



## Cape Range National Park

*From the glistening turquoise waters that house an abundance of marine life to the rugged ancient canyons, visitors to Cape Range National Park are spoilt for choice on how to spend their time and what to explore. On the right day, it comes pretty close to being paradise.*

Located adjacent to Ningaloo Marine Park, on Western Australia's Coral Coast, Cape Range National Park covers more than 50,000ha of spectacular scenery. Now celebrated as part of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area, the park has been known to local Aboriginal people for an estimated 35,000 years and there are 140 sites registered on the list of Aboriginal Site and other Heritage Places.

Burial grounds, examples of rock art and artefacts, including shell beads, provide an insight into Jinigudira, Baiyungu and Thalanji people who lived in the area. Nowadays, people come from across the world to see the unique combination of this rich heritage and the tropical reef and turquoise waters contrasting against the ancient gorges.

### WATER WONDERLAND

The magnificent Ningaloo Reef runs between 200m and 7km from the shoreline and encases the park's western side. Ningaloo Marine Park is one of the best places in the world to encounter the world's largest fish, the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), which visits the area from March to June. Weighing as much as 11 tonnes, with mouths more than 1m wide, they may live for 100 years, and only reach sexual maturity after 30 years. A number of daily tours operate in the marine park to guide

visitors to swim with these gentle giants. Opportunities such as whale watching between August and November and coral viewing from glass-bottom boats or taking a boat tour along the Yardie Creek are just some of the other incredible nature-based experiences that people can enjoy.

The waters are home to seven species of marine turtles, and visitors can learn about them at the Jurabi Turtle Centre, which provides displays and information about turtle biology and ecology. Here, visitors can access the turtle nesting beaches where they may see turtles laying eggs in the sand between November and February. The myriad of other marine life that populates the area can be discovered along the kayak and snorkel trails in the marine park, where people can moor their kayaks while they venture underwater (see 'Adventure out: Kayaking along Ningaloo Coast', *LANDSCOPE*, Winter 2014). Cuttlefish, squid and as many as 500 species of fish

**Above** Snorkelling at Turquoise Bay.

Photo – Tourism WA

**Above right** Shothole Canyon.

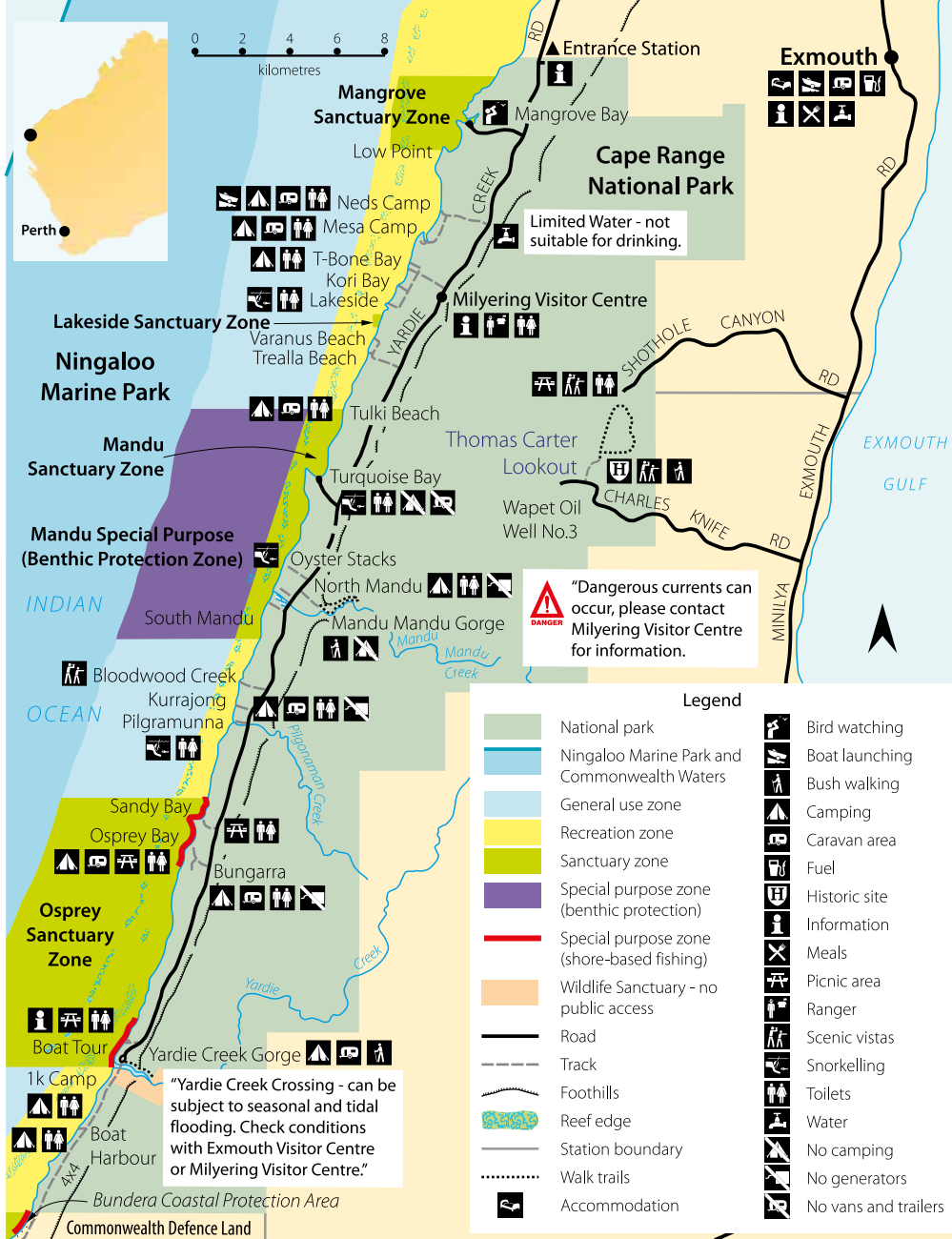
Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Opposite page

**Top** Yardie Creek.

**Above right** Emus can be found in Cape Range National Park.

Photos – Tourism WA



entertain snorkellers with their antics, while up to 200 species of coral dazzle with their varied colours and forms.

## HIKING GORGES

On dry land, Cape Range National Park amazes with its sweeping gorges and chasms, and rugged limestone range, which provide an insight into the area's rich geological history. The fascinating processes that have occurred here are the result of the ancient sea floor being thrust upwards by movements of the Earth's crust. This stunning landscape can be explored on a number of walks in the park – ranging from an easy 100m walk around the mangroves, to an 8km hike with views across Shothole Canyon and Exmouth Gulf.

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Visitors may be lucky enough to spot some of the amazing animals that live in the park, including the shy black-flanked rock-wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*) (see also 'Nature's pin-up' on page 54), echidnas (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) and a number of bird species, such as emus, Australian bustards, pied butcherbirds and ospreys. Meanwhile, an extensive karst system underground houses populations of as many as 38 species of cave-dwelling

invertebrates, of which 10 are endemic. In winter and spring the park erupts in colour as wildflowers bloom, transforming the otherwise dry landscape.

## STAY AWHILE

Cape Range National Park has long been popular among campers, and upgrades to existing facilities and the development of new ones offer visitors a better-than-ever camping experience.



## *Parks for People* Cape Range National Park



"What's there now is a rugged and beautiful wilderness. People come from all over the world to see it. After all, how many places can you go to where you can swim with a whale shark, a placid animal the size of a bus covered in brilliant dots like an Aboriginal painting. The same day you can be circled by manta rays that roll and swerve like enormous underwater birds. If you're lucky you'll see a dugong, the shy and vulnerable creature of the seagrass meadows. There'll be turtles, of course. I've seen them hatch and waddle down to the water with sky pink as the desert beyond. There'll be more coral than you've ever seen in your life. If you're keen enough you can see the coral spawn like a tropical blizzard. As you can see, I love the place. It has been left to us to experience, to look after, to pass on to our children and their children."

*Tim Winton (Ningaloo Reef Rally speech, Fremantle, December 2002)*

As part of the *Parks for People* initiative, the Kurrajong campground received a \$900,000 upgrade in 2012. There are now 36 camp sites nestled in between sand dunes to shelter campers from prevailing winds and are all a short walk to the beach. There are new toilets and a camp shelter as well as three paths and boardwalks that lead visitors to new viewing platforms and provide beach access. Here, visitors can relax and enjoy the stunning views or explore the shoreline by foot.

Upgrades have begun on Osprey campground, which is expected to be completed by Easter 2015, thanks to \$1.125 million of funding from *Royalties for Regions*. The campground will be expanded from 20 basic camp sites to a newly designed twin loop with 45 camp sites that will be accessible via a new road. A separate area for non-campers is also included in the new construction – providing visitors with direct access to the offshore kayak and snorkel trail and the beautiful beaches of Osprey Bay. Each site at Osprey Bay is designed to enhance the camping experience – with sites spaced 5m

apart and each with a view of the Ningaloo waters. New toilets, shade shelters, sunset viewing platforms and a connecting walk trail to the beautiful neighbouring Sandy Bay will also be built.

**Parks and Wildlife Campground**  
Host volunteers are present in the park's campgrounds and are only too happy to provide visitors with advice of where to go and what to explore. Whether you're just popping in for a day or planning on camping for a couple, there is plenty to do and see in this magnificent part of the world.

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**Above** Swimming with a whale shark in Ningaloo Marine Park off Cape Range National Park.

*Photo – Violeta Jahnel Brosig, courtesy Exmouth Visitor Centre*

**Top right** Turtle hatchlings.

*Photo – Ningaloo Turtle Program*

**Above right** Some natives visiting the campground.

*Photo – Jed Newman, courtesy Exmouth Visitor Centre*



## Do it yourself

**Where is it?** The northern access point is 36km from Exmouth.

**Total area:** 50,581 ha.

**What to do:** Birdwatching, hiking, snorkelling, diving, tours, camping, fishing, surfing, boat tour.

**Facilities:** Milyering Visitor Centre and gift shop, Jurabi Turtle Centre, campgrounds and caravan area, toilets, picnic tables, boat launching facilities, bird hide at Mangrove Bay, Yardie Creek Boat Tour.

**Visitor fees:** For current visitor and camping fees and to book online, visit [parkstay.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://parkstay.dpaw.wa.gov.au).

**Nearest Parks and Wildlife office:**

Exmouth District Office, 20 Nimitz Street, Exmouth, phone (08) 9947 8000. Rangers are based at Milyering Visitor Centre, phone (08) 9949 2808.

*Strong currents at Turquoise Bay mean inexperienced swimmers should not enter the water unless accompanied by an experienced swimmer or licensed tour operator.*

