



# Travel itinerary

## Self-drive short breaks



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



## Perth to Exmouth on the Coral Coast Highway

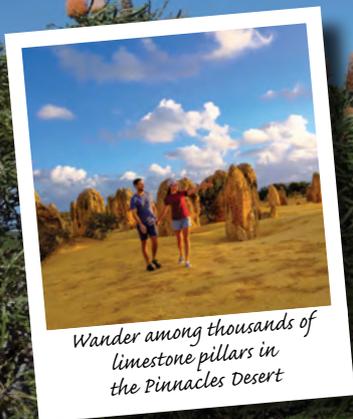
Pack your bags, fire up your spirit of adventure and take off on an unforgettable nature-lovers' odyssey from Perth to Exmouth.

Watch the landscape change from eucalypt forests and hillsides studded with grass trees to open plains, red sand dunes and rugged ranges.

Walk on sheltered sandy beaches, gaze from wild ocean cliffs, snorkel in coral lagoons and swim with whales, whale sharks, mantas and turtles.

See countless stars on crystal clear nights and feel the silence of Australia's outback.

Discover somewhere new, explore and learn something new as you travel a chain of national parks, marine parks and World Heritage areas through Australia's coral coast.



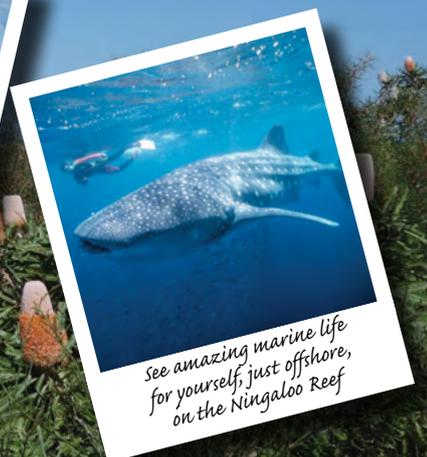
*Wander among thousands of limestone pillars in the Pinnacles Desert*



*Venture onto the new Kalbarri Skywalk 100m above the Murchison River*



*Experience the unique and colourful vastness of Shark Bay*



*See amazing marine life for yourself, just offshore, on the Ningaloo Reef*



# Travel itinerary

## Self-drive short breaks



### Start and finish

Drive from Perth to Exmouth or from Exmouth to Perth.

### Best time

March to November

### Duration

9 to 10 days one-way

### Plan your adventure

This itinerary is a guide to finding all the best nature experiences between Perth and Exmouth. It can be used as a nature-based companion for the [Australia's Coral Coast](#) Coral Coast Highway, especially as a fly/drive trip.

The whole trip can be made on sealed roads with some optional detours on unsealed roads. Add a day or two extra to spend more time in your favourite places or for the return drive to Perth.

Your best value-for-money option for national park entry fees on this road trip is a fourteen-day holiday pass. Buy yours online before you set off at [shop.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://shop.dbca.wa.gov.au).

A wide variety of accommodation is available in regional centres. Research your accommodation, tours, cruises, flights and other highlights and book well in advance

### Travel distances

Perth	→	Yanchep National Park	50km
Yanchep National Park	→	Geraldton	371km
Geraldton	→	Kalbarri	170km
Kalbarri	→	Denham	373km
Denham	→	Carnarvon	325km
Carnarvon	→	Exmouth	364km
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Perth	→	Exmouth	1653km

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**Top** Humpback whale, Ningaloo Marine Park

**Bottom** Banksia flowers, Lesueur National Park

**This page** View from Eagle Bluff



### 1 Perth to Yanchep National Park

• See birds and wildlife up close

Leave Perth and make your first stop at beautiful [Yanchep National Park](#). (50km).

See kangaroos, koalas and abundant birdlife, book an Aboriginal Cultural Experience or venture below ground on a Crystal Cave Tour or into the trees on a challenging ropes course.

Accommodation and camping options are both available.

#### Camp at:



**Henry White Oval,  
Yanchep National Park**



Bookings essential: [parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au)



#### Ranger's tip

- If you don't already have a 14-day park pass, buy it here in the gift shop and use it for the rest of the trip.
- Late afternoon is the best time to see kangaroos when they gather on grassed areas to feed.

### 2 Yanchep National Park to Geraldton

• Wander through the Pinnacles Desert

Watch for grass trees with flower spikes as you drive north on the Indian Ocean Drive toward [Nambung National Park](#).



#### Ranger's tip

Make short side trips to:

- enjoy Indian Ocean views and grass trees up close on the Wildflower Walk at Nilgen Lookout.
- have a swim, beach walk or picnic at [Hangover Bay](#) or the beach at Jurien Bay.
- Check out the living fossil thrombolites at [Lake Thetis](#).

#### Must do:



Walk among thousands of mysterious limestone pillars at the [Pinnacles Desert](#).

Find out how they formed and visit the gift shop in the [Pinnacles Desert Discovery](#).

Detour inland (23km unsealed road) for a scenic drive through [Lesueur National Park](#), a biodiversity hotspot and a colourful canvas of wildflowers in spring.

Stay overnight in Geraldton.



#### Photo tumble, top to bottom

Swing through the trees in Yanchep National Park (Photo: Trees Adventure)

Grass tree, Nilgen Lookout

Thrombolites in Lake Thetis, Nambung National Park



### 3 Geraldton to Kalbarri

- Fly over the **Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park**.
- Catch an **Indian Ocean sunset**

Visit the [Museum of Geraldton](#) to discover the natural and cultural heritage of the region and fantastic displays in the shipwreck gallery.

A scenic flight over the [Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park](#) is the best and easiest way to see this spectacular archipelago of 122 islands, 60km offshore from Geraldton. Flights are available from Geraldton and Kalbarri.

Turn off the highway in Northampton to travel past the Pink Lake near Port Gregory.

Stay for two nights in Kalbarri to explore both the river gorge areas and coastal cliffs.



#### Ranger's tip

As you arrive in Kalbarri, enjoy late afternoon and sunset views over the ocean from the coastal cliff lookouts or from [Meanarra Hill](#) in [Kalbarri National Park](#). Early morning, with the sun behind you, is also a great time to visit these places.

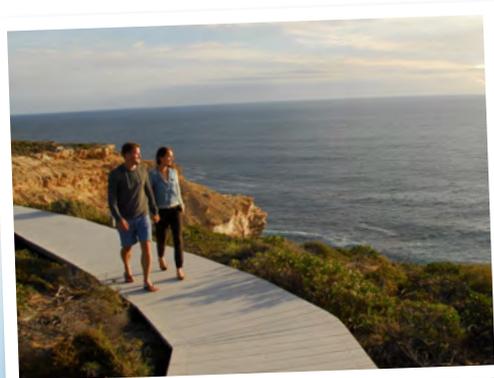
**Main** Aerial view of Abrolhos Islands National Park

**Photo tumble, top to bottom**

Bigurda Trail, Kalbarri National Park

Murchison Rose, Kalbarri National Park

Island Rock Lookout, Kalbarri National Park





### 4 Explore Kalbarri National Park

- Venture onto the new **Kalbarri Skywalk**
- Spot whales and dolphins from coastal cliffs

Spend the day exploring [Kalbarri National Park](#). In hot weather, visit the Murchison River gorge in the morning and coastal cliff locations in the afternoon.

A variety of short walks at [The Loop and Natures Window](#), [Z Bend](#), [Hawk's Head](#) and [Meanarra Hill](#) have great views and a chance to see wildflowers, usually at their best from August to October.

Walk trails along the coastal cliffs have spectacular ocean views. The boardwalk section of the Bigurda Trail between [Island Rock](#) and [Natural Bridge](#) is an easy stroll along the cliff edge.

Other walks take you closer to the ocean or into coastal gorges. Keep an eye out for whales (in season) and dolphins year-round. Longer walks are available in the park if you have enough time.



#### Ranger's tip

- Pick up a free park brochure at the park entrance - your guide to enjoying all of the sites and walk trails in the park.
- Always take a hat and drinking water with you.
- Apply sunscreen and wear sturdy shoes.

**Main** Kalbarri Skywalk, Kalbarri National Park

**Photo tumble, top to bottom**

Nature's Window, Kalbarri National Park

Z Bend, Kalbarri National Park

Kalbarri Skywalk, Kalbarri National Park

#### Kalbarri Skywalk

The fabulous new [Kalbarri Skywalk](#) will be a highlight of your trip. Allow time to take in views up and down the gorge and learn about the Nanda people's connections to this area.





## 5 Kalbarri to Shark Bay

• See amazing environments and life forms

Enjoy a sunrise view or cliff-top walk in [Kalbarri National Park](#) before you leave for Shark Bay. Drive right through the park and turn north onto the North West Coastal Highway. The landscape soon changes from undulating hills to flat plains and occasional ancient riverbeds. After 178km turn off the highway and into the [Shark Bay World Heritage Area](#).

### Must do:



Check out the stromatolites of [Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve](#), the unique and amazing beach at [Shell Beach Conservation Park](#) and endless views across Shark Bay with a chance to see sharks, rays and turtles from the boardwalk at [Eagle Bluff](#).

Find out about Shark Bay's extraordinary environmental and cultural values at the [Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery Centre](#) in Denham.

Stay for two nights at Denham (373km from Kalbarri), Monkey Mia (398km) or Big Lagoon (396km) in [Francois Peron National Park](#).



### Ranger's tip

The camping area at [Big Lagoon](#) is off the beaten track with well-spaced campsites, excellent sheltered decking and barbecue facilities overlooking a tranquil lagoon.



### Camp at:



### Big Lagoon

The campground is accessible to high clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles only. Advance bookings are not available.

Main Shell Beach Conservation Park

Photo tumble, top to bottom

Stromatolites, Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve

Big Lagoon campground, Francois Peron National Park





## 6 Explore Shark Bay

• Experience unique and colourful landscapes

Spend the day exploring Shark Bay. Take a tour or Aboriginal cultural experience for an unforgettable [Shark Bay](#) adventure. Explore the far reaches of [Francois Peron National Park](#) on a four-wheel-drive tour, cruise Shark Bay to see dugongs, dolphins, manta rays, turtles and whales. Fly over stunning and unique colours, marine life and remote landscapes on an amazing scenic flight to Steep Point, the most westerly point of Australia's mainland, Dirk Hartog Island and the Peron Peninsula.



### Must do:



Dolphin experiences begin at [Monkey Mia](#) between 8am and noon. It is best to be early and leave the rest of the day for exploring or relaxing.

Learn about the natural and cultural history of the area at the [Peron Heritage Precinct](#) in [Francois Peron National Park](#) (14km unsealed road).



### Ranger's tip

- Walk the beach for a chance to get close to local pelicans and other seabirds.
- Book a cruise to see dugongs, dolphins and turtles or a sunset to be remembered.

## 7 Shark Bay to Carnarvon

• Outback touring

As you drive to Carnarvon (325km from Denham) take the opportunity to see any of [Shark Bay](#) you missed on the way in at [Eagle Bluff](#), [Shell Beach](#) or [Hamelin Pool](#).

Consider a side trip north to the Blowholes and back to Carnarvon (132km return). Alternatively, an unsealed road will take you further to stay overnight at [Gnaraloo](#) or [Red Bluff](#) at the beginning of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area. Remember you will have to retrace your steps to the highway before going on to Exmouth.



Main Monkey Mia

Left Dirk Hartog Island

Photo tumble, top to bottom

Tour group, Francoi's Peron National Park

Shark Bay sunset



### 8 Carnarvon to Coral Bay and Exmouth

- Snorkel the Ningaloo Reef
- Gaze at the amazing night sky

Drive north and cross the Gascoyne River. The longest river in Western Australia, it gathers water from far inland including from the Kennedy Ranges and Mount Augustus national parks.

Your destination in the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area depends on your choice of activities for the next two days.

Call in at [Coral Bay](#) (240km from Carnarvon) and make your way to the beach for a swim or snorkel right in town.

Stay overnight in Coral Bay or drive on to Exmouth (364km from Carnarvon) or [Cape Range National Park](#) (417km from Carnarvon).



#### Camp at:



#### Cape Range National Park

Choose a site at one of nine campgrounds, all near the beach.

#### Nyinggulu Coastal Reserves

Completely self-sufficient campers can book campsites at a number of coastal campgrounds on the Ningaloo coast north of Carnarvon and north or south of Coral Bay.

Bookings essential: [parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au).



Main Night Sky, Cape Range National Park

Photo tumble, top to bottom

Coral on Ningaloo Reef, Ningaloo Marine Park  
Sunset, Cape Range National Park



### 9 Explore the Ningaloo Coast

- See whales, manta rays, whale sharks and turtles
- Spot rock wallabies on vertical gorge walls

This is the day to explore the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area.

There are so many things to do; relax, swim and snorkel at the beach, explore walk trails and scenic drives in the rocky gorges of the Cape Range, take a day tour on the reef or a one hour boat tour into the picturesque Yardie Creek Gorge.

#### Must do:



Take a snorkelling, diving or sight-seeing tour offshore in Ningaloo Marine Park to see or swim with turtles, mantas, whales and whale sharks.



#### Ranger's tip

Enjoy excellent snorkelling from the beach at lesser known spots including Lakeside, Oyster Stacks, Osprey Bay and Pilgramunna.



**Main** Swimming with whale sharks, Ningaloo Marine Park

**Photo tumble, top left to bottom right**

Swimming in Ningaloo Marine Park

Manta rays, Ningaloo Marine Park

Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park

Black-footed rock wallaby, Cape Range National Park



### 10 Exmouth

Your tour through the parks of [Australia's Coral Coast](#) ends in Exmouth. Check the travel time to your next destination or your flight time and:

- continue your adventure further north toward Karratha (555km).
- begin your drive by road back to Perth (1267km). Make sure you allow at least two days for the long drive and stay overnight at Carnarvon (364km) or Geraldton (846km).
- return your hire vehicle in Exmouth and fly to Perth.



Turquoise Bay, Cape Range National Park

### Handy information

**Parks** All the park information you need for your trip: [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au).

**Camping** Campground information and bookings: [parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au).

**Park passes** Buy park passes online at [shop.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://shop.dbca.wa.gov.au) at Parks and Wildlife Service offices and at selected tourism outlets and visitor centres. Royal Automobile Club (WA) members can buy discounted passes at [rac.com.au](http://rac.com.au).

**Trails** Detailed information about many of Western Australia's most popular trails: [trailswa.com.au](http://trailswa.com.au).

**Safe driving** Download and read a copy of [A guide to driving on WA roads](#).

**Emergencies** Download the free [Emergency Plus app](#) before your visit. The app can be used in the event of any emergency to call for assistance. If there is no mobile phone coverage you WILL NOT be able to call 000 but the app will provide you with GPS location details.

**Social media** Share your park experiences with us [@exploreparkswa](#) and use [#exploreparkswa](#).

**Visitor centres** Accredited visitor centres display the blue and yellow "i" symbol and can help with maps, accommodation, tour bookings and local knowledge. Find details at [visitorcentreswa.com.au](http://visitorcentreswa.com.au).

**Tours and accommodation** For additional information and ideas to help plan your trip: [westernaustralia.com](http://westernaustralia.com) and [australiascoralcoast.com](http://australiascoralcoast.com).

All accommodation and tour providers operating in national parks are accredited. Search for accommodation and tours at [trustthetick.wa.com.au](http://trustthetick.wa.com.au).



### Working Together on Country

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the lands and waters it manages.



Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

