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Torndirrup and West Cape Howe national parks

Coastal safety

Nearly every year a visitor falls or is washed off rocks along this coastline—most drown in the bitterly cold water.

The Southern Ocean is very unpredictable.

- Huge waves and extreme swells can suddenly occur even on calm days.
- Waves can sweep over rocky headlands.
- Rocks are extremely slippery when wet.
- Cliff edges can collapse without warning.
- Powerful rips and undertows can occur.
- Weather conditions can change quickly.
- Fishing from rocks is extremely dangerous.

Your safety is our concern, but your responsibility.

- Keep aware of constant changes in the ocean.
- Be alert for sudden powerful gusts of wind.
- Stand back from rocky headlands and cliff edges.
- Be prepared for changes in weather.
- Stay well clear of sea level.
- Enter the water at your own risk.

Please heed the warning signs that display this symbol.



FIGHTING DIEBACK

Phytophthora dieback is a major problem in the South Coast Region. More than 2,300 plant species in south-western Australia are susceptible to dieback.

Caused by a water-borne pathogen that dwells in the soil, *Phytophthora* kills plants by rotting their roots. Machinery, humans and animals spread the pathogen by moving infested soil to healthy areas. Once present in the landscape, dieback can move in soil and water or by root-to-root contact between plants.

Dieback threatens biodiversity by not only killing plants but also by destroying wildlife habitat, placing the health and survival of whole ecosystems at risk.

You can help to prevent the further spread of dieback.

- Stay on designated tracks and trails.
- Avoid walking in wet soil conditions.
- Do not enter restricted areas.
- Clean soil from footwear at the start and finish of any bushwalk. A small spray bottle of 100 per cent methylated spirits is ideal for cleaning footwear.
- Clean vehicle tyres before entering national parks.

For more information

DEC officers are always willing to help. Don't hesitate to contact them.

Torndirrup and West Cape Howe national parks

Frenchman Bay Road
Albany WA 6330
Tel (08) 9844 4090

DEC South Coast Region

120 Albany Highway
Albany WA 6330
Tel (08) 9842 4500

DEC State Operational Headquarters

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Kensington WA 6151
Tel (08) 9334 0333



Information and recreational guide



Department of Environment and Conservation



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TORNDIRRUP NATIONAL PARK

Three connected peninsulas, Torndirrup, Vancouver and Flinders, embrace and protect Albany's Princess Royal Harbour.

Torndirrup National Park occupies the rugged southern coastline of Torndirrup and Flinders peninsulas where limestone cliffs, granite headlands and white sandy beaches bear the full force of the powerful Southern Ocean. Located 10 kilometres south of Albany, this 3,906-hectare national park is one of the most visited in Western Australia. All park roads are suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles.

The park's wind-pruned coastal heathlands put on a colourful display of wildflowers in spring. Thickets of banksia heath lie inland from the granite headlands, providing a year-round banquet for the park's smallest marsupial, the honey possum.

A mixed forest of medium height karri and swamp yate lies south of the knobbly finger of Vancouver Peninsula. Peppermint woodlands can be found throughout the park. The bush abounds with wildlife, although many species are nocturnal, including the dunnart, mardo and quenda.

The park provides habitat for many reptile species. It is not unusual to find a carpet snake stretched across a road in the sun. However, poisonous snakes such as tiger snakes and dugites are also frequently seen. If a snake blocks your road or pathway, it is best to turn around and come back later.

Seabirds and numerous birds of prey can be seen in the sky above the park. Look for a kestrel, black-shouldered kite, whistling kite or square-tailed kite hovering nearly motionless above the scrub. Keen-sighted bushwalkers will see many swift-moving honeyeaters, wrens, red-eared firetails and other birds that live in the heath.

Cable Beach and Peak Head.



West Cape Howe.

WEST CAPE HOWE NATIONAL PARK

Jutting boldly into the Southern Ocean, West Cape Howe is the most southern promontory of Western Australia.

The park's exceptionally scenic landscape includes dramatic cliffs of granite and black dolerite, isolated golden beaches, rock islands, rugged limestone outcrops and complex patterns of vegetation including patches of karri forest, peppermint thickets and windswept heathlands.

Nearly 500 species of plants are found in the park including banksias, trigger plants and more than 50 species of orchids. Swampy areas form a habitat for the carnivorous Albany pitcher plant and many bird species.

Few facilities are provided in this wild area that lies about 30 kilometres west of Albany, yet it attracts campers, bushwalkers, fishermen plus fans of adventure activities. Shelley Beach lookout is a prime launching site for hang-gliers.

Two-wheel drive vehicles can reach Shelley Beach and the nearby lookout, but other sites within the park require four-wheel drive. Park features can also be reached by bushwalking along the sandy four-wheel-drive tracks.

Dolphins, seals and sealions may be spotted from the coastal cliffs of either park. Humpback and southern right whales travel along the coastline during winter and early spring.

Humpback whale.



Natural Bridge.

Changing coastline

The coastlines of Torndirrup and West Cape Howe national parks display spectacular geological features. This area of the Australian coastline was connected to Antarctica millions of years ago when both continents formed part of the super-continent Gondwana.

Ocean-carved features, such as The Gap and Natural Bridge found in Torndirrup National Park, and the prominent headlands in both parks, are the remains of an ancient mountain range.


The darkly dramatic cape known as West Cape Howe is mostly formed of dolerite, a mineral-rich rock that forced its way upwards as molten rock into the older granite of the mountain range. Outcrops of this rock occur for nearly 35 kilometres inland from the cliffs.

The mountain range slowly eroded and its granite core became exposed and fractured, creating a pattern of vertical and horizontal cracks called joints. Some joints gradually joined together, carving out granite blocks, many of which have been swept away by the powerful Southern Ocean.


In Torndirrup National Park, the seawater that is expelled through the Blowholes enters through a vertical joint in the underlying granite. The Natural Bridge remains in place despite the loss of lower granite blocks to the pounding ocean waves. The Gap exists where a vertical stack of blocks was removed.

The coastal rocks will continue to fracture. Eventually, the Natural Bridge will fall. More granite blocks will be swept away, creating and destroying features like The Gap, constantly reshaping an ever-changing coastline.


TORNDIRRUPT NATIONAL PARK

 **Blowholes** 50 minutes
1.6 kilometres return - including many steps


An impressive sight when there is a high ocean swell, the Blowholes may or may not be blowing. This location offers views of Peak Head and Eclipse Island. It is extremely hazardous to venture down slope from the Blowholes.

 **Stony Hill Heritage Trail** 20 minutes
450 metre circuit - some uneven surfaces

This easy circuit trail leads to one of the highest points in the park from which many features of the southern coastline and interior can be viewed.

















 **Peak Head** 2 hours 4.3 kilometres return

The peninsula's southernmost peak can be reached via a rugged path that is steep in sections. Some rock scrambling is required to reach the summit. Be aware that rock climbers may be on the cliffs below.

 **Bald Head** 6 to 8 hours 12.5 kilometres return - not recommended in gusty or strong winds

A challenging walk, with outstanding views, that leads over Isthmus Hill to Flinders Peninsula and on to Limestone Head and Bald Head. Terrain is steep and difficult in sections. Do not attempt to return via the beaches due to unseen hazards.



| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---|-----------------|---|------------------------|---|--------------|---|---------------|
|  | National park |  | 4WD track |  | Camping |  | Gas barbecue |  | Rock climbing |
|  | Sealed road |  | Bibbulmun Track |  | Fishing |  | Hang gliding |  | Scenic vista |
|  | Unsealed road |  | Bushwalk trail |  | Four wheel drive track |  | Information |  | Surfing |
| | | | |  | Toilet | | | | |




WEST CAPE HOWE NATIONAL PARK

Four-wheel-drive vehicle tracks – Bushwalkers are welcome to use four-wheel-drive tracks. Be cautious of four-wheel-drive vehicles using tracks. Tracks are very sandy and may cross hills. The rubber matting used to prevent eroding of some tracks is surprisingly slippery when scattered with sand.



Tarbotton Track leading to Shelley Beach.

 **Tarbotton Track** 30 minutes
600 metres return – part boardwalk, part sandy path

The boardwalk section of this easy walk begins at the car park for Shelley Beach Lookout. Where the boardwalk ends, a sandy path continues along a limestone ridge, where it meets the Bibbulmun Track and offers views down a rocky valley to Shelley Beach and the ocean.

Protecting habitat and wildlife

No pets are permitted in national parks, including within cars, parking areas and on beaches. Poison baits, used in the parks to kill foxes, will kill dogs.

Leave rocks and plants undisturbed. Please take your rubbish out with you. Bins are not provided.

Things to do

Visitors of all fitness levels can enjoy Torndirrup National Park's dramatic coastal scenery. Features including The Gap, Natural Bridge, Salmon Holes, Jimmy Newells Harbour and Sharp Point can be seen from viewing platforms located short distances from car parking areas.

In contrast, much of the rugged terrain of West Cape Howe National Park can be accessed only by bushwalking or four-wheel-drive vehicle.

Bushwalking

If you intend to walk in remote areas, please inform a responsible person of your route and expected time of return. Take adequate water as no drinking water is available in the parks. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat. Be prepared for prickly vegetation and sudden changes in weather.

Sloping and uneven surfaces exist throughout the parks. Granite surfaces can be rough and slippery. Take extra care near rock edges as they can crumble without warning.

Footwear cleaning stations are located in areas where there is a high risk of spreading the plant pathogen *Phytophthora dieback*. Please thoroughly clean your footwear at each of these stations.



Symbol signs denote the difficulty of bushwalks.



The Gap viewing platform.

Bibbulmun Track

The southern terminus of this 965-kilometre world-class walking track is located in Albany. The track traverses sections of Torndirrup and West Cape Howe national parks, offering scenic vistas of the southern coastline. For more information, visit a Department of Environment and Conservation office, a local tourism visitor centre or www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au.



Shelley Beach.

Camping

Camping is not permitted at Torndirrup National Park. Limited camping sites are located at Shelley Beach in West Cape Howe National Park. Campfires and cooking fires are not allowed.

Diving

Dunsky beach, at West Cape Howe National Park, is a popular site for scuba diving and snorkelling. Strong rip tides sometimes occur in this area. Spear guns and gidgees are not permitted.

Fishing

Fishing is popular at both Torndirrup and West Cape Howe national parks. Normal fishing regulations apply. Species include Australian salmon, shark, groper, mulloway, whiting and herring.

Keep safety in mind when choosing a fishing site. Fishing from rocks is extremely dangerous. Safety vests are available for hire or loan from local sporting goods suppliers.

Rock-climbing

Sites for properly equipped, experienced climbers are located in both parks.

Hang-gliding and paragliding

A popular launch site is located at Shelley Beach in West Cape Howe National Park.

Two-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive vehicles

All vehicles driven in national parks must be licensed for the road. All roads in Torndirrup National Park are suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicles.

In West Cape Howe National Park, only Shelley Beach Road is suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicles. All other roads and tracks require high-clearance four-wheel drive.

Shepherds Lagoon Road has very rough conditions that require expert driving skills and high-clearance vehicles. Access to Bornholm Beach is extremely difficult. Towing of bogged vehicles is not easily organised and is very expensive.

Follow four-wheel drive vehicle guidelines and drive to suit conditions. Watch for bushwalkers using four-wheel-drive tracks.