



A long-exposure photograph of a starry night sky. The stars are captured as long, curved white and blue streaks, creating a sense of motion and depth. The foreground is a dark, silhouetted landscape with low-lying vegetation and hills under a deep twilight sky.

Under the stars

NATURE-BASED CAMPING

Visitors to campgrounds around Western Australia are enjoying new facilities and experiences, thanks to a State-wide initiative designed to encourage and facilitate people to camp in our beautiful natural areas. *by Steve Crawford*

There's nothing quite like waking up to the sound of nature. Whether it's the chatter of birds busying themselves with their daily routines, the noise of rustling leaves in the surrounding trees, or the soothing sounds of water lapping at a river's edge or rolling in waves onto shore, it sure beats the sound of an alarm clock.

Each year, many thousands of Western Australians, interstate and international visitors venture to the many campgrounds throughout the State to enjoy time with family and friends. These experiences form treasured childhood memories and often become urban legends – stories of adventure and fun told long after the trip, usually embellished with every telling. On the flipside, some people venture out to seek solitude – a break from the busy and cluttered modern-day world. Whatever the motivation to get out, or the company taken, camping in WA is entering on a whole new era with an emphasis on accessibility and affordability.

A MAJOR INVESTMENT

The State Government's \$21.05 million *Parks for People* initiative, funded over four years by the *Royalties for Regions* program aims to improve and expand camping, and associated visitor experiences in national parks and conservation reserves throughout WA. It is delivering new facilities and



services including affordable camping and caravan accommodation through the development of eight new campgrounds and the expansion of at least nine existing campgrounds, resulting in 450 new camp sites. It includes the creation and upgrade of existing and new walk, bike and drive trails, and the development of interpretative information including mobile and desktop applications to help guide visitors to parks and camp sites, as well as wi-fi connectivity in some campgrounds. Important partnerships with key recreation and tourism industry stakeholder groups are also being forged to help encourage families to connect with nature while having fun and getting active. The initiative provides for improvements to commercial leasehold caravan park accommodation, and visitor facilities in State forest recreation areas and former pastoral lease areas.

NEW CAMPING FACILITIES

Western Australians are spoilt for choice, and Perthites don't need to travel far to find a well-equipped and beautiful setting in which to camp. A new campground has been opened at Martins Tank Lake in Yalgorup National Park, a short drive south of Mandurah (see '*Parks for People: Yalgorup National Park*', *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2014–15), while Baden Powell campground in Lane Poole Reserve in the Perth Hills provides camping among the jarrah forest (see '*Parks for People: Lane Poole Reserve*', *LANDSCOPE*, Winter 2014). Further south, on the spectacular rugged South Coast at Fitzgerald River National Park, two new campgrounds have been opened along with road improvements, new walk trails and additional recreational facilities (see '*Rediscovering Fitzgerald River National Park*', *LANDSCOPE*, Winter 2014). Travelling north, the new Kurralong campground at Cape Range National Park near Exmouth (see '*Parks for People: Cape Range National Park*' on page 8) has been

Go camping

For details about campgrounds and bookings visit parkstay.dpaw.wa.gov.au. Or for more general information about parks and recreational areas visit parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au. Share your experiences, photos and camping tips on Facebook at Explore Parks WA or hashtag your photos on social media with #exploreparkswa. To find out more about WA Wilderness Glamping or book a site visit www.wawilderness.com.au.

Where camping fees are charged these can vary from \$7.50 to \$19 per adult per night. Discount rates for children and concessions apply.



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Main Camping under the stars on Ningaloo Coast.

Photo – Paul Bester, courtesy Exmouth Visitor Centre

Above Fishing at Blackwood River.

Photo – Tourism WA

“These experiences form treasured childhood memories and often become urban legends – stories of adventure and fun told long after the trip, usually embellished with every telling.”



expanded with new camp sites, toilets, walking paths and scenic lookouts.

Additional camping facilities are planned and under construction at Leeuwin-Naturaliste (see ‘Our south-west escape: Leeuwin-Naturaliste capes’, *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2014–15), Wellington, Cape Le Grand, D’Entrecasteaux and Shannon national parks and many other parks and reserves. Camp site improvements cater for the full range of camping from basic tents to campervans and towed caravans.

Complementing these new camping facilities, Parks and Wildlife has recently upgraded and improved visitor facilities at a number of parks. The Granite Skywalk at Castle Rock in Porongurup National Park and the Wilderness View Lookout at Mount Frankland National Park are two new facilities that have been designed to deliver awe-inspiring visitor experiences. Coupled with the award-winning Valley of the Giants Tree Top

Walk and the redevelopment of the Gap Lookout at Torndirrup National Park, regional tourism bodies now have the opportunity to package and market new visitor experiences to a broader tourism audience.

In addition to new and improved infrastructure and facilities, Parks and Wildlife is improving its campground information and booking systems. Through the new Park Stay WA website (parkstay.dpaw.wa.gov.au), campers can get information on more than 100 campgrounds managed by the department

with 14 campgrounds bookable online, with plans to expand this number in the coming years.

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

While many campers are seeking a traditional low-key camping experience in a natural setting, Parks and Wildlife is meeting the growing demand for alternative forms of camping, such as ‘glamping’ (short for ‘glamorous camping’). Through a community partnership initiative with Pemberton

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Above Remote camping at Karlamilyi National Park.

Photo – Judy Dunlop/Parks and Wildlife

Right A ‘glamping’ tent for a couple.

Photo – Parks and Wildlife





Left Camping in the Perth Hills.

Below left Enjoying a barbecue at a pre-set up tent.

Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Below Pilgramunna camp site at Cape Range National Park.

Photo – Steve Bryant



In partnership with Nature Play WA and Outdoors WA, Parks and Wildlife conducted its first ‘Camping 101’ event at Yanchep National Park. Part of the Great Aussie Camp Out in October 2014, the event aimed to give first-time campers an opportunity to camp with support in the beautiful Yanchep National Park. More than 100 adults and children took part in the event and there are more planned for the future.

The provision of new and upgraded facilities has also created opportunities for Parks and Wildlife to work collaboratively in on-ground interpretative activities and experiences. Josh Whiteland of Koomal Dreaming recently conducted a Noongar bush barbecue experience, providing campers with an opportunity to experience Noongar culture. Josh demonstrated cooking with Noongar herbs and spices, provided tastings of emu and kangaroo, and gave an uplifting didgeridoo performance and story-telling session. The camping experience included guided nature walks by Parks and Wildlife rangers, highlighting the importance of partnerships in adding value to the camping experience and providing opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

STAYING IN TOUCH

To understand campers’ likes and dislikes and to help guide future planning,

market research is being undertaken to survey campers. Feedback received so far reaffirms that people enjoy the opportunity to get out into the great outdoors to reconnect and spend time with family and friends. A recently completed visitor survey at Cape Range National Park indicated that campers were highly satisfied with the park, the overall camping experience and the quality of camp sites. They also reported that camping provided a range of personal benefits including an ability to appreciate scenic beauty, the natural environment and an ability to access natural experiences. As we continue to deliver high-calibre and innovative camping experiences in natural settings while ensuring the natural values for future generations, would-be-campers can go to parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au to plan their next camping trip and look forward to sleeping under the stars and waking to the sounds of nature.



Scan here with your smart phone to watch a short video about the ‘Camping 101’ event at Yanchep National Park.



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