

Perth

Eguide

Perth is the state capital city of Western Australia, the largest state in Australia and the fourth largest city in Australia. For a city of its size, Perth is one of the most isolated places on earth. To reach Perth, the nearest Australian capital city and the nearest place of similar size, takes a day and a half of continuous travel by land, and Perth is closer to Singapore than it is to Sydney.

The centre of Perth is located on the northern bank of the Swan River, a very green city, with an abundance of parks and tree-lined boulevards. One of Perth's main attractions lies in the pristine quality of its beaches. Unbroken stretches of golden sands run the entire length of the city's coastal suburbs. Perth was not the first place in Western Australia to be settled. That honour fell to Albany in 1826. Perth was second, the Swan River Colony here being established in 1829. The city was so named because the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Britain at the time, Sir George Murray, was the member for the Scottish city of Perth.

Although this is not generally thought of as having been a penal settlement, in fact convicts were brought here from 1850 until 1868, and it was the last place in Australia to accept prisoners.

One of the incentives held out to the people of Western Australia to encourage federation in 1901 was that the Commonwealth Government would construct a railway line connecting the state with the rest of the continent. That was duly done, and proved a valuable link between this isolated city and eastern Australia, although the standard gauge line did not reach Perth until 1969.

Despite its fairly long history, by Australian standards, Perth gives the impression of being a thoroughly modern city. Yet, if one looks around, one can still find the older buildings and the history, especially in the city centre. It is a particularly attractive city, with the Swan River, named for the black swans which were always to be found on it, running through its centre, and with King's Park offering a fine view down over the urban area.

Perth Animal Attractions

Armadale Reptile Centre

Over 200 reptiles with snakes, lizards turtles and lots more. Just off the South Western Highway in Armadale. (08 9388 6297).

Aquarium of Western Australia

Hillarys Boat Harbour, a little north of Scarborough, is the home of the Aquarium of Western Australia. 91 Southside Drive, Hillarys (08 9447 7500).

Caversham Wildlife Park

A collection of over 200 species at Whiteman Park. A good place to see kangaroos, and wombats. Enter the park from Lord Street or Beechboro Road. (08 9248 1984).

Perth Zoo

Perth Zoo is in South Perth and has more than 2,000 creatures of 280 different species. It tries to present its residents in their natural environment as far as possible. There is an Australian Walkabout section featuring native wildlife, through some parts of which one can wander with the animals. 20 Labouchere Road in South Perth (08 9474 3551).

Cohunu Wildlife Park

Lots of Koalas in a large parkland along with other native animals. Mills Road, Gosnells (08 9390 6090).



Perth Buildings

Barracks Arch

This is the only remnant of the first military barracks constructed in Perth in 1860 for soldier settlers. *St. George's Terrace.*

Government House

Government House on St George's Terrace was completed in 1864 and is still the official residence of the Governor of Western Australia.

If you walk down between the Concert Hall and Government House, you will also get a glimpse of the magnificent gardens here.

London Court

In the heart of Perth a small pedestrian street built in 1937 in a mock Tudor style.

There are clocks at each end with hourly jousting tournaments and interesting little shops within. *Hay Street Mall and St Georges Terrace.*

Perth Boys' School

The former premises of Perth Boys' School date from 1854.

This is the second oldest independent school in Australia, the oldest being King's School, Parramatta, near Sydney (1831). *Corner of the Esplanade and William Street.*

St George's Cathedral

An Anglican cathedral in the city centre.

Perth Town Hall

The Town Hall on the corner of Hay Street and Barrack Street dates from the 1880s and was built by convict labour, but it appears older, copying a traditional English Jacobean style.

Perth Mint

Established in 1899, this is Australia's oldest operating mint and now specialises in the production of silver, gold and platinum commemorative coins and medals.

There is a museum, and you can see a demonstration of gold pouring here.

You can hold an ingot worth \$200,000 and see the world's largest collection of natural gold nuggets. *310 Hay Street (08 9421 7223).*

Supreme Court and Gardens

The Supreme Court building was constructed in 1897.

The nearby Old Courthouse houses the Francis Burt Law Museum and is the oldest building in Perth. *Corner of St. George's Terrace and Barrack Street.*

St. George's Hall

The building on Hay Street has been demolished, but the portico was allowed to remain as a reminder of the grandeur of Perth's first purpose-built theatre, constructed in 1879.

Swan Bell tower

The modernistic Swan Bell tower contains twelve bells from the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, London. The bells, cast in 1725, were a bicentennial gift from the U.K. Government. *Barrack Square (08 9218 8183).*

St. George's Anglican Cathedral

The Cathedral is built in Gothic style and found off St George's Terrace. It was started in 1880 and completed in 1888.

St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral

The western part of this Cathedral in Victoria Square was built in 1865. It stands on the highest point in the central part of Perth.

The Deanery

The Deanery on the corner of St. George's Terrace and Pier Street is one of the few buildings in Perth dating from the 1850s. It was originally the residence of the first Dean of Perth, but now it is used as Church offices. It still has its original timber shingles on the roof.



Perth Museums

Aviation Museum

The largest aviation museum in Australia is at Bull Creek. Displays include a Spitfire and Lancaster Bomber and lots more. *(08 9311 4470).*

Constitutional Centre

The history of democracy in WA is explained. *Havelock Street. (1800 647 249).*

Cricket Museum

A history of cricket. *WACA Ground on Nelson Crescent in East Perth. (08 9265 7318).*

Fire Station Museum

The Fire Station Museum on Murray Street has a display of fire-fighting equipment, including a 1927 Dennis fire engine.

Fremantle Motor Museum

More than 50 cars including world land speed record holders, cars of the rich and famous and lots more. *(08 9336 5222).*

Railway Museum

There is a Railway Museum adjacent to Bassendean Station on the Midland Line.

Scitech

The biggest planetarium in Australia with a huge 18 metre diameter dome screen providing a 360 degree view. *City West, Sutherland Street West Perth (08 9486 8246).*

Sport Museum of WA

Features WA sports stars. Challenge Stadium on Stephenson Avenue. *(08 9441 8242)*

WA Museum

A large collection of exhibits to interest all. *Perth Cultural Centre, James Street (08 9427 2700).*

Perth Outdoors

Beaches

There are plenty of beaches around Perth, along what has become known as the Sunset Coast. Cottesloe Beach is one of the nearest ocean beaches to the city and a safe swimming beach. Scarborough and Trigg beaches are popular surfing beaches.

Burswood Park

A public park with plenty of trails and places to picnic. The park foreshore runs along the Swan River.

The Heritage trail tells the story of Western Australia. All the attractions and facilities are free. *Resort Drive, Burswood.*

Kings Park

Opened in 1872 it has developed as a beautiful park in the centre of Perth and extends to 400 hectares. The tree-lined Fraser Avenue leads to the heart of this 400-hectare park, where the War Memorial stands.

The trees beside the road are karri, native to the state of Western Australia. The War Memorial is impressive in itself, but it also stands at the point where there is a magnificent view down over the whole of the city centre.

There are lots of paths and view points. The Lotterywest Federation Walkway provides a walk through the treetops. *Start at the Lord Forrest Statue on Fraser Avenue.*

Botanic Gardens

The Botanic Gardens are just beyond the War Memorial in King's Park. *King's Park.*

Whiteman Park

A large park of over 4000 hectares with most protected as a conservation reserve. Plenty of native wildlife to observe. *Lord Street, West Swan (08 9249 2446).*

Rottnest

The charming little island of Rottnest lies nineteen kilometres offshore from Fremantle, a distance which can be covered in only half an hour by the fast ferries plying the route. The island is eleven kilometres in length and a little over three kilometres across at its widest point. It is famous for its quokkas.

Rottnest is suitable for a day trip or for an extended visit. There is accommodation on the island, but it is a popular destination, so booking is advisable. It is especially favoured as a location for seeing in the New Year. Ferries run to Rottnest from both Perth and Fremantle.

There is also a service from Hillarys, on the coast just north of Scarborough. From Fremantle the crossing takes 30 minutes. From Hillarys it takes 45 minutes. From Perth, you get the beautiful journey down the Swan River to Fremantle first which takes an hour and, since passengers then have to be picked up in Fremantle, the whole voyage takes approximately two hours.

Although Rottnest was sighted by earlier Dutch navigators making their way to the East Indies, it was Willem de Vlamingh who named it in 1696. He landed and found the island inhabited by what he believed to be huge rats. Therefore, he called it Rottenest, meaning Rat's Nest. The 'rats' are, in fact, a very small type of kangaroo now given the aboriginal name quokka.

Although this is not quite the only place where they are found, it is one of the very few, and the only place where visitors are likely to



meet them. Originally they inhabited much of the coastal area of Western Australia, but the introduction by Europeans of various species of animal has doomed them. In particular, domestic animals such as cats and dogs have hunted quokkas almost out of existence on the mainland. Here, though, cats and dogs are not permitted, and quokkas abound.



There are an estimated 10,000 quokkas here and they can be found everywhere, although there are certain places which are particularly good viewing spots. They are not particularly shy,

having no enemies here, but they are basically nocturnal, so often sleeping during the day, unless they know that there are visitors around, with the possibility of food.

In fact, it is prohibited to feed the quokkas, since anything with which humans are likely to supply them will not be good for their digestive system.

Note that biscuits, in particular, are not the natural diet of quokkas, despite their being very adept at noticing that you have some hidden in your bag.

A feature of Rottnest is that private vehicles are not permitted on the island, with minor exceptions made for police, doctor and a few others.

There is a bus service and there are bicycles and feet. Recently, the railway line has also been restored.

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