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Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

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Caring for the park and for your safety

For your safety

- This area is remote and has some inherent dangers including:
  - variable weather conditions - hot, dry and windy in summer and cool and inclement weather in winter
  - dangerous coastline with large surf, 200-metre-high cliffs, blowholes and dangerous marine animals, including sharks.
- Notify a reliable person of your trip plans so that you can be traced in an emergency.
- Be prepared for the heat. Take at least 10 litres of water for each person per day.
- Exercise extreme caution near cliff edges especially when fishing. Supervise children at all times.
- Always swim, dive or snorkel with at least one other person and be aware of boats in your vicinity.

Caring for the national park

- No firearms, weapons and fireworks are allowed in the national park.
- Bushfires are potentially devastating to people and wildlife. No wood fires or firewood collection is allowed. Portable cookers are preferred.
- To assist with waste management please take out what you bring in. Do not leave any rubbish, food scraps or any other items on the island and do not bury any rubbish. Stow rubbish securely to prevent it from being blown away.
- Bury toilet waste in a hole at least 50 centimetres deep at least 100 metres away from camp sites and other public areas.
- All wildlife is protected. Leave plants, animals, rocks, shells and soil as you find them. Do not feed animals.
- To prevent the spread of weeds do not bring plants and plant material (other than food) on to the island.
- Stay clear of bird nesting areas. If birds are disturbed and leave their nests their eggs may be taken by predators.
- Pets are prohibited (except guide dogs) to protect native wildlife.
- Heritage sites such as shipwrecks and Aboriginal sites are protected. Do not disturb or damage these sites in any way and do not remove artefacts.

Four-wheel-driving code

- Only high clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles are permitted (no quad bikes and trail bikes).
- Ensure your vehicle is in sound condition and has all of the recommended safety equipment - visit www.sharkbay.org/equipmentlist.aspx for the full checklist.
- Normal road traffic rules apply. Seat belts must be worn and riding in the back of utilities is prohibited. Drive at a safe speed suitable to the conditions.
- Reduce your tyre pressure to at least 20psi (trailers included) to negotiate the soft sand tracks. The pressure will vary according to vehicle type and load as well as type of tyre and rim.
- Drive only on existing vehicle tracks and keep four-wheel drive engaged to minimise damage.

When fishing

- Always abide by the latest Department of Fisheries bag, size and seasonal limits and fish for the future.
- Shark Bay Marine Park surrounds much of Dirk Hartog Island. Marine zone boundaries are indicated on the map overleaf. No fishing is allowed in the sanctuary zones at Sandy and Surf Points.

More information

Department of Environment and Conservation
– for payment of camping fees
Shark Bay District Office
Knight Terrace
Denham WA 6537
Phone (08) 9948 1208 Fax (08) 9948 1024
Email: sharkbayenquiries@dec.wa.gov.au
www.dec.wa.gov.au
www.sharkbay.org.au

Steep Point Ranger
Phone (08) 9948 3993 Fax (08) 9948 3993
www.sharkbay.org/steeppoint.aspx
Email: ranger@steeppoint.com.au

Dirk Hartog Island Lodge
– for accommodation, tours and barge bookings
PO Box 62
Denham WA 6537
Phone (08) 9948 1211 Fax (08) 99481 660
Email: info@dirkhartogisland.com
www.dirkhartogisland.com

Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery and Visitor Information Centre
Knight Terrace, Denham
Phone (08) 9948 1590

Department of Fisheries
Denham District Office
Knight Terrace
Denham WA 6537
Phone (08) 9948 1210
Fax (08) 9948 1154
www.fish.wa.gov.au

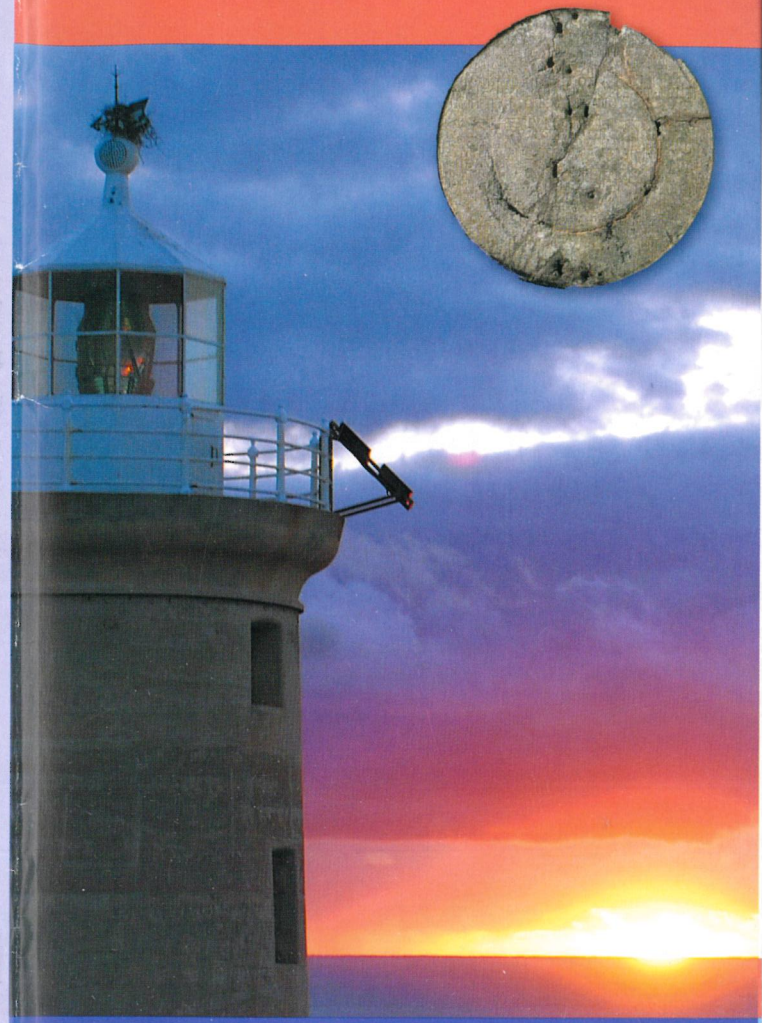
Bureau of Meteorology
www.bom.gov.au/weather/wa/forecasts
Phone 1900 926 150

Shark Bay Volunteer Marine Rescue
Calling VMR 675
Ch 88 VHF 16

Photos - Carolyn Thomson-Dans/DEC; Patrick Baker/WA Maritime Museum; Eva Boogaard/DEC; Paul McCluskey/DEC; Babs and Bert Wells/DEC

Department of Environment and Conservation
Healthy Parks Healthy People
Information current at September 2011
2010205-0911-5000

Dirk Hartog Island National Park



Information guide

Department of Environment and Conservation

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Above Coastal caper (*Capparis spinosa*).

Above Wooden posts, Cape Inscription.

Dirk Hartog Island, covering 63,000 hectares, is Western Australia's largest island. Forming a protective barrier to the shallow waters of Shark Bay, the island is 76 kilometres long and between three and 11 kilometres wide.

As the site of the first European landing in WA, Dirk Hartog Island holds a pre-eminent place in Australian history. It is named after the Dutch sea captain who landed at Cape Inscription in 1616 (152 years before the voyage of Captain Cook) aboard the *Eendracht*, leaving an inscribed pewter plate nailed to a post.

The island was used for pastoral purposes from the 1860s to the early 2000s. The purchase of the pastoral lease and creation of Dirk Hartog Island National Park by the state government in November 2009 marked the beginning of a new era and a change in focus towards conservation and recreation.

The island is particularly popular with fishing enthusiasts but also provides superb diving and snorkelling opportunities. Visitors can access the island by vehicular barge from Steep Point or by boat from Denham and Steep Point. Limited numbers of vehicles are allowed on the island at any one time to help protect the fragile landscape.

The island is also an interesting place to explore on foot. A large variety of landscapes from sweeping sand dunes to magnificent 200-metre-high cliffs await those with a penchant for exploration. Marine animals such as whales, sharks, manta rays and turtles can be seen from higher vantage points.

Dirk Hartog Island lies within a scientifically important World Heritage area. Most of the sheep and a large proportion of the feral goats have been removed from the island to allow native vegetation to regenerate. This is part of a large project aimed at restoring the island's natural ecosystems, including re-establishing locally extinct mammals.

Below Quoin Bluff South.
Bottom Knob-tailed gekko (*Nephrurus levis*).
Bottom right Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).

A conservation ark

Dirk Hartog Island has enormous conservation significance.

It is home to the largest loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) breeding colony in Australia, with as many as 3,000 turtles thought to nest at the island's north-eastern corner each year. The rookery is globally significant, and is one of the top five most important loggerhead breeding areas in the world. The loggerhead turtle is considered to be the most endangered turtle that nests in the Australian region. Dirk Hartog Island is also home to 48 terrestrial reptile species, including the threatened western spiny-tailed skink (*Egernia stokesii badia*) and the Shark Bay ctenotus (*Ctenotus youngsoni*), which is confined to Dirk Hartog Island and nearby Edel Land.

The island is also a special and important place for birds. Three threatened birds occur on the island: the Dirk Hartog Island black-and-white fairy-wren (*Malurus leucopterus leucopterus*), the Dirk Hartog Island southern emu-wren (*Stipiturus malachurus hartogi*) and the Dirk Hartog Island rufous fieldwren (*Calamanthus campestris hartogi*). Dirk Hartog Island has the largest breeding colony of pied cormorants in WA, with up to 2,500 breeding pairs at Quoin Bluff South.

Navigator William Dampier was the first person to collect Australian plants in 1699 and his first specimens came from Dirk Hartog Island. With more than 250 native plant species, the island has one of the most diverse island floras in the south-west. South-west and arid zone species grow together on Dirk Hartog Island, including many colourful wildflowers and a large number of species growing at the ends of their range.

Many of the 15 native mammal species originally found on the island are now locally extinct, but an opportunity exists to reintroduce several of these species to the national park after the Department of Environment and Conservation begins to restore the island's vegetation and control feral animals. Mammals likely to be reintroduced—most of them listed as threatened—include the chuditch, dibbler, long-tailed dunnart, western barred bandicoot, woylie and boodie.

History

Dirk Hartog Island is thought to have become isolated from the mainland in relatively recent times. Shell middens and stone artefacts dated at between 6,000 and 3,500 years show that Aboriginal people lived on the island at times of lower sea levels.

Having sailed too far east during a voyage to the lucrative Spice Islands (Indonesia), Captain Dirk Hartog of the Dutch East India Company landed on Dirk Hartog Island on 25 October 1616, leaving an inscribed pewter plate nailed to a post. Eighty-one years later, his countryman Willem de Vlamingh also visited the island and replaced Hartog's plate with one of his own. The original was returned to Holland. Replicas of both historic plates can be seen in the Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery Centre in Denham.

English explorer William Dampier spent from 16 to 21 August 1699 sailing around Shark Bay (which he named) aboard the *Roebuck*. He landed on Dirk Hartog Island, described the vegetation and made the first collections of Australian plants. Louis Saint Aloüarn in the *Gros Ventre* became the first French navigator to sight the Australian continent. He landed at Turtle Bay on Dirk Hartog Island on 30 March 1772 and took possession of the country in the name of French King Louis XV. To support his claim, he buried a bottle containing a parchment of annexation and two coins, each enclosed in a lead seal. Saint Aloüarn died prior to his return to France. Two coins and one bottle were rediscovered on the island in 1998, although, as could be expected after such a long time, there was no trace of the parchment.

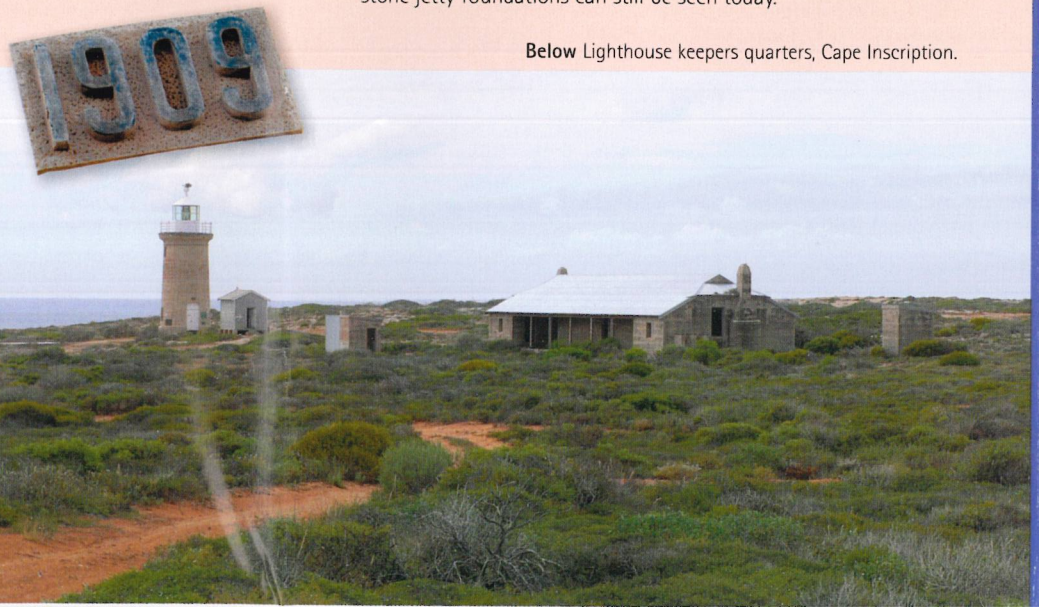
Below William Dampier.

In July 1801, crew from the French vessel *Naturaliste* arrived in Shark Bay and found Vlamingh's plate. Captain Hamelin added an inscribed plate of his own. One of Hamelin's junior officers Louis de Freycinet disagreed with the decision to leave the plate on the island. He returned to Shark Bay in command of the *Uranie* in 1818 and took Vlamingh's plate with him back to France. It was returned to Western Australia on 28 May 1947, a gift from the French government, and the original can now be seen in the Western Australian Museum 'Shipwreck Galleries' in Fremantle.

In the nineteenth century Dirk Hartog Island was used as a base for whaling, guano collecting, pastoralism and pearling. The French whaler *Perseverant* was wrecked at the northern end of the island on 16 March 1841 after being caught in a storm, possibly a tropical cyclone, while anchored inside Levillain Shoal at the northern end of Dirk Hartog Island. The vessel was a complete wreck, but no lives were lost and much equipment salvaged, including the whaleboats and food and water. Over the next 10 weeks, however, five men died of scurvy. Finally, on 24 May the remaining crew of 20 set sail on the long voyage to Java in four whaleboats. Two of the boats containing nine survivors eventually reached Batavia.

Accumulated guano (bird droppings) on many of the smaller islands in Shark Bay was an extremely valuable fertiliser in the 1800s. This led to the Colonial Government at Swan River establishing an army garrison at Quoin Bluff on Dirk Hartog Island in 1851 to collect a royalty per ton. But within months, the islands had virtually been scraped clean of guano and the regiment was called back to Fremantle. The ruins of their stone storehouse and stone jetty foundations can still be seen today.

Below Lighthouse keepers quarters, Cape Inscription.



Frank von Bibra was granted a lease to run sheep on Dirk Hartog Island in 1869. Aubrey Brown settled at the southern end of the island. As it took time to build up flocks, supplementary income from collecting guano, pearls and sandalwood was very important in the early years. After a succession of different owners, the Dirk Hartog Island pastoral lease was purchased by Sir Thomas Wardle (who owned the 'Tom the Cheap' chain of supermarkets) in 1968.

The Cape Inscription lighthouse—together with the keepers' quarters—was built between 1908 and 1910. It still operates, but is now automated. The keepers' quarters fell into disrepair after remaining unused for many years and the Shire of Shark Bay has now commenced renovating them. The Dirk Hartog landing site of 1616, together with the surrounding Cape Inscription area, was placed on the National Heritage List in 2006.

Below Cabbage corals and fish.

Planning your visit

The key to ensuring your trip is safe and comfortable is good preparation. The weather on Dirk Hartog Island can be variable with extreme hot, dry and windy conditions in summer and occasional inclement weather during winter. A mechanically sound and well equipped vehicle is a must. A full list of recommended equipment for a trip to the island is provided at www.sharkbay.org/equipmentlist.aspx. Be familiar with the safety information on the back of this brochure before arriving.

Access

A private barge on which you can take your four-wheel drive operates from Steep Point by prior arrangement only. See 'More information' on the back page for barge booking details.

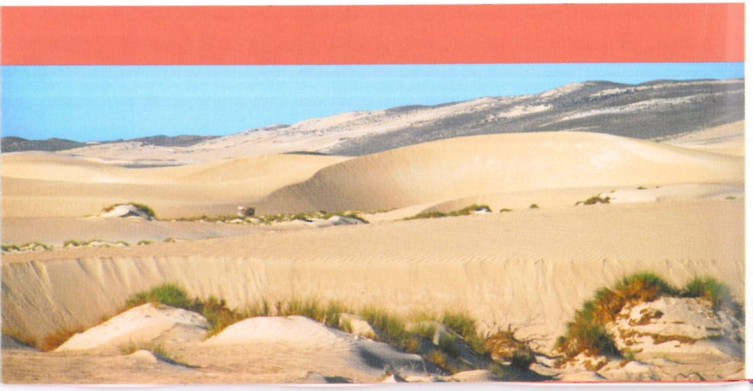
To get to Steep Point it is approximately 181 kilometres by road from the Northwest Coastal Highway; the first 41 kilometres is sealed, followed by 115 kilometres of rough, unsealed road and the last 25 kilometres is a very soft sand track. Be prepared.

Boats can reach the island from Denham or Steep Point (Edel Land). The crossing from Denham can be treacherous, especially during strong southerly winds, so check marine conditions and proceed with caution. Air access to the island is also available.

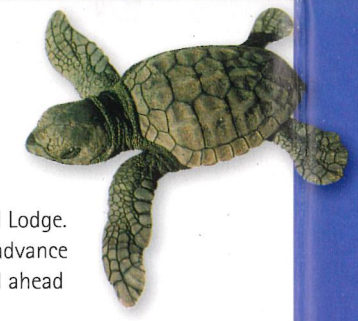
Camping fees

Camping fees apply for overnight stays. Fees can be paid at DEC's office in Denham (see 'More information' on the back page for contact details) and Steep Point. Camping fees also apply for people entering via Steep Point.

Holiday, annual local park, annual all parks and goldstar passes cover entry into Steep Point and are available at DEC offices around the state or online at www.dec.wa.gov.au/shop. Phone (08) 9219 8000 for more details.



Camping and accommodation



Two forms of accommodation are available on the island – camping or accommodation at the Dirk Hartog Island Lodge. You need to book all accommodation in advance and during peak times please do this well ahead to avoid disappointment.

Camping

Camping sites on the island are basic with minimal or no facilities. You have the option of vehicle-based camping or boat-based camping. Camping is only permitted at designated sites which are indicated on the map overleaf.

Most people accessing the island by barge will choose to camp on the mainland at Steep Point (Edel Land) the night before departing. Contact the ranger at Steep Point for more information.

If arriving by boat, camping fees are payable in advance at DEC's office in Denham. Booking is essential.

Dirk Hartog Island Lodge

This private lodge offers a range of tourism services which need to be booked in advance. See the 'More information' section for contact details.

Activities

Four-wheel driving

Most people explore the national park by four-wheel-drive vehicle (see 'Four-wheel-driving code'). The national park's spectacular and varied landscape makes for days of exploration. From the shallow bays and inlets of the eastern shoreline to the rugged cliffs along the western coast there is much to see and do.

Some of the magnificent sites to visit along the island's western coast include the historic precinct at Cape Inscription (including the lighthouse) at the northern end of the island; the rugged scenery at Charlie's Harbour, and Mystery Beach with its astounding sands packed with flotsam and jetsam of all shapes, sizes and origins (the shape and orientation of the bay is such that it forms a natural wreckage trap). On the eastern coast of the island, history buffs may appreciate Dampiers Landing (Sammys Well) and the interesting stone ruins of an 1851 army garrison at Quoin Bluff South.

Fishing

Dirk Hartog Island is renowned as one of the best shore fishing locations in Australia. West Point ('The Block') and Urchin Point along the island's exposed western coast are superb places to fish for local species (make sure you have a cliff gaff and plenty of lures). However, you should only fish along the western coast in suitable conditions, and with an eye to your personal safety, as this is wild and rugged coastline. The more sheltered eastern coastline provides shore-based fishing for whiting and flathead.

All of the waters north, east and south of Dirk Hartog Island (from Cape Inscription to Surf Point) lie within Shark Bay Marine Park. There are sanctuary zones at Sandy Point and Surf Point where no fishing or netting of any kind are allowed to protect local marine life. Before fishing in the marine park please obtain a copy of the Shark Bay Marine Park brochure, which has a detailed park zoning map, from the Department of Environment and Conservation.

You will also need to be familiar with the latest Department of Fisheries rules and regulations (see www.fish.wa.gov.au) and comply with size, season and bag limits.

Diving and snorkelling

Dirk Hartog Island offers some superb snorkelling sites within Shark Bay Marine Park. All sites should only be dived on a slack tide. Take care not to anchor on fragile corals.

Surf Point, on the southern end of Dirk Hartog Island, is a marine park sanctuary zone. Coral communities in the eastern part of the sanctuary zone lie in three to four metres of water and are protected from oceanic swells by a rocky platform reef. Vase corals, plate corals, a great variety of staghorn species and a wide range of tropical fish species, including a variety of parrotfish, butterflyfish, wrasse, angelfish and snapper, can be seen.

Louisa Bay is known for its beautiful coral communities in about three metres of water. Corals grow from about 200 metres from shore and include staghorns (*Acropora* species), massive corals (*Porites* species) and pink pocillopora coral (*Pocillopora* species), but cabbage corals (*Turbinaria* species) are dominant. Reef fish include coral trout, blue-lined emperor and scribbled angelfish. More rarely seen are potato cod, which are fully protected.

The Sandy Point sanctuary zone also offers a sheltered snorkelling area on the eastern side of Dirk Hartog Island in three to four metres of water. Here, numerous species of blue, purple, green and brown staghorn corals grow in a great diversity of forms. In one area there is a virtual garden of beautiful blue staghorn coral. Brain corals and plate corals can also be seen.

The Cape Inscription Lighthouse–together with the keepers' quarters–was built between 1902 and 1910. It still operates but is now automated. The remnants of a railway line used to service the lighthouse can be seen on the steep path to Turtle Bay.

Cape Inscription is the site of the first landing by Europeans on Western Australian soil. Dutchman Dirk Hartog came ashore here in 1616 and left a record of his landing inscribed on a pewter plate nailed to a post.

Naturaliste Channel

Cape Inscription

Turtle Bay

Turtle Bay has the largest loggerhead turtle breeding colony in Australia. The loggerhead is the most threatened turtle that nests in the Australian region.

Cape Levillain

Urchin Point

4.1

6.4

Dampiers Landing/Sammys

William Dampier came ashore here on 7 August 1699. The locality is also known as Sammys Well after a Malay station worker said to have died here during the 1920s after his leg was bitten off by a shark.

2.3

West Pt
("The Block")

10.8

13.6

Withnell Pt

Please stay on defined tracks!

0 2 4 6 8 10
kilometres

Mystery Beach

Long thought to be the site of a 'mystery wreck', investigations by the WA Maritime Museum revealed Mystery Beach is a natural wreck trap, capturing jetsam and flotsam from the world's oceans.

16.3

25°40.746'S
113°3.658'E

25°40.596'S
113°4.800'E

25°41.328'S
113°6.297'E

Sandy Point Sanctuary Zone

25°42.536'S
113°7.110'E

Sandy Pt

25°43.947'S
113°7.050'E

DENHAM SOUND

13.0

Dirk Hartog Island National Park

25°45.167'S
113°6.297'E

7.3

Massive waves that have built up over vast unbroken stretches of ocean break against spectacular 150-metre-high limestone cliffs on the western side of Dirk Hartog Island.

Charlies Harbour

Dirk Hartog Island was named by Dutch navigator William de Vlamingh in 1697. Aboard the Geelvink he anchored outside South Passage on 30 January. Crew members went ashore at the northern end of the island on 2 February and discovered Dirk Hartog's plate.

25°45.653'S
113°5.137'E

4.0

Quoin Head

Louisa Bay

WESTERN BOUNDARY OF SHARK BAY WORLD HERITAGE AREA

INDIAN OCEAN

10.7

Herald Bay

1.9

Quoin Bluff South

5

In 1851, Quoin Bluff South was the site of an army garrison sent by the Colonial Government at Swan River to collect a royalty from ships arriving to collect guano–bird droppings that were valuable for fertiliser. The ruins of their stone storehouse and stone jetty foundations can still be seen.

Egg Island

Tetrodon Loop

29.8

Notch Pt

Scene of a dramatic confrontation between armed European and Chinese pearlers in 1887.

Shark Bay Marine Park

Dirk Hartog Island Lodge

Cliff Lookout

19.5

Blind Strait

Bellefin Prong

Please stay on defined tracks!

Blowholes

26°7.352'S
113°10.887'E

Surf Pt

26°7.800'S
113°10.420'E

26°7.800'S
113°12.180'E

Sunday Island Bay

Surf Point Sanctuary Zone

Sunday Island

South Passage

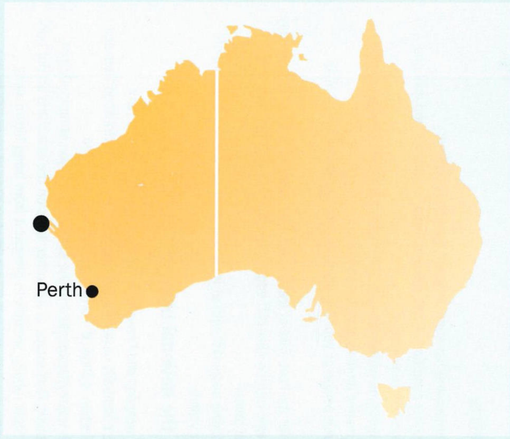
Steep Pt

Westernmost point of the Australian mainland.

Cape Ransonnet

Let down ALL tyres (including those on trailers) to 20psi or less before entering Edel Land/Steep Point.

Edel Land

Legend

- Barge route
- Kilometres
- 4WD Track
- World Heritage Area Boundary
- Marine park
- Marine park sanctuary zone
- National park
- Nature reserve
- Proposed national park
- Private property
- Camping site $
- Day use site
- Accommodation
- Airstrip
- Camping - boat based on beach (fees apply)
- Camping (fees apply)
- Fishing
- Historic precinct
- Lighthouse
- Ranger station
- Scenic vista
- Snorkelling