked vodka are sublime.

Geraldton has myriad takeaways, coffee lounges, bakeries, supermarkets and, of course, a great fish market!

Entertainment

Freemasons Hotel (p949) is a favourite drinking spot with regular live music and occasional DJs and dance nights. Also popular is **Nitey** (☎ 9921 1400; 60 Fitzgerald St; 📅 Thu-Sat), which sees locals lining up until late to boogie away in this red-walled club. Get here before 3am, as there's no entry between then and 5am closing.

If you fancy a film, head to **Geraldton 4 Cinemas** (☎ 9965 0568; cnr Marine Tce & Fitzgerald St; adult/child \$12/8) for the latest flicks, while **Queens Park Theatre** (☎ 9956 6662; cnr Cathedral Ave & Maitland St) stages theatre, comedy, concerts and films.

Getting There & Around

Skywest (☎ 1300 6600 88) has flights to and from Perth daily, as well as regular flights to Carnarvon, Denham (for Monkey Mia), Exmouth and Karratha.

Greyhound (☎ 1320 30) buses run from the Bill Sewell Complex to Perth daily (\$54, 6¼ hours), as well as Broome (\$284, 22 hours) and all points in between. **Transwa** (☎ 1300 6622 05) also goes daily to Perth (\$50, six hours) and three times weekly to Kalbarri (\$22, 2½ hours).

Geraldton Bus Service (☎ 9923 1100) operates eight routes to local suburbs (all-day ticket \$3). **Bike Force** (☎ 9921 3279; 54 Marine Tce) hires bikes for \$15/70 per day/week.

HOUTMAN ABROLHOS ISLANDS

Better known as 'the Abrolhos', this archipelago of 122 coral islands is about 60km off the coast of Geraldton. While they're home to sea lion colonies, a host of sea birds, golden orb spiders, carpet pythons and the Tammar wallaby, much of the beauty of the Abrolhos lies beneath the water. Here *Acropora* corals abound and, thanks to the warm Leeuwin Current, a rare and spectacular mix of tropical and temperate fish species thrives.

The beautiful but treacherous reefs surrounding the islands have claimed many ships over the years, including the ill-fated *Batavia* (see the boxed text, p953).

As the islands are protected and there are no tourist facilities, you can't stay overnight. Only licensed crayfishing families are permitted to shack-up on the islands in season (March to June). But you can go on bushwalks and picnics, and you can fly over, dive, snorkel, surf or fish the Abrolhos. A number of boats and light planes leave from Geraldton.

Flights are not only faster and more fun, they generally work out cheaper, at around \$200 per person. Try **Geraldton Air Charters** (☎ 08-9923 3434; www.geraldtonaircharter.com.au) or **Shine Aviation Services** (☎ 08-9923 3600; www.abrolhos.com.au). **Abrolhos Odyssey Charters** (☎ 0428-382 505; www.abrolhoscharters.com.au) runs popular fishing, diving and snorkelling trips.

Pick up the excellent *Houtman Abrolhos Islands Visitors Guide* from Geraldton's visitors centre.

NORTHAMPTON TO KALBARRI

Charming **Northampton**, a National Trust-classified town, was established to exploit lead and copper deposits discovered in 1848, and its historic stone architecture is splendid. It's worth calling in if you're around during the annual **Airing of the Quilts** in October, when Northampton's heritage buildings are draped with beautiful patchwork bed covers.

Pick up a free *Heritage Walk* pamphlet from the **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9934 1488; www.northamptonwa.com.au; 📅 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat), in the old police station on Hampton Rd (the highway). Also check out **Chiverton House** (☎ 08-2886 6596; Hampton Rd; admission \$2; 📅 10am-noon & 2-4pm Fri-Mon), an early mining cottage dating to 1896, which has been converted into a fascinating pioneer museum.

The stately **Old Convent** (☎ 08-9934 1692; 61 Hampton Rd; dm/s/d \$17/22/48) is a wonderful stone building designed by Monsignor Hawes (see the boxed text, p949), converted to backpacker accommodation. Next door, the striking **St Mary's Church** (Hawes again) is a dignified structure built from weathered stone.

The town's pubs serve hearty counter meals. The **Miners Arms** (☎ 08-9934 1281; Hampton Rd; \$80) is the most comfortable. If you're camping or caravanning, try **Northampton Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9934 1202; Hampton Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$17/22).

Greyhound (☎ 13 20 30) stops at the Miners Arms Hotel daily (Perth-Northampton \$77, eight hours).

PRINCE LEONARD'S LAND

If you thought Australia was an island nation, you would be incorrect. Down a dusty dirt road, 75km northwest of Northampton, lies the **Principality of Hutt River** (☎ 9936 6035; www.huttriver.net), Australia's 'second-largest country', formed when farmer Leonard Casley, appalled by new government quotas on wheat production, seceded from the Commonwealth of Australia on 21 April 1970.

The WA government tried to overturn the secession, but HRH Prince Leonard had done his constitutional homework – more than 30 years later the Prince and his Princess Shirley remain the monarchs of the only principality in the world declared without bloodshed. With four sons, three daughters, 24 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren, the family tree would suggest that the principality's borders will not be compromised anytime soon. Asked if he ever envisioned a palace coup by his heirs, the now elderly prince, who has retained his wonderfully deadpan sense of humour, replied, 'They consider it, but then they think about the work involved and change their minds before I get back to the farm.'

And the work involved in running your own principality is endless. There are visitors' passports to be stamped, naturalisation services to conduct (the principality has around 13,000 citizens worldwide with a five-year passport costing \$300), and a post office and gift shop to run – all of this in addition to running sheep and other interests on the property.

Despite his busy schedule, HRH Prince Leonard takes time out for the little people – both loyal subjects and visitors are welcome to call on the residence. Phone ahead to ensure that one of the royals is at home – royalty with a delicious sense of the absurdity of it all!

The coastal road is the more scenic option to get to Kalbarri – with good detours through the tiny coastal towns of **Horrocks** and **Port Gregory** on the way, and superb coastal gorges in the southern reaches of Kalbarri National Park (right).

Pitch a tent or camp your van at the laid-back **Port Gregory Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9935 1052; unpowered/powerd sites d \$20/22, on-site vans \$50, cabins with/without bathroom \$85/65).

The Hutt River Province (see the boxed text, above) is accessible from Ogilvie Rd; look for the blue signs.

KALBARRI

☎ 08 / pop 2000

Picturesque Kalbarri is a perennially popular seaside spot, which changes personality overnight with the coming of school holidays. One day the locals will be wandering down to the empty, windswept beaches with surfboards or fishing rods in hand, the next they'll find themselves confronted with the holiday hordes. Located at the mouth of the Murchison River, Kalbarri's proximity to both the dramatic coastline and the surrounding national park means plenty of beach and bush leisure opportunities.

Information

There are ATMs at the shopping centres on Grey and Porter Sts.

Kalbarri Café (☎ 9937 1045; Porter St) Has internet terminals.

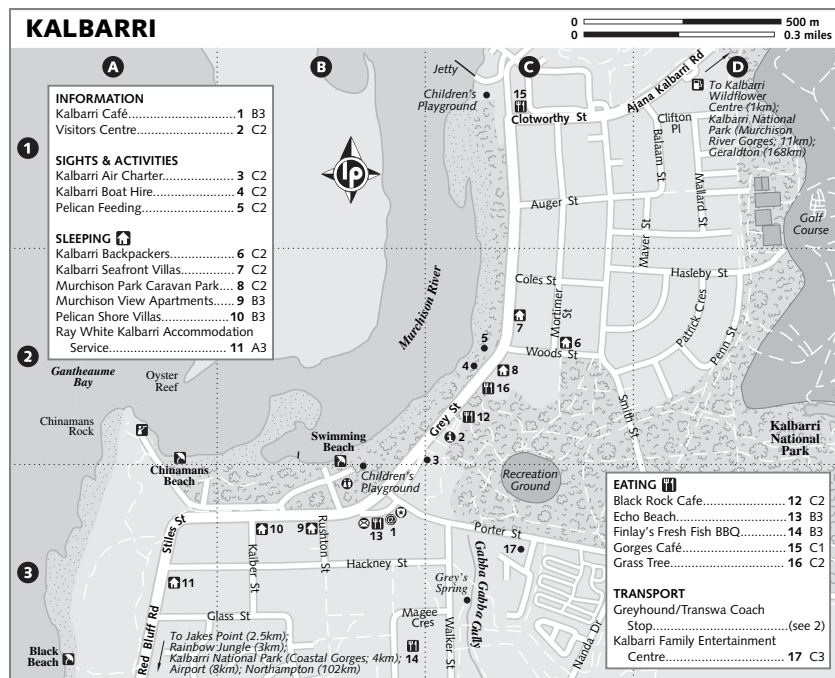
Visitors centre (☎ 1800 639 468, 9937 1104; www.kalbarriwa.com; Grey St; 📅 9am-5pm) Kalbarri's busy visitors centre has lots of info on the national park and activities around town, and can book accommodation and tours.

Sights & Activities

KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

With its magnificent river red gums and Tumblagooda sandstone, the ruggedly beautiful **national park** (per car \$9) contains over 1000 sq km of gorgeous bushland, stunning river gorges and magnificent coastal cliffs. There's myriad wildlife, including 200 species of birds, and spectacular wildflowers such as banksias, grevilleas and kangaroo paws between July and November.

To get to the river gorges from Kalbarri, head 11km east along Ajana Kalbarri Rd to the turn-off, and follow the 20km stretch of dirt to the gorges. A number of lookouts provide superb gorge vistas: at **the Loop** (400m from the car park) there's a natural rock arch framing the view upstream, 'nature's window' (and an 8km walk for the more adventurous); from **Z-Bend** (500m from the car park) the gorge plunges 150m to the river below; at **Hawk's Head** there are great views from the picnic grounds; and from **Ross Graham** you can access the river.



The park extends south of Kalbarri to a string of rugged coastal cliff faces, including **Red Bluff**, **Rainbow Valley**, **Pot Alley**, **Eagle Gorge** and **Natural Bridge**. A walking/cycling path from town goes as far as Red Bluff (5.5km), passing **Jakes Point**, an excellent surf break. From the cliff tops you may spot humpback whales (August to November) and dolphins (year-round).

OTHER SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Kalbarri's most popular attraction is **pelican feeding** (☎ 9937 1104; Grey St waterfront; free; ☞ 8.45am), proving that sometimes the simplest things in life are the sweetest.

Rainbow Jungle (☎ 9937 1248; Red Bluff Rd; adult/child \$12/5; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) is a beautiful bird habitat and breeding centre set in luxurious tropical gardens 4km south of Kalbarri.

Kalbarri Wildflower Centre (☎ 9937 1229; off Ajana Kalbarri Rd; adult/child \$4/free; ☞ 9am-5pm) lets you amble along a wonderful nature and wildflower trail (1.8km) that winds its way through native plants and flowers labelled for identification.

Kalbarri Boat Hire (☎ 9937 1245; www.kalbarriboat hire.com; Grey St waterfront; per hr \$10-50) on the

foreshore hires out kayaks, canoes, surf cats, paddle bikes/boats, barracuda bikes and powerboats to explore the Murchison River.

Other activities include fishing, surfing, sandboarding, abseiling, charters, horse riding and camel rides; see the visitors centre for more details.

Tours

There's a host of daily tours covering scenic, adventure and wildlife activities (including whale-watching tours).

Kalbarri Adventure Tours (☎ 9937 1677; www.kalbarritours.com.au) Popular all-day bushwalking and canoeing trips through the national park (adult/child \$65/50).

Kalbarri Air Charter (☎ 9937 1130; Grey St) Does 20-minute flights over the Murchison River gorges (adult/child \$45/30) and longer tours.

Kalbarri Wilderness Cruises (☎ 9937 1104; cruises \$30) runs popular cruises down the Murchison River to the Loop and Z-Bend.

Sleeping

Kalbarri has lots of accommodation, but it's often full during school holidays. The visitors

centre (p951) has a long list of places it can book on your behalf.

Kalbarri Backpackers (☎ 9937 1430; www.yha.com.au; cnr Woods & Mortimer Sts; dm \$20-22, s/d \$28/56; ☞ ☞) While the atmosphere is uninspiring, the facilities are good (decent pool and BBQ) and the location is excellent. There's a range of tours on offer and bikes for guests to hire (\$10 per day).

Kalbarri Seafront Villas (☎ 9937 1025; www.kalbarri seafrontvillas.com.au; 108 Grey St; 1-2-bedroom from \$155/175; ☞ ☞) These spacious, clean and comfortable units overlooking the waterfront come with TV, DVD players and microwaves.

Murchison View Apartments (☎ 9937 1096; cnr Grey & Rushton Sts; 2-bedroom unit from \$145; ☞ ☞) The fully self-contained apartments (DVD/CD players, fridge/freezer, stove etc) opposite the waterfront have balconies for kicking back after a day at the beach.

Pelican Shore Villas (☎ 9937 1708; pelicanshores@westnet.com.au; cnr Grey & Kaiber Sts; 2-3-bedroom front villa from \$185/205; ☞ ☞) These stylish, contemporary-designed units are the best in town, with all mod cons (including DVD, microwave, private laundry), floor-to-ceiling windows and big balconies overlooking the sea.

Ray White Kalbarri Accommodation Service (☎ 1800 777 776; www.kalbarriaccommodation.com.au; Kalbarri Arcade, 44 Grey St; holiday houses \$290-1200 per week) Has a wide range of self-contained apartments

and houses, from fibro cottages to contemporary-designed apartments.

Murchison Park Caravan Park (☎ 9937 1005; cnr Woods & Grey Sts; unpowered/power sites \$20/24, air-con cabins \$75; ☞ ☞) With its grassy, shaded sites and great facilities, this central, family-owned park opposite Kalbarri's waterfront is the best place to pitch your tent or park your van.

Eating

Gorges Café (☎ 9937 1200; Marina Complex, Grey St; meals \$5-14; ☞ 8am-4pm Wed-Mon) Catch up on your magazine reading at this bright BYO café, serving sandwiches, light meals and cakes. It has a funky, laid-back feel to it.

Black Rock Cafe (☎ 9937 1062; 80 Grey St; meals \$10-28; ☞ 7am-late) This casual, licensed eatery, with sunny outdoor seating overlooking the sea, keeps the crowds coming back again and again with great gourmet breakfasts and lunches, and a creative global fusion menu in the evening.

Finlay's Fresh Fish BBQ (Magee Cres; mains \$12-20; ☞ 5.30-8.30pm Tue-Sun) In a former fish factory, this big tin shed of a BYO eatery prides itself on offering 'no service, no corkage, no glasses, no frills' – just big servings of good-humoured abuse (that comes free as part of the fun) alongside huge portions of home-style barbecued seafood and steaks. You can also sing for your supper and they'll feed you in return. Seriously.

SHIPWRECKS AND SURVIVORS

Early in the morning on 4 June 1629, the Dutch East India Company's ship *Batavia* ran aground on an Abrolhos Islands reef off the coast of Terra Australis Incognita, as Australia was then known. The ship was taking the fastest route to Batavia (Jakarta) in Java – heading due east once around the Cape of Good Hope and then along the WA coast to Indonesia. Quite often these ships were caught in storms or they misjudged the depth of the reefs close to the Australian coast, earning this stretch of coastline the name Shipwreck Coast.

The captain of the *Batavia*, Francis Pelsaert, sailed a boat to the Dutch East India Company's base at Batavia to get help and supplies. While his back was turned a gruesome mutiny took place, and on the captain's return he executed all those involved, apart from two young men who were left ashore, becoming perhaps the first white men on Australian soil.

Another notable wreck was the *Zuytdorp*, which ran aground beneath the towering cliffs about 65km north of Kalbarri in 1712. Wine bottles, other relics and the remains of fires have been found on the cliff top, and the discovery of the extremely rare Ellis van Creveld syndrome (rife in Holland at the time the ship ran aground) in Aboriginal children suggests that *Zuytdorp* survivors lasted long enough to introduce the gene to Australia.

The remains of the *Batavia* and other wrecks can be seen at the Western Australian Museum in Geraldton (p947) and in Fremantle's Maritime Museum Shipwrecks Galleries (p897).

Batavia Coast Dive Academy (☎ 08-9921 4229; www.bataviacoastdive.com) offers diving tours to a more recent shipwreck, the *South Tomi*, sunk off the Geraldton coast in 2004.

Grass Tree (☎ 9937 2288; 94-96 Grey St; mains \$10-30; ☎ 9am-late Thu-Tue) While this licensed café-restaurant opposite the waterfront serves delicious breakfasts and light lunches, dinner is what it does best – expect innovative Asian-inspired global fusion using the freshest local produce.

our pick Echo Beach (☎ 9937 1033; Porter St; mains \$17-34; ☎ 8am-late) This stylish upstairs restaurant with a cool jazz soundtrack makes a refreshing change from the usual uninspiring country eateries. Its Mod Oz cuisine is delicious and the wine list's eclectic. Try the Outback Tasting Plate (BBQ kangaroo skewers, tempura crocodile, smoked rabbit, Murchison goat cutlets and bush tomato relish!) followed by Carnarvon tiger prawns and Kalbarri dhufish.

There are supermarkets and takeaways at the shopping centres.

Getting There & Around

Buses stop and depart from the visitors centre. **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) buses head to Perth (\$108, 11 hours), Exmouth (\$163, 10½ hours) and Broome (\$294, 24½ hours), while **Transwa** (☎ 1300 6622 05) services Perth several days a week (\$63, seven hours).

Kalbarri Auto Centre (☎ 9937 1290) rents 4WDs and sedans from \$40 a day and picks up and delivers to your door, while **Kalbarri Family Entertainment Centre** (☎ 9937 1105; 30 Porter St) rents bikes from \$15 per day.

SHARK BAY

World Heritage-listed Shark Bay incorporates two stunning peninsulas running parallel to the mainland and surrounded by a rich marine park. It's an outstanding example of an ongoing geological process (the shaping of its seabed by seagrass); a unique natural phenomenon (its hypersaline marine waters); an outstanding example of a major stage in earth's evolutionary history (the stromatolites of Hamelin Pool); and it has important habitats where threatened animal species survive (see the boxed text, opposite). What makes a visit to Shark Bay so satisfying is that you can experience all of these extraordinary features.

Originally inhabited by the Malgana, Nhanda and Inggarda peoples, who depended on both the sea and bush for their subsistence, there are now opportunities for visitors to take indigenous cultural tours to learn about the land from their perspective. The local people

were probably the first indigenous Australians to encounter Europeans – Shark Bay was the site of the first recorded landing by a European on Australian soil, when, in 1616, Dutch explorer Dirk Hartog anchored at the island that now bears his name, just off Denham, Shark Bay's main town.

Overlander Roadhouse to Denham

Leaving the highway just after the Overlander Roadhouse, the first turn-off (about 27km along) takes you to **Hamelin Pool**, a marine reserve containing the world's best-known colony of **stromatolites**. These brown rocklike formations are made up of modest microbes almost identical to organisms that existed 1900 million years ago and evolved into more complex life. They're extremely fragile, so there's a boardwalk (with information panels) that allows no-impact viewing; visit at low tide.

The nearby 1884 **Postmasters Residence & Telegraph Office** (☎ 08-9942 5905; ☎ 9am-4pm) served as a telephone exchange until 1977. This unassuming little outpost was also unwittingly responsible for transmitting messages from NASA's own Gemini space-mission craft in 1964 after communications between the tracking station and Carnarvon's dish went down. It now serves delicious Devonshire teas (tea, scones and jam) and has displays on the stromatolites.

The miniature cockleshells that cover the extraordinary **Shell Beach**, 50km from Hamelin, are 10m deep in places. These shells are peculiar to Shark Bay and cement together after rain, making sturdy white bricks – look out for them in Denham.

At the next turn-off, **Nanga Bay Resort** (☎ 08-9948 3992; nangabay@wn.com.au; unpowered/poweredsites \$15/23, dm \$20, d cabins/motel \$63/125; ☎ ☎), catering mainly to families and grey nomads, is a ranchlike place with a range of sleeps, from motel units to fisherman's huts. Facilities include tennis courts, a shop, and rustic bar and restaurant. You'll need your own wheels.

From **Eagle Bluff**, there are spectacular cliff-top views, wonderful bird life (yes, eagles) and sharks swimming in the clear waters below.

Denham

☎ 08 / pop 1140

Australia's most westerly town, laid-back Denham, with its crystal-clear water and charming beachfront, makes a decent base for visiting the marine park, nearby François Peron Na-

RETURN TO EDEN

When French naturalist François Péron visited the shores of Shark Bay in 1801 and 1803, he recorded the presence of over 20 species of land mammals living in the harsh climate of the region. Just some 200 years later, less than one-third of the mammals remained. With the environment degraded by decades of poor farming practices and infested with feral foxes, cats, goats and rabbits, the future of the natural species of mammals found in this area appeared in doubt. Today, however, the area is the subject of Australia's largest and most ambitious ecosystem regeneration programme, Project Eden.

Established in 1995, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) project is attempting to eradicate feral animals, re-establish populations of endemic species and develop techniques that can be applied to other degraded arid zones in Australia. The key has been the isolation of the peninsula from mainland Australia with a 3.4km fence at the isthmus as well as baiting, preventing feral species from repopulating. The eradication of foxes from the area has been successful and the feral cat population has been significantly reduced.

A breeding centre in François Péron National Park has collected breeding pairs of rare marsupials from the offshore Dorre and Bernier Islands, and zoos and rehabilitation centres across Australia. The reintroduction of three locally extinct species has been successful; woylies, bilbies and mallee fowls are now surviving in the area. However, feral cat predation has halted the reintroduction of rufous-hare wallabies and banded-hare wallabies. Still, as one prominent local Aboriginal put it to us, 'the country is beginning to heal itself'. With a little help from its friends, of course.

To learn more, visit www.sharkbay.org.

tional Park and Monkey Mia, 26km away. Originally established as a pearling town, they say pearl shell was used to pave Denham's streets. All you'll see is bitumen these days, but some shell-brick buildings still stand.

INFORMATION

Almost all visitor facilities are on the main thoroughfare, Knight Tce. There's an ATM at Heritage Resort.

DEC (☎ 9948 1208; Knight Tce; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Has plenty of information on the World Heritage area and national park.

Denham & Monkey Mia visitors centre (☎ 9948 1773; sharkbayvisitor@bigpond.com.au; 29 Knight Tce; ☎ 8am-5pm; ☎) The privately run, accredited visitors centre can book accommodation and tours, and organise car rental.

Post office (Knight Tce)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

In a striking contemporary building, the slick, cutting-edge **Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery Centre** (☎ 9948 1590; www.sharkbayinterpretivecentre.com.au; 53 Knight Tce; adult/concession \$10/8; ☎ 9am-6pm) – one of WA's best museums – has compelling exhibitions on Shark Bay's natural environment, its indigenous people, the many explorers who've ventured here and how understanding these entanglements can help us experience a sense of place.

On the way into town, **Ocean Park** (☎ 9948 1765; www.oceanpark.com.au; Shark Bay Rd; adult/child \$10/5; ☎ 10am-4pm) is a locally run aquaculture farm featuring an artificial lagoon where you can check out sharks, turtles, stingrays and fish.

TOURS

Mac Attack (☎ 0419-925 692; www.sportfish.com.au; adult/child \$150/100) Runs full-day fishing safaris, along with whale-watching and sightseeing trips.

Majestic Tours (☎ 9948 1627; www.ozpal.com/majestic; tours \$60-135) Has various full-day 4WD tours, including François Peron National Park and Shell Beach.

Power Dive (☎ 9948 1905; www.divefun.com.au; 70) Offers snorkelling and diving safaris in François Peron National Park.

Shark Bay Coaches & Tours (☎ 9948 1081; www.sbcoaches.com; tours \$70) Runs full-day tours to all key sights.

SLEEPING & EATING

Bay Lodge (☎ 1800 812 780, 9948 1278; baylodge@wn.com.au; 95 Knight Tce; dm \$20-22; ☎ ☎) Every room at this YHA hostel has its own bathroom, kitchen, living and dining facilities with TV/DVD. The owners will also spoil you, taking you on complimentary 4WD fishing, swimming and wildlife-spotting tours, and holding bush BBQ nights. They also provide a daily shuttle bus to Monkey Mia.

Denham Villas (☎ 9948 1264; www.denhamvillas.com; 4 Durlacher St; villas \$95-150; 🏠) The spacious, fully self-contained villas (with proper kitchen and laundry) are excellent value and ideal for families.

Oceanside Village (☎ 1800 680 600, 9948 3003; www.oceanside.com.au; 117 Knight Tce; houses \$120-160; 🏠) Lego-land may come to mind when you see these identical little white-and-blue houses, but they're actually rather swish – some even have spas. The best are on stilts on a hillside with great views of the sea.

Seaside Tourist Village (☎ 1300 133 733, 9948 1242; www.sharkbayfun.com; Knight Tce; unpowered/powerd sites \$22/26, cabins d \$60, 1-/2-bedroom chalets \$99/115; 🏠) This big beachside park has good facilities, including BBQs and self-contained chalets with verandas overlooking the sea.

Shark Bay Hotel (☎ 9948 1203; 43 Knight Tce; mains \$12-26) While this typical Aussie pub bistro is nothing flash, it's a great spot to eat a hearty counter meal, get to know some locals and play a few rounds of pool.

our pick Old Pearler Restaurant (☎ 9948 1373; Knight Tce; meals \$12-39) Built from seashell bricks, this splendid stone building houses one of WA's most atmospheric old restaurants. Its cosy interior, with fireplace, rustic wooden furniture and candlesticks on the walls, is the perfect place to feast on hearty retro Australian favourites like steak Dianne and crayfish mornay.

There is a supermarket, a bakery, café and takeaways on Knight Tce.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088) has flights from Geraldton and Carnarvon, linking to Perth, Exmouth and Karratha.

Daily shuttle buses (\$30, 1½ hours) from Denham and Monkey Mia connect with the north- and south-bound **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) services at the Overlander Roadhouse on the main highway, including Denham to Carnarvon (\$79, 5½ hours).

Bay Lodge (☎ 9948 1278) runs a daily shuttle bus to Monkey Mia (return for nonguests \$16) that leaves from the Shell service station on Knight Tce at 7.45am, returning from Monkey Mia at 4.30pm; bookings essential.

François Péron National Park

Renowned for its dramatic golden cliffs, pristine white-sand beaches, salt lakes and rare marsupial species, this **national park** (per bus passenger/car \$4/10), 4km from Denham on the

Monkey Mia Rd, will reward those with 4WD vehicles and an adventurous spirit. There's a visitors centre at the old Peron Homestead, 6km from the main road, where a former artesian bore has been converted to a soothing 35°C **hot tub**, a novel spot for a sunset soak. There are **camp sites** (\$9) with limited facilities at Big Lagoon, Gregories, Bottle Bay and Herald Bight. If you don't have your own wheels, take a tour to the park (see p955).

Monkey Mia

📞 08

World-famous for the wild dolphins that turn up in the shallow water for feeding each day, the beach resort of **Monkey Mia** (admission adult/child/family \$6/2/12), 26km northeast of Denham, now tops many travellers' list of things to do. It's so popular that the morning feeding session (around 7.45am) is a bit of a circus and it's hard to get close to the action; hang around after everyone leaves until the second feeding for a more satisfying experience.

The **DEC Dolphin Information Centre** (☎ 9948 1366; 🕒 7.30am-4pm) has lots of info, as well as showing videos and hosting presentations. There are great books for sale in the shop and you can also buy tour tickets here.

You can **volunteer** to work full-time with the dolphins for up to two weeks – it's understandably popular, so apply in advance. Contact volunteer coordinator **Alison True** (☎ 9948 1366; alison.true@dec.wa.gov.au).

TOURS

Aristocat II (☎ 9948 1446) Offers similar trips to Wildsights, at similar prices.

Blue Lagoon Pearl Farm (☎ 9948 1325; www.blue.lagoon.com.au; 1hr tours adult/child \$20/10; 🕒 11am) Take an eight-minute boat ride from Monkey Mia jetty across to the floating pearl farm to learn how the beautiful black pearls are cultured.

Wildsights (☎ 1800 241481, 9948 1481; www.monkeymia.wildsights.com.au; 1-2½hr tours \$39-64; 🕒 9am, 10.30am, 1pm) On these wonderful wildlife-spotting cruises on the *Shotover* catamaran you'll get to see dugongs, dolphins, loggerhead turtles, sea snakes and perhaps even tiger sharks.

Wula Guda Nyinda Aboriginal Cultural Tours (☎ 0429-708 847, 9948 1320; www.monkeymia.com.au; adult/child day tour \$35/18, night tour \$25/10; 🕒 9am, 4.30pm, 8.30pm) Local Aboriginal guide Darren 'Capes' Capewell (see the boxed text, opposite) leads excellent bushwalks where he teaches you 'how to let the bush talk to you'. You'll learn some local Malgana language, and

identify bush tucker and native medicine. The evening 'Dreaming' walks are magical.

SLEEPING & EATING

Monkey Mia is a resort and not a town, so eating and sleeping options are limited to the Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort. Self-catering is a good option.

Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort (☎ 1800 653 611, 9948 1320; www.monkeymia.com.au; tent sites \$11, van sites back/beach \$27/32, garden units \$205, beachfront villas \$275) This leafy resort offers a range of accommodation, from great-value tent and van sites to top-end villas within splashing distance of the beach. The facilities are good and the beach is a short stroll away.

Dolphin Lodge (☎ 1800 653 611, 9948 1320; www.monkeymia.com.au; dm \$24-28, d without bathroom \$62, park homes \$109; 📺) The Dolphin Resort's newest beachfront accommodation is suffering an identity crisis, with more-expensive seafront motel rooms ('beachside dolphin units') sharing walls with backpacker dorms. (We know who has the better deal!) There's an excellent communal kitchen, lots of outdoor seating, internet kiosks and a laundry.

Bough Shed Restaurant (☎ 9948 1171; meals \$6-34; 🕒 7am-8pm) While there are no surprises on the menu at this waterfront eatery, with the ubiquitous salt and pepper prawns (\$18) and seafood platters (\$110), we will hand it to them

for inventing a creative new name for 'Surf and Turf' – 'Pond and Paddock': a huge Kimberley rib steak with Pemberton marron.

Monkey Bar (☎ 9948 1320; meals \$7-18; 🕒 8am-late) This casual bar at the Dolphin Lodge serves good counter meals and snacks, and is a popular spot for a round of pool and a few drinks.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The only public transport to Monkey Mia from Denham is the Bay Lodge shuttle (see opposite). It means you'll have to spend a full day here, but that's no hardship if you do a tour or two, or simply bring a towel and a book.

CARNARVON

📞 08 / pop 6900

At the mouth of the Gascoyne River, fertile Carnarvon, with its fruit and vegetable plantations and thriving fishing industry, makes a good stopover between Denham and Exmouth. This lush centre of the dry Gascoyne has a variety of decent accommodation and well-stocked supermarkets.

Information

There are a couple of ATMs on Robinson St. **Post office** (Camel Lane)

Visitors centre (☎ 9941 1146; www.carnarvon.org.au; Civic Centre, 11 Robinson St; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Has lots of information on the town and region,

MEETING THE MALGANA MOB

'Today you mob are Malgana people,' said Darren 'Capes' Capewell as we started his cultural walk on a perfect blue-sky Monkey Mia day. A fit, handsome, 30-something ex-Aussie Rules player of considerable note, Capes is like a one-man Aboriginal Embassy in Monkey Mia – except that this is his country – Malgana country. Capes has run his own cultural walks, Wula Guda Nyinda ('you come this way'), here since late 2004. While visitors wait for the dolphins to turn up for their breakfast, we take Capes' morning walk: Buna (daytime) Dreaming.

Capes proceeds to take us on a fascinating and information-overload-inducing walk covering Malgana language, 'respect for country', bush medicine, bush survival, tracking, local history and the obligatory bush tucker. We're quite amazed that what appears to be scrubby bushland is actually a bush tucker supermarket.

When we met Capes, we'd already been on the road for a month but had only met a few indigenous Australians working in tourism – why weren't there more? Capes explains: 'Thinking in terms of product doesn't come too easy to our mob – while talking about our culture comes easy.' Capes had strong support from WAITOC (the Western Australian Indigenous Tour Operators Committee; www.waitoc.com) through training, networking and mentoring when setting up his business.

Research has shown that 80% of overseas visitors are seeking an Aboriginal cultural experience, but only 20% are getting it. Clearly, the tourism industry needs quite a few more 'Capes' to set up shop. But don't leave WA without doing an indigenous tour – it's rude to go to someone's country and not introduce yourself!

and can provide walking trails and self-driving maps. It also sells unique local products, such as the tasty dried 'Mango Leather'.

Wise Owl Book Exchange (Babbage Island Rd) has a good selection of secondhand books.

Sights & Activities

On the outskirts of town the **OTC Dish** (Mahoney Ave) was established by NASA in 1966 as a tracking station for the Gemini and Apollo space missions, and tracked Halley's Comet in 1986. It was closed in 1987 although there are plans to open it for tours in the future.

Carnarvon's luxuriant plantations provide nearly 70% of the state's tropical fruits and vegetables. While some offer **plantation tours** (for example, banana producers; see the visitors cen-

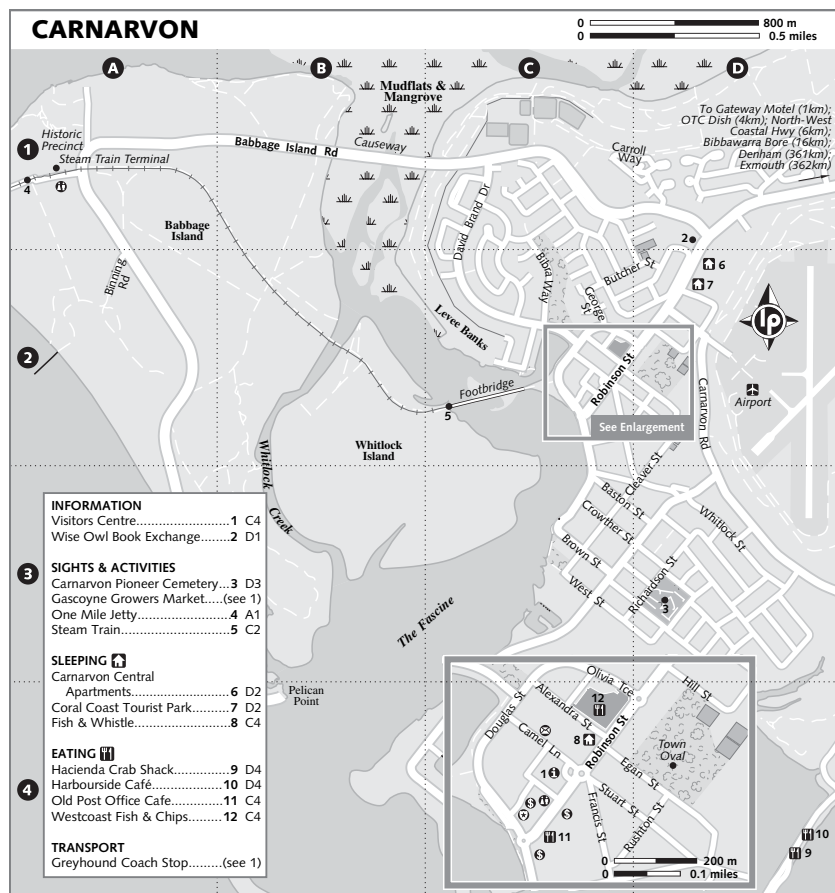
tre for details) you can get a taste of everyone's delicious produce at the **Gascoyne Growers Market** (Gascoyne Civic Centre car park; ☎ 8am-noon Sat May-Nov).

You can ride a restored **steam train** (adult/child \$7/5) from the end of the town footbridge to the **Historic Precinct**, and another along **One Mile Jetty**, where locals fish for mullet; you can also walk along the jetty (adult/child \$4/3).

The multicultural **Carnarvon Pioneer Cemetery** (Crowther St) is worth a wander; it's the final resting place of pioneers from as far away as Afghanistan and China.

Tours

Carnarvon Fishing Charters (☎ 0417-923 723, 0407-995 432; day trips \$150) Offers fishing trips and whale watching including bait, ice and fishing gear.



Stockman Safaris (☎ 9941 2421; stockmansafaris@wn.com.au; town tours adult/child \$30/17; Blowholes/Quobba/Salt Mine tour \$55/39, Kennedy Range \$120/90) Runs a variety of tours that take in the town, local and regional sites.

Sleeping & Eating

our pick Fish & Whistle (☎ 9941 1704; 35 Robinson St; dm/s \$22/35; 🍷 🍴 🍷) This big, breezy backpackers is a hit with travellers for its enormous communal spaces, excellent kitchen, BBQ area and big verandas, not to mention private rooms and no bunks! To top it off, the friendly owners treat guests like family, helping them find seasonal work, driving them to work every day and taking them fishing on their days off. And there's comfy flashpacker sleeps out back. Little wonder travellers don't want to leave.

Gateway Motel (☎ 9941 1532; 309 Robinson St; d \$98) The motel rooms here may be basic but the management is accommodating. Arrive late after a long drive and they just might wrap up some leftovers from the Chinese buffet (\$18) for you!

Carnarvon Central Apartments (☎ 9941 1317; www.carnarvonholidays.com; 120 Robinson St; 1-/2-bedroom apt \$95/115) These modern apartments are spotlessly clean and fully self-contained – ideal for self-caterers.

Coral Coast Tourist Park (☎ 9941 1438; coralcoastpk@westnet.com.au; 108 Robinson St; unpowered/powerd sites d \$20/22; 🍷 🍴 🍷) This pleasant, shady park, with well-manicured grounds, has a tropical pool and a new campers kitchen.

Old Post Office Café (☎ 9941 1800; 10 Robinson St; pizzas \$15-21; ☎ 5.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat) Locals and travellers love tucking into authentic pizzas and delicious pastas on the raised front veranda of this stylish casual eatery. And you can't help liking the music, which is easily the hippest in town. Licensed and BYO.

our pick Harbourside Café (☎ 9941 4111; Small Boat Harbour; mains \$15-30; ☎ 9am-8pm) Here's a recipe that works – the freshest seafood, served in good-sized portions, in imaginative ways, at reasonable prices, on a casual sunny waterfront terrace. How can you go wrong? Local favourites include the Shark Bay prawn omelette (\$16) for brunch, tandoori scallops (\$15), Cajun calamari (\$18) and Moroccan snapper (\$27).

Westcoast Fish & Chips (☎ 9941 1879; Carnarvon Blvd Shopping Centre, Robison St). Get your scrummy seafood takeaway here. While the seafood

baskets (\$12) are big, we loved our prawn burgers (\$7).

There's a supermarket, a couple of take-aways and cafés on Knight Tce.

Getting There & Away

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088) flies to Perth (\$200) daily, and has less-frequent flights to Geraldton and Exmouth. Daily **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 1499) buses to Perth (\$125, 13 hours) and Broome (\$190, 20 hours), via Port Hedland, stop at the visitors centre.

GASCOYNE AREA

Remote **Gascoyne Junction**, 177km east of Carnarvon on a good unsealed road (in the process of being upgraded), is in the gemstone-rich Kennedy Range. From here, the adventurous can continue northeast another 300km to Mt Augustus (Burrurrah) National Park to see **Mt Augustus** (1106m), the biggest, but certainly not the most memorable, rock in the world. Highlights include the outstanding Aboriginal rock paintings, and the rock can be climbed in a day.

Mt Augustus Outback Tourist Resort (☎ 08-9943 0527; powered/unpowered sites \$22/18, dongas d \$70, units \$175; 🍷 🍴) is right at the base of Mt Augustus and has good facilities and a licensed restaurant on site.

CORAL COAST & PILBARA

The tranquil blue Coral Coast is named after the colourful coral beds that make up marvellous Ningaloo Reef. The national marine parks are devoted to preserving this delicate reef and the abundance of marine life that call it home. If snorkelling and diving these gorgeous waters isn't enough for you, the Coral Coast is one of the few places in the world where you can swim with the biggest fish in the world, the whale shark, as well as watch whales, manta rays, turtles and rare dugongs. If even that's not enough, there are great waves to surf, calm waters to swim, beautiful beaches to laze about on and delicious fresh seafood to enjoy.

The rugged red-dirt Pilbara – a vast region of arid land with a parched skin and a big heart of iron-ore – couldn't be in greater contrast. It's the dusky dirt within the rich earth

BRAND NEW NOMADS

We were heading off-road in an absolutely wild part of the WA coast – somewhere near Carnarvon. Our map showed a tiny squiggle indicating a dirt track, so we took it, hoping to get another vantage point to check out the magnificently craggy coastline. It's here that we ran into Harry and Marge.

Semiretired, Harry and Marge have been around the world and now they want to see this part of Australia at their own pace and are equipped to go *anywhere*. After six weeks on the road, they have only stayed in a caravan park twice. To attain the level of self-sufficiency that allows them to camp in a location with no power, no running water and no supermarket for weeks at a time involved \$10,000 worth of vehicle and van preparation – on top of the purchase of the 4WD and high-tech Tvan (www.tracktrailer.com), a camper trailer that you can tow to just about anywhere a 4WD can go.

Their self-sufficiency doesn't mean they're going without, though. To keep fridges cold, lights running and sundry pieces of technology charged (including a laptop and digital cameras), they use two solar panels. To Harry and Marge, self-sufficiency and eco-friendliness are good companions. And when it allows them to stay in these remote and ruggedly beautiful parts of WA for weeks at a time, barely leaving a trace, it's a sweet piece of synergy.

that has massive machines tearing into the ranges, remarkably long trains rolling through the desert, and tidy lush green towns like Tom Price and Newman developing incongruously in the middle of nowhere.

What these amazingly different regions do have in common are two of WA's most spectacular national parks: Ningaloo Marine Park (p965) and Karijini National Park (p943), and lots of wide open space to drive through to get between them!

Getting There & Away

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088) has daily flights from Perth to Port Hedland, sometimes via Karratha. There are also daily Perth–Exmouth flights via Carnarvon twice a week. **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13) flies from Perth to Karratha and Port Hedland.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99) has three services a week from Perth to Exmouth (\$210, 20 hours), via Coral Bay (\$188, 18 hours). There are also daily services from Perth (with connecting shuttles into Exmouth) stopping at Karratha (\$232, 22½ hours) and Port Hedland (\$267, 25½ hours). From Port Hedland buses continue to the Kimberley.

CORAL BAY

☎ 08

Coral Bay is a tiny beachcomber community nestled on a beautiful bay, at the southern tip of Ningaloo Marine Park. Its town consists of one street, down which you amble to the white-sand beach to swim and snorkel on the

reef just offshore. It's a super base for outer-reef activities as well, such as swimming with (harmless) whale sharks, scuba diving, whale watching and fishing.

Coral Bay's **Main Beach** is designated for swimming; enclosed by a protective reef, there's good snorkelling within 50m of the shore. You can hire snorkel gear, boogie boards and glass-bottomed canoes (from \$8 to \$20 per hour) on the beach.

Just 20 minutes' walk north of Main Beach is **Point Maud**, where manta rays swim, and around the point, Bateman Bay is a breeding ground for reef sharks from October to March. We probably don't need to tell you that swimming is not a brilliant idea here.

Coral Bay has no shire services: private owners supply its electricity and water (not all taps contain desalinated water for drinking), but there are plans to develop tourism here in order to sustain the increasing number of visitors and establish Coral Bay as a town.

The main shopping centre on Robinson St has an ATM and newsagent, and internet access is in the 'visitors centres' (which the tour operator booking offices like to call themselves).

Tours

Popular tours from Coral Bay include snorkelling, diving, swimming with whale sharks, whale watching, marine life-spotting tours to search for dolphins, dugongs, turtles and manta rays, and coral viewing from glass-bottom boats. Most include equipment and



BONZA BACKROADS – BLOWHOLES AND BEACH SHACKS

About 20km north of Carnarvon along the main highway is the Blowhole Rd turn-off. This sealed road leads 49km to the frenzied **blowholes** and swathes of desolate, windswept coastline. Keep a sharp eye on the ocean: as the sign says, 'king waves kill'. Just 1km further south is **Point Quobba**, where locals have beach shacks and come for the fishing and swimming. You can often spot turtles, whales (in season) and sea eagles. There are rocky **camp sites** (\$5), but no facilities.

Around 10km further north (mostly unsealed) you'll find **Quobba Station** (☎ 08-9941 2036; www.quobba.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites \$16/18, d fishing shack/chalet from \$40/80), an ocean-front property with plenty of rustic accommodation, a small store and legendary fishing.

refreshments. Tour operators have offices in the shopping centre. Here's a selection of them:

Coral Bay Adventures (☎ 9942 5955; www.coralbayadventures.com.au) Sixteen years in the business, this excellent company offers half-day and full-day trips to go wildlife watching (\$175), swimming with whale sharks (\$330), whale watching (\$100) and coral viewing (\$30). Prices include all equipment and lunch.

Coral Breeze (☎ 9948 5190; www.coralbaytours.com; adult/child from \$75/37) Takes travellers cruising on the reef on a small catamaran for snorkelling, swimming, wildlife spotting and sunset cruises.

Coral Coast Tours (☎ 9948 5190; adult/child half-day wildlife safari \$120/72, full-day Cape Drive \$170/114) Also does full- and half-day 4WD outback wildlife safaris and tours around Cape Range to Exmouth via the 4WD coastal track.

Ningaloo Experience (☎ 9942 5824; www.ningalooexperience.com; adult/child from \$135/95) The only officially eco-certified tour at the time of research. The wildlife watching/snorkelling tours get consistently good feedback.

Ningaloo Reef Dive (☎ 9942 5824; www.ningaloo reefdive.com) Specialises in diving and snorkelling, and offers snorkelling with whale sharks (\$350), reef dives (\$145) and PADI diver training courses from \$380.

Sub-Sea Explorer (☎ 9942 5955) Operates popular daily one-hour coral-viewing tours from glass-bottom boats (adult/child \$30/15).

Sleeping & Eating

Avoid school holidays if you can, and if you can't, book well ahead.

Ningaloo Club (☎ 9948 5100; www.ningalooclub.com; dm \$22-25, d/tr without bathroom \$70/90, d/tr with bathroom \$90-110; ☎ ☎ ☎) This excellent hostel wins awards for being the cleanest in WA! It boasts a central pool, well-equipped kitchen and a big lounge area with bar and pool table. It also sells Greyhound tickets and books discounted tours. Handily, Easyrider stops here.

Bayview Coral Bay Resort (☎ 9385 7411; www.coralbaywa.com; unpowered/powerd sites \$25/28, cabins d from \$80, chalets \$105-230, units \$140-150, villas \$170-210) Of-

fers an enormous range of quality accommodation, including lovely grassy sites for pitching the tent and camping the van, along with comfortable self-contained villas, units, chalets and cabins. There's also the four-bedroom White House with all mod-cons (\$345). The resort facilities are far-ranging – swimming pool, BBQs, tennis courts, kid's playground – you name it, and they've got it!

Ningaloo Reef Resort (☎ 9942 5934; www.coralbay.org; motel/beach units \$155/165; ☎ ☎) Another laid-back resort with several levels of accommodation, plus pub and bottle shop.

Shades Restaurant (☎ 9942 5863; meals \$8-30) At the Ningaloo Reef Resort, Shades offers everything from pastas and pizza to seafood and curries, along with takeaway.

Reef Cafe (☎ 9942 5882; meals \$11-20) does filling pizzas while **BYO Fins Cafe** (☎ 9942 5900; meals \$8-28) serves breakfast, light lunches and the usual café standards.

There's a good bakery and supermarket at the shopping centre but prices are high. If you're self-catering, stock up in Carnarvon or Exmouth.

Getting There & Away

Coral Bay is 1200km north of Perth, and is accessible from north and south by a sealed road off the Manilya-Exmouth Rd.

Skywest Airlines (☎ 1300 66 00 88) flies into Exmouth's Learmonth Airport, about a 75-minute drive from Coral Bay; most Coral Bay resorts can arrange a private taxi service on request. **Greyhound** (☎ 1800 076 211) has regular bus services via Exmouth, and, along with **Easyrider** buses, stop at the Ningaloo Club.

EXMOUTH

☎ 08 / pop 2500

Sunny Exmouth, with its delicious shrimps (it has a thriving prawn industry), is a busy tourist base for an increasing number of travellers

eager to experience the Coral Coast's Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park. There's little to do at Exmouth apart from fish and swim, and enjoy the wildlife – you'll pass kangaroos on the drive into town, emus wandering *around* town, and there's a great deal of bird life, including gorgeous pink-breasted galahs. While this is all fun, Exmouth is really a base for people driving into the national parks, doing tours or heading off to surf the cape.

Exmouth's shopping centre on Maidstone Cres has banks with ATMs (as does the visitors centre) and decent shopping, including surf, camp and dive stores.

Information

D&A Hire Bookshop (☎ 9949 1425; cnr Murat Rd & Pellew St; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) Has a decent selection of secondhand books.

DEC (☎ 9949 1676; 22 Nimitz St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Supplies maps and brochures. Pick up the excellent *Parks of the Coral Coast: Cape Range National Park & Ningaloo Marine Park, Watching Whales, and Experiencing Whale Sharks in Ningaloo Marine Park*, so you can ensure you're interacting with marine life in the most sensitive manner. The visitors centre should also have these.

Exmouth District Hospital (☎ 9949 1011; Lyon St) **Post office** (Maidstone Cres)

Visitors centre (☎ 1800 287 328, 9949 1176; www.exmouthwa.com.au; Murat Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun) Has lots of great stuff on the national parks and good fishing spots, and can book tours, flights, bus tickets and accommodation.

What Scooters (☎ 9949 4748; 102 Murat Rd; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) Has laptop and wireless internet connections.

Tours

Fun tours from Exmouth include swimming with whale sharks, whale watching, wildlife spotting, scuba diving, sea kayaking, fishing and coral viewing from glass-bottom boats. There are many more tours than those listed here – see the visitors centre.

Capricorn Kayak Tours (☎ 1800 625 688; www.capricornkayak.com.au) Offers a range of coastal and camping tours by sea kayak from April to October, including paddles with BBQ (adult \$49), half-day Coral Coast (\$68), full-day lagoon explorer (\$115) and camps under the stars (two days \$335, five days \$745).

Ningaloo Dreaming (☎ 9949 4777; www.ningaloo dreaming.com; Exmouth Shopping Centre, Maidstone St; from \$199) This eco-certified company offers whale shark cruises, whale watching, wildlife spotting and scuba-

diving courses, plus a combined whale shark and dive course (\$750).

Ningaloo Ecology Cruises (☎ 9949 2255; www.ecology.com.au; tours from \$50) Operates one- to 2½-hour glass-bottom boat trips to view coral in the Ningaloo Reef, leaving from Tatabiddi on the west coast of the cape (free bus transfers).

Surf Ningaloo (☎ 0429-202 523, 9949 1176; www.yallingsurfschool.com; lessons from \$60) Offers half-day surfing tours, private lessons and sunset BYO cheese and biscuit surfs.

Sleeping

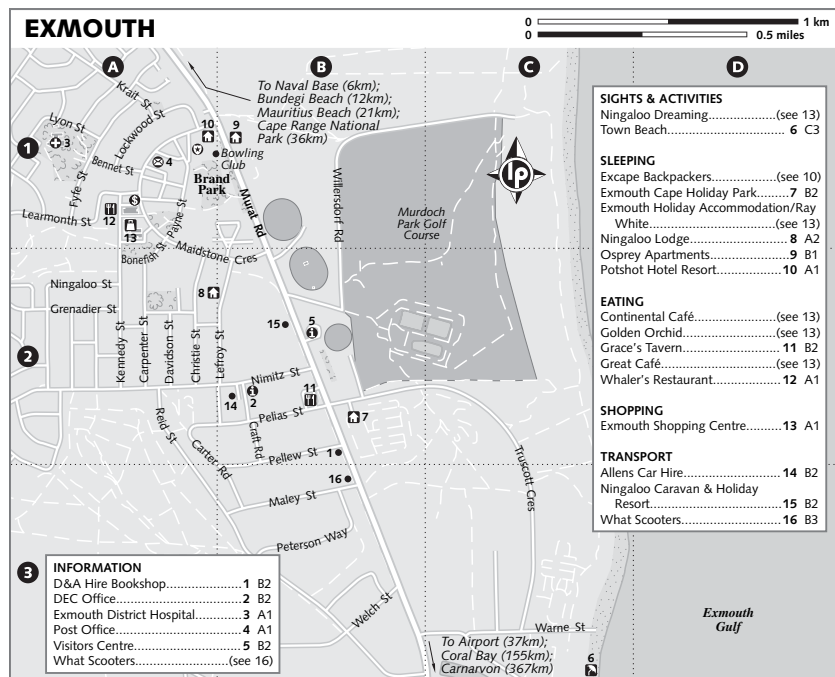
Accommodation is limited; don't even think about arriving in Exmouth without a booking during high season (April to October). It's a long way to go to find a bed.

Ningaloo Lodge (☎ 1800 880 949, 9949 4949; www.ningaloolodge.com.au; Lefroy St; d \$95; ☎ ☎) These basic rooms with fridge and TV – and communal kitchen, BBQ and pool – are the best budget motel deal in town.

Potshot Hotel Resort (☎ 9949 1200; www.potshotresort.com; Murat Rd; dm/d \$24/59, motel d \$89, studio \$139, apt from \$159; ☎ ☎ ☎) This bustling resort, with several bars, two eateries, a tropical swimming pool and a decent bottle shop, offers a range of clean and comfortable sleeps, from simple motel rooms to the swish Osprey Apartments. Travellers love the Potshot's Escape Backpackers – all rooms and dorms have bathrooms, there's a great communal kitchen and BBQ area, a good internet café and is within arm's reach of the pub! Osprey Apartments, across the road, are stylish, spacious, self-contained units, some with a swish mezzanine bedroom, with cane furniture and spa baths. Discounted weekly rates are available.

Exmouth Holiday Accommodation/Ray White (☎ 9949 1144; www.exmouthholidays.com.au; holiday houses \$700-1400; ☎) If you're planning a longer getaway, Ray White Real Estate has a wide range of weekly rentals, from fibro shacks to enormous two-storey homes with verandas all around.

Exmouth Cape Holiday Park (☎ 1800 621 101, 9949 1101; exmouth@aspenparks.com.au; cnr Truscott Cres & Murat Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/26, dm \$48, cabins d \$65; ☎ ☎ ☎) This great-value park has a range of sleeps, from shady camp sites to backpacker dorms, along with terrific facilities (BBQs, campers kitchen and swimming pool), plus it's just a short stroll to the beach.



Eating & Drinking

Continental Café (Exmouth Shopping Centre; snacks \$3-10; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-3pm Sun) This cosy coffee shop serves 'gourmet coffee', along with lots of light lunches and snacks, sandwiches, wraps, pies, muffins and cakes.

Golden Orchid (☎ 9949 1740; Exmouth Shopping Centre; meals \$8-17; ☎ 11.30am-2pm Mon-Fri, 5-10pm daily) If you're craving Asian food, head here for tasty Chinese and Thai dishes. The \$8 lunch specials are excellent value. BYO.

Great Café (☎ 9949 1244; Exmouth Shopping Centre; meals \$8-19) The outdoor terrace of this casual BYO eatery gets crowded with backpackers enjoying generous serves of pasta, salads, nachos, pizza and the like.

Grace's Tavern (☎ 9949 1000; Murat Rd; pizza \$16-23, meals \$17-32) Oddly, Grace's has a 'fine dining' restaurant and a more casual bistro that share the same menu, only the bistro is cheaper. Unless you're hankering for a night out, go for one of Grace's delicious pizzas instead.

Whaler's Restaurant (☎ 9949 2416; 5 Kennedy St; mains \$18-27; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-9pm Tue-Sun) While Exmouth is pretty laid-back, people put on their 'going-out clothes' for dinner at this

breezy terrace eatery, with an international menu. Licensed and BYO.

Grace's Tavern and Potshot Hotel are the town's main watering holes; each has pool tables, darts, a juke box and live music.

There are two supermarkets, takeaways and a bakery at Exmouth shopping centre on Maidstone Cres.

Getting There & Away

If you're travelling by your own wheels (by far the best way to explore the cape and national parks), from the North-West Coastal Hwy take the turn-off to Exmouth (200km) at the Minilya Roadhouse.

Exmouth's Learmonth Airport is 37km south of town and there are daily **Skywest** (☎ 1300 660 088) flights to Karratha and Carnarvon, with links to Denham, Geraldton and Perth.

Buses stop at the visitors centre. **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) has three services a week from Perth (\$211, 20 hours). Alternatively, you can hop off the daily Greyhound Perth-Darwin bus at the Giralia turn-off and pick up the Exmouth shuttle there (\$60, two hours). From Exmouth there are three weekly services to

Coral Bay (\$65, two hours). Going north from Exmouth, you have to change buses at the Giralia turn-off.

Red Earth Safaris (☎ 9279 9011; www.redearthsafaris.com.au) runs six- or eight-day tours (\$599 to \$735) from Perth to Exmouth, along with a weekly 1½-day Perth Express service departing on Sunday at 7am (\$140). **Easyrider Backpacker Tours** (☎ 9226 0307) stop at Exmouth on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday at 6.45am on the Coastal cruiser route (May to November) to Perth. Easyrider's Perth Express stops here on Monday and Wednesday at 6.45am.

Getting Around

The **Airport Shuttle Bus** (☎ 9949 1101; \$20) meets all flights and shuttles the 37km into town; reservations are required for a ride back to the airport. The **Bundegi Beach Bus** (☎ 9949 4499; \$10 return) operates a service to Bundegi Beach, 13km north of Exmouth. Services depart at 12.30pm and 1.30pm, returning at 2.20pm and 4.45pm.

What Scooters (☎ 9949 4748; 102 Murat Rd; per day \$35) rents mopeds; a drivers licence is required. There are several car-hire companies in town, including **Allens** (☎ 9949 2403; Nimitz St), with cars starting from \$50 per day. Rent a pushbike from **Ningaloo Caravan & Holiday Resort** (☎ 9949 2377; Murat Rd) for around \$12 per day.

NINGALOO MARINE PARK

The Ningaloo Marine Park boundaries protect more than 250km of waters and foreshore areas from Bundegi Reef in the northeast of the North-West Cape peninsula to Amherst Point in the southwest.

The Ningaloo reef is amazingly accessible, lying only 100m offshore from some parts of the peninsula, and is home to a staggering array of marine life. There are sharks, manta rays, humpback whales, turtles, dugongs and more than 500 species of fish.

There's wonderful marine activity to enjoy year-round:

November-February Turtles – four known species nestle and hatch in the sands.

March & April Coral spawning – an amazing event 10 to 12 days after the full moon.

May-July Whale sharks – these big guys come for the coral spawning.

May-November Manta rays – these creatures migrate dramatically in big schools.

July-November Humpback whales – also migrating south, they have fun splashing about on the way.

What also makes Ningaloo special is its coral – over 220 species of hard coral have been recorded in the waters, ranging from the slow-growing bommies to delicate branching varieties. The hard corals found here are less colourful than soft corals, but have amazing formations. For eight or nine nights after the full moon in March and April there is a synchronised mass spawning, when branches of hermaphroditic coral simultaneously eject eggs and sperm into the water.

It's this coral that attracts the park's biggest drawcard, the solitary speckled **whale shark** (*Rhiodon typus*). Ningaloo is the only place in the world where these gentle giants arrive like clockwork each year to feed on plankton and small fish, making it a Mecca for marine biologists and visitors alike. The largest fish in the world, it can weigh up to 21 tonnes, although most weigh between 13 and 15 tonnes, and reach up to 18m long.

Activities

Most people visit Ningaloo Marine Park to snorkel. Stop at **Milyering visitors centre** (☎ 08-9949 2808; ☎ 9am-5pm) to get maps and information on the many gorgeous beaches where you can kick those flippers – especially if you haven't snorkelled before, as there are dangerous currents you need to be aware of. The shop at the visitors centre sells and rents snorkelling equipment (about \$15 per half-/full day to hire).

The best snorkelling spots:

Lakeside Snorkel out with the current before returning to the original point.

Oyster Stacks Just metres offshore, the Oyster Stacks shelter many species of fish.

Turquoise Bay Everyone's favourite: walk 300m south along the beach, swim out for about 40m and float face down – the current will carry you over coral bommies and abundant sea life. Get out at the sand bar then run back along the beach and start all over!

There are plenty of other water- and land-based tours from Coral Bay (p960), Exmouth (p963).

CAPE RANGE NATIONAL PARK

The 510-sq-km stunning **Cape Range National Park** (admission per vehicle \$10) comprises about a third of the North-West Cape peninsula and is rich in wildlife – kangaroos, emus, echidnas and lizards are easily spotted on a walk or drive through the park. Spectacular deep

canyons and rugged red limestone gorges dramatically cut into the range, flowing with deep blue water that mirrors the cliffs when calm. The gorges gradually soften, giving way to white sand, which leads to the crystal waters of Ningaloo Reef.

The park is accessible from the east coast from the unsealed Charles Knife Rd and Shot-hole Canyon Rd, which in turn are accessed from the Minilya-Exmouth Rd, although these roads won't take you through to the west coast. From the west coast it's accessible from Yardie Creek Rd.

The excellent **Milyering visitors centre** (☎ 08-9949 2808; ☎ 9am-5pm) has a comprehensive display of the area's natural and cultural history, and great maps and publications.

Sights & Activities

On the east coast, the scenic drive to **Charles Knife Canyon** along Charles Knife Rd, 23km south of Exmouth, dramatically follows the ridges of the range with breathtaking views below. **Shothole Canyon** is reached from Shot-hole Canyon Rd, 16km south of Exmouth, along a dry creek-bed of a road that gets you up close to the colourful canyon walls.

On the west coast, you can drive to start off the walk into **Mandu Mandu gorge** (3km return) via an access road 20km south of the Milyering visitors centre, for fantastic panoramic vistas of the gorge.

Drive to **Yardie Creek**, where the sealed Yardie Creek Rd ends, to do the easy 1.5km return walk to the creek. You can take a very pleasant one-hour **Yardie Creek Cruise** (☎ 08-9949 2659; adult/child \$25/12) up the short, sheer gorge to see rare black-footed rock wallabies and lots of bird life. It runs daily in season.

At low tide, those with 4WDs should be able to continue south to Coral Bay via a slow sandy track along the coast. Check road conditions first with the Milyering visitors centre and note that the crossing has had many victims in the past.

Sleeping

Ningaloo Reef Retreat (☎ 1800 999 941, 08-9942 1776; www.ningalooareefretreat.com; near Mandu Mandu Gorge Rd entrance; swag \$155 pp per night, wilderness tents d \$530 per night) An example of the new breed of 'luxury' wilderness escapes that seem to offer just a fraction more than a normal camping experience but at 10 times the price. What makes this one special is its dune-side location, tur-

WARNING

While swimming and snorkelling are the highlights of Cape Range, please be aware that strong currents do occur at beaches everywhere in the park, including the popular Turquoise Bay. Be attentive.

quoise water views, luxe dining tent, camp kitchen and library.

There are many compact **camping grounds** (sites \$7 pp) along the coast within the parks. Facilities and shade are minimal, but most have toilets. Sites are limited and allocated upon arrival (no advance bookings). **Milyering visitors centre** (☎ 08-9949 2808; ☎ 9am-5pm) has a list of sites with photos of the beaches. Get info in advance from **DEC** (☎ 9949 1676; 22 Nimitz St, Exmouth).

Getting There & Away

If you're not on a tour, you need your own transport to explore Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park. There is no local transport; the Ningaloo Reef Bus is no longer operating.

KARRATHA

☎ 08 / pop 12,500

The commercial centre of the Pilbara, Karratha ('good country') developed in the late 1960s as a single-purpose company town to house the overflow of workers from Dampier (20km away), which had reached saturation. Today it supports a plethora of companies and industries, including iron, salt, gas and fertiliser.

Karratha visitors centre (☎ 9144 4600; info@tourist.karratha.com; Karratha Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun, shorter hr Dec-Mar) has internet access and lots of local info and can organise fishing charters and dives in the beautiful Dampier Archipelago or Montebello Islands (from \$150). It can also supply permits (free) to use the private company road to Tom Price.

The visitors centre can book you on one of the many industrial tours, including Dampier Salt, Dampier Port and **Northwest Shelf Gas Venture** (admission free; ☎ Mon-Fri Apr-Nov). It also sells the 3.5km **Jaburara Heritage Trail** (\$2) guide, which takes visitors through significant traditional sites and details Karratha's history, from the displacement and eventual extinction of the Jaburara people to the development of billion-dollar industries.

The shopping centre has ATMs and a newsagent.

Sleeping & Eating

Call ahead if you intend to stay the night on your way through, as hotels fill with corporate/government guests.

Karratha Backpackers (☎ 9144 4904; 110 Wellard Way; dm/d \$22/\$4; ☎ ☎) Clean, comfortable rooms are set around a courtyard, and there's a good communal kitchen and lively TV-lounge. It's recently had a much-needed overhaul under new enthusiastic management.

All Seasons Karratha (☎ 9185 1155; www.accorhotels.com.au; Searipple Rd; d \$185; ☎ ☎) This central hotel has spacious, comfortable rooms with fridge, TV and phone, just behind the shopping centre. The hotel's Hearson's Bistro (mains \$17 to \$28) is one of Karratha's best eateries and has a pleasant poolside setting.

Karratha International Hotel (☎ 9185 3111; Balmoral Rd; d \$195; ☎ ☎) The town's best hotel has spacious, sophisticated self-contained rooms, but it's almost always full, so settle for a meal at one of its excellent restaurants instead. Stylish Etcetera (meals \$19 to \$32) is the best in town with a quality, creative menu, but the more casual bar and eatery Gecko's (meals \$16 to \$27), with its pastas, seafood and grills, is also fab.

Pilbara Holiday Park (☎ 1800 451 855, 9185 1855; www.fleetwoodparks.com.au/parks/pilbara.htm; Rosemary Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$28/31, motel/studio d from \$120/135; ☎ ☎ ☎) This neat, leafy park has a range of good self-contained accommodation, shady sites, a kids' playground, campers kitchen, TV-room and kiosk.

There is a supermarket, takeaways, and cafés in the main shopping centre.

DAMPIER

Dampier, some 25km from Karratha, is the region's main port. Spread around King Bay, it overlooks the 42 pristine islands of the **Dampier Archipelago**, and supports a wealth of marine life in its coral waters, but travellers generally only head here when they can't get a room in Karratha. The archipelago is popular with anglers and a number of charter boat operators head there (see the Karratha visitors centre, opposite, for details).

Dampier Mermaid (☎ 08-9183 1222; www.dampiermermaid.com.au; the Esplanade; d \$155; ☎ ☎ ☎) has basic but comfortable rooms, with the best having great ocean views. It's mostly occu-

ped by contract workers, so book ahead. There's also a bar and bistro but **Barnacle Bob's** (☎ 08-9183 1053; the Esplanade; mains \$10-19), overlooking Dampier Harbour, does good seafood.

Getting There & Around

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13) has direct daily flights from Perth, while **Skywest** (☎ 1300 660 088) travels via Exmouth and has links to Carnarvon, Denham and Geraldton. **Northwest Regional Airlines** (☎ 1300 136 629) has flights to Port Hedland and Broome three times a week.

Greyhound (☎ 13 20 30) has daily services to Perth (\$232, 22 hours) and Broome (\$126, 11 hours) from the Shell Service Station on Searipple Rd.

ROEBOURNE AREA

While atmospheric Roebourne and Cossack are the sites of the first European settlements in the Pilbara, seaside Point Samson is a fine spot for doing nothing but marking the time with the tides. The area gets busy during school holidays, and swelteringly hot in summer.

Roebourne (pop 970), 40km east of Karratha, is the oldest Pilbara town still in existence (1866) and home to a large Aboriginal community. Once a grazing and copper-mining centre, it has some grand buildings. The region's **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9182 1060; Queen St; ☎ 9am-4pm, shorter hr Nov-Apr) is housed in the Old Gaol, which is also a **museum** (admission by donation). Other historic buildings include the **Holy Trinity Church** (1894) and **Victoria Hotel**, the last of five original pubs.

MUSHROOM CLOUDS OVER THE MONTEBELLO ISLANDS

The Montebello Islands, a group of around 100 flat, limestone islands 200km southwest of Dampier, have the dubious distinction of being the site of Britain's first nuclear tests in Australia, in 1952. These days the islands are a conservation park with thriving land and marine fauna. The radiation warning signs remain, along with commemorative plaques, but the islands are considered safe to visit. The best way is to charter a boat from Dampier. Keen surfers still manage to have a 'blast' here – the surf is phenomenal.

Cossack has a lovely riverside location and historic bluestone buildings (1870–98), and makes for a quiet stopover. At the mouth of the Harding River, it was the district's main port from the mid- to late 19th century, but was supplanted by Point Samson and then abandoned. Attractions include the **Social History Museum** (adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 9am–4pm), which celebrates the town's halcyon days. The pioneer cemetery has a tiny Japanese section dating from the days when Cossack was WA's first major pearl-fishing town. **Cossack Adventure Cruises** (☎ 08-9182 1060) runs a cruise up the mangrove-lined Harding River and out to Jarman Island (\$80). **Cossack Backpackers** (☎ 08-9182 1190; dm \$21) has clean rooms in the atmospheric old police barracks, but you'll need to bring your own food as the nearby **Cossack Café** (☎ 08-9182 1550; light meals \$4–10) opens for lunch only.

Point Samson (pop 230) is a pleasant seaside town that supports a substantial commercial fishing industry. There's good **snorkelling** off Point Samson and **Honeymoon Cove**, a postcard-pretty beach featured on myriad tourist brochures (bring your own gear). Swish **Point Samson Resort** (☎ 08-9187 1052; www.pointsamson.com; 56 Samson Rd; motel/studio d \$195/205; ♿ ♿) has comfortable rooms in tropical gardens. **Samson Beach Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9187 1414; Samson Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$18/26) is a tiny park in lovely leafy surrounds, conveniently close to the water and the tavern. Bookings are essential in school holidays. Point Samson Resort has one of the best restaurants in the region, **Ta Ta's** (mains \$17–32), with a creative, mainly seafood, menu in stylish surroundings. The seafood laksa (\$23) is scrummy. **Moby's Kitchen** (☎ 08-9187 1435; mains \$6–11; ☎ 11am–2pm & 6–8.30pm Mon–Fri, 11am–8pm Sat & Sun) has good old-fashioned takeaway fish and chips, overlooking the sea.

MILLSTREAM-CHICHESTER NATIONAL PARK

The tranquil waterholes of the Fortescue River are cool, lush oases in the midst of arid, spinifex-covered plateaus and basalt ranges. Around 120km south of Roebourne, this 2000-sq-km park is well worth a detour – you'll be rewarded by panoramic vistas reminiscent of the USA's Monument Valley.

The unmanned Millstream **visitors centre** (☎ 08-9184 5144; ☎ 8am–4pm) was once the homestead of a pastoral station and now

has excellent displays on the park's history, ecosystems and traditional owners, the Yinjibarndi people.

In the park's north, the enchanting **Python Pool** (just a two-minute walk from the car park) is worth a look, and a swim if it's warm enough. It's linked to Mt Herbert by the **Chichester Range Camel Trail** (8km, three hours), from where it's a further 45-minute clamber to the peak. Further south, **Chinderwarriner Pool** and **Crossing Pool** are lovely waterholes with lilies and shady palms. The **Murlunmunyjurna Trail** (7km, two hours return) features river crossings over palm-trunk bridges and interpretive plaques next to vegetation explaining the plants' uses by the Yinjibarndi people. Pick up a park map from the visitors centre.

Shady bush **camp sites** (☎ 08-9184 5144; per person \$7) are located at Snake Creek, Crossing Pool and Deep Reach Pool; all have pit toilets and the latter two sites have gas BBQs.

MARBLE BAR

☎ 08 / pop 360

After a long summer in 1924, when for 161 consecutive days the temperature never dipped below 37.8°C, Marble Bar earned itself the reputation as the hottest place in Australia. It's appropriate then that the main attraction here is a natural pool, 5km west of town. **Chinaman Pool** is just beyond the 'marble bar' in a rock face for which the town is named, which is actually a 'bar' of jasper that pioneers mistook for marble. **Ironclad Hotel** (☎ 9176 1066; www.geocities.com/ironcladhotel; 15 Francis St; dm \$22, dongas s/d \$65/80, motel s/d \$95/110) is a classic old pub that's the heart and soul of the town, with well-used pool tables, a likeable beer garden and home-cooked counter meals (mains \$11 to \$24).

PORT HEDLAND

☎ 08 / pop 15,000

The industrious town of Port Hedland, with its low-rise corrugated buildings and fibro houses, is caked in dark red dirt. Its massive dock handles the iron-ore mined at Newman and exports more tonnage than any other Australian port. It's the stockpiles of ore dominating the skyline that are the source of that layer of dust that coats the town.

Information

There are ATMs along Wedge St and in the Boulevard shopping centre (cnr Wilson & McGregors Sts).

CHRISTMAS & COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

Christmas Island

☎ 08 / pop 1300

While Christmas Island (CI) is an Australian territory, its closest neighbour is Jakarta, Indonesia, 360km to the north, with Perth some 2300km to the southeast. A rugged limestone mountain, CI was settled in 1888 to mine phosphate – still the main economic activity. Its people are a mix of Chinese, Malays and European-Australians, a blend reflected in the island's food, languages, customs and religions. Several Singapore-style colonial buildings remain, as do traces from the Japanese occupation in WWII.

The island is most famous for the events of August 2001, when the Norwegian container ship *Tampa*, with its cargo of rescued asylum seekers, was refused permission to land on Australian soil, despite having asylum seekers needing urgent medical attention on board. The island was subsequently excised from Australia's migration zone and designated a future holding-pen for asylum seekers. As such, asylum seekers held on Christmas Island do not have full access to legal challenges and reviews available on the mainland. This policy, along with sending these 'undocumented' arrivals to other countries for processing, was dubbed the 'Pacific Solution', and has been heavily criticised by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and many NGO's such as Amnesty International. Asylum seekers have been held on the island as recently as 2006.

In spite of this activity, 63% of the island remains protected by CI National Park. There is tall rainforest on the plateau, and a series of limestone cliffs and terraces that attract endemic nesting sea birds, including the gorgeous golden bosun and rare Abbott's booby. CI is famous for the spectacular annual movement in November/December of millions of red land crabs marching from the forest down to the coast to breed. They cover everything in sight on their migration routes, including the roads. Marine life is also dramatic, with bright corals and fish on the fringing reefs attracting snorkellers in the dry season, when international yachties also drop anchor. Divers come throughout the year for the drop-off wall and cave dives, and are especially drawn to the possibility of diving with seasonal whale sharks (roughly October to April). A sea swell can bring decent surf during the wet season (roughly December to March) and there's a surf shop on the island.

Christmas Island **visitors centre** (☎ 9164 8382; www.christmas.net.au) can coordinate accommodation, diving, fishing and car hire. Visit its excellent website for links to travel agents offering packages, other local businesses and detailed island information.

Visitor accommodation is in self-contained units, motel-style rooms or resort-style suites from \$85 per night. Expect to pay about \$5 to \$10 for lunch and \$20 for dinner in the several Chinese and European-Australian restaurants.

National Jet Systems, booked through **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13), flies a circle from Perth, via the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, two or three times a week (five to seven hours depending on the route). There is also a return charter flight at least once a week from Singapore/Jakarta (50 minutes), which must be booked directly with **CI Travel** (☎ 9164 7168; www.citravel.com.au). Visa requirements are as for Australia, and Australians should bring their passports.

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

☎ 08 / pop 600

Some 900km further west are the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI), the necklace of low-lying islands around a blue lagoon that inspired Charles Darwin's theory of coral atoll formation. CKI was settled by John Clunies-Ross in 1826 (and briefly by a huge contingent of British forces during WWII), and his family remained in control of the islands and their Malay workers until 1978, when CKI became part of Australia's Indian Ocean territories. Now a population of about 500 Malays and 100 European-Australians live on the two settled islands. It's a very low-key place in which to walk, snorkel, dive, fish, surf and relax. Check out the two island-information websites: www.cocos-tourism.cc and www.cocos-solutions.com.

Hospital (☎ 9158 1666; Sutherland St)

Visitors centre (☎ 9173 1711; 13 Wedge St;

☎ 8.30am–4pm Mon–Sat, 10am–2pm Sun, shorter hr Nov–May) The helpful visitors centre has internet access.

Sights & Activities

Charming **Dalgety House Museum** (☎ 9173 4300; cnr Wedge & Anderson Sts; admission \$3; ☎ 10am–3pm May–Oct, via Town Tour only Nov–Apr), dating to 1903, is one of the few remaining examples of early-20th-century architecture. Its displays interpret the story of Port Hedland as a gateway to the world and the role of Dalgety & Co in the town's development.

The visitors centre is the departure point for mind-boggling **BHP Billiton iron ore plant tours** (adult/child \$15/8; ☎ 9.30am Mon–Fri). If you're impressed by size, don't miss this!

Courthouse Arts Centre & Gallery (☎ 9173 1064; Edgar St; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri) has a rotation of contemporary art exhibitions (with chic Champagne openings), as well as a gallery shop with Aboriginal and local art and crafts for sale.

Between November and February **flatback turtles** nest on nearby beaches. The best spot to see them is Cemetery Beach, but make sure you follow the code of conduct; the visitors centre has detailed information.

Pretty Pool, 7km east of the town centre, is a popular fishing and picnicking spot (beware of stonefish). Just to the north, Goode St is the best place to view Port Hedland's **Staircase to the Moon** (p979).

From **Marapikurrinya Park** at the end of Wedge St, you can watch impossibly large tankers glide in and out of port during the day, and see BHP's Hot Briquetted Iron plant on Finucane Island light up like a fairy castle at night.

Sleeping & Eating

Harbour Backpackers (☎ 9173 4455; 11 Edgar St; dm/d \$20/45; ☎) Travellers make themselves very much at home at this rather cluttered hostel – watching TV in the central living room is like hanging out at a friend's place. Its few rooms surround the lounge, and there's a big shady front terrace and sushi bar (sushi \$3 to \$7, open Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm).

Frog's (☎ 9173 3282; 20 Richardson St; dm/s/d \$22/32/46; ☎) On the foreshore, Frog's has a decent kitchen/dining area, a communal TV/video room, BBQ, laundry and lockers in dorms. Booking ahead is a must here as reception is only open from 5pm to 10pm.

Best Western Hospitality Inn (☎ 9173 1044; Webster St; d \$135, d with ocean view \$169; ☎) This exceptional motel is easily the most comfortable in town, with spacious, spotless rooms with TV, microwave, kettle and coffee plunger, and very groovy tables and chairs. Make sure you make it by 8pm for last orders in the excellent in-house restaurant. Room price includes breakfast.

Bruno's Ocean Lodge (☎ 9173 2635; 7 Richardson St; motel d \$70; ☎) If you can't get a room elsewhere in town, these well-worn rooms do the trick. Unfortunately, our bed was buggy when we last checked in.

Cooke Point Caravan Park (☎ 9173 1271; www.fleetwoodparks.com.au; cnr Athol & Taylor Sts; unpaved/powered sites \$28/32, backpacker \$65, motel/unit d \$90/110; ☎) Park your van or pitch your tent on the red dirt at this tidy caravan park overlooking Pretty Pool and the ocean. Expect good amenities including a terrific campers kitchen and an inviting pool, and a range of decent motel-style accommodation to suit all budgets.

Port Hedland Yacht Club (☎ 9173 3398; Sutherland St; mains \$10–18) is a popular spot with local families for traditional fish and chips wrapped in butcher's paper. It's licensed and has outdoor seating on a terrace overlooking the port.

Bruno's Pizzeria & Ristorante (☎ 9173 2047; meals \$11–24; ☎ 6pm–late) Locals swear by the generous portions of honest Italian served here.

There is a supermarket and café at the **Boulevard shopping centre** (cnr Wilson & McGregor Sts).

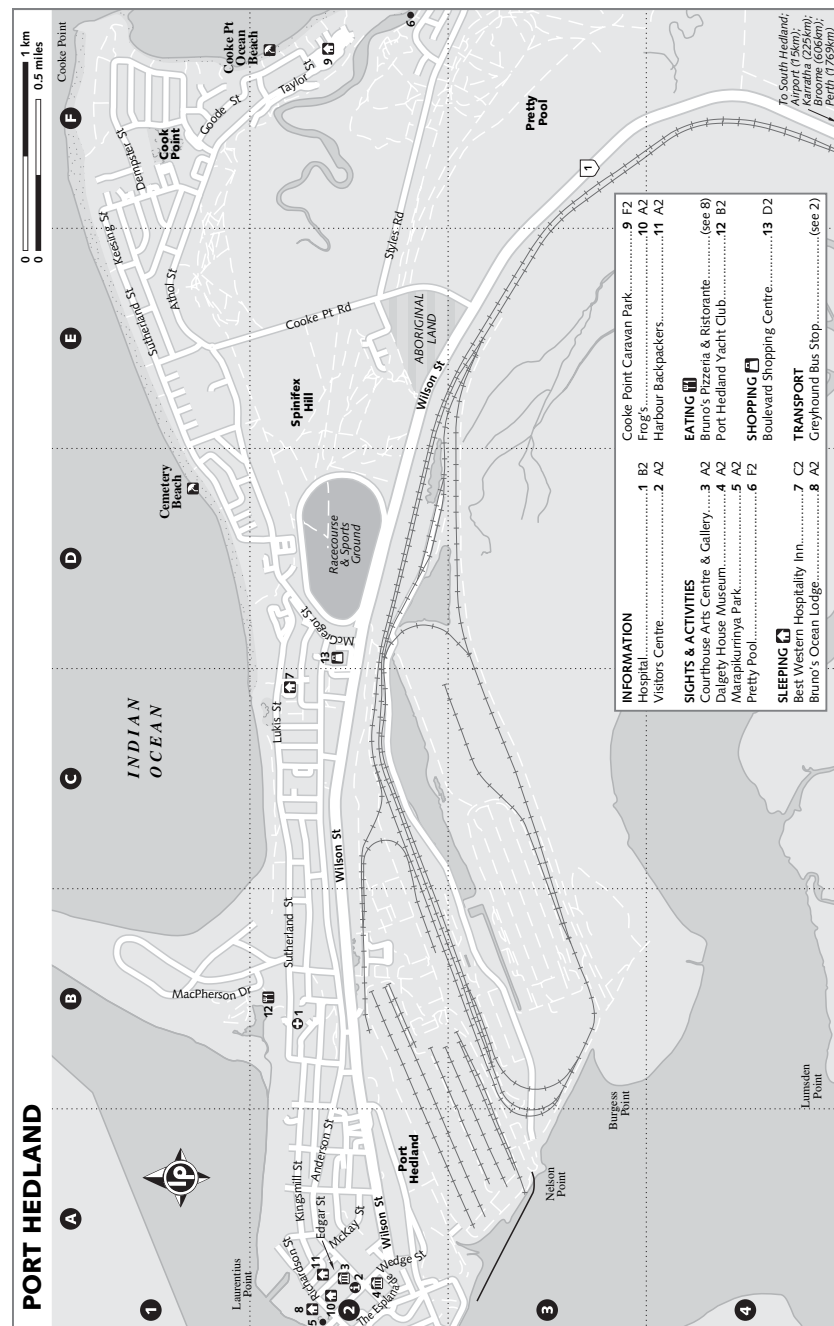
Getting There & Away

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13) flies to Port Hedland from Perth daily, while **Northwest Regional Airlines** (☎ 1300 136 629) goes to Broome and Karratha three times a week.

Greyhound (☎ 13 20 30) has daily buses to Perth (\$267, 26 hours) and Broome (\$87, seven hours) from the visitors centre and the South Hedland shopping centre. There's also a slightly quicker inland service to Perth (via Newman) on Friday. **Integrity** (☎ 1800 226 339) has two services a week to Perth and Broome, from the same departure points.

Getting Around

The airport is 13km from town; **Hedland Taxis** (☎ 9172 1010) charges around \$30. **Hedland Bus Lines** (☎ 9172 1394) runs limited weekday services between Port Hedland and Cooke Point, and on to South Hedland (\$3).



PORT HEDLAND TO BROOME

The highway runs inland from Port Hedland to Broome for 611km. Willy-willies whip through dusty, flat, featureless terrain while the coast to the west is lovely and unspoilt.

If you want to break the journey, there are great beaches for fishing along the way – the sharks seem to agree! The exit to **Cape Ker-audren Reserve** is 154km from Port Hedland, near Pardoo Roadhouse; there are **camp sites** (per vehicle \$6) with toilet facilities here. **Shady Eighty Mile Beach Coastal Resort & Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9176 5941; unpowered/powerd sites \$25/28, cabins d \$50-154) backs onto the beautiful white-sand beach, 245km from Port Hedland; there's a shop for essentials. **Port Smith Lagoon Caravan Park** (☎ 08-9192 4983; unpowered/powerd sites \$23/25, cabins d \$60-130), 477km from Port Hedland, is on a tidal lagoon.

THE KIMBERLEY

With just two opposing seasons, the Wet and the Dry, the Kimberley is a land of extremes – semi-arid plains dotted with spinifex and outback roads that flow like rivers, spectacular ranges cut by steep stony gorges and tiny pockets of tropical rainforest and tranquil waterholes. It's these dramatic contrasts that make a trip here so compelling.

But despite the region's many attractions – from the pristine Dampier Peninsula and splendid Cape Leveque to the magnificent gorges of Geike and Windjana and Tunnel Creek, and the rough and tumble of Gibb River Rd – there's still no place as engaging or as full of contradictions as Broome, with its rich, ancient indigenous history and exotic 19th-century pearling past. And then there's its present as a big outback town that plays host to amateur rodeos the same week it holds its annual cultural festival, the Shinju Matsuri, with Japanese food and dragon boat races.

Tours

Myriad multi-day tours explore the Kimberley. Itineraries, prices and dates vary; shop around and ask questions before committing. Prices usually include meals, accommodation, equipment and park fees.

Kimberley Adventure Tours (☎ 1800 083 368, 08-91 91 2655; www.kimberleyadventures.com.au) Operates tours between Broome and Darwin taking in the Gibb River Rd and Purnululu National Park (nine days \$1395).

Kimberley Wild (☎ 08-9193 7778; www.kimberleywild.com) An ecotourism finalist, offering tours from Broome including day trips to Windjana/Tunnel Creek (\$219), Geike Gorge (\$249) and Cape Leveque (\$219), and three-day Kimberley Indigenous Experience (from \$879). **Kimberley Wilderness Adventures** (☎ 1800 804 005, 08-9192 5741; www.kimberleywilderness.com.au) Award-winning eco-certified company (co-owned with East Kimberley Aboriginal collective) offers multi-day tours, including the popular 13-day Kimberley Complete (from \$4995).

Specialist tours can make for memorable experiences:

Alligator Airways (☎ 1800 632 533; www.alligatorairways.com.au) Offers variety of air trips from Kununurra, including a full-day Lake Argyle and Bungle Bungles tour (\$495)

King Leopold Air (☎ 08-9193 7155; www.kingleopoldair.com.au) Air tours of western Kimberley including half-day Buccaneer Explorer (\$360), taking in Horizontal Falls, and full-day Prince Regent Explorer via Mitchell Falls (\$640).

Willis's Walkabouts (☎ 08-8985 2134; www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au) Multi-day bushwalking tours around Northern Kimberley from \$425 for a two-day trip, up to \$5395 for a 28-day tour.

Getting There & Away

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13) has daily flights from Perth to Broome as well as a couple of direct flights per week to Kununurra. Partner airline **Air-north** (☎ 08-8920 4001; www.airnorth.com.au) flies from Broome to Darwin and Kununurra, as well as Kununurra to Darwin.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99) stops at the Broome visitors centre on its daily Perth-Darwin service. From Darwin, destinations include Kununurra (\$180, 11 hours), Derby (\$298, 21 hours) and Broome (\$339, 24 hours). From Broome, fares include Perth (\$351, 31 hours), Port Hedland (\$87, seven hours), Derby (\$60, 2½ hours) and Kununurra (\$204, 13¼ hours).

BROOME

☎ 08 / pop 14,000

An improbable combination of colours – red from the *pin-dan* (the rust-coloured dirt), the aquamarine of Roebuck Bay and the pearl white of Cable Beach's sands – makes Broome's landscape memorable. The dramatic contrasts of colour and weather, along with the town's rich history and cultural complexity, give Broome an atmosphere and energy like no other place in WA. This vitality has enticed adventurers, entrepreneurs, artists and

WET OR DRY?

The climatic extremes of the Kimberley make for very different travel experiences, depending on the time of year you visit. The best, but busiest, time to visit is April to September (the Dry). There's little rain, the temperatures are low and all the roads are likely to be open. By October it's already getting hot as the build-up starts, and throughout the Wet (roughly November to March) temperatures of more than 40°C are common.

Probably the Wet's major drawback is the closure of the Gibb River Rd, which blocks exploration of the magnificent northern Kimberley. In addition, opening hours for visitors centres and attractions are reduced and tours run less frequently or not at all. Otherwise, the Wet is definitely not to be sneezed at. It's as hot as blazes, and humid to boot, but the locals are more relaxed, there's plenty of elbowroom and the lack of crowds makes accommodation prices plummet. And when the rains do arrive, you'll be glad you were here to see the spectacle – low, black clouds come at a pace, dumping massive volumes of water during huge thunderstorms with awesome lightning displays. Rivers and creeks can rise rapidly and become impassable torrents within 15 minutes.

travellers to Broome, who have given the town a sense of the cosmopolitan – a vibrant culture, great cuisine, fine art and unique style that you won't find elsewhere.

Initially established as a pearling centre by Japanese entrepreneurs in the 1880s, Broome quickly attracted Chinese and Malays who joined local Aboriginal divers in the dangerous side of the business. Pearl diving was in open water, and initially without breathing apparatus; many divers were taken by sharks or got the bends. Pearling peaked in the early 1900s, when the town's 400 luggers supplied 80% of the world's mother-of-pearl (mainly used for buttons). Today, pearl farms have replaced open-sea diving and a handful of successful family-run companies continue to provide the world with exquisite Broome pearls.

During the Dry, Broome buzzes; this is the best time to visit. During the Wet, prices drop, opening hours are shorter, and locals breathe a collective sigh of relief and get on with their lives. While some like visiting during this time, keep in mind many attractions shut and roads can close.

Orientation

Broome is situated on the west coast of the Dampier Peninsula. Within Broome, Chinatown, the commercial heart, and Old Broome, the administrative and residential centre, are in the town's east, overlooking Roebuck Bay. Hamersley St runs from Chinatown, south through Old Broome to Town Beach, while Frederick St leaves Chinatown heading west to meet Cable Beach Rd and Cable Beach, and

runs into Port Dr, which leads to Broome's deep-water port in the south.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Kimberley Bookshop (☎ 9192 1944; 4 Napier Tce; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Stocks an extensive range of books on Broome, the Kimberley, Aboriginal art, fiction, nonfiction and travel guides.

Magabala Books (☎ 9192 1991; www.magabala.com; 2/15 Saville St; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Australia's only independently operated indigenous publishing house has a wonderful selection of indigenous novels, poetry, social history, biographies and children's literature.

EMERGENCY

Broome District Hospital (☎ 9192 9222; 28 Robinson St) Open 24 hours.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access costs anything from \$5 to \$10 per hour.

Galactica DMZ Internet Café (☎ 9192 5897; 4/2 Hamersley St; per hr \$5; ☎ 10am-8pm) Broome's best, with 40 terminals with internet access, Skype & webcams; BYO laptop for broadband access and burn CDs/DVDs of your pics among other services. Next to McDonald's.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Events in the Kimberley (www.eventsinthekimberley.com.au)

Kimberley Tourism Association (www.kimberleytourism.com)

MONEY

There are ATMs in Carnarvon St, Napier Tce and Short St.

THE KIMBERLEY



POST

The post office is in Chinatown's Paspaley shopping centre.

TOURIST INFORMATION

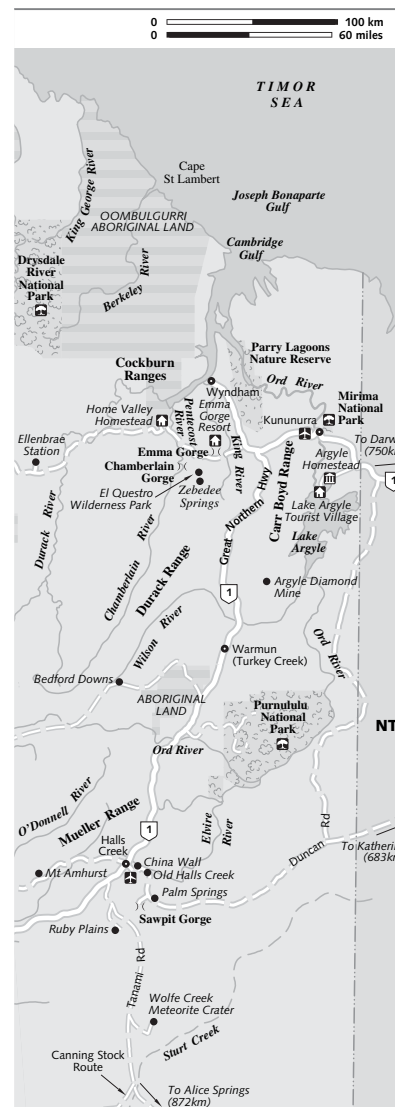
Visitors centre (☎ 9192 2222; www.broomevisitorcentre.com.au; cnr Broome Rd & Short St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Nov, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-

1pm Sat & Sun Dec-Mar) Has masses of info on the Kimberley and Broome, and books transport, accommodation and tours.

Sights & Activities

CABLE BEACH

About 4km west of town, Cable Beach is one of Australia's finest beaches, with azure waters



saur tracks are exposed (at high tide check out the concrete casts on the cliff-top). **Anastasia's Pool** is a rock pool that was built by the lighthouse keeper to soothe his wife's arthritis.

Just back from Cable Beach is the **Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Park** (☎ 9192 1489; Cable Beach Rd; adult/child/family \$20/16/50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Nov). Australia's original crocodile hunter was making classic Aussie adventure films *Across the Top* and *Follow the Sun* in the 1960s when the late Steve Irwin was just a kid. To get the most out of your visit, time it with a feeding tour (3pm daily; alligator-feeding tours 11am Monday to Friday).

CHINATOWN & TOWN BEACH

Enchanting **Chinatown** is Broome's historical and commercial heart; there's scant evidence of the Chinese now, its atmosphere coming from the vernacular architecture. Corrugated-iron buildings with lattice, louvers and verandas line Carnarvon St, Short St, Dampier Tce and Napier Tce; charming **Sun Pictures** (see p979) is the highlight. Once home to boarding houses, tailors and grocers – and in nearby Sheba Lane, brothels, opium dens and gambling joints – buildings now house boutiques, cafés and art galleries.

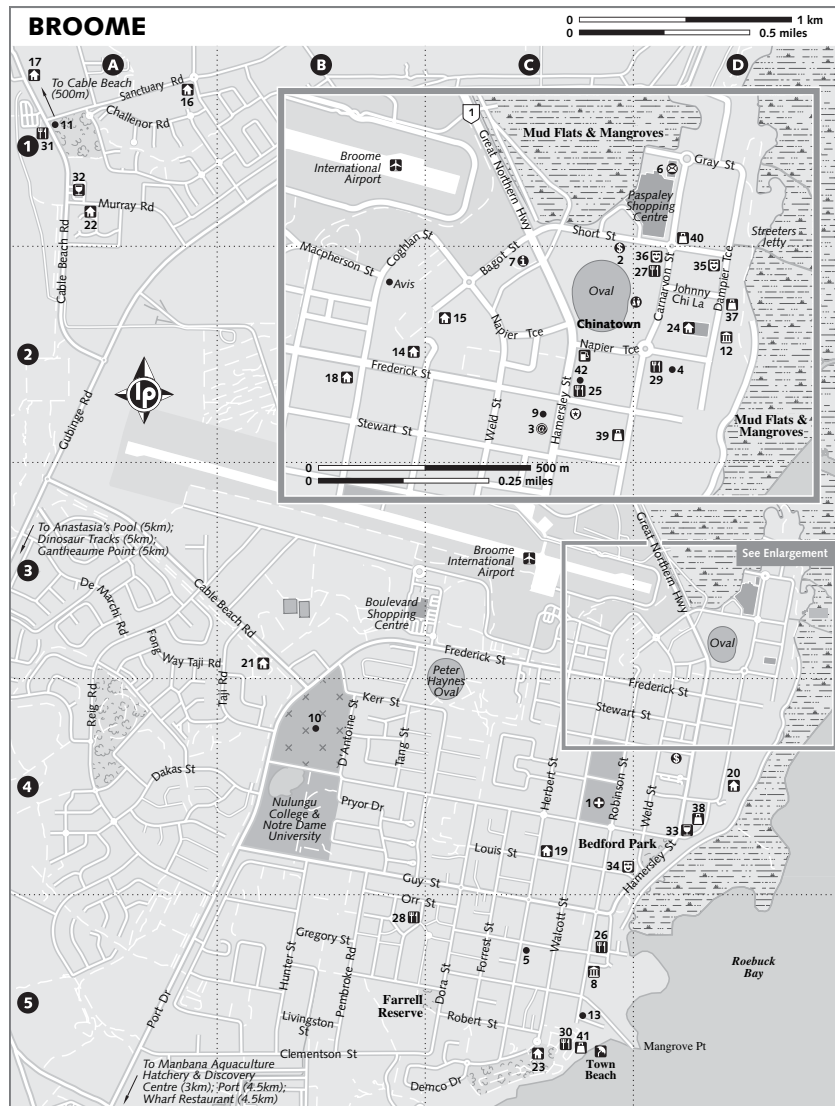
Pearl Luggers (☎ 9192 2059; www.pearlluggers.com.au; 31 Dampier Tce; admission free; 75min tours adult/child \$19/9; ☎ tours 9am, 11am & 2pm) offers compelling tours covering Broome's tragic pearling past, including rare archival film, and a taster of delicious pearl meat (different to oysters, nothing like chicken). Four times vary at weekends and in the Wet; book ahead. If you enjoy this don't miss **Willie Creek Pearl Farm** (see p977). Equally fascinating is **Broome Museum** (☎ 9192 2075; 67 Robinson St; adult/child/concession \$5/1/3; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun), with a wonderful collection of early photos documenting the town's multicultural history and exhibits on pearling and luggers.

A number of cemeteries testify to the multicultural make-up of Broome society. There's a small **pioneer cemetery** overlooking Roebuck Bay by Town Beach, while on Frederick St there's a **Japanese Cemetery** with 919 graves (mostly pearl divers), a **Chinese cemetery** with more than 90 graves and several monuments, and a **Muslim Cemetery**.

The elegant old teak **courthouse** on Hamersley St was built in 1889 to house staff from the Eastern Extension Australasian and China Telegraph Company which linked Broome to

and a classic, wide, white sandy beach as far as the eye can see.

The long sweep of Cable Beach ends at **Gantheaume Point**, 7km south of Broome. The striking cliffs have eroded into curious shapes, revealing beautiful layers of reds, oranges and yellows that give off a lovely hue at sunset. At extremely low tides 120-million-year-old **dino-**



Java by an underwater cable – it came ashore at Cable Beach, ran across the current airport site and finished here! Markets are held in the courthouse gardens every Saturday (See p980).

Tiny **Town Beach** is fine for a dip, while the **port** has a pleasant sandy beach from where you can swim across to the rocks, and good fishing from the jetty.

Manbana Aquaculture Hatchery & Discovery Centre (☎ 9192 3844; www.manbana.com.au; Murakami Rd; adult/child/concession \$19/10/15; 🚗 guided tours 10am & 1.30pm Mon-Fri) is Australia's first indigenous-owned commercial aquaculture hatchery and a discovery centre exploring the role the Kimberley waters have played in the lives of the local indigenous peoples.

INFORMATION		EATING 🍴		SHOPPING 🛍️	
Broome District Hospital.....	1 C4	Aarli Bar.....	25 C2	Kailis Pearls.....	37 D2
Commonwealth Bank ATM.....	2 C2	Black Pearl.....	26 C5	Monsoon Gallery.....	38 D4
Galactica DMZ Internet Café.....	3 C2	Blooms.....	27 D2	Old Broome.....	C2
Kimberley Bookshop.....	4 D2	Café Carlotta.....	28 B5	Lockup Gallery.....	39 C2
Magabala Books.....	5 C5	Frangipanis.....	29 D2	Paspaley Pearls.....	40 D1
Post Office.....	6 D1	Pearl Luggers.....	12 D2	Town Beach	
Visitors Centre.....	7 C2	Pioneer Cemetery.....	13 C5	Markets.....	41 C5
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		DRINKING 🍷		TRANSPORT	
Broome Museum.....	8 C5	Diver's Tavern.....	32 A1	Broome Broome.....	(see 42)
Courthouse.....	9 C2	Matso's Broome Brewery.....	33 D4	Broome Cycles.....	42 C2
Japanese, Chinese & Muslim Cemeteries.....	10 B4				
Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Park.....	11 A1				
Roebuck Bay Caravan Park.....	23 C5				
Roebuck Bay Hotel.....	16 A1				
Roebuck Bay Motel.....	17 A1				
Kimberley Klub.....	18 B2				
McAlpine House.....	19 C4				
Mangrove Hotel.....	20 D4				
Ocean Lodge.....	21 B3				
Palm Grove Holiday Resort.....	22 A1				
Palms.....	(see 20)				
Roebuck Bay Hotel.....	(see 24)				
Tides Bar.....	(see 20)				
Murphy's Irish Bar.....	34 C4				
Nippon Inn.....	35 D2				
Sun Pictures.....	36 D2				

Tours

Broome Sightseeing Tours (☎ 9192 5041; www.broomesightseeingtours.com; adult/child \$85/65) Award-winning, comprehensive four-hour guided multimedia tour.

Hovercraft Tours (☎ 9193 5025; www.broomehovercraft.com.au; 1hr tour adult/child \$72/50, sunset BYO tour \$110/75) 'Fly' over tidal flats to visit historical sights and see magnificent sunsets.

Mamabulanjin Tours (☎ 9192 2660; mabtour@wn.com.au; adult/child \$66/33) Half-day indigenous guided tour of Roebuck Bay covering Aboriginal traditions, culture, storytelling, traditional fishing, hunting and survival techniques.

Red Sun Camels (☎ 9193 7423; www.redsuncamels.com.au; 40min morning ride adult/child \$30/20, 1hr sunset ride \$50/30) While several of Broome's camel tour companies are perhaps riding off into the sunset due to a camel coup, the sunset camel ride is still a quintessential Broome experience.

Willie Creek Pearl Farm (☎ 9193 6000; www.williecreekpearls.com.au) Fascinating insight into modern pearl farming with compelling presentations on oyster insemination, plus a boat ride on the azure-coloured estuary to see a pearl farm. Half-day bus tour from Broome (adult/child \$65/33) or self-drive (4WD recommended) then join the two-hour tour at the farm (\$33/15).

Willie Pearl Luger Cruises (☎ 0428-919 781; www.williecrises.com.au; adult/child \$95/50) Sail on a traditional pearl lugger to see whales (July–September), dolphins (September–March) and other marine life, plus sunsets. Price includes transport, BBQ and drinks.

Other activities on offer include fishing charters, kayaking, bird-watching, Harley tours and skydiving. See the visitors centre (p974) for details.

Festivals & Events

Staircase to the Moon Three magical nights each month from March to October.

Big Moon Rising (www.bamf.org.au) Broome Arts and Music Festival is held in April and May.

Broome Fringe Arts Festival June.

Ballet on the Beach West Australian Ballet company performs in Broome each June.

Kimberley Cup Broome's end-of-season horseracing carnival takes place in July.

NAIDOC Week National recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in July.

Opera Under the Stars (www.operaunderthestars.com.au) August.

Shinju Matsuri Festival of the Pearl (www.shinju matsuri.com) Includes dragon boat races. September.

Worn Art A fabulous spectacle of fashion, performance, music and dance in October.

Mango Festival A celebration of the fruit in all its forms takes place in November.

Sleeping

The cost of Broome's accommodation skyrockets during the Dry. If you're here in the Wet, compare deals as competition is fierce. High-season prices are listed in this section.

BUDGET

Cable Beach Backpackers (☎ 1800 655 011, 9193 5511; www.cablebeachbackpackers.com; 12 Sanctuary Rd; dm \$20-25, d \$65; 🚗 🚻 🚰) Within splashing distance of Cable Beach, this relaxed place has a lush tropical courtyard, swimming pool, big communal kitchen and bar. The friendly management can provide anything from shuttle buses to free sausage sizzles and surfboards.

our pick Kimberley Klub (☎ 1800 004 345, 9192 3233; www.kimberleyklub.com; 62 Frederick St; dm \$24-26, d \$80; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This big, breezy backpackers like Broome's Last Resort but on a grander scale. There are myriad common areas, a poolside bar, hammock spaces, a massive kitchen, big-screen TV, table tennis, beach volleyball, free beach shuttle and themed nights including bingo and open mic nights.

Broome's Last Resort (☎ 9193 5000; www.broome.slarestort.com.au; 2 Bagot St; dm \$20-25, d \$65; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Has a wonderful laid-back tropical vibe thanks to its wide verandas, swimming pool shaded by palm trees, hammocks, bar, pool tables and jukebox. The friendly management throws in free breakfast, town tours, BBQs, beach trips, a daily happy hour and pool comps where you can win a tattoo!

MIDRANGE

Roebuck Bay Hotel (☎ 9192 1221; www.roebuckbayhotel.com.au; Carnarvon St; budget/standard/superior motel d \$100/120/140; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Broome's oldest hotel, built in 1890, has comfortable rooms surrounding a tropical swimming pool (take an upstairs room), while the budget sleeps back onto the pub's noisy band area. A backpackers lodge (dorm \$16 to \$19) is in a separate building next to the live gig/dance space, attracting a party crowd.

Broome Motel (☎ 1800 683 867, 9192 7775; www.broomemotel.com.au; 51-57 Frederick St; d \$115, self-contained r \$145; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This pleasant, central motel – with spotless, comfortable rooms with TV, fridge and tea and coffee facilities – represents one of Broome's best motel deals.

Ocean Lodge (☎ 1800 600 603, 9193 7700; www.oceanlodge.com.au; 1 Cable Beach Rd; d/f \$140/160; 🍷 🍷) Halfway between Cable Beach and Chinatown, these spacious clean rooms are looking a little worn, but guests love the swimming pool, expansive tropical garden and big BBQs where they can cook their own food.

TOP END

Cable Beach Club Resort (☎ 1800 199 099, 9192 0400; www.cablebeachclub.com; Cable Beach Rd; d from \$255; 🍷 🍷 🍷) What makes this idyllic resort special is the unique combination of Broome architecture and Eastern Zen style. Add to that lush gardens, serene swimming pools, great eateries and friendly service.

our pick McAlpine House (☎ 9192 3886; www.mcalpinehouse.com; 84 Herbert St; d from \$300, off-season from \$200; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Comfortable Kimberley style

abounds in Captain Kennedy's atmospheric old home (dating to 1910) – allowing you to live like a pearling master. Spend a few days lazing in a hammock, picking mangoes from the tree, swimming in the serene pool and drinking cocktails on the big verandas at this stylish boutique guesthouse.

Mangrove Hotel (☎ 1800 094 818, 9192 1303; www.mangrovehotel.com.au; Carnarvon St; d \$205; 🍷 🍷) The stylish Executive Rooms (contemporary Asian-inspired design) have divine views over Roebuck Bay's aquamarine waters and the hotel's large swimming pools (and drop by \$30 off season). Rumour is the budget rooms will be renovated into flashpacker accommodation.

CAMPING

Roebuck Bay Caravan Park (☎ 9192 1366; 91 Walcott St; unpowered/powerd sites d \$23/28, on-site vans d \$75; 🍷) Right on the milky waters of Roebuck Bay's Town Beach, and short bus rides to Chinatown and Cable Beach, this shady park has good facilities, including a communal kitchen and BBQ area.

Palm Grove Holiday Resort (☎ 1800 803 336, 9192 3336; www.palmgrove.com.au; cnr Cable Beach & Murray Rds; unpowered/powerd sites \$32/36, studio d \$155, 2-bedroom park homes \$180; 🍷 🍷) Across the road from Cable Beach, this verdant caravan park has free BBQs, campers kitchen and a gorgeous swimming pool.

Eating

Broome has the only serious dining scene between Perth and Darwin. If you're a foodie, savour it while you can. During the Wet some eateries close, keep shorter hours or only offer takeaway.

Aarli Bar (☎ 9192 5529; cnr Frederick & Hamersley Sts; tapas/mains \$9-16, pizzas \$16; 🍷 7am-late Tue-Sat Mar-Nov) Funky little Aarli Bar isn't actually a bar – it's BYO only. What it does have though is large portions of modern Med-influenced tapas as well as authentic wood-fired pizza – delicious! Bookings essential.

Blooms (☎ 9193 6366; 12 Carnarvon St; mains \$12-26; 🍷 7am-late) A convenient pre-/post-cinema spot with a pleasant pavement terrace, Blooms does decent light dishes (salt and pepper squid, fish cakes etc), sandwiches and pastas, and has good wines by the glass. The service, however, gives new meaning to 'Broome time'.

Zanders (☎ 9193 5090; Cable Beach Reserve, Cable Beach Rd; mains \$18-27; 🍷 7am-late) Its beachside location

keeps Zanders busy, especially around sunset, while its range of eating options – from takeaway at picnic tables to bistro-style eating with table service – keeps everyone happy, despite the predictable menu.

Town Beach Cafe (☎ 9193 5585; Robinson St; mains \$6-25; 🍷 7am-8pm Mon-Sat) This busy BYO seafood café overlooking the beach does excellent tempura king prawns or beer-battered fish and chips.

Café Carlotta (☎ 9192 7606; Jones Pl; mains \$7-28; 🍷 5.30-10pm Mon-Sat) Owners Mic and Charlotte make regular research trips to Italy and it shows with their daily handmade pastas and authentic wood-fired pizzas.

Frangipanis (☎ 9193 6766; 5 Napier Tce; mains \$10-32; 🍷 7.30am-late) Snag a table on the terrace and share the signature Tasting Plate (\$19) of Med and Mod Oz flavours: grilled kangaroo skewers, wild olives, feta, chorizo, haloumi, duck shanks and Turkish bread. Conveniently, it's licensed and BYO.

Black Pearl (☎ 9192 1799; 4/63 Robinson St; mains \$11-27; 🍷 8am-late) The Med and Mod Oz cuisine at this stylish BYO eatery can be a bit hit and miss – as can the service. Visit on a good day and score a table under the shade sails overlooking Roebuck Bay, and you're sure to risk a second visit.

our pick Wharf Restaurant (☎ 9192 5800; Port of Pearls House, Port Dr; mains \$9-20; 🍷 10am-10pm) Chilling out with a crisp glass of white and a dozen fresh oysters (half-price from 2pm to 5pm) overlooking the aquamarine seawaters of Roebuck Bay is sublime. The owners here have been keeping locals and tourists sated for

STAIRCASE TO THE MOON

The reflections of the rising full moon hitting the rippled Roebuck Bay mud flats, exposed at low tide, create the optical illusion of a golden stairway leading to the moon, called (naturally) the Staircase to the Moon. It has quite an impact on Broome's locals and visitors alike. If you're in town for the few days around the full moon, between March and October (the visitors centre publishes the exact dates and times), the town will be abuzz with everyone eager to see the spectacle. At Town Beach there's a lively evening market with food stalls and people bring their fold-up chairs and a bottle of something!

10 years with fabulous quality seafood and a great list of delicious WA wines by the glass. If you can get past the oysters, try the chilli blue swimmer crab.

Self-caterers will welcome well-stocked supermarkets and bakeries at Paspaley and Blvd shopping centres.

Drinking

Matso's Broome Brewery (☎ 9193 5811; 60 Hamersley St) There's no better spot in Broome to kick back with a beer than Matso's wide verandas overlooking Roebuck Bay. The wonderful award-winning beers are brewed on-site – the Monsoonal Blonde is sensational – and there's live music on Sundays in the courtyard from 3pm to 6pm, and occasional DJs and bands on weekend nights.

Roebuck Bay Hotel (☎ 9192 1221; 45 Dampier Tce) The 'Roey' is your typical Aussie pub with a blokes' sports bar with pool tables, darts and skimpies (barmaids in g-strings), a beer garden with counter meals (Cheffy's), a band venue (Pearlers Lounge) and a club/concert venue (Oasis), with live music and dance parties with DJs.

Diver's Tavern (☎ 9193 6066; Cable Beach Rd; 🍷 11am-10pm) This is the place to head for a few beers over some games of pool followed by a no-nonsense counter meal (mains \$12 to \$29). The Divers Burgers (\$16) are deservedly popular, although many find it hard to resist 'Half an Ass' (a half-kilo rump, gravy, chips and salad for \$26).

On Friday nights locals like to sink a few beers under the Tiki torches while the sun goes down over Roebuck Bay at **Tides Bar**, before moving inside to **Palms** (☎ 9192 1303; Carnarvon St) at the Mangrove Hotel.

Entertainment

See a movie at **Sun Pictures** (☎ 9192 3738; www.sunpictures.com.au; 27 Carnarvon St; adult/child/concession/family \$15/9/12/40), the world's oldest operating picture gardens (see the boxed text, p980). Sinking back into a canvas deckchair or sprawling out on the grass under the stars will go down as one of your most memorable movie-going experiences – especially if a jet flies overhead!

Backpackers love the Tuesday jam nights at **Murphy's Irish Bar** (☎ 9192 1002; Mercure Hotel, Weld St) and Wednesday nights at the **Nippon Inn** (☎ 9192 1941; Dampier Tce) for its 'best beer gut' and wet T-shirt competitions.

Shopping

Broome specialises in pearls and Aboriginal art, and while both make treasured souvenirs, they're also great investments. You don't have to be rich – pearl earrings can cost less than \$100, photographic prints from \$40 upwards, while small limited-edition art prints can start at around \$100.

Monsoon Gallery (☎ 9193 5379; www.monsoon-gallery.com.au; Hammersley St; ☎ 10am-5pm) Has an eclectic range of art by Aboriginal and other local artists, along with quality prints, photography, sculpture, textiles, glass and ceramics.

Old Broome Lockup Gallery (☎ 9193 5633; www.lockup.groovylips.com; Camarvon St; ☎ 10am-5pm) In the building that was a jail for Aborigines up until the 1950s, this gallery sells art by local indigenous painters, along with photography, carvings, didgeridoos and music created by resident artists.

Kailis Pearls (☎ 9192 2061; Shop 3, 23 Dampier Terrace; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) Having established Broome's first underwater pearl farm on a Roebuck Bay seabed, Kailis Pearls creates elegant, understated designs.

Paspaley Pearls (☎ 9192 2203; www.paspaleypearls.com; 2 Short St; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun May-Oct only) Paspaley started Australia's first cultured pearl farm and has been setting splendid pearls in stylish designs ever since.

For local arts, crafts, incense, candles, hippy gear and hemp clothes, head to the Court-house Markets on Saturday (year-round) and Sunday mornings (May–September) or the Town Beach Markets during the Staircase to the Moon (see the boxed text, p979).

Getting There & Away

Broome is a regional hub with flights or links to all Australian capitals, including Perth and major centres as well as towns throughout the Kimberley. **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99) stops at the visitors centre. See p972 for details of fares.

Getting Around

The Town Bus Service (☎ 9193 6585; www.broomebus.com; adult/child \$3/2, hop-on hop-off day pass adult/child \$9/free) links Chinatown with Cable Beach every hour (7.10am to 6.05pm; starts at 10.23am mid-October to May). **Nightrider** (☎ 9192 8987; adult/child one way \$4/3, all-night pass \$6/3) runs every half-hour from 6.30pm until midnight. Get timetables from the visitors centre.

Broome Broome (☎ 9192 2210; www.broomebroome.com.au) has air-con cars from \$30 a day, 4WD from \$105 (plus insurance) and scooters from \$35 for two days. **Broome Cycles** (☎ Chinatown 9192 1871; Cable Beach 0409-192 289; \$50 deposit) rents bikes for \$18/70 per day/week. For taxis phone **Broome Taxis** (☎ 9192 1133) or **Chinatown Taxis** (☎ 1800 811 772).

AROUND BROOME Broome Bird Observatory

This wonderful **bird observatory** (☎ 08-9193 5600; Crab Creek Rd; adult/child \$5/free, includes binoculars) on the Roebuck Bay shores, 25km from Broome, is a vital staging post for hundreds of migratory species, including 49 waders (nearly a quarter of the world's total species). An incredible 800,000 birds arrive each year, travelling some 12,000km to get here, on their way to or from Asia and Siberia. Join an excellent two-hour tour (from the observatory/Broome \$50/85); a full-day tour of the freshwater lakes (\$120/155, BYO lunch); a one-hour introductory walk (\$15); or do a seven-day all-inclusive course (\$790 including transfers, accommodation and meals).

You can rent a room (singles/doubles \$30/55) or fully self-contained chalet (\$105), or camp on-site (per person \$11). Transfers from Broome cost \$35. If you're driving, access is via a decent dirt road, which can be closed in the Wet.

Dampier Peninsula

Stunning scenery of aquamarine waters, white-sand beaches and red rock formations, along with the opportunity to learn about the indigenous culture and country of the Ngumbarl, Jabirrjabirr, Nyul Nyul, Nimanburu and Bardi peoples (your hosts and guides), are great reasons to visit the remote Dampier Peninsula.

Access to the isolated Aboriginal communities is 4WD only, along the rough, corrugated, red pindan 200km-long Cape Leveque Rd (turn-off 9km east of Broome). You must plan your trip in advance, obtaining permits and booking accommodation before setting off. Permits exist to protect the privacy of the community, preserve Aboriginal heritage and culture, and the natural environment, as well as ensuring your own safety. You can obtain a free transit permit in advance online from the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (☎ 1300 651 077; www.dia.wa.gov.au); it may take around three days to be processed if you want to visit the community. Get the *Dampier Peninsula Travellers Guide* from Broome visitors centre, which can make accommodation arrangements for you. You need to be completely self-sufficient and take fuel, food and water to last the period you'll be away. Check road conditions before leaving.

The first turn-off, Manari Rd, takes you to the **Willie Creek Pearl Farm** (see p977), while another 40km north is **Coulomb Point Nature Reserve**, which protects unique pindan vegetation and the rare bilby.

Back on Cape Leveque Rd, it's around 110km to **Beagle Bay** (☎ 08-9192 4913; entry per person \$5), notable for the extraordinarily beautiful mother-of-pearl altar at Beagle Bay church, built by Pallotine monks in 1918. There are no public facilities or accommodation, just a shop and fuel (weekdays only). Contact the office on arrival.

Tranquil, unspoilt **Middle Lagoon** (☎ 08-9192 4002; entry per car \$8; unpowered/powerd sites per person \$13/16, beach shelter d \$44, cabins d \$125-200), 170km from Broome, is ideal for swimming, snorkelling and fishing, and is popular with Broome families. There's no fuel here.

Between Middle Lagoon and Cape Leveque, **Lombadina** (☎ 08-9192 4936; www.lombadina.com.au; entry per car \$5, dm \$44, unit d \$165), 200km from Broome, has fishing, whale watching, mudcrabbing and indigenous 'footprint' tours (one-/two-hour guided walks \$33/55, boat tours from \$154). There's fuel here Monday to Friday. Gorgeous **Chile Creek** (☎ 08-9192 4141; www.chilecreek.com; sites per person \$17, bush shelter per person \$25), 7km from Lombadina, keeps it real with basic bush shelters and a rustic camp kitchen where travellers share stories.

Cape Leveque is spectacular, with pristine beaches and stunning red cliffs. Eco-tourism award-winner **Kooljaman** (☎ 08-9192 4970; www.kooljaman.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites d \$32/37, beach shelters/mini safari tents d \$60, cabins d \$140, safari tents d \$240) is the most sophisticated of the communities, with accommodation ranging from hill-top resort-style safari tents with panoramic views to thatched beach huts. Kooljaman gets busy in-season, but is almost deserted off-season. **Dinkas Restaurant** (mains \$10-22; ☎ Apr-Oct) offers eat-in or a bush butler service!

Peninsula Transfers (☎ 08-9192 2660; adult/child \$95/60; ☎ 8am Sun/Wed/Fri Apr-Oct) operates 4WD services from Broome to Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Cape Leveque. Other destinations and the return trip must be negotiated when booking. Tour operators to Cape Leveque from Broome include indigenous-owned **Chomley's Tours** (☎ 08-9192 7307; www.chomleystours.com.au; 2-day tour incl 3hr Aboriginal guided tour \$310) and **Over the Top Adventure Tours** (☎ 08-9192 5211; www.4wdtours.com.au; 1-/2-day Cape Leveque tour \$225/410).

FUN AT THE SUN

There are stars on the screen and in the sky at Broome's **Sun Pictures** (p979), the world's oldest outdoor cinema. Operating almost continuously since 1916, the theatre has a fascinating history.

Originally, this double-fronted tin structure was an Asian emporium that was in part a Japanese playhouse for traditional theatre performances. The building was sold in 1913 to master pearly Ted Hunter, who set about converting it to a 500-seat cinema. From 1916 to 1933 silent movies were screened to a tinkling piano accompaniment – often played by a local personality named Fairy – until the projector was adapted for sound in 1933 and Sun Pictures screened its first 'talkie'.

Before a levee bank was built in 1974, the theatre suffered from tidal flooding and moviegoers were often carried out of the theatre to higher ground. The theatre also went through a period of racially segregated seating, with the well-to-do Europeans having the better seats and the Malays, Koepangers, Filipinos and Aborigines having a separate entrance. Both WWII and the introduction of TV and video to the Kimberley region saw the theatre temporarily close, but it was restored between 1998 and 2000.

Today, armed with a choc-top (a classic Australian ice-cream treat), reclining in the canvas deckchairs and watching a film as children play, bats make a racket and the odd aircraft flies overhead (yep, it's right on the flight path!) is as quintessential a Broome experience as a Cable Beach sunset.

DERBY

☎ 08 / pop 5000

Drowsy Derby, the administrative centre for west Kimberley, sits astride a peninsula jutting into King Sound, surrounded by tidal mud flats. Its mangroves attract over 200 bird species, including migratory waders. This is crocodile country so squeeze the last bit of beach out of Broome (219km south) before heading here. Derby is short on sights but makes a decent base for trips to the national parks of the ancient Devonian Reef (see p985) and the islands of the Buccaneer Archipelago; it's also the western entrance to the Gibb River Rd.

Orientation & Information

The post office, supermarket and ATMs are on Loch and Clarendon Sts. The **visitors centre** (☎ 1800 621 426; 9191 1426; www.derbytourism.com.au; 2 Clarendon St; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, Sat 9am-noon & Sun closed Oct-Mar) sells bus tickets, can advise on road conditions, and books local mud crabbing and fishing tours.

Sights & Activities

Derby's first wooden jetty was built in 1894 to serve the growing pastoral population and gold rush, while the current **wharf** opened in 1964 to export cattle; nowadays mainly lead and zinc. Locals like to fish here for northwest salmon, shark and mud crabs, and it's the best place to see the colossal 11m tides. There are crocodiles, so if you want to swim head for the swimming pool on Clarendon St.

The **Old Derby Gaol** (Loch St), next to the police station, is the town's oldest building, dating to 1906, and is a grim reminder of the hostility and violence between the indigenous people and European settlers that racked the town from the late 1800s.

The **Boab Prison Tree**, 7km south of town, is Derby's most famous attraction. With a girth of 14m and a hollow trunk, it's said to be over 1000 years old. Prisoners were locked up here en route to Old Derby Gaol.

Begun in 1960, the **Boab Festival** (July) entertains locals with concerts, sports (including mud footy) and street parades.

Tours

Derby's biggest drawcard is its proximity to the natural splendours of remote King Sound and the Buccaneer Archipelago, uninhabited islands that are best viewed from the air or sea. **Buccaneer Sea Safaris** (☎ 0419-917 797, 9191 1991; www.buccaneerseasafaris.com; 4 days from Derby/Broome \$1790/2100) Offers tours combining sea and sky vistas.

Bush Flight (☎ 9193 2680; www.bushflight.com; 90min flights \$255 from Derby)

Kimberley Seaplanes (☎ 9191 1760; www.horizontalfalls.com.au; 5hr/overnight fly-cruise-fly tour \$395/495)

One Tide Charters (☎ 9193 1358; www.onetide.com; 5 days \$2450) Offers all-inclusive multi-day 'sea safaris' with camping overnight at idyllic spots.

Sleeping & Eating

Spinifex Hotel (☎ 9191 1233; Clarendon St; dm \$25, budget s/d \$45/60, motel d \$85; 🍷) Rooms at the Spini may be basic but most travellers will pass their time

in the affable pub here, which also does decent meals (mains \$11 to \$22).

Boab Inn (☎ 9191 1044; boabinn@bigpond.com; Loch St; s/d \$110/145; 🍷 🍷) The best-value accommodation in town. Prices drop by \$40 off-season. Rooms are clean and comfortable and there are excellent counter meals (mains \$12 to \$26) in the pub's restaurant. It even has a real espresso machine!

King Sound Resort (☎ 9193 1044; Loch St; d \$150; 🍷 🍷) Make this your last resort. The rooms are spacious but had cockroaches when we stayed.

Kimberley Entrance Caravan Park (☎ 9193 1055; www.kimberleyentrancecaravanpark.com; 2 Rowan St; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/24) Friendly managers Ian and Julie provide great facilities in leafy surrounds.

Point (☎ 9191 1195; mains \$11-26; 10am-late) In a prime sunset-watching spot overlooking the jetty, this BYO place is Derby's best, with delicious seafood. The barramundi and croc steaks are popular. It also does takeaway.

Getting There & Away

Skippers Aviation (☎ 9478 3989) flies to Broome Monday to Saturday. Daily **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) buses to Darwin and Perth stop at the visitors centre.

GIBB RIVER ROAD

The Gibb River Rd was constructed as a 'beef road' to move cattle to and from surrounding stations. Spanning some 660km from Derby to Wyndham and Kununurra, it may be more direct than the highway by several hundred kilometres, but it's a rough, corrugated, 4WD-only dirt road that's often closed after rain and is closed altogether during the Wet.

The route leads through vast empty country and dramatic terrain. The scorched earth is scarred with spectacular lush gorges and awesome riverbeds, their rocky surfaces parched during the Dry and surging with water during the Wet.

If you want just a taste of back-country adventure, do the 'tourist loop' that takes you 125km along the Gibb River Rd from Derby to the Fairfield Leopold Downs Rd turn-off, then 124km past Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek (see the Devonian Reef national parks, p985) to the Great Northern Hwy, 43km west of Fitzroy Crossing.

The neighbourhood is made up of Aboriginal communities and private cattle stations, so

if you plan to leave the main roads you need to get permission first from owners. Apply online for permits to transit or visit Aboriginal communities from the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (☎ 1300 651 077; www.dia.wa.gov.au); it may take around three days to be processed. Get *Travelling in Outback Western Australia* or check www.dpi.wa.gov.au/pastoral for info on driving through pastoral stations; the *Travelers Atlas of Western Australia* shows lease boundaries.

The *Gibb River & Kalumburu Roads Travelers Guide* (\$4 from visitors centres) is indispensable, with essential advice, sights, fuel stops and accommodation listings (often tented cabins at stations which must be booked in advance). Make sure you're driving a high-clearance 4WD, have spare tyres and tools, and stock up on several days' food and water in case you get stranded. Before leaving, check road conditions with **Mainroads Western Australia** (☎ 1800 013 314; www.mainroads.wa.gov.au; 24hr).

If you're not an experienced 4WD-driver, opt for the hop-on-hop-off **Gibb River Road Bus** (☎ 1800 197 262; www.gibbriverbus.com.au; departs Derby 6am Wed/Fri/Sun, Kununurra 6am Tue/Thu/Sat May-Sep only; multistop ticket one way/return \$260/390). Many organised tours also travel the road (see p972).

Derby to Wyndham-Kununurra Rd

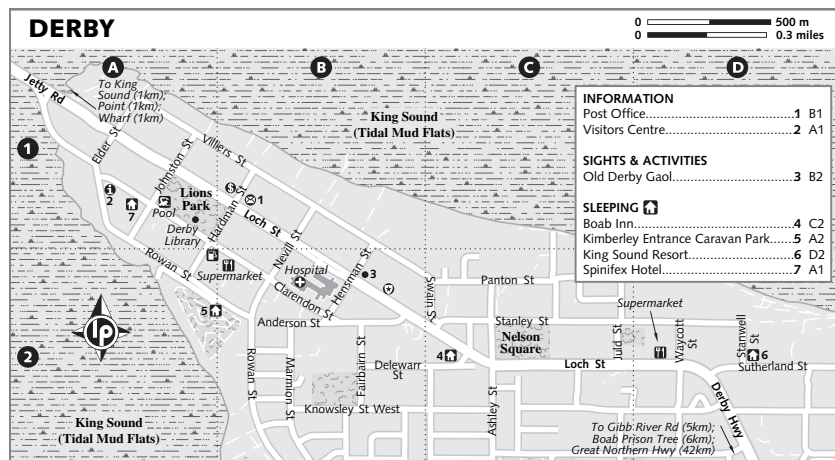
Mowanjium Wandjina Art (☎ 08-9191 1104; 🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Fri), about 4km along Gibb River Rd, is an Aboriginal community renowned for its artists painting in the Wandjina style. Phone ahead.

The 5000-acre **Birdwood Downs Station** (☎ 08-9191 1275; www.birdwooddowns.com; Gibb River Rd; camping s \$11, savannah huts d \$120), about 20km from Derby, offers outback accommodation and trail rides through the savannah (90 minutes \$50).

After crossing the Lennard River bridge (120km from Derby) you'll come to the Yamarra Gap in the King Leopold Range (145km). Narrow 5km-long **Lennard River Gorge**, 8km off Gibb River Rd, has a refreshing pool and waterfall.

At 184km you'll see the turn-off (and 50km rough drive) to enchanting **Mt Hart Wilderness Lodge** (☎ 08-9191 4645; www.mthart.com.au; d per person incl 3-course dinner & breakfast \$180).

At 26km past the Mt Hart turn-off is stunning **Bell Gorge**, 29km down a rough track, with



a picturesque waterfall and camping at **Silent Grove** (adult/child \$9/2).

Refuel and meet some locals at characterful **Imintji Store** (☎ 08-9191 7471), your last chance to get supplies. Next to Imintji Aboriginal Community is **Imintji Wilderness Camp** (☎ 1800 889 389; www.kimberleywilderness.com.au; d incl breakfast \$135) with safari tents.

Mornington Wilderness Camp (☎ 08-9191 7406; camping adult/child \$15/7; safari tents full board d \$450), on the Fitzroy River, is 100km south of the 247km mark, with spacious tents and tours.

Horseshoe-shaped **Galvans Gorge** has a swimming hole less than 1km off the road at the 286km mark.

Mt Barnett Roadhouse (☎ 08-9191 7007; camping \$10), at the 306km point, is owned by the Kupingarrri Aboriginal Community and has fuel and a store. **Barnett River Gorge** is another good swimming spot, 5km off the 328km mark.

At 406km you reach the Kalumburu turn-off (see opposite). The Gibb River Rd continues through spectacular country; at 579km there are views of the Cockburn Ranges, the Cambridge Gulf and the Pentecost and Durack Rivers. Just 2km further is **Home Valley**

Homestead (☎ 08-9161 4322; www.homevalley.com.au; camping adult/child \$10/5, \$10 power, homestead \$80 per person incl breakfast) with swimming, fishing and horse riding.

At 590km is the infamous **Pentecost River** crossing. Take care: water levels are hard to predict and saltwater crocs love it here.

At 614km, the million-acre **El Questro Wilderness Park** (☎ 08-9169 1777; www.voyages.com.au; park permit \$15; ☹ Apr-Nov) has a range of accommodation, including luxurious **El Questro Homestead** (d incl meals \$1780; ☹); the more down-to-earth **El Questro Station Township** (camping per person \$15, safari tents d \$135, bungalows d \$298; ☹), offering the best value; and over-rated **Emma Gorge Resort** (safari-style tent cabins d \$248; ☹ ☎), at 623km. There are restaurants and bars at the Township and Emma Gorge resorts. Highlights include boat tours up the wonderful **Chamberlain Gorge** to see indigenous art, and the 40-minute bushwalk along gorgeous **Emma Gorge** to a pretty pool and waterfall.

At 630km you cross King River and at 647km you finally hit bitumen: Wyndham is 48km to the northwest (see p987), Kununurra 52km east (see p988).

JANDAMARRA

As a talented young Aboriginal stockman, Bunuba tribesman Jandamarra earned himself the nickname 'pigeon' for his ability to flit around like the local crested spinifex pigeon. Barely in his teens, Jandamarra was equally at home with a pair of reins, sheep shears or a gun in his hands.

Jandamarra was working with a white stockman named Richardson when the station that employed them went broke. Richardson became a policeman and enlisted Jandamarra as his tracker. At this time the relationship between the white settlers and the Bunuba people had reached a low point, with the white settlers (already struggling to survive) not taking kindly to sheep being stolen and the Bunuba, in turn, being outraged at the settlers who had invaded their land and shown little respect for their sacred sites.

The Bunuba people were rounded up by the police and the team of Richardson and Jandamarra were a redoubtable one. Having captured a fair slice of the Bunuba leaders in October 1894, Richardson took them to the Lillimooloora Police Outpost. However, one of the prisoners, Elle-marra, who'd guided Jandamarra through his tribal initiation, convinced the young man to swap allegiances. The night before departing for Derby, Jandamarra shot Richardson in his sleep and freed the prisoners. Thus began one of the few armed resistances to the white occupation.

After ambushing some white settlers, Jandamarra and his crew faced a day-long battle with police and squatters from Derby. Though heavily wounded, Jandamarra eluded the police and for three years taunted them by managing to easily evade capture. Jandamarra's ability to just slip away earned him the nickname 'magic man' among his people and it was believed that only another spirit could ever capture him.

On 1 April 1897 that spirit arrived in the form of an Aboriginal tracker named Mongo Mick, who killed Jandamarra in his Tunnel Creek hideout.

For more on Jandamarra, get a copy of the *Pigeon Heritage Trail* (\$3) from the Derby (p982) or Broome (p974) visitors centres, or pick up the fascinating *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance* by Howard Pedersen and Banjo Woorunmurra.

KALUMBURU ROAD

While unsealed Kalumburu Rd is in better condition than the Gibb River Rd in some spots, in others it's severely corrugated or covered in rocks or bull dust. During the Wet, the road becomes a river; afterwards, locals find parts of it have disappeared altogether, and it may not open again until May or even June. Distances are given from the junction of the Gibb River and Kalumburu Rds, 419km from the Derby Hwy and 248km from the Wyndham-Kununurra Rd.

You need permits to visit the Kalumburu community; apply in advance online from the **Department of Indigenous Affairs** (☎ 1300 651 077; www.dia.wa.gov.au; free), allowing seven days, and the **Kalumburu community** (☎ 08-9161 4300; kalumburumission@bigpond.com; \$40 per car, valid 7 days).

Gibb River Road to Mitchell Plateau

After crossing the Gibb River at 3km, and Plain Creek at 16km, you reach the first fuel stop at 59km, **Drysdale River Station** (☎ 08-9161 4326; www.drysdaleriver.com.au; camp sites \$9-14, d \$130), where you can get basic supplies, meals and, in the Dry, where you can set up scenic flights to Mitchell Falls (\$250).

The Mitchell Plateau turn-off is at 172km, from where it's 70km to the turn-off to spectacular **Mitchell Falls**, 16km downhill; you have to walk the final 3km. In the Dry, the water spills down the terraces; in the Wet, it thunders over all the escarpments and a scenic flight from Kununurra is the only way to see the spectacle. There is accommodation at the **Ungolan Wilderness Camp** (☎ 1800 889 389; www.kimberleywilderness.com.au; safari B&B \$135), at the turn-off to the falls, and free camping back at King Edward River. The *Gibb River & Kalumburu Roads Travellers Guide* lists further options on remote areas of the coast accessible by air only.

Mitchell Plateau Turn-Off to Kalumburu

From the Mitchell Plateau turn-off the road heads northeast, crossing **Carson River** at 247km. In another 20km you'll arrive at **Kalumburu Aboriginal Community** (☎ 08-9161 4333), a picturesque mission nestled among giant mango trees and coconut palms, with a shop, food and **fuel** (☹ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri). You can pitch a tent at **Honeymoon Bay** (☎ 08-9161 4366; camping \$9).

HORIZONTAL WATERFALLS

One of the most intriguing features of the Kimberley coastline is the phenomenon known as 'horizontal waterfalls'. Despite the name, the falls are simply tides gushing through narrow coastal gorges in the Buccaneer Archipelago, north of Derby. What makes it such a spectacle are the huge tides – often reaching up to 11m, the rate of flow reaches an astonishing 30 knots as the water is forced in and out of the constricted sandstone gorges. The two narrow gaps, the first being 20m wide and the second 10m wide, often see the 'waterfall' reach a height of 4m. The falls are best seen by air and form part of many tour operators' itineraries; see p982 or inquire at the visitors centres in Derby (p982) or Broome (p974).

DEVONIAN REEF NATIONAL PARKS

West Kimberley's three national parks feature three stunning gorges that were once part of a western 'great barrier reef' in the Devonian era, 350 million years ago. Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek National Parks are accessed via Fairfield Leopold Downs Rd (linking the Great Northern Hwy with Gibb River Rd), while Geikie Gorge National Park is just north of Fitzroy Crossing.

The walls of beautiful **Windjana Gorge** soar 100m above the Lennard River, which surges in the Wet but is a series of pools in the Dry. Scores of freshwater crocodiles sunbake on its banks and lurk in the water. Bring plenty of water for the 7km return walk from the **camp ground** (site \$9) to the end of the gorge. The ruins of **Lillimooloora** homestead (1893) are 3km from Lennard River; once a police outpost, this is where Aboriginal tracker Jandamarra shot Constable Richardson (see the boxed text, opposite).

Tunnel Creek is a 750m-long passage, 3m to 15m wide, created by the creek cutting through a spur of the Napier Range. In the Dry, you can walk all the way to the end; be prepared to meet bats along the way and wade through cold, knee-deep water in places. Take a strong torch and change of shoes. There are Aboriginal paintings at either end. No camping.

The magnificent **Geikie Gorge** is 18km north of Fitzroy Crossing on a sealed road. The best

way to enjoy this incredible gorge and its abundance of wildlife (including bull sharks and crocs – no swimming!) is on an entertaining one-hour **DEC boat tour** (☎ 08-9191 5121; 9195 \$500; tickets from DEC kiosk at Geike Gorge; adult/child \$20/5; ☎ 8am, 9.30am, 11am & 3pm Jun-Aug, fewer trips & times vary Apr, May, Sep & Oct). You can also take cultural bushwalks and boat tours with an indigenous guide through **Darngku Heritage Tours** (☎ 08-9191 5355; 2hr walk adult/child \$55/45, 3hr boat cruise \$70/55).

Tours

Tour companies also go to the gorges from Broome and Derby.

Australian Adventure Travel (☎ 1800 621 625; www.safaris.net.au; 5 days \$895) Departs from Broome to all gorges via the Gibb River Rd, then Kununurra.

Broome Day Tours (☎ 1800 801 068; day trip \$190) Geikie Gorge and Windjana.

Derby Bus Service (☎ 08-9191 1426; \$121) Windjana and Tunnel Creek day trip.

Kimberley Getaway Safaris (☎ 08-9193 7139; www.kimberleysafaris.com.au; 3 days \$595) From Broome to all gorges.

FITZROY CROSSING

☎ 08 / pop 1100

This is a true outback town, located where the Great Northern Hwy crosses the Fitzroy River, with a large Aboriginal population hailing from the Gooniyandi, Bunuba, Walmatjarri and Wangkajungka communities. Fitzroy Crossing is a good access point for Geikie and Windjana Gorges and Tunnel Creek. The **visitors centre** (☎ 9191 5355; fxinfo@sdwkw.wa.gov.au; ☎ 8am-5pm Apr-Sep, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) is on the highway.

The oldest pub in the Kimberley, lively **Crossing Inn** (☎ 9191 5080; crossinginn@bigpond.com.au; Skuthorpe Rd; unpowered/powerd sites d \$17/21, dongas s/d \$60/80, motel s/d \$93/110; ☎) provides a chance to meet locals inside its tin shed and across the road at the billabong. Basic accommodation is at the back of the pub. The tin walls feature wonderful paintings by talented local high-school students.

Fitzroy River Lodge Motel Hotel & Caravan Park (☎ 9191 5141; Great Northern Hwy; unpowered/powerd sites \$11/25, safari tents d \$135, motel d \$175; ☎) has a wide range of high-quality accommodation, from comfortable motel rooms and safari tents to shady camping spots, and a friendly bar with delicious counter meals (mains \$10 to \$23).

Northwest Regional Airlines (☎ 1300 136 629) has daily flights to Broome and Halls Creek. **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) has daily buses to Perth (\$477, 39 hours) and Darwin (\$262, 19½ hours) that stop at the visitors centre and Fitzroy River Lodge.

HALLS CREEK

☎ 08 / pop 1590

On the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, Halls Creek is a small town with communities of Kija, Jaru and Gooniyandi people. The town has quite a user-friendly layout, with most services on the highway or Roberta Ave. Pick up local information at the **visitors centre** (☎ 9168 6262; Great Northern Hwy; ☎ 8am-4pm, reduced hr in the Wet). Check your email at the **telecentre** (Library, Great Northern Hwy; per 20min \$2).

From here there are tours and flights to the Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater and Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park, while **China Wall**, 5km east and about 1.5km off the road, is a small but picturesque subvertical quartz vein protruding 6m off ground.

Best Western Halls Creek Motel (☎ 9168 6001; hallscreemotel@westnet.com.au; 194 Great Northern Hwy; dongas \$50, motel d \$120; ☎) has clean, well-equipped rooms, including decent budget rooms, and serves hearty meals at **Russian Jack's** (mains \$12-28).

Kimberley Hotel (☎ 9168 6101; www.kimberleyhotel.com; Roberta Ave; budget/motel d \$91/164; ☎) has comfortable rooms with all mod cons, and an atmospheric bar and restaurant (mains \$16 to \$31) overlooking the pool.

Northwest Regional Airlines (☎ 1300 136 629) has daily flights to Fitzroy Crossing and Broome. **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99) buses run to Perth (\$518, 43 hours) and Darwin (\$208, 17 hours), and they stop at the Poinciana Roadhouse.

WOLFE CREEK METEORITE CRATER

The massive 850m-wide and 50m-deep Wolfe Creek meteorite crater – believed to have been formed when a meteorite plunged into earth more than a million years ago – is the second largest in the world. According to the local Jaru people's Dreaming, the crater, Kandimalal, marks the spot where a huge rainbow snake emerged from the ground.

The crater is best appreciated from the air. **Northwest Regional Airlines** (☎ 08-9168 6462; www.northwestregional.com.au; 70min \$255) offers flights on demand from Halls Creek. Otherwise, it's

a challenging drive along a rough 4WD road. The turn-off is 16km west of Halls Creek, from where it's 137km south along the Tanami Track. You'll need plenty of food, water and fuel.

PURNULULU NATIONAL PARK – BUNGLE BUNGLE RANGE

The Purnululu National Park, 3000 sq km of ancient country, is home to the wonderful ochre and black striped 'beehive' domes of the Bungle Bungle Range.

The distinctive rounded rock towers are made of sandstone and rough conglomerates (rocks comprised of pebbles and boulders), moulded by rainfall over millions of years. Their stripes are caused by differences in clay content and porosity of the layers; the rock within the dark stripes is more permeable, allowing algae to flourish, while the lighter layers consist of oxidised iron compounds.

While the local Kija people have always known about them – *purnululu* means 'sandstone' in the Kija language and Bungle Bungle is thought to be a misspelling of 'bundle bundle', a common grass – the formations were only 'discovered' during the mid-1980s; the park was created in 1987, and added to the World Heritage list in 2003.

The park has wonderful Aboriginal art galleries, gorgeous swimming holes within the gorges and a wide array of wildlife, including over 130 bird species.

The stunning **Echidna Chasm** in the north and **Cathedral Gorge** in the south are about an hour's walk from the car parks, while the soaring **Piccaninny Gorge** is an 18km round trip that takes a full day to walk. The restricted gorges in the northern part of the park can only be seen from the air.

The park is open April to December; rangers are based here during these months. If you're driving, you'll need a high-clearance 4WD, as there are five deep creek crossings. The turn-off from the highway is 53km south of Warmun, then 52km along a very rough 4WD-only track to the Three Ways junction. Allow at least 2½ hours to get to the visitors centre. **Kurrajong Camp** and **Walardi Camp** have fresh water and toilets (sites per person \$9).

Tours

East Kimberley Tours (☎ 08-9168 2213; www.eastkimberlytours.com.au; 1/2 days \$396/796) has a wide range

of tours from Kununurra, and several operators include Purnululu in multiday Kimberley tours (see p972). You can also do scenic flights from Kununurra in helicopters with **Slingair** (☎ 9169 1300; www.slingair.com.au; 20/60min \$175/450) and light planes with **Alligator Airways** (☎ 9168 1333; www.alligatorairways.com.au; 2¼hr \$230). Helicopters get you closer.

WYNDHAM

☎ 08 / pop 900

A languid little town at the confluence of five rivers in some stunningly rugged countryside, Wyndham has one of only two crocodile farms in WA (the other is back in Broome; see p977). The 20m concrete croc that greets visitors at the entrance of the town reassures them that Wyndham doesn't take itself too seriously.

Kimberley Motors (☎ 9161 1281; Great Northern Hwy; ☎ 6am-6pm) has tourist information, maps and tide charts, and can book fishing and 4WD tours.

The excellent **Wyndham Crocodile Farm** (☎ 9161 1124; Barytes Rd; adult/child \$15/8; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Dry, 11am-2pm Wet) has some magnificent specimens and the guides get close to them during an entertaining tour at feeding time (11am daily).

Warri Dreamtime Park (Koolama St) features enormous bronze statues of an Aboriginal family and some native animals. **Five Rivers Lookout** on Mt Bastion has splendid views of the King, Pentecost, Durack, Forrest and Ord Rivers entering the Cambridge Gulf; best at sunrise and sunset.

About 15km from Wyndham is **Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve**, a beautiful wetlands that teems with birds in the Wet, and the **Grotto**, a peaceful pool surrounded by lush vegetation in a small gorge.

Wyndham Town Hotel (☎ 9161 1202; O'Donnell St; s/d \$88/110; ☎) has basic rooms, but you'll be spending most of your time in the atmospheric pub meeting the locals. The home-style steaks and salads are enormous (meals \$5 to \$24).

Wyndham Caravan Park (☎ 9161 1064; Baker St, Three Mile; unpowered/powerd sites per person \$10/13, dongas \$45; ☎) has a wonderful boab in its shady grounds, offers fishing tours and provides a good campers kitchen where you can cook your catch in the evening.

You can do a one-day Wyndham tour from Kununurra with **Triangle Tours** (☎ 9168 1272; triangleretours@bigpond.com; adult/child \$165/90).

FRESHIES & SALTIES

The Kimberley is home to two types of crocodile. The freshwater crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstoni*), 'a freshy' or 'a johnston' to locals, is generally not considered harmful unless provoked. The saltwater or estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), or 'salty', on the other hand, is considered harmful unless in a cage at a crocodile farm.

The salties are misleadingly named – they can happily inhabit fresh or saltwater – and are the world's largest remaining crocodile species. At a quick glance you can distinguish the freshies from the salties by the broader and more powerful jawline of the salty. While male freshies grow to around 2m, male salties grow to an average 5m, though one has been measured at 7.3m, and they can weigh up to three-quarters of a tonne. Salties can live to more than 70 years.

Young salties feast on crabs, prawns and shrimp but as they progress to adulthood larger animals factor in their diet – wallabies, pigs and even cattle are a good meal for a fully grown salty. When attacking, it propels itself out of the water with its tail and clamps its vast jaw around the prey's head. Then it goes into a death roll – spinning its body to either snap the animal's neck or drown it.

Salties are aggressive and territorial, not a great combination if you happen to camp too close to the water, fish, swim or hike where they call home. To avoid becoming dinner, don't do the aforementioned activities in areas that are known to have salties. Not following these rules is what turns you into a statistic.

In contrast, the freshies would only cause injury by snapping at you if you happened to step on it. It eats insects, birds, small fish and bats, and very occasionally may attack a dingo at the water's edge. Males grow to a maximum 3.3m, females to 1.85m. They live no longer than 50 years.

Apart from the crocodile farms at **Wyndham** (p987) and **Broome** (p977), where you can see salties and freshies, one of the best places to see freshies in the wild is at **Windjana Gorge National Park** (p985). But remember: if you're close enough to get a good look at a salty in the wild, you're too close.

KUNUNURRA

☎ 08 / pop 6000

Kununurra is a neat, pleasant town nestled beneath the red domes of Mirima National Park, with lovely Lily Creek Lagoon lapping at its shores. It was founded in 1960 as the centre for the Ord River irrigation scheme (an ambitious government incentive to harness the region's water), and tourism developed quickly thanks to the proximity of the Gibb River Rd, Lake Argyle and Purnululu National Park.

If you're coming from the Northern Territory, note that there's a 90-minute time difference and throw out your fruit, as strict quarantine restrictions apply in WA.

Information

There are ATMs at the shopping centres.

Boab Books (☎ 9169 2574; 114b Coolibah Dr) Has an excellent range of books on the Kimberley.

DEC (☎ 9168 0200; Konkerberry Dr)

District Hospital (☎ 9168 1522; 96 Coolibah Dr) Has a 24-hour emergency department.

Kununurra telecentre (☎ 9169 1868; Coolibah Dr; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, Sat 9am-1pm) Access the internet here.

Visitors centre (☎ 9168 1177; www.kununurra.com.au; Coolibah Dr; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat Dry, 9am-1pm Wet) Has tonnes of information, and can advise on road conditions and book tours.

Sights & Activities

Lily Creek Lagoon is a mini-wetlands with lots of wonderful bird life and freshwater crocs. Locals like to stroll here in the late afternoon. Lake Kununurra, also called **Diversion Dam**, has pleasant picnic spots and great fishing.

Kununurra has numerous art galleries. Our favourites are the **Waringarri Aboriginal Arts Centre** (☎ 9168 2212; 16 Speargrass Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri; ☎ 9am-5pm), an Aboriginal-owned art gallery and studio with local artists working in their unique abstract style using ochre pigments; and **Our Land Gallery** (☎ 9168 1881; 10 Papuana St & 110 Coolibah Dr; ☎ 9am-5pm), specialising in ochre paintings from the Kimberley in the Papuana St gallery and in authentic Aboriginal artefacts in the gallery around the corner.

Kelly's Knob is a favourite sunset viewpoint on the town's northern fringe. During the Wet, distant thunderstorms are spectacular from here, although it's sometimes struck by lightning!

MIRIMA NATIONAL PARK

A short stroll from town (1.5km), this **national park** (per car \$9) is a stunning area of rugged sedimentary formations that look like mini Bungle Bungles. The 350-million-year-old sandstone rock has taken shape by uplift over the past 20 million years.

The splendid gorges of Hidden Valley are home to spinifex-covered hills and boab trees. There are excellent walks and wonderful wildlife: honeyeaters, black kites and the rare white quilled rock pigeon, along with wallabies, dingoes, echidnas, pythons, dragon lizards and snakes. The two well-marked walking tracks take around 30 minutes each – head here a couple of hours before sunset so you can see the magic the sun's light works on the rocks.

Tours

A number of tour companies offer canoeing trips on the Ord River over one, two or three days. Eco-certified **Go Wild** (☎ 1300 66 33 69; www.gowild.com.au; \$150) also offers one-day abseiling tours. **Kununurra Cruises** (☎ 9168 1718; adult/child \$67/25) does popular sunset 'BBQ Boat' cruises on Lily Creek Lagoon and the Ord River.

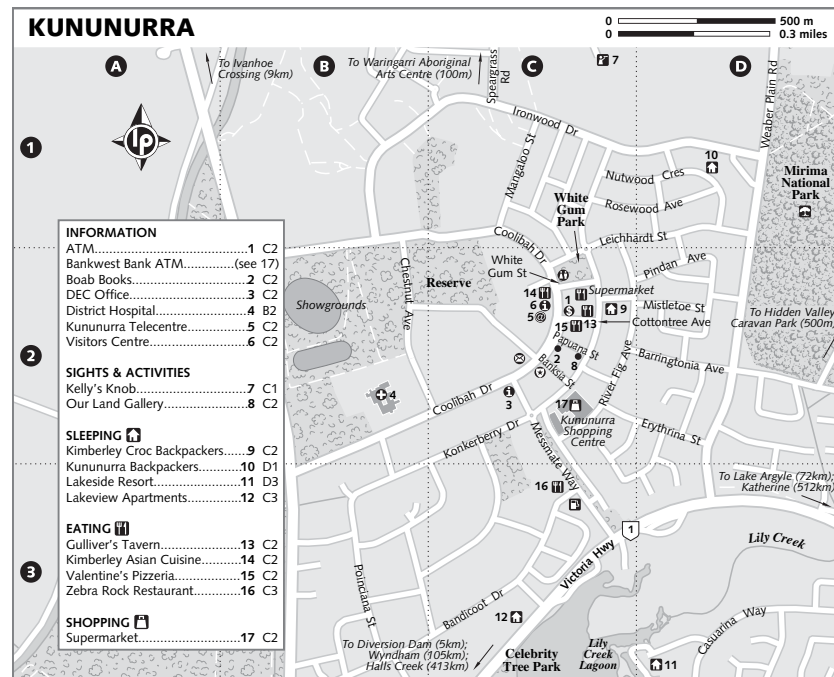
Sleeping

Kununurra Backpackers (☎ 1800 641 998, 9169 1998; www.adventure.kimberley.net.au; 24 Nutwood Cres; dm \$21-23, d \$54; ☎ ☎) and **Kimberley Croc Backpackers** (☎ 1300 136 702, 9168 2702; www.kimberleycroc.com.au; 120 Konkerberry Dr; dm \$22-24, d \$55; ☎ ☎) are both excellent value with lush tropical gardens, swimming pools, BBQs, good communal facilities and Kimberley tours.

Lakeside Resort (☎ 9169 1092; www.lakeside.com.au; Casuarina Way; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/22, self-catering studio d \$125, motel d \$155; ☎ ☎) At the edge of lovely Lily Creek Lagoon, there's a good range of accommodation set within leafy gardens.

Lakeview Apartments (☎ 9168 0000; www.lakeviewapartments.net; 224 Victoria Hwy; 1-2/2-3-bedroom apt \$165/195/255; ☎ ☎) These spacious, self-contained apartments across the road from Lily Creek Lagoon have all mod cons and fully equipped kitchens.

Hidden Valley Caravan Park (☎ 9168 1790; Weaber Plains Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/22, cabins d \$95, extra adult \$10; ☎) Under the looming crags of Mirima National Park, this excellent park has good amenities, there's a large pool and the self-contained cabins are well priced.



Eating

Valentine's Pizzeria (☎ 9169 1167; 4 Cottontree Ave; pizzas \$12-20; 🕒 5-9pm) Thick with toppings, they may not be authentic but these filling pizzas will do the trick; BYO or delivered to your room. Tex-Mex is also on the menu.

Kimberley Asian Cuisine (☎ 9169 3698; 75 Coolibah Dr; mains \$14-21) This pan-Asian place, serving Aussie versions of Chinese and Thai, will satisfy those cravings for Asian. Eat in (BYO) or takeaway.

Gulliver's Tavern (☎ 9168 1666; 196 Cottontree Ave; \$14-25) does hearty counter meals – all the usual suspects plus a smattering of Asian dishes (Thai beef salad, Hokkein noodles etc) and local favourites such as the Barra Burger.

Zebra Rock Restaurant (☎ 9168 1344; Kununurra Hotel, 8 Messmate Way; \$13-26) Has the most sophisticated menu, albeit served in casual pub surroundings – bruschetta, tasting platters, 'Ocean and Earth', barramundi and Thai curries.

There are two well-stocked supermarkets, bakeries and a couple of takeaways.

Getting There & Around

Qantas/Airlink (☎ 13 13 13) flies to Broome (three weekly) and Darwin (five weekly). **Greyhound** (☎ 13 20 30) has daily buses to Darwin and Perth that stop at the visitors centre. Destinations include Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby and Broome.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99) has daily buses to Darwin and Perth that stop at the visitors centre. Destinations include Katherine (\$110, seven hours), Halls Creek (\$103, four hours), Derby (\$201, 10 hours) and Broome (\$204, 13 hours).

LAKE ARGYLE

Enormous Lake Argyle, Australia's second-largest reservoir, created by the Ord River Dam, can hold around 18 times the water of

Sydney Harbour. Unfortunately, there hasn't been enough rainfall for the lake to reach capacity since it filled to the brim in 1973 (and the spillway flowed until 1984!), but this bold 1969 initiative to harness the Ord River's waters and develop the tropical north has still had amazing results: 58,000 hectares of dry clay plains have been irrigated, the riverside ecology has improved and wildlife numbers have increased (especially turtles, fish and freshwater crocodiles), with some being struck off endangered species lists (for example, the buff-sided robin). The scenery is spectacular, with high, steep red ridges plunging into the lake's deep blue waters.

Atmospheric **Argyle Homestead** (☎ 08-9167 8088; adult/child \$3/1; 🕒 7am-4pm Apr-Oct), home of the Durack pastoral family, and currently managed by Michael Durack, was moved here when its original site was flooded. Fascinating old black-and-white photos and memorabilia are displayed and there's a small family cemetery where some of the pioneering Duracks are buried. Pick up copies of Dame Mary Durack's *Kings in Grass Castles* and *Sons in the Saddle* about the family's extraordinary achievements.

Lake Argyle Cruises (☎ 08-9168 7687; \$40-120, Kununurra transfers \$15) offers several cruises, including swimming and fishing, but book ahead as trips are cancelled if there aren't enough numbers. Award-winning **Triple J Tours** (☎ 08-9168 2682; admin@triplejtours.net.au; adult/child \$170/100) offers the more comprehensive 'Lake Argyle-Ord River Combo Tour', visiting Argyle Homestead, cruising Lake Argyle and returning by boat to Kununurra on the Ord River.

Lake Argyle Tourist Village (☎ 08-9168 7777; paradise@lakeargyle.com; Parker Rd), once a wonderful caravan park and camping ground, was closing at time of research for major redevelopment. It's due to open its luxury self-contained villas some time in 2007.