



## Cape Le Grand National Park

White beaches and rugged peaks characterise Cape Le Grand National Park.

**Above** Mount Le Grand.  
*Photo – Gordon Roberts/DEC*

*Opposite page*  
**Top** Le Grand Coastal Trail.  
*Photo – Andrew Davoll/Lochman*  
*Transparencies*

**Right** Honey possum on a pincushion hakea (*Hakea laurina*).

*Photo – Ian Solomon*

**Far right** Mount Le Grand at sunset.  
*Photo – Dennis Sarson/Lochman*  
*Transparencies*

Cape Le Grand National Park near Esperance is treasured for its wildly spectacular coast. Here giant granite boulders tower high above the earth, massive stretches of beach sweep across the coast and oceans dazzle with intense hues of blue.

In the distance, island peaks mark the necklace of islands of the Recherche Archipelago. And inland, sandplain heath harbours spring wildflowers which erupt annually from the austere growth in lashings of brilliant colour. The raw, rugged beauty means the 32,000-hectare park exudes a remote, almost desolate feel, yet it is just a 30-minute drive from the town of Esperance.

### Exploring the park

You can explore Cape Le Grand National Park's wild reaches on the 15-kilometre Le Grand Coastal Trail, which links many of the park's most spectacular coastal sections. Alternatively, break the trail into four shorter sections.

Le Grand Beach marks the trail starting point and is also the site of one of the park's two camp grounds. These camp grounds are complete with septic toilets, solar hot water showers and camp kitchen facilities. Each bay is tucked away by itself, affording you privacy. The camp ground is perched on the edge of a wide stretch of beach overlooking island peaks in the distance.

The walking trail connects Le Grand Beach with the spectacular sweep of beach at Hellfire Bay. Here, like most of the park's beaches, the sand is so clean it squeaks as you walk across it.

Walk another two hours from Hellfire Bay and you'll arrive at the picture-perfect Thistle Cove. Here a seasonal freshwater stream spills from the hills, carves its way through the sand and trickles into the ocean. A white ribbon of beach curves towards a soaring granite peak in the distance, and giant boulders are strewn across the land and into the sea.

Next stop on the walk is the ever-popular Lucky Bay, named by Matthew





Flinders in 1802 after he took shelter here from a storm. Lucky Bay is famed as being declared by scientists as officially having the whitest beaches in the country. It is also the site of the second of the park's camp grounds and is the best place in the park to launch a boat.

Walk another two to three hours and you'll reach Rossiter Bay. Explorer John Eyre named the bay after the captain of the ship *Mississippi*, which he encountered here after completing his epic and gruelling journey across the Nullarbor in 1841.

Away from the coast, you can also hike up Frenchman Peak—a two-hour journey which can be very steep in places. Frenchman Peak soars 262 metres above its surrounds while Mount Le Grand is 345 metres high and Mississippi Hill is 180 metres.

These massive granite outcrops were formed over the past 600 million years as erosion and movements in the Earth's crust shaped them to their present form.

Then, some 40 million years ago when sea levels were about 300 metres higher than today, the currents, waves and eddies further sculpted the peaks, carving out tunnels and caves.



### Plants and animals

Cape Le Grand National Park's inland sandplains are particularly beautiful in spring when seasonal wildflowers adorn the landscape with colour.

The lashings of colour of the red kangaroo paw are particularly stunning, splashed across the undulating heath-covered sandplain. A variety of banksias also occur here, providing nectar and insects for the tiny and impossibly cute honey possum. Other mammals like the quenda or southern brown bandicoot and the ubiquitous kangaroo also live within the park's reaches.

### park facts

**Where is it?** 30 kilometres south-east of Esperance, 50 kilometres by bitumen road.

**Total area** 32,000 hectares.

**What to do** Walking, camping, boating, picnicking, sightseeing, nature study, swimming, photography, fishing.

**Facilities** Barbecues, tables, toilets, camp sites, picnic areas, shade shelters, camp kitchens, water, information bay, walk trails.

**Nearest DEC office** Esperance District, 92 Dempster Street, Esperance. Phone (08) 9083 2100.



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