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Francois Peron National Park Wulyibidi



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



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Front cover Big Lagoon aerial view. *Photo – Chris McMonagle.*

Above Watch out for echidnas on the road. *Photo – Rebecca Stanley*

Francois Peron National Park

Francois Peron National Park covers 52,000ha of arid shrublands, rolling sandplains and circular depressions bounded by spectacular coastal scenery on the Peron Peninsula.

World Heritage

The park lies within the Shark Bay World Heritage Area and its coastal scenery and diverse wildlife habitats are among the many reasons for its heritage listing.

Aboriginal and other Australian heritage

The national park is the traditional country of the Malgana people.

Malgana language speakers have occupied the central part of Shark Bay, including the Peron Peninsula, for about 25,000 years. Wulyibidi is the Malgana name for Peron Peninsula and Gutharraguda, meaning 'two bays', is the name for Shark Bay.

French explorers were the first Europeans to provide reports of the Malgana people early in the 19th century. François Peron meticulously documented anthropology, oceanography, meteorology and zoology during Nicholas Baudin's 1801 and 1803 expeditions. The park bears Peron's name in recognition of his contribution to recording Australia's natural and social history.

In the late 1880s a pearl camp was established at Herald Bight, where pearl shells still litter the beach. It was also the site of a canning factory, the remains of which are still visible today. Peron Peninsula was managed as a 100,000ha sheep station until 1990, when it was bought by the State Government. Francois Peron National Park was declared in 1993.



Above Thick billed grass wren. *Photo – Mary Barrett*

Plants

Meeting at Shark Bay are plants of two vegetation provinces – the southern temperate vegetation of the south-west and the desert vegetation of the north and east. The result is two distinct vegetation types found in Francois Peron National Park.

Red, sandy plains are dominated by desert-adapted acacias while flowering plants from cooler climates, such as hakeas and grevilleas, are not found north of this area.

William Dampier collected plants from the region in 1699 and was particularly impressed by the blue-flowering plants, including wild tomato, halgania and his namesake, the hoary dampiera.

Animals

Francois Peron National Park and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area are home to threatened species including the bilby, woma python, thick-billed grass-wren and malleefowl.

Nearly 100 reptile and amphibian species live in Shark Bay. The thorny devil, racehorse goanna, bobtail skink, knob-tailed gecko and bearded dragon are abundant. Snakes include the gwardar, mulga and woma python.

Migratory and wading birds including godwits, greenshanks, plovers and sandpipers can be seen around the coastline while emus, fairy-wrens, scrubwrens, finches and wedgebills are common on dry land. Wedge-tailed eagles, osprey and white-bellied sea eagles may be seen riding thermals.

Mammals are mostly nocturnal and tend to be harder to spot, but the tracks of euro kangaroos, echidnas and native mice are scattered over the red sand.

The sea around Peron Peninsula teems with wildlife, including bottlenose dolphins, dugongs, green and loggerhead turtles, manta rays and sharks. They are best seen from Cape Peron and Skipjack Point.



Above Bungarra (Gould's goanna). *Photo – Dana Norman*

Marine

The waters of Shark Bay Marine Park abound with whiting, snapper, bream and kingfish, to name just a few.

Special rules apply to fishing and other marine activities surrounding the park. Please see the Shark Bay Marine Reserves brochure for details. Abide by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's regulations in the recreational fishing guide.

Project Eden

Project Eden, an ecological restoration project, has succeeded in returning bilbies and malleefowl to the park. Restoration of natural habitats has also allowed woma pythons to flourish.

Access

The Peron Heritage Precinct is two-wheel-drive accessible. High-clearance four-wheel drive is needed to access the rest of Francois Peron National Park.

Check track conditions at the Parks and Wildlife Service office before driving into the park.

The four-wheel-drive tracks are single-lane soft sand. They are not suitable for caravans or large boat trailers.

Reduce tyre pressure to 20psi (or less) at the tyre pressure station to avoid getting bogged or damaging tracks.

Be aware of oncoming traffic, drive to the conditions and please stay on marked tracks. Some sections traverse large birridas (gypsum claypans) which can be boggy when wet. Take care when driving on birridas after rain.

Fees

Entrance and camping fees apply. A self-registration fee collection box is located at the park entrance off Monkey Mia Road. Your fees are used to maintain and develop park facilities.



Above Shearing shed at Peron Heritage Precinct.

Things to see and do

Peron Heritage Precinct



This precinct offers an insight into what life was like during the pastoral era. Explore the history of the area around the self-guided walk and see how the shearers worked and lived.

Enjoy a dip in the hot tub, a popular place to soak in artesian waters.

Big Lagoon



Soak up spectacular scenery while picnicking or camping at Big Lagoon. Bring a kayak, stand-up paddle board, or other small craft and enjoy sights from the water. You may fish in the special purpose zone from the campground towards the sea, but not in the sanctuary zone north of the campground. See the Shark Bay Marine Reserves brochure for details.

Kraskoes Tank



Krasker was a one-legged entrepreneur who rode his horse from Denham to Herald Bight every week to buy pearls and collect mail. He perished trying to reach this water tank after falling off his horse and breaking his remaining good leg.

Cattle Well



Throw in a line and enjoy the fishing at Cattle Well.



South Gregories



Camp and enjoy the scenery, swimming and fishing. Walk along the beach and inspect the layers of shells partly consolidated into rock.

You can also launch small boats here over very soft sand.

Gregories



At high tide snorkel and explore one of the most accessible reef systems within Shark Bay. Great camp sites, picnicking and scenery within easy reach of the beach.

Bottle Bay



Enjoy camping with easy access to swimming, fishing and walks along the beach. You can also launch small boats here over very soft sand.

Cape Peron



See the line where ocean and bay waters converge at Cape Peron and enjoy a picnic with a view. Beware of the dangerous currents here.

Walk to the top of the dune at the start of the Wanamalu Trail to soak up the views and striking colours of Peron. From there you can also see many cormorants (known as wanamalu to Malgana people) crowding the water's edge.



Above Lookout at Skipjack Point.

Wanamalu Trail

1.5km, 45 minutes one-way



This walk from Cape Peron to Skipjack Point has outstanding views of the coastline and colours of Shark Bay. If you have someone to drive the car and meet you at Skipjack Point, this is an easy short walk although the sand is soft. Otherwise it will be a 3km, 1.5-hour return walk. Make sure you protect yourself from the sun, and keep hydrated, especially during the hot summer months.

Skipjack Point



It's just a five-minute walk from the carpark to the lookouts at Skipjack Point where you may see dolphins, dugongs, turtles, stingrays, manta rays and sharks cruising in the shallows below the lookout. Remember your binoculars.

Herald Bight



Located on the eastern side of the peninsula, the long crescent beach at Herald Bight offers informal beach camping sheltered from south-westerly winds.

Keep an eye out for the remains of a fish canning factory established in 1933 and converted to a fish freezer in 1938. The freezer was closed in 1947 when a new freezer plant was built in Denham. You can launch small boats here over very soft sand.



Above Fishing at Cape Peron.

Enjoy your visit – look after the park and yourself

- There are no water, food, fuel or vehicle services in the park and mobile phone coverage is limited.
- Fires are prohibited in Francois Peron National Park. This includes the use of heat beads. Please bring gas appliances for cooking.
- Heat is a potential safety hazard – make sure you take enough drinking water. Allow at least 3L per person per day.
- Do not empty chemicals into toilets as chemicals destroy composting micro-organisms.
- Where there are no toilets, bury human waste at least 30cm deep and 100m from public areas and the water.
- Firearms, weapons and fireworks are not permitted.
- Pets are not permitted in the national park.
- Poisonous stonefish are common around reef areas – supervise children at all times, wear reef shoes or sandals to protect your feet and be careful what you pick up.
- If stung by a stonefish immerse affected area in hot water (test it's not too hot with unaffected limb) and seek medical aid.
- All native wildlife is protected. Leave all plants, animals, rocks and shells as you find them.
- Fish bag limits and size restrictions apply. Please check and abide by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development regulations (dpird.wa.gov.au). Fisheries officers conduct regular patrols within the park.
- There are zones in the Shark Bay Marine Park where recreational activities are restricted. See the Shark Bay Marine Reserves brochure or go to sharkbay.org for further information.
- Keep your rubbish contained away from wildlife and protected from the strong winds.
- Take your rubbish away with you. A bin is provided at the tyre pressure station near the Peron Heritage Precinct.



Take care when diving or snorkelling

- Only dive and snorkel on a slack tide.
- Stay alert for boat traffic.
- Display a dive flag when diving. Dive flags should be at least 750mm by 600mm.
- It is recommended that a dive flag is displayed when snorkelling more than 200m from the shore.
- Interaction with marine plants and animals is both a privilege and a responsibility. Leave areas as you find them.
- Make sure your diving gear is secured, not dangling, and be careful where you kick.
- Always leave someone on board when diving or snorkelling from a boat.
- Shark Bay Marine Park is zoned to protect marine life and habitats in certain areas. Please observe regulations for the area in which you are diving or snorkelling.
- Many marine animals use venom or toxins for catching prey or defending themselves. Some can cause serious harm to people.
- Shipwrecks are protected and the removal of artefacts is prohibited. Please help preserve our maritime heritage by leaving wrecks undisturbed.



Above Bottle Bay. *Photo – Chris McMonagle*

Boat safely in Shark Bay Marine Park

- Plan your trip well and observe standard safety precautions.
- Always check the weather forecast before you leave.
- Boat according to your skills, experience and the conditions.
- While on the water, keep an eye on the weather and the water at all times. Boats have been swamped and lives have been lost as a result of unexpected waves.
- Carry the safety equipment relevant to your vessel and enough life jackets for each person on board.
- Ensure your boat is in good working order and has extra fuel.
- Carry enough water, food supplies and sun protection for your trip.
- Let a responsible adult know about your trip, and remember to let them know when you have returned safely.
- Keep at least 50m clear of dive flags.
- Avoid anchoring on fragile corals.

Drive carefully

- Always watch out for wildlife on roads and tracks.
- A high-clearance four-wheel drive is required for tracks north of Peron Heritage Precinct.
- The access road north of the Peron Heritage Precinct is a sandy, single-lane track. Watch out for oncoming traffic and drive to the conditions.
- Reduce tyre pressure to 20psi or less (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.
- Unlicensed off-road vehicles (quad bikes, motorbikes) are not permitted.
- Remember to inflate tyres when you return to the tyre pressure station near Peron Heritage Precinct.
- Drive only on existing vehicle tracks and keep four-wheel drive engaged to minimise track damage.



Above A four-wheel-drive vehicle bogged at Herald Bight.

Four-wheel driving in Shark Bay

Only high-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles with low range capability can safely traverse the soft sandy tracks in Shark Bay. All-wheel-drive vehicles are not suitable.

Reduce tyre pressure

Prepare for driving on soft sand by deflating your vehicle's tyres. If you are towing, also deflate your trailer tyres. Reduce tyre pressure to 20psi (140KPa or 1.4 bar) or less if required. Lower driving speeds are essential when driving with deflated tyres.

Remember to reinflate your tyres when returning to two-wheel-drive roads.

Engage four-wheel drive

Make sure four-wheel drive is engaged at all times on sandy tracks. Some vehicles have hubs on the front wheels that need to be locked for four-wheel drive to be engaged. Use H4 and only switch to low range if you get bogged.

If you are not familiar with the vehicle you are driving, check its instructions for engaging four-wheel drive.

If you get stuck

- Check the vehicle is in four-wheel drive. Ensure wheel hubs are locked and the underbody is clear of the sand.
- Reverse over your tracks. If this doesn't work immediately, deflate your tyres a little more.
- You can deflate tyres to 15psi (100KPa or 1.1 bar) if necessary without problems in soft sand but reinflate to 20psi once the vehicle is free.
- If the vehicle becomes stuck deep in the sand, dig a path for each tyre and drive out.
- If you cannot get out, contact Shark Bay Towing on 0428 481 141 or Outback Coast Towing on 0427 333 590 (service fee applies).

Never leave your vehicle to get help, especially in hot weather.



Above Give way to oncoming traffic and beware of blind bends.

Driving on sand and clay pans

Most of the four-wheel-drive tracks in Shark Bay are single-lane, soft sand. Be aware of oncoming traffic, especially when approaching bends and corners.

When you see a vehicle coming towards you slow down and prepare to pull over to the side. Brake gently and come to a rolling stop – avoid sudden braking.

Clay pans are treacherous when wet. Stay on the main track to avoid getting bogged.

In summer, the sand gets extremely hot and softer than normal.

Emergency contact

Mobile telephone coverage is limited or non-existent in most four-wheel-drive areas. In a life threatening situation call 000. If you can only get enough signal for an SMS, text the SES on 0417 097 330.



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Above Halganas on red sand hills. *Photo – Mary Barrett*



Camp fires are not permitted in Francois Peron National Park This includes the use of heat beads. Penalties apply. Please bring gas appliances for cooking.



To maintain the natural environment and visitor experience of parks, domestic animals are not permitted.

More information

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Parks and Wildlife Service – Gascoyne District

63 Knight Terrace, Denham WA 6537

Phone (08) 9948 2226

dbca.wa.gov.au

sharkbay.org

Check for alerts and updates directly related to parks and major trails at alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au and for all emergency information in Western Australia at emergency.wa.gov.au.

Find more park visitor information, book campsites and share your experiences at exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au.

@waparkswildlife



@exploreparkswa



Information current at October 2024.
Publication available in alternative format on request.



Francois Peron National Park

Legend

- Accommodation
- Beach access
- Boat launch
- Camping
- Caravan and camping
- Entry station
- Fishing
- Kayaking
- Gas BBQ
- Historic site
- Hot tub
- Interpretive walk
- Lighthouse
- Scenic vista
- Lookout platform
- No pets
- Picnic area
- Restaurant
- Toilets
- Wheelchair accessible
- 4WD only
- Low scrub
- Birrida (gypsum claypan)
- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- 4WD track
- Sanctuary zone boundary
- 20 Kilometre distance between points



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