

The Southwest



The green and lush southwestern corner of Western Australia (WA) makes a fantastic contrast to the stark, sunburnt country of much of the state.

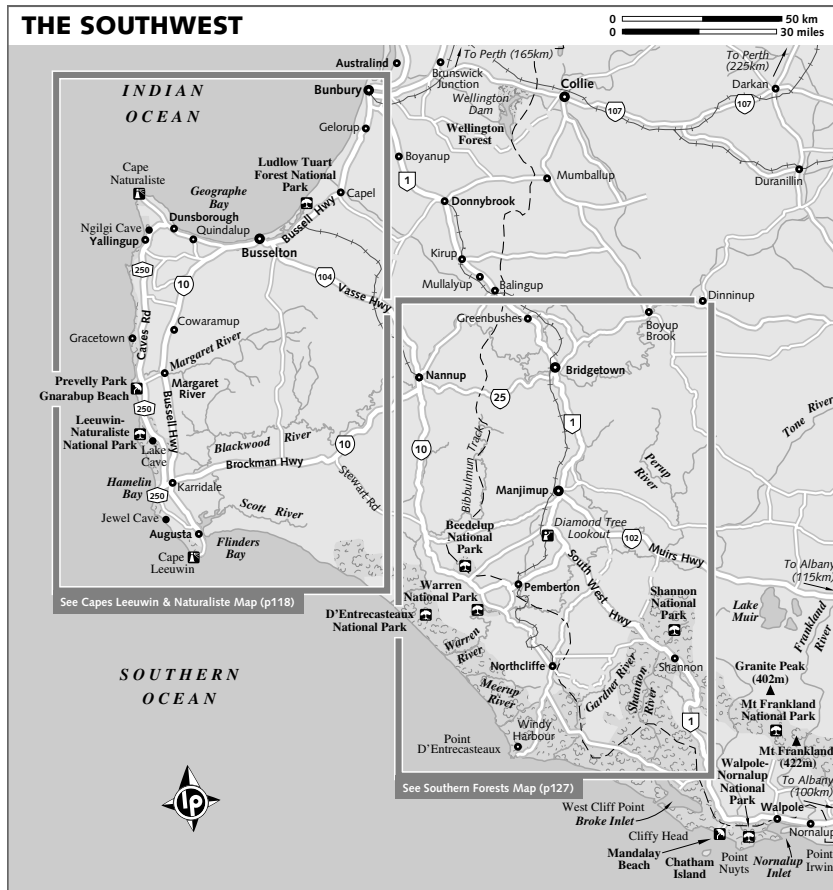
Forests of magnificent tall trees around Pemberton beckon bushwalkers while, below the shady canopy, rivers and creeks run fast after rain and offer great canoeing. Popular coastal towns like Busselton and Dunsborough, within easy reach of Perth, are crazily busy in holiday periods, when families with dolphin-mad kids enjoy the sheltered beaches, serious surfers tackle the ocean breaks and equally serious walkers hike the Cape-to-Cape track. Accommodation options range from cliff-top chic to beachside shack, while national parks offer greater solitude in quiet bush camp sites, and luxury spa retreats beckon the frazzled.

For the less energetic, networks of scenic drives wend their way along the coast and through the cave-riddled and forested landscape. In the renowned Margaret River region, side roads make regular detours to the cellar doors and restaurants of fabulous wineries where local produce – from crayfish and trout to cheeses and chocolates – is second to none. Distances between the myriad attractions are short, a rare event in most of WA, so drive time is mercifully limited; it's a great area to explore for a few days. This sort of country can get under your skin though, so be warned: however much time you spend here, it won't feel like nearly enough.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sample the premium wine, fabulous food and amazing architecture of the wineries of the **Margaret River** (p123) region
- Explore labyrinthine limestone caverns along Caves Drive between the capes, especially stunning **Lake Cave**, and the beautiful **Jewel and Ngilgi Caves** (p123)
- Front-up to the impressive coastline at Augusta's **Cape Leeuwin lighthouse** (p126), at the confluence of the great Indian and Southern Oceans
- Camp on the coast, drive the 4WD tracks, and fish the wild waters of remote **D'Entrecasteaux National Park** (p132)
- Wend your towards the creative community of **Balingup** (p117) and nearby towns
- Canoe from the forest to the sea, along the Blackwood River, starting at **Nannup** (p128)
- Get all your blues out in the gorgeous little town of **Bridgetown** (p126)
- Climb the **Gloucester Tree** (p131) at Pemberton





Getting There & Away

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.gov.wa.au) and **South West Coach Lines** (☎ in Perth 9324 2333, in Bunbury 9791 1955, in Busselton 9754 1666) run daily bus services from Perth to the following towns: Bunbury (\$25, three hours); Busselton (\$29, four hours); Dunsborough (\$31, 4½ hours); Margaret River (\$33, 5½ hours); and Augusta (\$40, six hours).

Transwa runs a service to Pemberton (\$42, eight hours) several times a week. South West Coach Lines also run 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.goldrushtours.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 (\$23.90, 2½ hours) twice daily.

BUNBURY REGION

Close to Perth, Bunbury and its surrounds are popular with locals looking to escape the city. Its beach-dotted coastline beckons, while inland the rural townships offer peace and quiet. Gateway to the great tall forests of the southwest, and to the national parks and wineries between Capes Naturaliste and Leewin,

the region is gearing up to service the growing numbers of visitors heading southwards.

BUNBURY

☎ 08 / pop 56,180

Bunbury, 184km south of Perth, has started to remake its image as industrial port into that of seaside holiday destination.

The town lies at the western end of Leschenault Inlet, which Nicolas Baudin, commander of *Le Géographe*, named after his botanist Leschenault de la Tour in 1803. In 1836 James Stirling sailed south from the Swan River Colony, met Henry William Bunbury, commander, at Port Leschenault and renamed the port in his honour; a classic case of colonial one-upmanship, replacing French place names with English ones.

The city is centred on a rectangle formed by Wittenoom, Clifton, Blair and Stirling Sts. Bunbury's main street is Victoria St, which bisects the town centre. Recent development around Boat Harbour, north of the centre, has seen silos converted into urban apartments and waterside restaurants. Koombana Beach, to the east, is popular for swimming and dolphin encounters, and Ocean Dr, to the west, hugs the coast with a stunning walk and cycle track running beside. The train station is 3km from town, and South West Coach Lines terminal is beside the **visitors centre** (☎ 9721 7922; Carmody Pl; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-4.30pm Sun), located in the historic train station (1904). Check your email at the Old Station Coffee Lounge next door.

Sights & Activities

Bunbury's **Dolphin Discovery Centre** (☎ 9791 3088; www.dolphindiscovery.com.au; Koombana Beach; adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 8am-5pm) was set up in 1989 and wild dolphins started to interact with the public in early 1990. Three pods of about 100 bottlenose dolphins regularly feed in the inner harbour, most frequently between November and April. While you're not allowed to touch them, you can wade waist-deep alongside, which you can't do at Monkey Mia. During these months, the centre also runs a **Dolphin Swim Tour** (3hr tour \$125) by boat that allows you to swim with dolphins in open water; no children under eight permitted. **Dolphin cruises** (1½ hr tour adult/child \$41/26) depart most days at 11am and 3pm. A dolphin-watching sea-kayak tour is offered by **Dekked Out** (☎ 9796 1000; dekkedout@iprimus.com.au; per person \$50).

Several early buildings, some laced with wrought iron, still stand in the city, including **King Cottage** (☎ 9721 7546; 77 Forrest Ave; ☎ 2-4pm), which now houses a museum; the 1842 **St Mark's Church** (cnr Charterhouse & Flynn Rds) and **Bunbury Regional Art Galleries** (☎ 9721 8226; 64 Wittenoom St; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm) in a restored 1897 pink-painted convent.

There are good **walking tracks** around the city; pick up the *Walk-it Bunbury* brochure from the visitors centre. The **Mangrove Boardwalk** (enter off Koombana Dr) allows you to explore the most southerly mangroves in WA, rich with more than 70 species of birds. Helpful panels provide information about this ancient ecosystem, thought to be about 2500 years old. In contrast, a stretch of tall **Tuart Forest** runs along the southern end of Ocean Drive.

The **Big Swamp** is a wetland bang in the middle of encroaching suburbia; there are good walking tracks, and seats to hang out and bird-watch. Kids can feed kangaroos and parrots at the **Big Swamp Wildlife Park** (☎ 9721 8380; Prince Philip Dr; adult/child \$5.50/3.50; ☎ 10am-5pm), set in bushland and with good picnicking spots.

Sleeping

Dolphin Retreat YHA (☎ 9792 4690; dolphinretreatbunbury.yha@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 barbecue on the back veranda.

Glade Caravan Park (☎ 1800 113 800, 9721 3800; Timperley Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$20/25, cabins \$55-80 ☎) Functional rather than fantastic, this spotless van park is five minutes drive from the centre of town.

Wander Inn Backpackers (☎ 9721 3242; www.bunburybackpackers.com.au; 16 Clifton St; dm/s/d \$23/36/56; ☎) Down a quiet side street, in between the beach and the main strip, this friendly hostel has good adventure tours and cruises. Look for the cheerful blue-and-yellow house.

Koombana Bay Holiday Resort (☎ 9791 3900; www.bestonparks.com.au; cnr Koombana Dr & Lyons St; unpowered/powered sites \$28/32, cabins from \$85; ☎) The great location of this caravan park – just over a towel's throw from Koombana Beach, and close to the dolphin centre – is reflected in its higher than usual price. There are also ample distractions for kids – such as tennis and basketball courts and a games room – and great cabins.

Rose Hotel (☎ 9721 4533; www.rosehotel.com.au; cnr Victoria & Wellington Sts; hotel s/d with shared bathroom \$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 though you'll share a bathroom.

Lighthouse Beach Resort (☎ 9721 1311; www.lighthousehotel.com.au; Carey St; r \$90-140, apt \$130 (♿ ♿)) Located 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.

Clifton (☎ 9721 4300; www.thedifton.com.au; 2 Molloy St; ste \$240; (♿ ♿)) For luxurious accommodation with lots of heritage trimmings, go for the top-of-the-range rooms in the Clifton's historic Grittleton Lodge (1885), with sleigh beds, a spa and a grand piano for ivory-tinkling.

Eating & Drinking

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

Fitzgerald's (Victoria St; ☎ 6pm-late Thu-Sun) With a big beer garden and an easy, laid-back vibe, Fitzie's is popular for the Sunday session.

Fill up on traditional Irish Stew or Guinness Pie (\$12.50).

Rose Hotel (☎ 9721 4533; cnr Victoria & Wellington Sts; mains \$13; ☎ lunch & dinner) The delightfully old-fashioned dining room serves tasty and filling old-fashioned classics (remember your grandma's corned silverside of beef?), and counter meals are served at the bar.

Mojo's (☎ 9792 5900; Victoria St; mains \$20-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Still buzzing, this modern café's sunny outdoor tables are the place to watch the world and agonise over what you'll order from the local produce-focused menu.

Walkabout Café (☎ 9791 6922; Victoria St; mains \$22; ☎ lunch & dinner) Themed around bush Australian, you can eat kangaroo sausages and mash here and there's a good value \$12.50 lunch menu.

Check out the recent foodie options at Boat Harbour, where **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, overlooks the marina. In the next block, be sure to eat fish and chips on the deck at **Aristos Waterfront** (☎ 9791 6477; fish & chips \$10; ☎ lunch & dinner), while upstairs **Barbados** (☎ 9791 6555;

☎ 11am-midnight) is the place to go for a sunset drink and an evening jive.

Entertainment

The **Prince of Wales** (☎ 9721 2016; 41 Stephen St) has long been the place to see live music. For the newest movie releases, try the **Grand Cinema** (☎ 9791 4455; cnr Victoria & Clifton Sts). **Bunbury Entertainment Centre** (☎ 9791 1133; www.bunburyentertainment.com; Blair St) attracts local and overseas acts, and is the region's main cultural centre.

Getting Around

Bunbury City Transit (☎ 9791 1955; Bicentennial Sq, Carmody Pl) covers the region around the city north to Australind and south to Gelorup. There's a free bus to and from the visitors centre that connects with the trains.

BALINGUP

☎ 08 / pop 803

About 65km south of Bunbury is the lovely arts-and-crafts village of Balingup. The **visitors centre** (☎ 9764 1818; www.balinguptourism.com.au; South West Hwy; ☎ 10am-4pm) is on the main street.

Balingup's most famous attraction is the **Old Cheese Factory** (☎ 9764 1018; Mannup Rd; ☎ 9.30am-4pm), which sells more knock-knacks than you could poke a fridge magnet at, as well as other crafty things and foodstuffs. Its casual café serves lunches (fancy a ploughman's?) and morning and afternoon teas. The **Tinderbox** (☎ 9764 1034; www.cheekyherbs.com; South West Hwy) herbal remedies shop is also worth a poke around; its locally made products – from massage oils to head-lice treatment – are sold around the country. See website for opening hours.

In the post office building, the **Hikers Hideaway** (☎ 9764 1049; hotbunks@wn.com.au; 26 Brockman St; \$28 pp; ♿) has just 10 beds in three rooms; book if you can, if it's busy you'll have to share a room. Popular with hikers walking the Bibbulmun Track, it's cheerful and informal.

Woodlands (☎ 9764 1272; Russell Rd; cottage \$100), on the Mullalyup side of the village, is a self-contained cottage in a peaceful, pretty setting overlooking a valley.

Almost opposite the Old Cheese Factory and up a steep hill – the highest point in the southwest – you'll find **Balingup Heights** (☎ 9764 1283; www.bluewren.com.au; Lot 6 Mannup Rd; cottages from \$140), where secluded, self-contained cottages are scattered around a quirky stone farmhouse in a truly magnificent setting.

Coffees and home-style lunches are available at a couple of cafés in town; try the Mushroom Café & Bakery on the main street.

NATURALISTE TO LEEUWIN

The gorgeous capes region is defined by the holiday resorts of Busselton and Dunsborough to the northeast; in the northwest corner is Cape Naturaliste and the surf of Yallingup; the southwest corner has Cape Leeuwin, several interesting caves, and remote Augusta at the confluence of the Indian and Southern Oceans; the regional centre is the laid-back town of Margaret River.

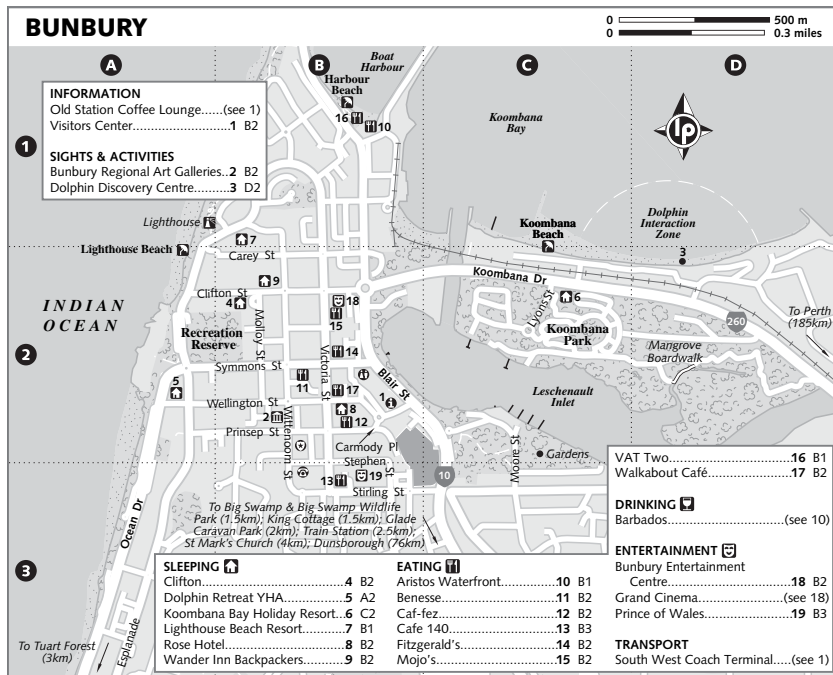
Known for its picturesque wineries (see p121), great surfing beaches (see p113) and labyrinthine caves, the region draws many visitors, but you really do need wheels here, as transport between the smaller centres is virtually nonexistent. The coast has real variety – cliff faces, long beaches pounded by rolling surf, and calm, sheltered bays – and arts-and-crafts places are everywhere. There are accommodation options for all travellers; it's very busy during summer and at holiday times when prices may rise 30% higher than those given here; winter (roughly June to August) is quieter, prices level off and opening hours can be erratic.

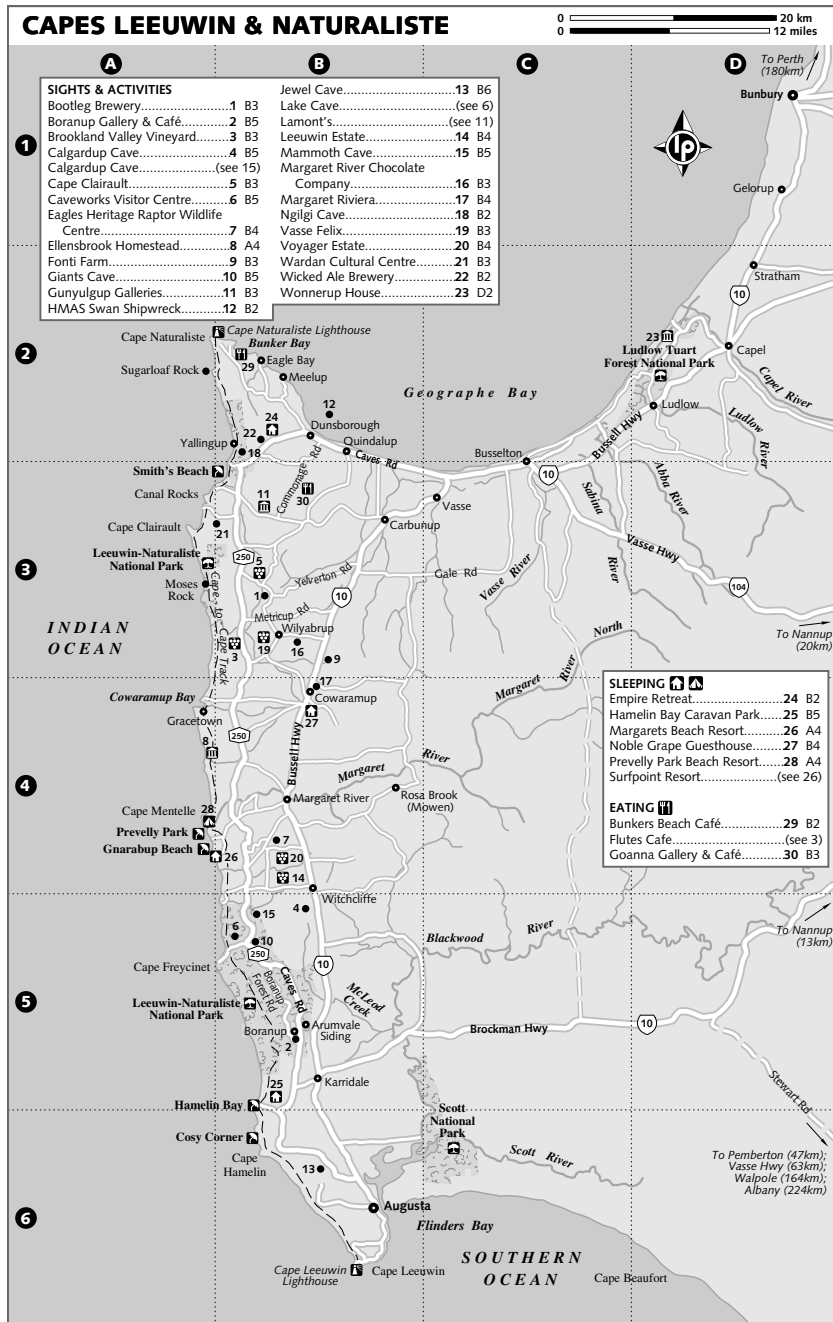
You can walk the stunning 135km **Cape-to-Cape Track** (www.capetocapetrack.com.au) between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin, passing through heath land, forest and sand dunes. Most Cape-to-Cape walkers take about seven days, although many choose to complete small sections. Individual walk-section brochures (\$2) are available from the local visitor centres.

BUSSELTON

☎ 08 / pop 24,000

On the shores of Geographe Bay, 230km south of Perth, Busselton is a popular holiday resort with a slightly old-fashioned air. Local place names come from the early 1800s, when a French sailor named Vasse was lost at sea in Geographe Bay; Vasse (the river and district), Geographe (the bay) and Naturaliste (the cape). Busselton itself is named after the Bussell family, who were early settlers in the area. The main street, Queen St, leads down to the beach.





Still family-friendly, Busselton has plenty of diversionary activities for lively kids; think playgrounds on the foreshore, sheltered beaches, waterslides, animal farms, 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. The South West Coach Lines depot is in Albert St.

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, friendly **museum**; at the ocean end is the **underwater observatory** (adult/child \$20/11.50; ☎ 10.30am-3.30pm).

The former **courthouse** displays historical information on a panel by the entrance; now an arts centre, it's open to the public during exhibitions. The **Old Butter Factory Museum** (Peel Tce; adult/child \$4/1; ☎ 10am-2pm Wed-Mon) shows the history of Busselton.

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.

Between Busselton and Bunbury the 20-sq-km **Ludlow Tuart Forest National Park** is the world's only tall stand of tuart, a specialised eucalypt that grows nowhere but on WA's coastal limestone. In a gorgeous setting in the forest, **Wonnerup House** (☎ 9752 2039; adult/child \$5/3; ☎ 10am-4pm Weds-Sun), a whitewashed colonial homestead built in 1859, has been lovingly restored by the National Trust.

Sleeping

Busselton is packed in the holidays and pretty much deserted off-season. On the Bussell Hwy, heading towards Dunsborough, caravan parks and motels line the road; better to head for town and the places in walking distance of good beaches and good food.

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.

Paradise Motor Inn (☎ 9752 1200; www.paradisemotorinn.aussie.com.au; 6 Pries Ave; lodge/motel d \$30/70) It's not flash, but it's the best of the few places in town that offer budget accommodation. The 'lodge' has basic share-facility rooms.

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.bluebayapartments.com; cnr Brown & Adelaide St; from \$90) Only a couple of years old, and just a stone's throw from the beach, these self-contained apartments are bright and cheery, each with private courtyard and barbecue.

Prospect Villa (☎ 0417 099 307; 1 Pries Ave; d \$90, self-contained cottage \$120; ☎) Based in Busselton's oldest house, built around 1844, this B&B is full of character and quirky country furnishings. It was on the verge of changing hands when we visited, so fingers crossed for its future.

Newton House (☎ 9755 4485; newton@compwest.net.au; 737 Bussell Hwy; s/d \$120/150) Built around 1851, this early settler residence, west of town, has a lovely four-room guesthouse amid green lawns and gardens of herbs and lavender. Its restaurant (mains \$35; open lunch and dinner Tuesday to Saturday) offers some of the best food in the region, including fabulous home-made preserves and chutneys; book for dinner.

Eating

Star Sushi & Noodle (☎ 9751 4888; 44 Queen St; noodle soups \$10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Filling and good-value Asian food is cooked to order here, to take away only.

Esplanade Hotel (☎ 9752 1078; 167 Marine Tce; mains \$15; ☎ lunch & dinner) Classic pub grub is served at this almost-waterfront Busselton institution; evening meals are often themed (steak night, Mexican night and so on).

Equinox Cafe (☎ 9752 4641; www.theequinox.com.au; Jetty foreshore; lunch \$15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Lower-key and somewhat more relaxed than its goosy neighbour, this is a fine waterfront hangout.

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

THE SOUTH WEST

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 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 to early December. The cheerful staff at the **visitors centre** (☎ 9755 3299; www.geographebay.com; Naturaliste Tce; ☺ 9am-5pm) has 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 \$9/4.50; ☺ 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** (see the boxed text below).

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, which 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

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 Beach Lodge (☎ 9756 7144; www.dunsboroughbeachlodge.com.au; 13 Dunn Bay Rd; dm/d \$25/60) Close to the beach; some rooms at this centrally located lodge have balconies.

Dunsborough Inn (☎ 9756 7277; www.dunsboroughinn.com; 50 Dunn Bay Rd; dm/d \$25/50, unit \$90-139; ☑) The 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 carriages \$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.

There are many, many options for self-contained rentals in town depending on season; the visitors centre has current listings.

Eating

Goanna Gallery & Café (☎ 9759 1477; cnr Commonage & Hayes Rd; mains \$16; ☺ 9am-4pm Wed-Sun) Several kilometres out of town, this fabulous café has a stunning bush setting, plenty of quirky outdoor seating, and a kids' sand pit. The simple winter lunch of homemade soup, bread and cheese is a knockout.

THE BIRD HAS FLOWN – TOO FAR SOUTH

Birders will enjoy the sight of the red-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) soaring happily in the sea breezes above Sugarloaf Rock, south of Cape Naturaliste. The section of beaches between Capes Naturaliste and Leeuwin is anything but the tropics; nevertheless, this stretch of coast is home to the most southerly breeding colony of red-tailed tropicbirds in Australia, reliably seen here between September and May.

The tropicbird is distinguished by its two long, red tail streamers – almost twice its body length. It has a bill like a tern's and, from a distance, could easily be mistaken for a Caspian tern. You'll have fun watching through binoculars as the inhabitants of this small colony soar, glide, dive then swim with their disproportionately long tail feathers cocked up. They are ungainly on land and have to descend almost to the spot where they wish to nest.

SURFING THE SOUTHWEST

Known colloquially to surfers as 'Yal's' and 'Margaret's' (when viewed from far-off Perth), 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 (\$4.95) from the Dunsborough visitor centre on the way through, and check out www.yallingupsurfschool.com if you need some help with your technique.

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); Bam-booe (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, above); if you prefer dry land, a series of beautiful **walking trails** track the coast between here and Smith's Beach.

The leafy **Caves Caravan Park** (☎ 9755 2196; www.cavescaravanpark.com; cnr Caves & Yallingup Beach Rds; unpowered/powered sites \$16/22, cabins/chalets \$65/100), one of the best around, has tastefully decorated cabins and detached private bathrooms for every site.

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

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

Everything about the intimate **Empire Retreat** (☎ 9755 2065; www.empireretreat.com; Caves Rd; ste \$220-380, villas \$450-490) is incredibly stylish, from the Indonesian-inspired design to the attention to detail and service. A lovely day spa is attached.

CAVES ROAD AREA

Take a day or two to drive up and down Caves Rd, and get enjoyably lost pottering along the side roads. You'll find a swag of visitor attractions, from horse-riding to wineries to pottery to woodwork to caves to animal parks. All the visitor centres in the area supply free, detailed maps of the local attractions.

Sights WINERIES

Vineyards abound. Among those renowned for their food as much as their wine are **Lamont's** (☎ 9755 2434; margaretriver@lamonts.com.au; Gonyulup Valley Dr; mains \$35 ☺ lunch daily, dinner Sat only) where, after a delicious lunch or weekend brunch on the balcony overlooking the lake, you can wander next door to the **Gonyulup Galleries** (☎ 9755 2177; www.gonyulupgalleries.com.au; ☺ 10am-5pm) showcasing exquisite contemporary WA art.

Flutes Café (☎ 9755 6250; www.brooklandvalley.com.au; Caves Rd; mains \$30; ☺ lunch noon-4pm), at the Brookland Valley Vineyard, has glass walls and a balcony overlooking a dam and rolling

grounds; the platter of locally-made game terrine and salamis is good.

Cape Clairault (☎ 9755 6225; www.clairaultwines.com.au; Henry Rd, Wilyabrup; mains \$26-32; ☎ lunch noon-3.30pm) is a contemporary building of timber and corrugated iron amid vineyards and eucalypts, with an eclectic, appealing menu.

The first of the commercial wineries, **Vasse Felix** (☎ 9755 5242; www.vassefelix.com.au; Harman's South Rd; mains \$30; ☎ lunch to 3pm) is considered by many to have the finest restaurant in the area; it's certainly one of the most scenic. Make time also to enjoy the artworks on display from the Holmes à Court collection.

The white-washed Dutch-style buildings of **Voyager Estate** (☎ 9757 6354; www.voyagerestate.com.au; Gnarawary Rd; mains \$30, Devonshire tea \$8.50; ☎ lunch to 3pm) belie the winery's beautiful grand interior; its restaurant has an always-impressive seasonal menu.

Leeuwin Estate (☎ 9757 6253; Stevens Rd; mains \$32; ☎ lunch) is a place for long lunches, overlooking lawns that roll gently down to the bush to form a natural amphitheatre – the site of the annual alfresco concerts. Behind-the-scenes wine tours and tastings take place at 11am, 1pm and 3pm (\$9).

CAVES

Caveworks 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. There are displays on fossils found in the area.

Single cave tickets (adult/child \$16.50/8.50) include entry to Caveworks. Three-cave passes (\$42.50/8.50) can be used over several days and include entry to Caveworks and Lake, Jewel and Mammoth Caves. There are guided tours of **Lake Cave** (☎ 9.30am-4.30pm), while tours of **Jewel Cave** (☎ 9.30am-4pm), 8km north of Augusta, leave on the hour. You can enter **Mammoth Cave** (☎ 9am-4pm) yourself, and it has partial wheelchair access.

Managed by DEC (☎ in Busselton 9752 5555), **Caldargup Cave** (adult/child \$10/5; ☎ 9am-4.15pm) is a self-guided cave, with an underground lake. **Giants Cave** (adult/child \$10/5; ☎ 9.30-3.30 school & public holidays only) is also self-guided, with some steep ladders and scrambles. Helmets and torches are provided at both.

Between Dunsborough and Yallingup is the mystical **Ngilgi Cave** (☎ 9755 1288; ngilgi@geographebay.com; adult/child \$15.50/6.50; ☎ 9.30am-

4.30pm, last entry 3.30pm); a series of well-marked bush walks also start here.

There's detailed information on the region's caves at www.showcaves.com.

OTHER SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Near Dunsborough is **Wicked Ale Brewery** (☎ 9755 2848; www.wickedalebrewery.com.au; ☎ 10am-5pm), a small-scale and eccentric brewery in a great bush setting. There's also a chance to try the award-winning beers of **Bootleg Brewery** (☎ 9755 6300; Wilyabrup; ☎ 10am-4.30pm), which bills itself as 'a beer oasis in a desert of wine'.

Canal Rocks, a series of rocky outcrops forming a natural canal, are just outside Yallingup. A little further south on Caves Rd is **Warden Cultural Centre** (☎ 9756 6566; www.wardan.com.au; adult/child \$12/6; ☎ 10am-4pm Sep-Mar, closed Tue & Sat Apr-Aug, closed Jul), where you can get a window onto the lives of the local Wardandi Aboriginal people.

Boranup Gallery & Café (☎ 9757 7585; www.boranupgallery.com; ☎ 10am-4pm) has a beautiful selection of local arts and crafts; the attached café is a good spot to refuel.

West of Margaret River, off Caves Rd, the coastline provides spectacular surfing and walks.

On the Bussell Hwy at Cowaramup is **Fonti Farm** (☎ 9755 7588; ☎ 9.30am-5pm), whose cheeses and yogurt are distributed throughout WA – there's a viewing window into the factory kitchen, and a tiny historical display. Chocoholics should head for the **Margaret River Chocolate Company** (☎ 9755 6555; www.chocolatefactory.com.au; Harman's Mill Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm), where the chocolatier works wonders and you can even buy chocolate lip balm and bath salts! Gourmet food store **Margaret Riviera** (☎ 9755 9333; www.margaretriviera.com.au; Bottrill St, Cowaramup) stocks local produce including olive oils, preserves and cheeses.

A beautiful National Trust property 8km northwest of Margaret River, the 1857 **Ellensbrook Homestead** (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. Between 1899 and 1917, Edith Bussell, who farmed the property alone for many years, established an Aboriginal mission here. There's decent wheelchair access into the homestead grounds.

Eagles Heritage Raptor Wildlife Centre (☎ 9757 2960; www.eaglesheritage.com.au; adult/child \$10/4.50;

THE CAVES OF THE CAPE

The limestone cliffs that make their jagged way along the coastline between the capes give an inkling of what lies beneath. Limestone helps the formation of caves, as water seeps through the porous substance, dissolving calcium carbonate which is later deposited to create stalactites and other formations. There are perhaps as many as 350 limestone caves dotted throughout the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge between the capes. The most spectacular is Jewel Cave, while Lake Cave is undoubtedly the prettiest.

The limestone formations are reflected in the still waters of an underground stream in **Lake Cave**. Creative lighting effects enhance the forms of the stalactites and stalagmites. The vegetated entrance to this cave is spectacular and includes a karri tree with a girth of 7m. Lake Cave is the deepest of all the caves open to the public. There are more than 300 steps down (a 72m drop) to the entrance.

Caldargup Cave is an attractive illustration of the role of the caves in the local ecosystems – a stream transports nutrients to the creatures living in the cave, while tree roots hang overhead.

The caves of the region have also revealed a lot about the prehistoric fauna of the southwest. **Mammoth Cave** boasts a fossilised jawbone of *Zygomaturus trilobus*, a giant wombatlike creature, as well as other fossil remains. Fossil remains of a Tasmanian tiger (*thylacine*), believed to be 25,000 years old, have been discovered in **Jewel Cave**. The cave was discovered in 1957 and has an impressive 5.9m straw stalactite, so far the longest seen in a 'commercial' cave.

Near Yallingup is the mystical **Ngilgi Cave**, which was discovered, or rather stumbled upon, in 1899. Formations include the white 'Mother of Pearl Shawl' and the equally beautiful 'Arab's Tent' and 'Oriental Shawl'.

☎ 10am-5pm), 5km south of Margaret River on Boodjidup Rd, rehabilitates many birds of prey each year. There are free-flight displays at 11am and 1.30pm.

Sleeping

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

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

Margarets Beach Resort (☎ 9757 1227; www.assured.net.au; Gnarabup Beach; studio \$200, apt \$250-390; ☎ ☎) A 64-unit stylish modern complex, but when we last visited the small shopping mall and art gallery was looking forlorn and almost empty of tenants; a temporary state of affairs, hopefully.

MARGARET RIVER

☎ 08 / pop 5600

The ample attractions of Margaret River – fantastic surf, undulating bushland, some of Australia's best wineries – make it one of

WA's most popular destinations. The town is close to the incredible surf of Margaret River Mouth, Gnarabup, Suicides and Redgate, and to the swimming beaches at Prevelly and Gracetown.

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.mrwinefest.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 Café (2/72 Willmott Ave; per hr \$6) Internet.

Visitors centre (☎ 9757 2911; www.margaretriver.com; cnr Bussell Hwy & Tunbridge St; ☎ 9am-5pm) This sleek centre has wads of information, plus an on-site wine centre.

Sights & Activities

Need we mention that **wine tasting** is the most popular activity in the area? See p121 for a description of many of the spectacular wineries in the region. Also read our special section (p47) and drop by the **Margaret River Regional Wine Centre** (☎ 9755 5501; www.mrwines.com; 9 Bussell Hwy, Cowaramup; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun).

If you're limited for time and overwhelmed by choice, the knowledgeable staff can plan a vineyard itinerary for you and can ship wine almost anywhere in the world.

Another popular activity around here is exploring the many **caves** of the region. See p122 for more information.

Tours

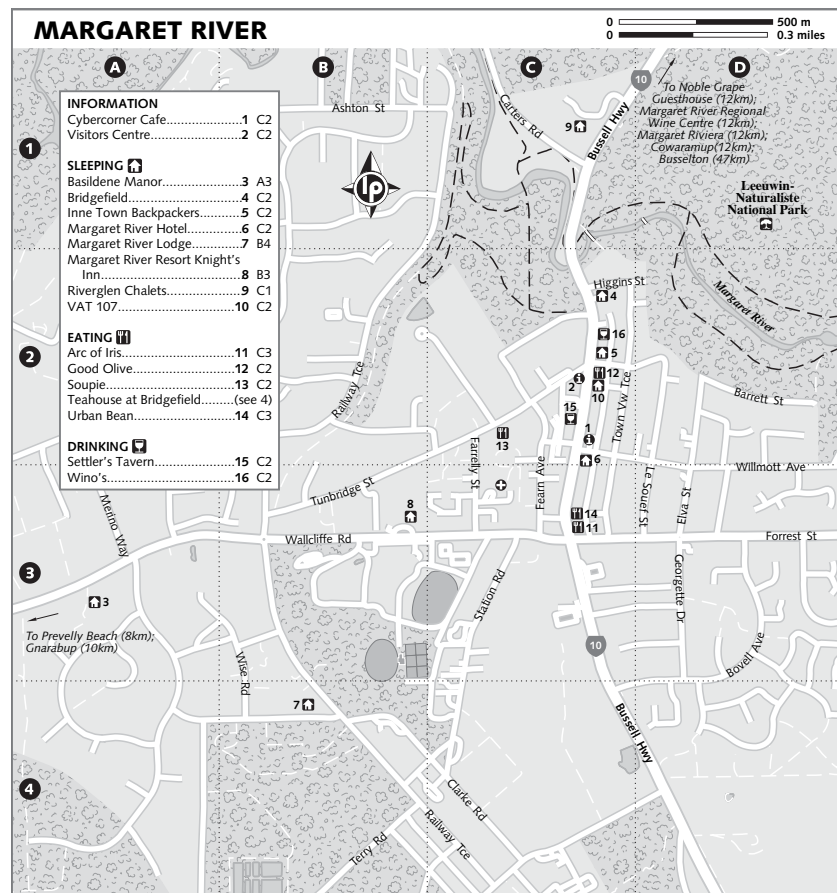
Still highly recommended is the search for forest secrets with **Bushtucker River Tours** (☎ 9757 1084; www.bushtuckertours.com; adult/child \$60/30). The four-hour trip combines walking and canoeing up the Margaret River, and features aspects of Aboriginal culture along with uses of flora and tasting of bush tucker. They also offer a low-key and informative winery tour,

as does **Wine for Dudes** (☎ 9758 8699; www.winefordudes.com); both are \$60.

Dirty Detours (☎ 0417 998 816; www.dirtydetours.com) does guided mountain-bike rides through the magnificent Boranup Forest (\$55).

Margaret River Tours (☎ 0419917 166; www.margaretrivertours.com), one of the longest-standing local operators, runs combined winery and sightseeing tours (half/full day \$60/95) or can arrange charters. For something totally indulgent you can take a chauffeured Rolls Royce around the vineyards for a progressive lunch with the **Margaret River Lady** (☎ 9757 1212; half/full day \$330/530).

There's a huge number of tour companies operating in Margaret River; see the visitors centre for all options.



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. The best camping option is at nearby Prevelly Beach; see p123.

BUDGET

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 the noticeboards here for work opportunities in town.

Margaret River Lodge (☎ 9757 9532; www.mrlodge.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 great sizable gardens.

MIDRANGE

Margaret River Hotel (☎ 9757 2655; www.margaretriverhotel.com.au; 139 Bussell Hwy; s/d/f \$95/125/160) You won't pay seasonal price surges in this central, 1936 heritage building. The rooms have been beautifully restored with loads of jarrah detail, though the cheaper rooms are tiny.

Bridgefield (☎ 9757 3007; www.bridgefield.com.au; 73 Bussell Hwy; s/d \$100/120) A 19th-century coach house, this lovely higgledy-piggledy B&B is all wood panels, high ceilings, tiled floors and ancient clawfoot baths.

Noble Grape Guesthouse (☎ 9755 5538; www.noblegrape.com.au; Lot 18 Bussell Hwy, Cowaramup; s/d \$110/130) There are flowers everywhere – in the beautiful gardens, decorating the rooms and linen – in this modern B&B built in colonial style on the highway in Cowaramup.

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.

TOP END

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/villas \$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 among landscaped gardens with views to karri forest – is simply magnificent.

Eating

Soupie (Community Resource Centre, 33 Tunbridge St; soup & bread \$3; 🍴 5-7pm Mon-Wed) In contrast to the high-profile and high-priced local food industry, this long-standing voluntary community service welcomes any helpers with a free lunch from 1pm. Profits go to green groups.

Urban Bean (☎ 9757 3480; 157 Bussell Hwy; lunch \$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) An old favourite, it's eclectic, lively and a throwback to the hippy generation.

VAT 107 (☎ 9758 8877; 107 Bussell Hwy; entrée/mains \$20/35 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Retaining its trendy reputation, the food here remains inventive and excellent – like Jerusalem artichoke and black cabbage risotto with seared scallops – and a simple coffee on the veranda makes for great people-watching.

Drinking

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 southwesterly point in Australia and on a wild day you fear being blown off the edge of the earth. The **visitors centre** (☎ 9758 0166; www.margaretriver.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 ten 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 \$3/1.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sep-Apr, 10am-noon May-Aug) has interesting local exhibits.

Sleeping & Eating

Hamelin Bay Caravan Park (☎ 9758 5540; hamelinbay@bordernet.com.au; low/high season 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.

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 with great facilities that are fully equipped for travellers with disabilities. Ask about the 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 river bank. 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.

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

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'. It sells fantastic fish, fresh from the ocean.

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. Backdrop to the townships, verdant farmland and meandering rivers such as the Blackwood make their way through the landscape.

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

Getting There & Away

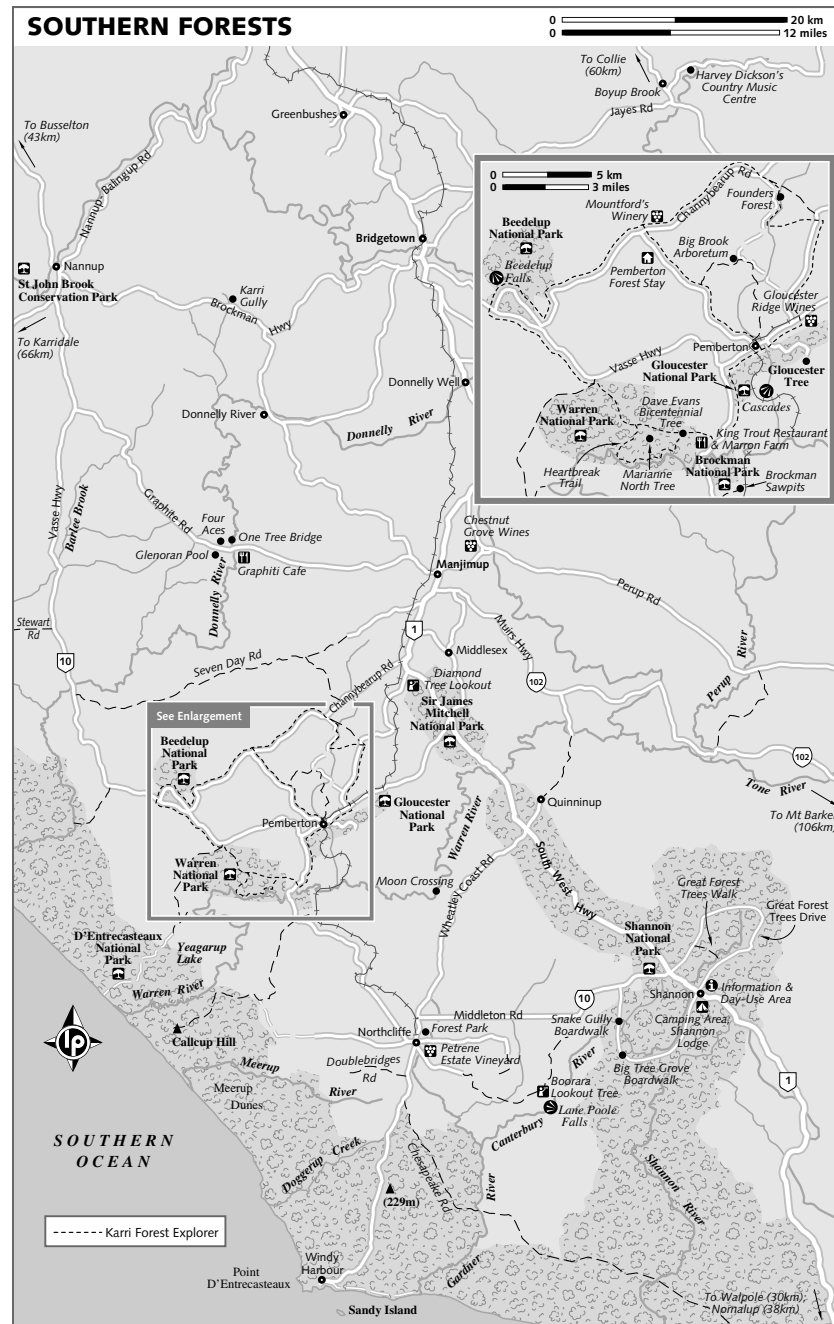
Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) runs a daily service from Perth (the East Perth terminus) to Pemberton (\$42, eight hours) via Binningup, Balingup and Bridgetown.

Goldrush Tours Golden Triangle Tour (☎ 1800 620 441; www.goldrushtravels.com.au) travels through the region, stopping in Pemberton as part of its hop-on hop-off bus route between Perth and Kalgoorlie.

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 fantastic community feel.

Information

Visitors centre (☎ 9761 1740; www.bridgetown.com.au; 54 Hampton St; ☹ 9am-5pm, Sun 10am-3pm) Has a collection of apple-harvesting and cider memorabilia, and a curious jigsaw collection.

Sights & Activities

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. A series of walks loop around town and out to join the Bibbulmun track; the Balingup and Bridgetown visitors' centres keep walk trail brochures.

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 pot-bellied stoves and washing machines) have wide views and friendly cows wandering around.

ELVIS SIGHTED IN WA

Follow the Brockman Hwy east of Bridgetown for 31km and you'll come across the small town of **Boyup Brook**, the centre of country music in WA. Local country-music fan and Elvis-obsessive Harvey Dickson has created **Harvey Dickson's Country Music Centre** (☎ 9765 1125; www.geocities.com/harveydickson) here, 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.

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

Cidery (☎ 9761 2204; 43 Gifford Rd; ☹ lunch Wed-Mon) Sample the local drops (alcoholic and nonalcoholic 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; Southwest 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.

NANNUP

☎ 08 / pop 1200

In the heart of the southwest's forests and farmland, Nannup, 50km west of Bridgetown, is a quiet, historical town in a picturesque setting. It's home to the legendary **Nannup tiger**, similar to the (probably extinct) Tasmanian tiger, it's a striped wolflike animal, sighted so rarely that it has become almost mythical.

Information

Visitors centre (☎ 9756 1211; www.nannupwa.com; Brockman St; ☹ 9am-5pm) Check out the tiger press clippings at this centre, housed in the 1922 police station; this is also the place to book a site in the caravan park (unpowered/powerd sites \$17/19, cabins \$55) on the river bank next door.

Sights & Activities

Garden-lovers should head to **Blythe Gardens** (admission by donation), opposite the tourist office. Once the pub's cow paddock, since 1958 the gardens have been lovingly transformed by the Blythe family into 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.

The **Blackwood River** begins in the salt-lake systems to the east and flows for more than 400km through forests, farmland and towns before emptying into the ocean east of Augusta. It's a good river to **canoe**, and the best time to paddle is in late winter and early

spring, when the water levels are up. **Blackwood River Canoeing** (☎ 9756 1209; blackwoodrivercanoeing@wn.com.au) runs guided canoeing trips (from \$25) including equipment and basic stroke instruction, and can help you arrange longer self-guided expeditions.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation in Nannup tends towards B&Bs (from \$100 and constantly changing; check with the visitors centre) and longer-term self-contained cottages.

Black Cockatoo (☎ 9756 1035; 27 Grange Rd; d \$20) In town, this quirky guesthouse is full of eclectic objects (think wood sculptures and fabrics) 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 is a working farm. 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.

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 eggs and kippers, and end it with carpetbag steak, you know you're not eating in your average country restaurant. Highly recommended.

MANJIMUP

08 / pop 4350

Surrounded by spectacular forest, the former timber town of Manjimup, the heart of WA's timber industry, is reinventing itself through a promising **wine industry** and a unique (for mainland Australia) **truffle** (yup, that's what truffle-growing places are called).

Information

Visitors centre (☎ 9771 1381; www.southernforests.com.au; Giblett St; ☹ 9am-5pm) The enthusiastic folk here can assist with information.

Sights & Activities

There's a particularly lovely drive between Manjimup and Nannup via **Graphite Rd**. Nine kilometres south of Manjimup is the **Diamond**

Tree Lookout. You're allowed to climb this 51m karri (not for the faint-hearted or vertigo sufferers); there's a nature trail nearby. Some 22km from town, the remains of **One Tree Bridge**, constructed from a single karri log carefully felled to span the width of the river but rendered unuseable by the 1966 floods, can be seen in a clearing in the forest. In the same location is the gorgeous **Glenoran Pool**, a sizable swimming hole in the forest. A little further down the road, the **Four Aces** are four superb karri trees – believed to be more than 300 years old – in a straight line; stand directly in front and all the trees disappear into one, makes a good photo opportunity! There's a short loop walk through the surrounding karri glade, or a 1½-hour loop bushwalking trail from the Four Aces to One Tree Bridge. The **Timber & Heritage Park** (☹ 9am-5pm), in the centre of town, is a good place to stop, picnic and potter after you've done a stock up on groceries in town.

Sleeping & Eating

Perup, 50km east of Manjimup, is the centre of a 400-sq-km forest, whose inhabitants include rare mammals such as the numbat, tamar wallaby and southern brown bandicoot. While drop-in visitors aren't encouraged, you can book through **DEC** (☎ 9771 7988) in Manjimup to stay at the ecology centre there.

Graphite Café (☎ 9772 1283; Graphite Rd; mains \$12; ☹ lunch Wed-Sun, breakfast Sun) On the Manjimup side of One Tree Bridge is this fantastic café, surrounded by karri forests. It makes a mean coffee and has a small menu of interesting food with creative veggie options such as pizza with pine nuts and blue cheese.

PEMBERTON

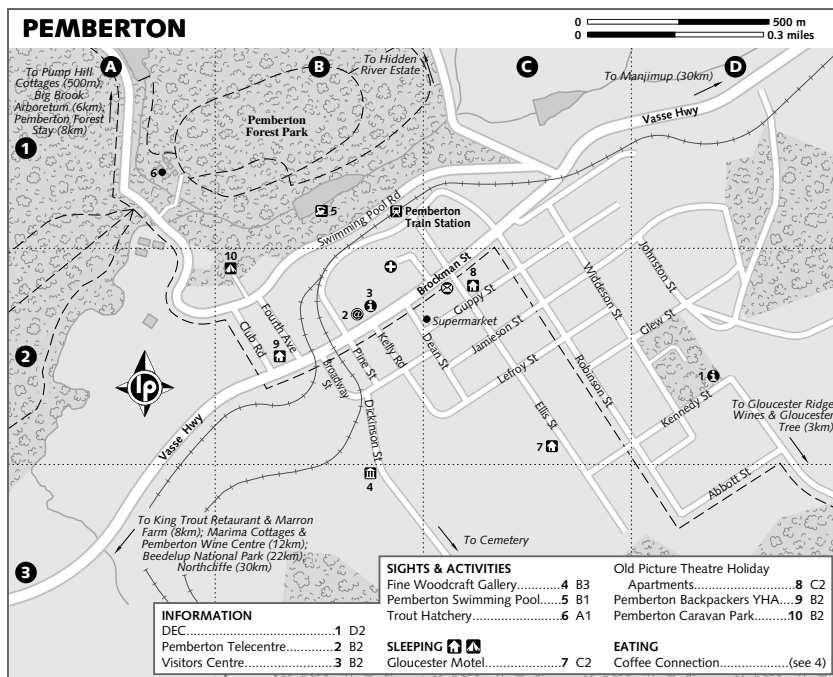
☎ 08 / pop 950

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 (\$3.95).

Pemberton Telecentre (Brockman St) Internet access. **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 (see opposite).

The red wines of Pemberton's burgeoning wine industry attract favourable comparison to those from Burgundy; check at the visitors centre for wineries 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

PURCHASE A PARK PASS

Most of the national parks around Pemberton charge a \$10 entry fee per vehicle. If you plan to visit more than three parks in the state, take advantage of the all-park passes. A four-week pass costs \$35; an annual pass is \$75. Any Department of Environment & Conservation (DEC) office, and most visitors centres, sell them.

pack a mixed box to your taste (its attached café makes a mean local cheese platter).

In town, amid lush gardens, the **Fine Woodcraft Gallery** (☎ 9776 1399; Dickinson St; ☎ 9am-5pm) sells beautiful wooden objects, and art and craftworks – from alpaca felt hats to fine prints – made by highly skilled artisans.

The scenic **Pemberton Tramway** (☎ 9776 1322; www.pemtram.com.au) was built between 1929 and 1933. Trams leave Pemberton train station for Warren River (adult/child \$18/9) at 10.45am and 2pm. The route travels through lush karri and marri forests with occasional photo stops; a commentary is also provided and it's fun, if noisy. A steam train makes the old sawmill trip to Eastbrook (adult/child \$23.50/11.50) during school holidays.

The natural and pretty **Pemberton Swimming Pool**, surrounded by karri trees, is ideal on a hot day. A nearby **trout hatchery** supplies fish for the state's rivers.

Tours

The **Pemberton Hiking Company** (☎ 9776 1559; www.perbertonwa.com) runs well-regarded (and environmentally sound) walks through forest,

clear rivers and sand dunes; half-day tours start at \$40 per person. It also plans longer hikes, canoeing or tubing trips, night hikes, and trips for special-needs travellers.

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

Wandering Vintage (☎ 9776 1757; www.wanderingvintage.com.au) wanders through forest and wineries every afternoon; the half-day tour is \$65. If a boat is more your style, try **Donnelly River Cruises** (☎ 0427 771018; www.donnelyrivercruises.com.au) for a half-day tour (adult/child \$55/35) that takes in a visual feast from the karri forests to the cliffs of the Southern Ocean.

Sleeping BUDGET

Pemberton Backpackers YHA (☎ 9776 1105; pembertonbackpackers@wn.com.au; 7 Brockman St; dm/s/d/cottage \$19/35/51/70; ☎) 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.

Pemberton Forest Stay (☎ 9776 1153; Stirling Rd, Pimlea; dm/s/cabins \$21/30/65) This forest getaway, a former timber workers' village, with good cabins and a forest backdrop, is at Pimlea, 9km from Pemberton; you need your own wheels to get here.

IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY

The **Karri Forest Explorer** drive wends its way along 86km of scenic roads, punctuated by glorious walks, magnificent individual trees, pretty bush camp sites and picnic areas, and lots of interpretive signage.

Its popular attractions include the **Gloucester Tree**, named after the Duke of Gloucester, who visited in 1946. It's a splendid fire-lookout tree, laddered with a spiral metal stairway; if you're feeling fit, make the scary 60m climb to the top. This is not for the faint-hearted! The **Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree**, tallest of the 'climbing trees' at 68m, is in Warren National Park, 11km south of Pemberton. Its tree-house cage weighs two tonnes and can sway up to 1.5m in either direction in strong winds; you have been warned. 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, scenic walk that crosses Beedelup Brook near **Beedelup Falls**; the bridge was built from a karri log. There are numerous bird species to be found in and around the tall trees; at ground level the busy red-winged fairy wren is commonly seen in the undergrowth. North of town, **Big Brook Arboretum** features 'big' trees from all over the world.

The track loops on and off the main roads, so you can drive short sections at a time.

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

MIDRANGE

Gloucester Motel (☎ 9776 1266; Ellis St; s/d \$75/85) Best choice of the motels in town – it's off the main road and the verandas aren't quite on the car park. Sadie's restaurant on-site is popular and there's a decent choice on the bar menu (try 'Ian's Butt Kickin Chilli') for around \$15.

Pump Hill Farm Cottages (☎ 9776 1379; www.pump.hill.com.au; Pump Hill Rd; cottages \$105-245) Families will love this bush property, where kids (add \$12 to the cottage rate per day for each one) are taken on a daily hay ride to feed the animals, including donkeys, cows, goats and nosy ducks. Child-free folk will enjoy the ambience of the lovely, private, well-equipped cottages too.

Old Picture Theatre Holiday Apartments (☎ 9776 1513; www.oldpicturetheatre.com.au; cnr Ellis & Guppy Sts; d \$110; ☎) The town's old cinema has been revamped into lovely self-contained, spacious apartments with lots of jarrah detail and black-and-white movie photos; fantastic value.

TOP END

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 pot-belly stoves are a true getaway.

BONZER 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 130kms 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.

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

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.

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 makes good coffee and maybe the cheapest breakfasts in town.

King Trout Restaurant & Marron Farm (☎ 9776 1352; cnr Northcliffe Rd & Old Vasse Rd; ☺ 9.30am-5pm) The menu at this café showcases trout and marron prepared in more ways than seems possible, and is part of a great combination of food and fishing activities. A daily farm tour (adult/child \$5/3; 11am) may whet your appetite to hire a rod and hook your own lunch; it can be cleaned and cooked on site for a small fee. A King Trout Platter (\$55 for two) can to your accommodation.

Gloucester Ridge Wines (☎ 9776 1035; www.gloucester-ridge.com.au; Burma Rd; mains \$25; ☺ lunch) Possibly the leader in local lunches, this restaurant produces some of the best food in the region, and an afternoon cuppa on the sunny veranda is a welcome break from hiking the forest trails.

SHANNON NATIONAL PARK

The 535-sq-km Shannon National Park is on the South West Hwy, 53km south of Man-

jimup. The Shannon was once the site of WA's biggest timber mill (it 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* (\$14.45) 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 even 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**. In the park's southwest, a 6km return walking track (only for the hardy) links Boorara Tree with a lookout point over Lane Poole Falls.

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 the **DEC** (☎ 9776 1207) in Pemberton.