

Western Australia

A Greentours Itinerary

Days 1 & 2 to Perth, Western Australia

We'll touch down in Perth, largest city and capital of Western Australia, during the evening of Day 2. Perth is the gateway to one of the world's Botanical Hotspots, boasting over ten thousand plant species. In addition to the variety the flora claims a high percentage of endemics, due to the region's long isolation. The climate is somewhat Mediterranean with hot, dry Summers and cooler wet Winters, so different from adjoining states which are mainly desert like. Western Australia's Spring is August to October with September the best month to visit as everywhere seems to be in bloom.

Days 3 - 5 Eneabba Wildflower Park, Leseur National Park and the Beekeepers Reserve

After a night in Perth we'll head northwards towards Eneabba and en route we'll enjoy abundant colourful flowers including *Banksias* such as *Banksia menziesii* (Firewood Banksia) and *Banksia prionotes* (Acorn Banksia). Roadsides are coloured with *Grevilleas*, *Hakeas*, Wild Peas, Kangaroo Paws such as *Anigozanthos humilis* and *Anigozanthos manglesii*, the latter the Western Australia state flower. Hopefully we'll find the rather surreal Black Kangaroo Paws (*Macropedia fuliginosa*), and certainly Feather-Flowers such as *Verticodia nobilis* amongst Drumsticks (*Dasypogon bromelifolium*) and various *Hakeas* including the Shell-leaved *Hakea*, all combining to create a colourful botanical extravaganza.

The area around Eneabba can only be described as a vast botanical garden. The arid interior and wheatlands stand in stark contrast to a magnificent scenically dramatic coast. Both contain a huge variety of endemic and/or spectacular flowering plants. The arid shrublands and heathlands of Badgingarra are a wonderful introduction to the West Australian flora. We'll find Winter Bells (*Blancoa canescens*), *Lechenaultias*, silver-grey *Conospermums* and numerous wild pea species. We will look out for the ancient cycad *Macrozamia fraseri*, and various *Stylidium*s (Trigger plants) and insectivorous *Droseras* (Sundews), some of which climb. Western Australia's orchids are famed for their beauty, the variety and above all, the many weird and wonderful shapes and colour schemes employed in attracting pollinators. We'll start the tours orchid extravaganza with golden-yellow *Diuris* species and lovely Cowslip Orchids, before moving on to the many and varied Spider Orchids. Other delights include *Hakea costata* (Ribbed *Hakea*), the Fox *Banksias* (*Banksia sphaerocarpa*), coneflowers such as *Isopogon linearis*, and beautiful *Darwinias* like *Darwinia speciosa*.

Lesueur National Park covers 27,000 hectares and is the third largest of Western Australia's National Parks. Amongst over nine hundred flower species are rare *Banksia tricuspis* (Lesueur Banksia) and *Banksia attenuata* (Slender Banksia). We will look for the diminutive Flying Duck Orchid and *Xanthesia tomentosa* (Southern Cross) and spiny *Synophea spinulosa*. Among the many birds we'll see in the national park are Cockatoos, Rosella Parrots, Western Corellas and Bee-eaters. Beekeepers is another large reserve, known to provide a rich collection of botanical 'goodies'.

Days 6 & 7

Kalbarri

The Northampton roadsides will enthrall this morning, while the Zuydorf Cliffs region is home to a very different flora in the afternoon. En route we'll find the Lilac Hibiscus (*Alogyne huegellii*), Tamala Roses (both *Diplolaena ferruginea* and *Diplolaena drummondii*) as well as the white spheres of *Pimelea sessilis*. The coastal town of Kalbarri is reputed to be where the first Europeans settled in Australia, when in 1629 two sailors survived a shipwreck. The town sits at the mouth of the Murchison River, where we'll encounter flocks of pristine Silver Gulls. The Murchison River cuts a deep gorge through the nearby national park.

We'll spend a full day in Kalbarri National Park, discovering the huge variety of wildflowers that inhabit the Murchison River Gorge, and the coast. The National Park covers a massive area of 186,000 hectares harboring over eight hundred species of plants, which includes over forty species of orchid, along with a wide range of birds. The rocks are also well known for their fossils. Both the sandy plains and the coastal cliffs abound in magnificent displays of River Gums, gold and orange banksias, Grevilleas including *Grevillea leucopteris* (White Plume) and *Grevillea petrophiloides* (Pink Poker). There's various kangaroo paws, especially the rare *Anigozanthos kalbarriensis*, white and yellow feather-flowers such as *Verticordia monodelpha*, *Verticordia nobilis* and *Verticordia polytricha*, *Calytrix* (starflowers), *Lachnostachys eriobotrya* (Lambswool), and *Calothamnus* spp. (clawflowers). The sandplains within the park hold botanical treats at every turn – Dusky Pink Coneflowers (*Isopogon divergens*), Fringed Bells (*Darwinia neidiana*), Blue leaved Dryandra (*Dryandra glauca*) and the delicate yellow flowers of *Persoonia microcarpa*. Ospreys and Wedge-tailed Eagles fly over us as we walk paths lined with *Melaleuca* bushes to some spectacular viewpoints over the Murchison River Gorge.

Day 8

Coalseam Conservation Park

Leaving Kalbarri we begin our journey south making various roadside stops heading for Coalseam. This is the site of the first coal mining in Western Australia when seams of coal were exposed by the Irwin River as it cut through sandstone and shale. The area is renowned for its magnificent large drifts of everlasting flowers under a light canopy of gums and wattles. The range of flowering annuals includes pink *Schoenia*

cassiniana, the similar pink *Rhodantha chlorocephala* subsp. *rosea* and lovely white *Rhodantha chlorocephala* subspecies *splendens*, yellow-orange *Waitzia acuminata* and *Podolepis*. We continue from here to the wheatland areas around Three Springs, where we will look for *Lechenaultia macrantha* (Wreath Flower) having checked locally as it seems to flower spasmodically at different sites within this area.

Day 9

Via Yarra Yarra Lakes, Watheroo National Park & Perth

The nearby Yarra Yarra Lakes should satisfy bird watchers with Black Swans along with other water-loving birds. Lakeside meadows are ablaze with drifts of *Schoenia cassiniana* and various *Rhodantha* species. Roadside verges are a virtual flower garden with golden *Grevillea excelsior* and deep red *Grevillea paradoxa* as well as *Banksia grandis*. The penstemon-like *Pityrodia terminalis* is referred to as their native foxglove. Tall pink *Stylidium*s (trigger plants) mix with orange and red *Lechenaultia formosa* or bright blue *Lechenaultia biloba*. *Kennedia nigricans* (Black Coral Vine) climbs whereas *Moraea setifolius* prefers clear ground and no competition. We should see Pied Honeyeaters, Chats and Babblers, and hopefully Wedge-tailed Eagles, as we make our way southwards to Watheroo Reserve and Perth. Roadside planting includes various wattles and *Banksia prionotes* (Acorn Banksia) and *Banksia burdettii*.

Watheroo reserve stands on the Darling Fault Line with one side being the Western shield of granite, some 2,500 million years old with outcrops surrounded by rich heathland, while the other side is more suited to wheatland and other farming activities. The reserve and surrounds host a wide range of Eucalyptus.

Day 10

King's Park, Perth

One thousand hectares overlooking the Swan River is a world renowned botanical hotspot given and preserved as an open space for the city of Perth and the nation in 1872, becoming the world's first area of native bushland to be protected. Two thirds of the park is native bushland, parts of which have been burnt to encourage its unique flora to rejuvenate naturally. The remaining third is a botanical garden where over two thousand different native plants are arranged in landscaped beds and borders. This is the perfect place to see many plants already noted in the wild and here well-labelled whilst also having our appetite's whetted for the second part of the tour when we travel down to the South coast. Some of the areas are designated as habitats, others regions, or dedicated to specific genera and families. With such a diverse range of plants there is great scope for birdwatchers, especially as they seem to be less shy than in other parts of the state. There is an excellent book shop and gifts as well as the expected high quality eating establishments. Such is the diversity on show it is difficult to pick out particular plants though perhaps the Mottlecah (*Eucalyptus macrocarpa*), Pipe Lily (*Johnsonia pubescens*), Pixie Mops (*Petrophile linearis*) and handsome Wedge Pea (*Gompholobium knightianum*) deserve special

mention. Herdsman Lake is a ground water lake located just north-west of Perth and is surrounded by Herdsman Lake Regional Park. The perimeter of lake is dredged to provide permanent open water even in the summer and so there are an abundance of waterbirds attracted to this site.

Day 11

Boyagin, Wave Rock & Hyden

We travel westward to Boyagin Nature Reserve centred around two massive granite outcrops. Surrounded by *Eucalyptus wandoo* (Wandoo), *Eucalyptus accedens* (Powderbark) and *Allocasuarina huegeliana* (Sheoak) woodlands, and some very rich heath, this is a most rewarding area for enthusiastic botanists. At the top of the outcrops we can find *Kunzea pulchella* (Granite Kunzea), *Calothamnus rupestris* (Mouse ears) and *Borya* sp (Pincushions). Under the Sheoak we'll find many orchids, notably *Caladenia dillatata* var *falcata* (Fringed Mantis Orchid). Birds of the area include the lovely Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Red-capped, Western Yellow and Hooded Robins, Yellow-plumed and White-eared Honeyeaters, Bronzewing, Songlark, and Square-tailed Kites. If time permits we will visit the salty Kondinin Lake Reserve, a magnet for waterbirds.

Hyden is known for the nearby Wave Rock Reserve with the spectacular 100m long stretch of 3,000 million year old granite resembling a huge surf wave. The light surrounding woodland is rich in orchids such as Snail, Ant, Blue Sun, Candy, Cowslip, Donkey, Jug, and Spider Orchids. Over two thousand five hundred plant species grow in the Wave Rock area. Some of the finer include *Verticordia acerosa*, more Banksias, more Grevilleas, and an interesting range of *Eucalyptus* such *caesia* subsp *caesia*, *crucis*, and *salmonophloia*,

Day 12

Hopetoun

Raventhorpe is on the route to our overnight accommodation at the little seaside resort of Hopetoun. It is recognized as the gateway to a unique area where the soil and climatic conditions have encouraged a panoply of endemic species, indeed around seventy per cent of the local flora is restricted to this area, and around a hundred of these are considered very rare. We'll find *Eucalyptus* species such as *tetragona*, *nutans* and *megacornuta*, *Calothamnus*, *Beaufortia*, *Templetonia retusa* (Cockies Tongue), *Acacia glaucoptera* (Flat Wattle), *Grevillea eriostachya* (Flame Grevillea), *Sanatulum acuminatum* (Quandon), and *Kunzea* alongside the road.

The roadside flora in this region changes regularly with subtle changes in soil giving rise to markedly different floras. In one area it may be Quandong (*Santalum murrayianum*), or it may be *Eucalyptus tetragona* (Tallerack) and *Acacia glaucoptera* or clay wattle. Beneath Grevilleas abound notably the red and black toothbrush

grevilleas, *Grevillea hookeriana* and *Grevillea coccinea*, and the diminutive but spectacular *Grevilla nudiflora*

Days 13 - 15

Fitzgerald National Park, Qualup Homestead & Point Anne

The route into the Fitzgerald National Park is outstanding with the ocean on one side, perhaps with whales breaching, with pristine sandy coves and beaches, and incredible botanically-rich heathland either side of the winding and undulating track. As we pass hummocks and hills *Pimelea physodes* (Qualup Bell) and the large colourfully-veined leafy bracts of *Hakea victoria* (Royal Hakea) signal an even greater range of flora, making progress slow especially when looking for the numerous *Caladenia* species (Spider Orchids) and *Thelymitra* species (Sun Orchids). Today's drive is also good for West Australian reptiles including Southern Plains Monitors.

While the Qualup Bell and the Royal Hakea are the iconic plants of this region there are so many other treats in store. A wide array of banksias inhabit the slopes including Lemman's Banksia (*Banksia lemmaniana*), Teasle Banksias (*Banksia pulchella*), Woolly Banksias (*Banksia baueri*) and the Creeping Banksias (*Banksia repens*). Red Leschenaultia (*Lechenaultia formosa*) can be viewed as can *Lambertia inermis* (honeysuckle), and the Painted Lady (*Gompholobium scabrum*). Not to be outdone are the Austral Bluebush (*Sollya heterophylla*), and *Alogyne heugelii* (Lilac Hibiscus). For orchid enthusiasts, custard orchids (*Thelymitra villosa*) will enthrall.

The Qualup Homestead, situated within the National Park, has an exceptional botanically-rich area of land fenced off, with many plants carefully labelled. They are rightly proud of their *Pterostylis turfosa* (Tufted Bird Orchid), *Banksia coccinea* (Scarlet Banksia), *Leucopogon apiculatus* (Bearded Heath), *Conostylis variegata*, *Actinodium cunninghamii* (Swamp Daisy), *Banksia repens* (Creeping Banksia), *Dryandra obtusa* (Shining Honeypot), *Isopogon trilobus* (Barrel Coneflower), *Petrophila longifolia* (Long-eared Cone-bush) and *Anigozanthus rufus*.

Point Anne is the place to look out for breaching Humpback Whales as well as Southern Right Whales. Nevertheless the botany will not stop as the settlement is surrounded by interesting heathland and bushes littered with fine species such as *Calocephalus brownii* (Cushion Bush), *Pimelea ferruginea* (Coastal Pimelea), *Banksia speciosa* (Showy Banksia) and *Anthocercis littorea* (Yellow Tailflower). It is also a good area for birding with Crested Bellbird, Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Emu-wren, Western Whipbird and the stunning little Spotted Pardalote.

Days 16 - 19

Stirling National Park, Red Gum Drive and Two Peoples Bay National Park

A highlight of any visit to Western Australia is the Stirling Range. This dramatic

national park has over a thousand species of flowering plant, while the half day walk up onto the summit ridge from Bluff Knoll is one of the most rewarding walks anywhere in the world. The Stirling Range Drive and Red Gum Pass are a special treat, with a remarkable display of *Gastolobium* (Poison Pea) under a canopy of *Eucalyptus wandoo*. Flowers are abundant, eagles soar above, and on the ground are a variety of lizards. Numerous orchids are found in this area. Perhaps the most spectacular of all the coneflowers is the local Stirling Range Coneflower (*Isopogon latifolius*) with its beautiful large mauve heads. Also along the roadside here are the locally endemic Stirling Pea (*Nemcia leakeana*), and mountain bells such as *Darwinia collina*, *Darwinia legostyla* and *Darwinia vestita*. In areas where fire has occurred in recent years the orchids can be spectacular – we'll look for Zebra Orchids, Broad-lipped Spiders, Crab-lipped Spiders, Slender Spiders, and common Dragons.

Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, a coastal headland, is home to Noisy Scrub-bird and Gilbert's Potoroo, both until recently thought to be extinct. Apart from the flora and fauna this is a delightful area to visit, providing the weather is kind. Botanical highlights include *Xanthosia rotundifolia* (Southern Cross), *Isopogon latifolius* (Stirling Range Coneflower), *Darwinia* species (Mountain bell), *Nemcia leakeana* (Bushy Pea), *Nemcia rubra* (Mountain Pea), *Agonis flexuosa* (Peppermint Tree), *Kingia australis* (Black Gin) and *Leucopogon verticulatus* (Tassel Flower).

Day 20 to Perth

It is farewell to the Stirling Range as we make the four hundred kilometre drive back to Perth. We'll have to time to stop en route a few times to sample yet more roadside colour and a last few orchid species!

Days 21 & 22 Return to the UK

The long journey back to the UK!

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