

Western Australia

Australia is a vast, ancient and ecologically diverse continent. Isolated for eons by desert and ocean, the state of Western Australia is home to one of the most diverse floras in the world with over 12,500 plant species which make it a particularly fascinating place for the lover of wildflowers and natural history.



Springtime in Western Australia, with daily temperatures of 16-25°C, is the perfect time to study and enjoy this incredibly rich and spectacular flora along, the unique wildlife, along with the beauty and diversity of its natural history. The national park at Kalbarri includes dramatic canyons, gorges and wildlife. Desert predominates inland, and luxuriant jarrah/karri (*Eucalyptus marginata* and *E. diversicolor*) forest, not to mention excellent vineyards, dot the deep south. To round it all off, the Western Australian coast is magical.

Travel is by comfortable small coach equipped with an excellent nature library of reference books. Accommodation is in comfortable hotels and motor lodges, usually with private facilities.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND THE BRILLIANCE OF ITS WILDFLOWERS

The south-west of Western Australia is a vast botanical garden. The arid interior stands in stark contrast to a magnificent scenically dramatic coast. Both contain a huge variety of endemic spectacular flowering plants. Tall forest, woodlands, shrublands, and heath are home to over 4,000 species - 80% of which grow nowhere else- a truly remarkable flora.



Mid-spring is the time when the flowers are at their best; Banksias, Grevilleas, Hakeas, Wild Peas, Myrtles, Kangaroo Paws and many more all combine to create a colourful botanical extravaganza. Many are alongside the roads, so for the most part, walking is easy on this trip.

The tour, which commences and concludes in Perth, concentrates on discovering and acquiring an insight into the magnificent array of wildflowers in the state, whilst also gaining a deeper appreciation and understanding of the wider natural heritage.

The Perth hinterland is as diverse as it is fascinating. The journey of discovery begins with a short drive inland for walks to observe the flora on the Darling Ranges. Travel is then north from Perth through the Banksia-Eucalypt woodlands, followed by the mallee shrublands and heathlands. Our route takes us to the Pinnacles National Park where we will walk amidst these magnificent forms as the sun sinks low in the sky.

A special day will be spent exploring the Hi Vallee Farm near Badgingarra. This 'farm' is home to a wonderfully diverse range of West Australian native plant communities, and includes a number of endemic and near endemic species.

Further north lies the Kalbarri National Park. A huge variety of wildflowers clothe the plains surrounding the Murchison River gorges, and the coast. Both the sand plains and the coastal cliffs abound in magnificent displays of river gums, gold and orange banksias, grevilleas, kangaroo paws, featherflowers, starflowers, and smokebushes.

Monkey Mia and Shark bay lies a little further north and is home to 10% of the world Dugong population. Surrounded by desert like landscape this region may also yield fascinating lifeforms such as Stromatolites and Thorny Devils.

Turning southwards, the shrublands give way to the renowned everlasting wildflowers south of Geraldton. Inland the climate supports near desert species and at Tallering we shall view the famed wreathflowers and other dryland plants.

Passing through the coastal shrublands, many roads are lined with what appear to be veritable botanic gardens ablaze with colour. Overnight will be spent back in Perth, with time the following day to visit the Kings Park Botanic Gardens. East of Perth lies the Dryandra woodlands, a botanically rich and diverse 'island' surrounded by agricultural land. From our base in the town of Narrogin we will take an evening excursion to view endangered marsupials.





Heading east leads to the Fitzgerald River National Park. A region of remarkable contrasts. Enjoy shrublands including such world renowned species as royal hakea, pincushion hakea, four winged mallee, scarlet banksia, Quaalup bell, and the Barrens regelia. Hopetoun is the base from which to explore East Mount Barren and the eastern fringe of this large national park, whereas the western section will be explored from the Stirling Range Retreat.

The coastal cliffs on the southern coast of this park provide great viewing points through spring of breeding Southern Right Whales.



Another highlight of any visit to Western Australia is the Stirling Range. This dramatic national park has over a thousand species of flowering plant. A hike up onto the summit ridge and Bluffy Knoll brings flowers in abundance while on the rocks a variety of lizards are evident.



Returning to Perth via the south coast takes in the famed Karri-Tingle forests and the Jarrah – Marri forest. Walk amidst the canopy of these magnificent trees on a canopy walkway and gain a better understanding of the intricacies of the forest and fire relationship. A new flora appears as the wetter regions of the state are entered.

Accommodation: comfortable hotels and motels generally with en suite facilities

Local Travel: air conditioned comfortable small coach

Conditions: most areas easily accessible to all, a small number of walks in rougher hill country.

Climate is Mediterranean, with temperatures from 16-30°C expected

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.

Day 3 Kings Park Botanic Garden & Ellis Brook in the Darling Ranges

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.

During the afternoon walk on the granite outcrops at Ellis Brook. Here the lower valley slopes have some of the highest concentrations of wildflower species in the Perth region.

Day 4

Lesueur National Park

Travel north from Perth to the Lesueur national park north of Cervantes. Explore the roadside flora here before continuing north to Dongara. 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*.

Day 5

Tallering and Wreathflowers

We'll head towards Tallering 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 *Verticordia nobilis* amongst *Drumsticks* (*Dasypogon bromelifolium*) and various *Hakeas* including the Shell-leaved *Hakea*, all combining to create a colourful botanical extravaganza.

Days 6 & 7

Kalbarri National Park & The Murchison River Gorges

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.

The Zuydorf Cliffs region will enthral this morning and they are home to a very different flora. There is time to walk to the scenic lookouts atop the cliffs and also walk along the cliff top path. 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*.

Later we continue south through Geraldton along the Brand Highway. Excellent opportunities to explore banksia fields in the Arrowsmith region before arriving at Cervantes.

Days 8 & 9

Pinnacles National Park & Hi Vallee Farm

The area around Eneabba and the wonderful Hi Vallee Farm 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*.

Just south of Cervantes are two spectacular natural features. First up is Lake Thetis with the amazing ancient stromatolyte life forms, with origins 3.6M years ago. From there we will travel south to the Nambung National Park, to walk amidst the amazing pinnacles formations.

Early afternoon we continue south to Perth.

Day 10

Perth

A free day in Perth with optional visits to Kings Park, Rocksnest Island, historic Fremantle or the Swam River

Day 11

Dryandra Woodlands

Depart Perth for the south-west and Narrogin. Dryandra is a very special place and one of the few remaining areas of pristine south-western woodland in the state. We shall explore the Dryandra woodlands in more detail. A huge array of Leguminous and Proteaceous shrubs will astound while larger marsupials such as the Black Gloved Wallaby, Tammar Wallaby, Western Brush Tailed Possum and possibly even a Numbat may be encountered. Short beaked Echidnas are regularly also seen foraging during the day.

Woodlands comprise *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. On 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.

Days 12 & 13

Via Hyden & Wave Rock to Hopetoun

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*.

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*

Day 14

Fitzgerald National Park

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.

Days 15 & 16

Stirling National Park, Qualup Homestead and Point Anne

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.

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*.

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.

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.

Day 17

Jarrah-Karri Forests of Torndirrup National Park

Returning west via the south coast takes in the southern jarrah-karri forests. Torndirrup National Park has spectacular granite coastline and a range of coastal shrublands. We shall pay a short visit to this scenic hotspot before continuing west into the renowned Jarrah and Karri forests. Walk amidst the canopy of these magnificent trees on a canopy walkway and gain a better understanding of the intricacies of the forest and fire relationship. 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).

A new flora introduces itself as the wetter regions of the state around Pemberton are entered

Day 18

d'Entrecasteaux National Park

Near Pemberton lie the fascinating and vast dune systems within d'Entrecasteaux National Park. Morning walk around a dune lake then on to the dunes before returning to Pemberton. Further short walks in the southern Karri forests this afternoon

Day 19

Pemberton, and to Perth and evening departure

It is farewell the South Coast as we complete the drive back to Perth. We'll have to time to stop en route a few times to sample yet more roadside colour and maybe last few orchid species! Evening flights out of Perth.

Day 20

Arrive Europe/UK

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