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Nambung National Park



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



**PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**

RECYCLE Please return unwanted brochures to distribution points

Caring for the park

Stay cool. Don't light fires. Visitors may use their own gas appliances anywhere in the park. There are free gas barbecues at Hangover Bay and Kangaroo Point.

Be clean. Put your litter in bins or take it with you. Bins can be found on the entry road into Cervantes.

Pets are not allowed in Nambung National Park. Free basic dog kennels for park visitors are located at the Cervantes Ranger Station, which is open 7 days per week between 8am and 5pm. Call (08) 9688 6000 for more information.

Visitor fees help protect the park and improve its facilities. Day passes can be purchased at the gate house into the Pinnacles Desert Discovery. Five-day, two-week and four-week and annual passes are available at Parks and Wildlife Service offices, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery and the Turquoise Coast Visitor Centre in Jurien Bay.

Respect the pinnacle formations. Do not climb, sit or stand on them. Stay clear of them as pinnacles can be top heavy, unstable and may fall over at any time – injuries have occurred.

Stay on the road. Follow signs in the park and stay on the roads marked in this brochure. Other tracks in the park are for management purposes only and cut across areas of *Phytophthora* dieback. If you drive through these areas, you may spread infection.



Above Western grey kangaroo. Above Lake Thetis boardwalk.

More information

National park rangers and Pinnacles Desert Discovery staff are always glad to help make your visit more enjoyable and informative. Do not hesitate to contact them if you require any information or assistance.

Pinnacles Desert Discovery

Pinnacles Drive
PO Box 62
Cervantes WA 6511
Ph: (08) 9652 7913
Email: pinnacles@dbca.wa.gov.au

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Parks and Wildlife Service Ranger Station

Lot 809 Bradley Loop
PO Box 62
Cervantes WA 6511
Ph: (08) 9688 6000

Parks and Wildlife Service Moora District Office

67 Bashford St
PO Box 638
Jurien Bay WA 6516
Ph: (08) 9688 6000

Visit dbca.wa.gov.au

Photos – DBCA, Peter Nicholas/DBCA, Sally Treasure/DBCA, Tourism WA



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Information current at July 2020.
Available in alternative formats on request.

Welcome

Nambung National Park is situated on the Swan Coastal Plain approximately 200km north of Perth. The park contains one of Australia's most fascinating landscapes, the Pinnacles Desert.

Out of the shifting yellow sands rise thousands of huge limestone pillars standing in stark contrast to the surrounding low heathlands typical of this coast.

The pinnacles often feature in tourist guides to the region, but they are only one part of the 19,268-hectare national park. Beautiful beaches, coastal dune systems and trees and flowering plants typical of the northern coastal plain are all part of this park.

Summer days between December and March are usually hot and dry, with an afternoon sea breeze. During this time the fire danger is often extreme. Wildlife rests during the heat of the day and only appears in the cooler hours of early morning and evening.

Most of the annual 540mm of rain falls between May and September. From September onwards the weather warms up, but the days are still mild and wildflowers throughout the area start their spring bloom. This is the best time of year to discover the pinnacles and explore the park.

Below Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*). Below King skink (*Egernia kingii*).



Coastal landscapes

Three old systems of sand dunes run parallel to the WA coast from Cervantes to Busselton. These dunes, formed from wind-blown beach sand rich in lime, mark ancient shorelines on the Swan Coastal Plain.

The further the dune systems are from the sea the older and more gently undulating they are. The shape and character of the sands determine the plants that grow on them.

The Quindalup system of white, lime-rich sands is found immediately inland from the fore dunes and is constantly being added to by sand from the fore dunes and the beach. Acacia thickets are common in the small valleys between the dunes and on the leeward slopes.

Further inland the older Spearwood dunes have yellow and brownish quartz sands, often overlying limestone. The pinnacles are the eroded remnants of what was once a thick bed of limestone beneath these sands.

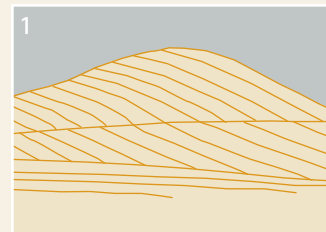
Tuart woodlands occur in the valleys, but it is the low exposed heaths of acacia and myrtles extending inland to the Pinnacles Desert that dominate the landscape. Casuarinas and banksias are also seen, the brilliant orange-flowered *Banksia prionotes* is common.

The silica-rich sands of Bassendean system are found on the park's east where the vegetation is low, open banksia woodland.

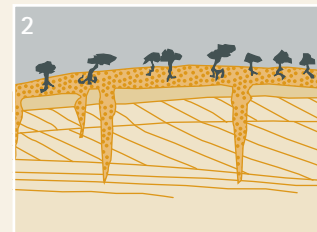
Most animals in the park are nocturnal, but during the day you may see emus or western grey kangaroos. Reptiles of many sorts are common, particularly bobtail skinks and snakes. More than 90 species of birds have been recorded in the park, including singing honeyeaters and the southern emu wren.



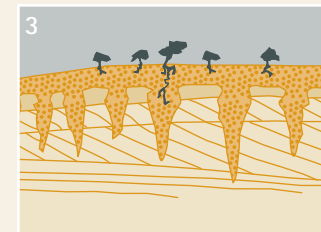
The formation of the Pinnacles



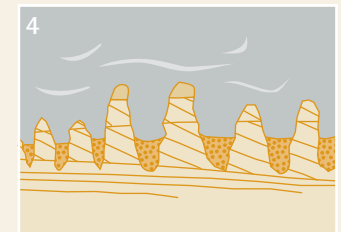
Lime leached from the sand by rain cements the lower levels of the dune into a soft limestone.



Vegetation forms an acidic layer of soil and humus. A hard cap of calcrete develops above the softer limestone.



Cracks in the calcrete are exploited by plant roots. The softer limestone continues to dissolve. Quartz sand fills the channels that form.



Vegetation dies and winds blow away the sand covering the eroded limestone. The pinnacles appear.



The Pinnacles

The park's most popular attraction is the Pinnacles Desert. Thousands of limestone pillars rise up to 4m out of the stark landscape of yellow sand. Some are jagged, sharp-edged columns, others resemble tombstones. What are the pinnacles? What natural processes created these odd and spectacular structures?

The limestone came from sea shells that were broken down into lime-rich sands and were carried inland by wind to form high, mobile dunes.

Winter rain leached the lime from these sands, cementing grains of sand in the lower levels of the dunes. Vegetation grew and stabilised the dunes. At the same time, an acidic layer of soil and humus developed over the remaining quartz sand.

This acidic soil accelerated the leaching process, and a hard layer of calcrete formed over the softer limestone below. Today this calcrete can be seen as a distinct cap on many pinnacles and has helped protect the softer limestone below.

There are a few theories regarding how the pinnacles were formed. This is the most accepted theory:

Cracks formed in the calcrete layer and were exploited by plant roots. Water spread down these channels leaching away the softer limestone beneath. The channels gradually filled with quartz sand. This subsurface erosion continued until only the most resilient columns remained. The pinnacles as we see them today were exposed and shaped by prevailing winds blowing away the overlying quartz sand.

Planning your visit

Nambung National Park is within easy driving distance of Cervantes and Jurien Bay. Both towns have accommodation, shops, fuel, restaurants, a post office and entertainment. Jurien Bay also has a medical centre, police station and banking services.

Access roads to recreation sites in the national park, sealed and unsealed, are suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles, trailers, caravans and buses. However, trailers are not permitted on the Pinnacles Desert loop and can be parked in the car park.

The Pinnacles Desert Discovery complex has toilets, a shade shelter, an interpretive centre and shop. The Emu Walk Trail starts and finishes at the facility with the first 200m being wheelchair accessible, leading to the Pinnacles View Lookout.

There is no camping in Nambung National Park. Local tours of the area can be arranged through the Pinnacles Visitor Centre in Cervantes on (08) 9652 7700 or the Turquoise Coast Visitor Centre in Jurien Bay on (08) 9652 2425.

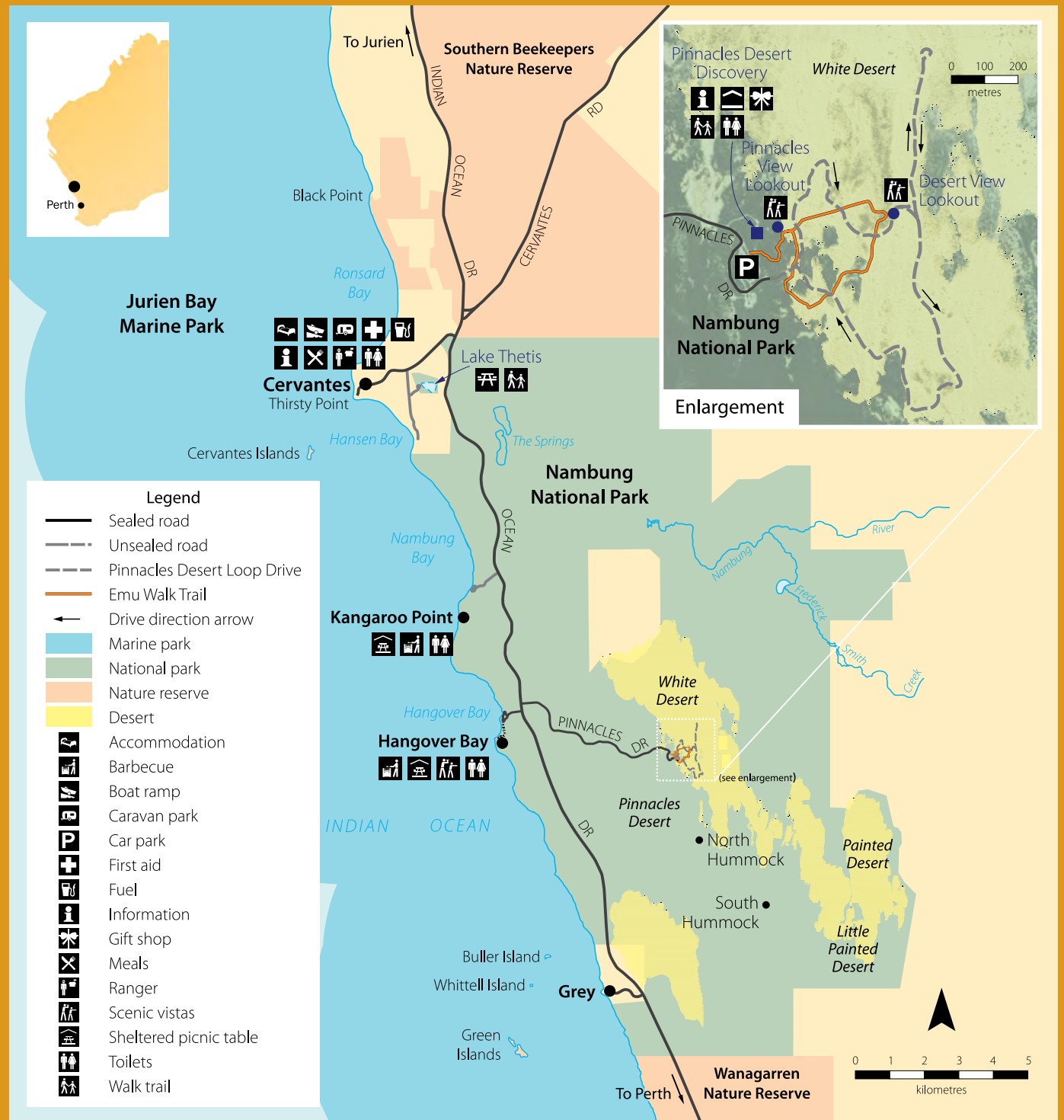


Pinnacles Desert Loop Drive.

Things to do

Pinnacles Desert Loop Drive and Lookout

A 4km one-way loop track winds through the Pinnacles Desert and the many pull-over bays give visitors the opportunity to get out and explore the desert on foot and to visit the Desert View Lookout at the northern end. The loop drive is unsealed and vehicles longer than 7m and caravans and trailers are not permitted on the track. These should be parked in the long vehicles bays provided in the car park.



Pinnacles Desert Discovery

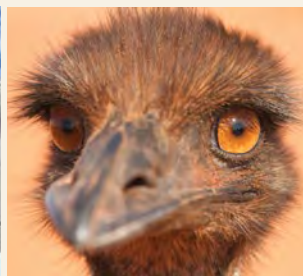
Adding a different dimension to the pinnacles experience, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre is a stepping-stone into the park. There is interpretive material that encourages you to use all your senses to identify the hidden wonders and signs of life in the desert.

Designed by John Nichols, who also designed the award-winning Karijini Visitor Centre, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery fits into the landscape and has a strong relationship with the site.

Construction materials are reflective of the area: free standing limestone walls were inspired by the pinnacles, the vertical timber beams are tuart, mimicking the northern woodland being engulfed by the shifting sand. Lower portions of these tuart beams were deliberately set on fire to reveal the significance of fire in the forming of this landscape. Engraved into the burnt wood are Nyoongar words provided by the local Yued people, echoing the strong links they have to their country and the use they made of fire to manage and live in harmony with it.

Make sure you explore the award-winning interpretive area showcasing the flora and fauna in the area, along with the mysteries of the Pinnacles Desert. The Pinnacles Desert Discovery shop also provides visitors with a wide choice of quality giftware and refreshments to enjoy after exploring the pinnacles.

Below Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre. **Below right** Emu.



Stromatolites, Lake Thetis.



Lake Thetis.

Hangover Bay

Hangover Bay is located near the turn-off to the Pinnacles Desert. With its wide sweep of sandy beach, the bay offers good snorkelling, swimming and surfing in the Jurien Bay Marine Park. There are free sheltered barbecues, a toilet and wheelchair-friendly path across the fore dunes with good views of the beach and ocean.

Hangover Bay got its name from a local tradition of frequenting the sheltered bay on New Year's Day, for a relaxing day at the beach after New Year's Eve celebrations. Beach shacks also existed on the bay in the 1970s and 1980s, commonly owned by farmer's inland that would come to Hangover Bay for summer holidays. Remnants of the shacks can be found among the fore dunes.

Kangaroo Point

Kangaroo Point is located approximately 10km from Cervantes and provides an idyllic beach popular for fishing and boating. To the north-west you can see Cervantes at Thirsty Point. Islands off Cervantes can be seen from the beach. Picnic, barbecue and basic toilet facilities are provided. Kangaroo Point is well named as western grey kangaroos are often seen feeding in the surrounding vegetation.

Below Hangover Bay.



Lake Thetis

Lake Thetis is a small inland saline lake 1.25km from the Indian Ocean and 1.7km south-east of Cervantes. It is estimated that the lake became isolated from the sea about 4,800 years ago when sea levels dropped and coastal dunes formed around the lake.

The lake is one of only a few places in the world with living marine stromatolites, or 'living fossils'. The microbes that build stromatolites are a species of cyanobacteria and are similar to those found in 3,500 million-year-old rocks. The lake's stromatolites that look like rocky lumps have been dated to about 3,370 years old. Stromatolite communities grow as the thin layer of bacteria on their surface deposit calcium, cementing sediment into bulbous structures.

Lake Thetis is isolated from major surface drainage and is fed by groundwater flow. The only loss of water comes from evaporation. It is a saline lake but there is no evidence to suggest the lake has a connection to the sea. The water level fluctuates around average sea level but doesn't appear to reflect tidal variations. The lake levels follow trends more closely related to the rainfall for the area.

The lake water is alkaline and nutrient-poor but provides an ideal environment for bottom-dwelling microbial communities. The lake contains some small fish, amphipods and a few crustacean species adapted to living in highly saline environments.

The circumference of the lake is 1.5km and provides an interesting and enjoyable walk. Please stay on the path and boardwalk provided.

Fishing

Fishing is popular at Hangover Bay and Kangaroo Point. Contact the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development for the latest fishing rules and regulations. Be aware there are sanctuary zones within the Jurien Bay Marine Park, which is adjacent to Nambung. These are signposted where they are located. A brochure is available regarding the marine park from Parks and Wildlife Service offices and other visitor outlets. Please note that the offshore islands are all nature reserves, some of which have limited access restrictions, or are prohibited to access due to Australian sea lion breeding areas.