

Perth is the capital and largest city of the state of Western Australia and the fourth-largest city in Australia, with a population of 1.5 million. The City of Perth is currently the fastest growing area in Australia, growing at 10% per year.

The metropolitan area is located in the south west of the Australia between the Indian Ocean and a low coastal escarpment known as the Darling Range and extends from Yanchep in the north to Mandurah in the south, total distance of approximately 125 kilometres (78 mi) by road. The central business district and suburbs of Perth are situated around the Swan River. According to Aboriginal folklore the Swan River was created by a large mythical snake known as the Waggy, which slithered its way through the area creating the bends and gullies which shaped the river. In winter came the rains which filled the empty channel with water, and the river we know today as "The Swan" came to be.

One of Perth's claims to fame is that it is one of the most isolated metropolitan areas on Earth. The nearest Australian city with a population over 1 million is Adelaide in South Australia, which is 2,104 kilometres (1,307 mi) away. Perth is geographically closer to East Timor and Jakarta in Indonesia, than it is to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

The coastal suburbs take advantage of Perth's Oceanside location and clean beaches. Perth is on generally flat, rolling land - largely due to the high amount of sandy soils and deep bedrock. This abundance of sand has resulted in West Australians' being given the nickname sandgroppers by the rest of the country. Perth has two major river systems; the first is made up of the Swan and Canning Rivers. The second is that of the Serpentine and Murray Rivers, which discharge into the Peel Estuary at Mandurah.

Perth offers an abundance of accommodation options camping, backpacker hostels (booking are recommended in the summer months as budget travelers can find it hard to find a vacant bed) motels/hotels, short and long stay apartments.

Sights & Attractions

During your visit to Perth you will find many fun activities in Perth's city centre, many of which focus on the picturesque Swan River. You can enjoy one of the many river cruises which operate along the river, some offering dining and music as you spend a few hours cruising in and out of the city. For spectacular panoramic views of Perth and the river, visit Kings Park and Botanic gardens and take advantage of the many lookouts and vantage points available to the public, or enjoy a relaxing picnic in one of the many recreation areas of the park.

The Western Australian Museum holds an extensive display of Aboriginal artifacts as well as numerous zoological and social exhibits. The West Australian Art Gallery houses the state's premier art collection and hosts numerous impressive visiting exhibitions. The city centre also offers tourists a wealth of great shopping opportunities. Whether you're after souvenirs, Aboriginal art and crafts, fashion, swimming and beach wear,

jewellery, cameras and high tech items, there is a vast array of shops from shopping malls and department stores.

While in Perth you must visit the beach! Perth boasts kilometres of pristine white sandy beaches, perfect for swimming, sun tanning, learning to surf, picnics, playing beach volleyball or cricket, or just watching the sunset over the magical Indian Ocean with a beer in your hand at any of the beach front pubs. If you have a car, there is a fantastic coastal drive to take from Hillary's in the north to Fremantle in the south. Cottesloe and Scarborough Beaches are the most popular and easy to access with public transport.

Fremantle

Fremantle is Perth's port city, just a short drive or train ride south of the Perth city centre. Affectionately known by locals as 'Freo', Fremantle was originally Perth's access port for ships bringing supplies when Perth was just a colony. Fremantle today, while still the main port for Western Australia, has over the years grown to embrace its own identity as a seaside city with a vibrant atmosphere. Many creative people now live in and around Fremantle, so it's become a great place to see live music, pick up some West Aussie art, or some local designer clothes. Fremantle is a popular destination for both visitors and Perth locals to spend a day out and the now renowned 'Cappuccino Strip' on South Terrace buzzes with people enjoying the alfresco style cafes, particularly at weekends and during the summer months. Fremantle is also the first port of call for fishing boats and vessels with their fresh catch of the day. If you love fresh seafood, stop in at Fishing Boat Harbour for a choice of restaurants with waterside views that specialize in local fresh fish and seafood dishes.

Fremantle has a historic feel to it, as many of the old buildings are originals and are heritage listed, there are also a number of historic attractions to visit including the Fremantle Prison. The prison is an historic icon of the city where you can take a number tours from "doing time" to discovering the little known underground tunnels beneath. The Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle displays maritime objects from all eras and includes a former Royal Australian Navy submarine. At the busy Fremantle Markets (weekends only) on South Terrace you will find an unusual range of items, from fresh fruit and produce, to jewellery and hand crafted local items. The E Shed Markets in Victoria Quay overlooks the Fremantle wharf and offers a range of interesting shops and is well worth a look.

Swan Valley

Perth's Swan Valley is only a short 20 minutes from the city, and is a great destination for a day trip from Perth. The Swan Valley is home to

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more than 40 vineyards, many of which are still run by the descendants of families who originally came from Europe and started the wineries many years ago. One of the unique characteristics of the Swan Valley for wine lovers is that it is particularly renowned for high quality fortified wines, such as Muscat's, Ports and a number of unique liqueur wines which are available direct from the cellar door and are not produced anywhere else. Beer lovers will not be disappointed either, as there are a number of boutique and micro breweries in the region making their own award winning brews. Fine wine and food certainly make great companions, and the Swan Valley has a number of local restaurants and cafes where you can enjoy the local wine, beer and delicious food often made with fresh local produce.

Rottnest Island

Just off the coast of Perth is Rottnest Island, (locally known as "Rotto") measuring just 11 Kilometres long. The name comes from early Dutch explorers who visited the island and mistook small marsupials we call Quokka's for rats and referred to the island as "Rottenest", a rat's nest. These guys are cute little creatures, though very shy, you'll still find them in large numbers on the island. Rottnest can be visited by ferry from Fremantle, Perth city or Hillary's boat harbor. Rottnest is a popular holiday destination for locals and tourists due to the frequency of ferry services to the island, day trips are very popular or you can stay overnight. Long weekends and school holidays are very busy, so if you are looking for a quieter island experience it is best not to plan your trip during these times. With its stunning protected bays, beautiful reef system, lakes and historical sites, it's no wonder 'Rotto' is so popular! There are no cars on the island so a fun way to explore is hire a bike and ride around (24 kilometres round trip), if that sounds too active there are some tour buses and a jump off bus instead.

Climate

Perth receives moderate though highly seasonal rainfall. Summers are generally hot and dry, lasting from late December to late March, with February generally being the hottest month of the year, making Perth a classic example of a Mediterranean climate. Winters are relatively cool and rather wet, with most rainfall being recorded in July and August. On most summer afternoons a sea breeze, also known as "The Fremantle Doctor", blows from the south-west, cooling the city by up to 10°C.

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