



Karijini National Park

Karijini National Park, in the heart of the Pilbara, lies about 1400 kilometres from Perth and covers an area of 627,445 hectares.

Above Hancock Gorge.
Photo – David Bettini

Facing page

Right Silver cadjeputs (*Melaleuca argentea*) line a waterfall at Weano Gorge.
Photo - Brett Dennis/Lochman Transparencies
Far right Ranges near Hamersley Gorge.
Photo – Bill Bachman

It is the second largest national park in Western Australia and flaunts the classic red dirt country. The scorched red rocks, imposing gorges, crystal clear pools and arresting views ensure its popularity, despite its isolated location.

The park was originally gazetted in 1969 and the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) assumed responsibility for its management in 1985. In 1993, a park council was formed. The council consists of CALM and Aboriginal representation and is the primary agent for Aboriginal participation in park management.

Originally known as Hamersley Range National Park, Karijini National Park was renamed in 1991 to reflect the area's Aboriginal history and the continuing association of the Banyjima, Yinhawangka and Kurrama people with the park and surrounds. People primarily speak 'Banyjima', and 'Karijini' is the Banyjima name for Hamersley Range. Some occupation sites more than 18,000 years old have been found in the park.

Nature's extravaganza

Karijini National Park is famous for its rugged red landscape, liberally interspersed with deep, dramatic gorges. Some are more than 100 metres deep and have emerald pools filled with icy water at the bottom. One spot from which to appreciate these majestic formations is Oxers Lookout. It offers a view over the junction of Red, Weano, Joffre and Hancock gorges. The major gorges all have lookouts over their best features.

Each gorge is unique. Dales Gorge lays claim to the Fortescue Falls, the park's only permanent waterfall. Upstream from the falls is Fern Pool, and downstream is Circular Pool. Both pools are special places to local Aboriginal people and are two of the most picturesque settings in the park. Joffre Gorge has an unusual curved wall that forms a natural amphitheatre. The sheer walls of the gorge are layered in colours from red to green and blue to pink in the changing sunlight, and it too has a spectacular 100-metre waterfall after the seasonal rains.



Karijini National Park also contains the two tallest mountains in Western Australia. Mount Meharry is 1245 metres high and Mount Bruce, known as Bunurrinla by the Aboriginal people, is 1235 metres. A panoramic view of the top of the Hamersley Range is your reward for climbing the mountain.

Basking in grandeur

There are many areas to explore in this immense, spectacular park. You can capture it through photography, or enjoy its splendour by walking or exploring. Lookouts and walktrails have been developed at many sites, and the world-class Karijini Visitor Centre has a wealth of information about the park's natural and cultural heritage. There are two basic campsites in the park.

The park's size and rugged beauty are its main attractions. However, these same attractions can make the park extremely hazardous. The most difficult trails can only be negotiated by canyoning, and signs and information warn of this. Canyoning involves travelling through a gorge by scrambling, climbing, abseiling, swimming, possibly with a flotation aid such as an inflated tyre tube or air mattress. It requires skill in navigation, ropework, climbing and avoiding hypothermia. Canyoning can be

treacherous and fatalities and serious injuries have occurred as a result of flash flooding, falls, hypothermia and getting lost. Emergency response agencies travel long distances to enact costly, time consuming search and rescue procedures. To ensure that any visit is both safe and satisfying, visitors must first notify the ranger of any plans to be involved in canyoning activities.

A recently-released book, *Bushwalks*

of the Pilbara, provides maps and descriptions of 25 fabulous walks at Karijini (as well as many other bushwalks in other Pilbara parks) and has useful information about exploring safely with minimal impact on the environment. This book, a 'must have' if you are planning a visit to the park, is available from all good bookshops in WA and at Karijini Visitor Centre for only \$16.45.



park facts

Where is it? 1400 km from Perth.

Total area 627,445 ha.

What to do Walking, sightseeing, photography, camping, swimming, nature observation. Some sites are significant to Aboriginal people, so enjoy the sites but respect the culture. Ask for a brochure to plan your visit.

Must see Views from Oxers and Junction Pool lookouts, Fortescue Falls, Fern Pool and Circular Pool, all in Dales Gorge, should not be missed.

Naming 'Karijini' is the Banyjima name for Hamersley Range. Banyjima is the primary language spoken by Banyjima, Yinhawangka and Kurrama Aboriginal people.

Nearest CALM Office Pilbara Regional Office, Mardie Road, Karratha Industrial Estate, phone (08) 9143 1488. Rangers are based in the park (see map), phone (08) 9189 8157.

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