



Southward bound: **TOP 10** camping spots

Western Australians and visitors to the State are spoilt for choice when camping in the south-west. Here are 10 top spots between Perth and Esperance to put on the camping 'bucket list'.

by Steve Crawford

Above Relaxing at Cape Le Grand National Park.

Photo – Jiri Lochman

Research tells us that spending time in nature is good for general health and wellbeing. But anyone who has pitched a tent, or set up a caravan or camper trailer and camped can tell you that, no doubt with a raft of anecdotal tales. If you take the time to tune in your senses to the sights, sounds, smells, textures and even tastes (if you have a palate for bush tucker) then you feel more connected to the natural environment and (hopefully) more connected to the people you're with. For some, it's a nice change to look over the camp fire and talk to friends and family, rather than connecting through text messaging, social media and emails. While for others it's quiet time alone and away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. And spending time in nature offers kids a chance to make those all-important

childhood memories, and get their hands and feet dirty while learning about the natural world – a much-needed contrast to the increasingly computer-driven world in which many of us live.

When it comes to natural places to explore, Western Australians and our visitors are spoilt for choice. The Department of Parks and Wildlife manages more than 265 campgrounds throughout WA with more than 2900 campsites to choose from. Thanks to the State Government's *Parks for People* initiative, \$21.05 million has been provided through the Royalties for Regions program to improve camping options and park facilities. Some of these are in far-flung parts of the State in locations only sought after by those with a penchant for adventure, while others are a short drive from Perth – perfect for a weekend getaway.

DOWN SOUTH

Western Australia's south-west is a botanical biodiversity hotspot and an important environment for a number of native animals. It has stunning ocean vistas, fascinating geology, awe-inspiring forests as well as a range of opportunities for bushwalking, bike riding, swimming, surfing, diving, snorkelling, kayaking, canoeing and rock climbing, to name a few! Here is a list of top 10 camping spots down south that are suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicle getaways.



1 BEELU NATIONAL PARK

Just 40 kilometres east of Perth, Beelu National Park is a terrific spot if you are new to camping and want the bush experience but prefer creature comforts such as hot showers and flushing toilets. The Perth Hills Discovery Centre campground, which is suited to tents only, is fitted with a camp kitchen with fridge, electric barbecues, power, a sink and a fire ring. Parks and Wildlife's *Nearer to Nature* program, which is based at the centre provides a raft of engaging activities for people of all ages, including through the school holidays.

2 YALGORUP NATIONAL PARK

A short drive from Perth, Yalgorup National Park boasts the newly redeveloped Martins Tank Lake campground. This is a perfect location for families with young kids who want a taste of camping but don't want to stray too far from home. Here you'll find eight new tent camp sites, four larger group camp sites, a camp kitchen, two communal fire pits and two toilets.

While there, you can try your luck night-spotting for possums, view wading birds on the lake, swim at nearby Preston Beach, view thrombolites from a boardwalk or take the six-kilometre Lake Pollard Trail that takes in the bird hide where you can view the wildlife in their natural environment without disturbing them (see also 'Parks for People: Yalgorup National Park', *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2014–15).

3 LANE POOLE RESERVE

Just 9.5 kilometres from Dwellingup, Lane Poole Reserve has long been a popular camping destination, and now improved facilities at Baden Powell campground as well as redeveloped picnic areas have upped the appeal. Nanga Brook campground is a newly redeveloped site which provides camp sites for campervans, caravans, camper trailers and tents. These facilities provide a base for visitors to spend time bike riding, bushwalking, swimming, fishing, canoeing and kayaking on the Murray River. If you are feeling

adventurous, try the newly opened Trees Adventure rope course (see 'Adventure out: Canopy capers' on page 46).

4 DRYANDRA WOODLAND

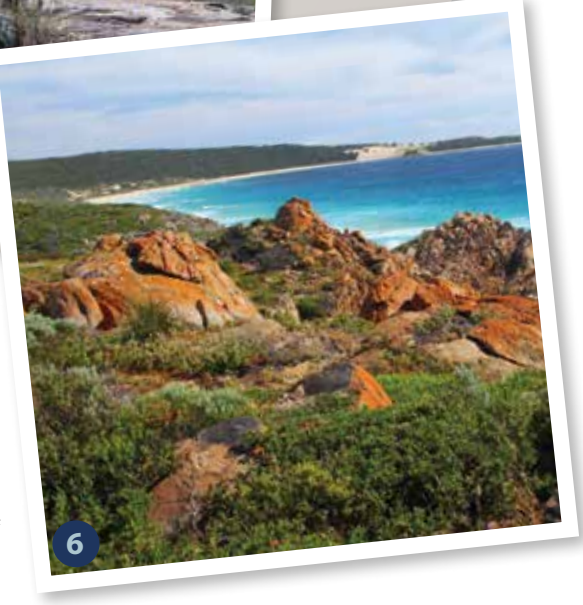
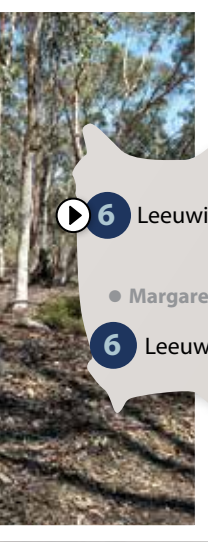
Less than two hours' drive from Perth, Dryandra Woodland is one of the prime places in the south-west for viewing native wildlife. Congelin and Gnaala Mia campgrounds both provide a spot to camp, where you're nestled among the magnificent woodlands and spectacular wildflowers in spring. They provide 17 caravan sites, 12 tent sites, four toilets and two camp kitchens (see also, 'Parks for People: Dryandra Woodland', *LANDSCOPE*, Winter 2015).

If you are into hiking there are a number of walking trails where you can explore the surrounding forest. You might even spot some native wildlife in their natural habitat. Or, for an up-close look at some of WA's most precious animals, you can visit Barna Mia and take a guided nocturnal tour in a tranquil sanctuary.



Take a journey to some of these beautiful spots

Scan this QR code or visit Parks and Wildlife's 'LANDSCOPE' playlist on YouTube.



5 WELLINGTON NATIONAL PARK

The stunning Honeypool Pool and Potters Gorge campgrounds offer picturesque camping and picnic sites within Wellington National Park. Potters Gorge is set on the banks of the Wellington Dam in a shady jarrah and marri forest setting. Here you can experience breathtaking views across the calm waters and try fishing or catching marron in season (with a permit). This is also a great place to take the family canoeing, swimming or kayaking.

Honeymoon Pool is a very popular campground shaded by peppermint trees on the banks of the Collie River. There is easy access to the river for swimming and water activities when the weather is fine. It's also a perfect spot to toast marshmallows on the campfire during the cooler months.

6 LEEUWIN-NATURALISTE NATIONAL PARK

One of WA's most popular and beloved national parks, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park provides access to the Cape to Cape Track and an opportunity to explore caves, go surfing, swimming, snorkelling, rock climbing and bike riding, or visit nearby wineries, fine food outlets and galleries.

Close to the beach is Contos campground with 116 camp sites nestled among the coastal peppermint woodland. The campground has a range of site types catering for tents through to sites suitable for large caravans and camper trailers. Inland, and a little more secluded, is the small Boranup campground, close to the magnificent towering karris, which accommodates just seven tents and small campervans (see also 'Our south-west escape: the Leeuwin-Naturaliste capes', *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2014–15).

Previous page

Main Thrombolites can be viewed from the boardwalk at Lake Clifton, Yalgorup National Park.

1 A misty morning at Beelu National Park.

Photos – Sallyanne Cousans

3 Camping at Lane Poole Reserve.

Photo – Tourism WA

4 Dryandra Woodland.

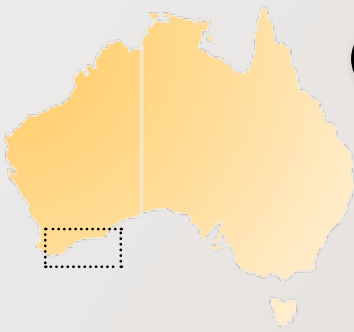
Photo – Sallyanne Cousans

5 Little Rock at Wellington National Park.

Photo – Ann Storie

6 Injidup Point, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

Photo – Andrew McInnes



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7 Warren National Park

Stokes National Park 9

10 Cape Le Grand National Park

Fitzgerald River National Park 8

Walpole

Albany

7 WARREN NATIONAL PARK

Glamorous camping, or 'glamping' is becoming increasingly popular among those who don't own a tent, camp bedding or cooking equipment or who simply want to experience being in nature but still have access to some of life's luxuries (and have someone else look after them for you). WA Wilderness Glamping operated by Pemberton Discovery Tours provides fully equipped camp sites at Drafty's campground. From here, in easy reach, you can enjoy the tall timbers of the southern forests, go bushwalking, freshwater fishing, cycling, canoeing or climbing one of the three fire lookout trees for a view over the forest.

8 FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Fitzgerald River National Park boasts a number of new facilities that cater to visitors who are camping or just passing through thanks to a \$40 million investment by the State and Federal governments. Several picnic areas and viewing facilities provide places to enjoy the magnificent scenery (and an opportunity for whale watching between July and October), while two campgrounds have been revamped. The Four Mile Beach campground is set into the bush to maximise privacy and provide protection from the wind, while the newly developed Hamersley Inlet visitor precinct provides 14 camp 'pods', toilets and a camp kitchen.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

CampingMate app has been designed to help people get on the road easier. The app has a comprehensive list of pre-loaded items that you can add to and share with others and save for next time. The app also has handy information about where to camp and how to book, and details about some of WA's tracks, trails and partner organisations.

CampingMate can be downloaded free from the 'App Store' and Google Play.

ParkFinder WA is a free one-stop shop for information about the 150 parks and reserves in WA including information about what sites you'll find in the parks and reserves, whether entry fees apply and how to get there. The app is kept up-to-date with information about fires and park alerts.

ParkFinder WA can be downloaded for free from the 'App Store'.

Exploring Western Australia's natural wonders: national, marine and regional parks is a 327-page region-by-region guide to 64 of WA's stunning parks and reserves. It contains fascinating and helpful information about how to explore the park, its history and natural attractions. There is also information on a range of activities available for visitors such as bushwalking, camping and mountain biking. *Exploring Western Australia's natural wonders: national, marine and regional parks* can be purchased for \$39.95 from good bookshops and Parks and Wildlife (shop.dpaw.wa.gov.au) or see page 34.

Park Stay WA (parkstay.dpaw.wa.gov.au) is a convenient website where you can search for campgrounds and their facilities, compare them, create a shortlist of alternatives and even book some online.



7 Warren River Lookout.

8 Quoin Head, Fitzgerald River National Park.
Photos – Jiri Lochman



9

9 STOKES NATIONAL PARK

Stokes Inlet is one of the most picturesque and interesting estuaries along WA's southern coast. The Benwenerup campground is nestled on the banks of the inlet surrounded by paperbark trees. It is a perfect spot to unwind and take part in activities such as kayaking and bushwalking where you'll discover an abundance of bird life on the inlet and lakes. Fishing is popular and you can launch small boats from the camp sites in the hope of catching some of the area's black bream, Australian salmon, King George whiting and mullet, all found within the area. Normal fisheries regulations apply in national parks.

Thanks to a \$3 million upgrade, visitors can camp at Benwenerup campground with 14 sites of various sizes, all suitable for caravans.

9 A narrow beach along Stokes Inlet meanders through an avenue of paperbark trees.

Photo – Sallyanne Cousans

10 and right Lucky Bay, Cape Le Grand National Park.

Photos – Andrew McInnes



10

10 CAPE LE GRAND NATIONAL PARK

The white sand and turquoise waters of the stunning Lucky Bay make this area akin to paradise. The sand is so fine it squeaks under foot and kangaroos can be spotted sunbathing on the beach. The park features sweeping heathlands and rugged coastal peaks to explore. In season, the wildflowers in the area are spectacular.

A campground expansion and upgrade at Lucky Bay provides campers with a camp kitchen, gas barbecues, picnic tables, toilets and water.



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