





# Access

## to more, for more

It is a well-known fact that spending time in nature is good for the mind, body and soul. But heading outdoors and experiencing our natural attractions can be a bit trickier for the one in four Australians who identify as having a physical, sensory, psychiatric, neurological or intellectual disability. However, with the advent of new technology, appropriate aids, services and accessibility measures, the question is becoming less about where people with disability can go, and more focused on where they want to go, to reap the benefits of spending time in nature. We've put together a list of some of WA's best and most accessible attractions.

**by Lauren Cabrera**



**T**he benefits of spending time in nature have been well-documented and continue to be wholly felt by park visitors. Acknowledging that visitors of all abilities should, wherever possible, have the opportunity to access and therefore benefit from Western Australia’s natural assets helps guide the planning and redevelopment of sites and facilities. As a result, the number of accessible sites on DBCA-managed lands and waters is increasing every year, and more people than ever are experiencing the benefits of our natural areas. DBCA’s commitment to maximising accessibility is outlined in its *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2020*. This document sets out the ways in which the department will ensure that the one in four Western Australians who have disability have access to its facilities and services.

.....  
*Previous page*

**Main** Monkey Mia’s resident dolphins delight visitors.

*Photo – DBCA*

**Above** Mount Frankland Wilderness Lookout.  
*Photo – Cliff Winfield*

**Above right** A female competitor uses an adaptive handcycle on the Cape to Cape Track.  
*Photo – Travis Deane*

**“Across the State, recreation sites are designed and managed for a range of experiences and access levels – from highly developed and easily accessible, to remote areas with no assisted access and visitor facilities.”**

However, it’s important to acknowledge that not all recreation sites and facilities are universally accessible. While accessibility is always a major consideration during planning and design, with the goal of providing as much access as possible, this must be achieved without compromising the natural or cultural values that attracted visitors there in the first place. Across the State, recreation sites are designed and managed for a range of experiences and access levels – from highly developed and easily accessible, to remote areas with no assisted access and visitor facilities.

## BEYOND ACCESS

For some people, actually visiting an area is not possible. While for others, visits need to be planned thoroughly. This is where technology is literally changing lives.

The sensory experience of virtual reality (VR) is not a new concept, however the immersive technology is

being applied in a variety of ways, such as treating phobias, distraction-free learning for children with ADHD and as a way to help people with disability explore the world that might be difficult or impossible to access in real life.

Many popular VR headsets are expensive, but Google Street View is now available via virtual reality and relatively inexpensive VR cardboard headsets can be purchased online for about \$10. All that’s left to do is download an app, slide in a smart phone and explore virtual worlds from a wheelchair, bed or couch.

DBCA’s free 3D 360° immersive virtual reality app *Explore Parks WA - VR Edition* provides a tour of some of Western Australia’s most popular natural areas and nature-based tourism attractions. The app has about 50 locations to visit in Perth and the south-west, and guides people along the rugged south coast, through the treetops at the Valley of the Giants and even underground in caves of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park,



## Never too old for the outdoors

Research is showing that nature can have sweeping benefits for seniors, too. Several recent studies have concluded that seniors who spend time outdoors may experience less anxiety, depression and stress than those who do not. Gentle sloping walkways, sealed paths and accessible carparks feature in parks whenever possible and help with the physical hurdles that prevent some seniors from getting outside. *Concession rates apply to Seniors Card holders when purchasing park passes.*



just to name a few. Audio and information pop-ups are also available, which provide more information about each place.

Google Street View is a handy tool for pre-trip planning – an important process for people with disability and their families. In 2018, DBCA partnered with Google to capture imagery on key tourist trails and attractions for inclusion on Google Street View (see ‘Going off-road’, *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2018–19). Departmental staff and volunteers carried the Street View Trekker backpack, complete with a camera system on top, and travelled by foot, bike and boat on 100 trails covering 3000 kilometres, capturing images of trails and other areas not accessible by the Street View vehicle.

From mountain biking, trail running and camping, there is a groundswell of innovation and collaboration towards challenging people’s perceptions of what people with disability can do, what they might want to do outdoors, and creative ways of getting them out into the natural world (see ‘Adventure out’ on page 20).

## ACCESS TO NATURE

Many major attractions in WA cater to people with a range of accessibility requirements. Organised outings for groups that include people with disability, carers, the elderly or infirm may be eligible for an entry fee waiver.

It’s always a good idea to contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service

office before adventuring into the great outdoors, but we’ve compiled 10 must-see destinations, both north and south of Perth, that provide assisted accessibility.

**Top left** A partnership with Google resulted in 360-degree imagery from some of the State’s most remote parks.

*Photo – DBCA*

**Above left** A free virtual-reality app is helping more people explore the State’s natural attractions.

**Top** Yalgorup National Park.

*Photo – Cliff Winfield*


**Above** The Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk.

*Photo – DBCA*

# Access to nature north of Perth

## 1 Kalbarri National Park 570km, 6.5-hour drive from Perth

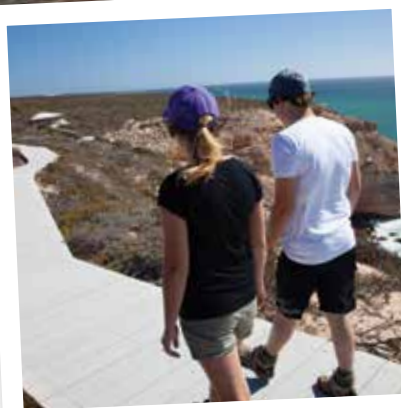
Offering both coastal and inland attractions, Kalbarri National Park surrounds the lower reaches of the Murchison River, which cuts a magnificent 80-kilometre gorge through the red and white banded sandstone. You can experience scenic gorge views from The Loop parking area, Hawks Head and the Ross Graham Lookout and soaring sea cliffs from Red Bluff, Natural Bridge and Island Rock. Two skywalks with a connecting boardwalk jut 25 metres and 17 metres beyond the rim of the Murchison River Gorge at one of its highest points at West Loop. There are designated parking bays, unisex accessible toilets and sealed paths at each site, but no toilets at Red Bluff and Island Rock. A 1.2-kilometre section of the Bigurda Trail between Natural Bridge and Island Rock has been improved, with sealed paths and an 800-metre boardwalk to provide more accessibility. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information contact Parks and Wildlife Service Geraldton office on (08) 9964 0901.

 **Ranger's tip** Amazing wildflowers set the park ablaze with colour from July to November. Be aware that the park can be very hot at times, and there is no drinking water available at recreation sites.

Above Geikie Gorge boat tour.  
Photo – Jesse Murdoch/DBCA

Inset above Bigurda Trail, Kalbarri National Park.  
Photo – Rory Chapple/DBCA

Inset above right Monkey Mia Visitor Centre.  
Photo – Tiffany Taylor




Kalbarri National Park



Monkey Mia Reserve


## 2 Monkey Mia Reserve 846km, 9-hour drive from Perth

For one of the best-known up-close wildlife experiences, head to Monkey Mia Reserve in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area, where you can be within metres of wild bottlenose dolphins that visit the shores every morning. Three generations of dolphins living in Shark Bay Marine Park are now regular visitors to the beach. The Monkey Mia Visitor Centre has interpretive displays providing insight into dolphins and the unique Shark Bay regions. There is designated parking, unisex accessible toilets and sealed paths throughout the site. The beach is accessible on a 1:14 timber ramp, and you can borrow a beach wheelchair with large pneumatic tyres, which can be immersed in water, from the visitor centre at no charge. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information contact Monkey Mia Visitor Centre on (08) 9948 1366.

 **Ranger's tip** As wild animals, the Monkey Mia dolphins visit the beach at a time of their choosing, but it is generally in the morning. So it is best to allow plenty of time in your travel schedule and phone the centre to ask about the best time to visit. While in the area, check out Eagle Bluff Lookout, Shell Beach and Peron Homestead.

## 3 Cape Range National Park and Ningaloo Marine Park 1300km, 13.5-hour drive from Perth 40km from Exmouth

Where the desert meets the sea, Cape Range National Park boasts rocky gorges of arid, rugged ridges and provides a spectacular contrast to the vibrant Ningaloo Marine Park. Both in the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area, the parks can be appreciated along the stunning drive on sealed roads all the way to Yardie Creek. Along the way, stop off at Milyering Discovery Centre for interpretive displays, designated parking, accessible toilets, a small shop that sells souvenirs and refreshments and beach wheelchairs for hire. Turquoise Bay, Sandy Bay and Yardie Creek are worth a visit, where you will find designated parking, unisex toilets and hardened paths. If you like to camp, check out the facilities at Kurrajong, Osprey and Mesa campgrounds. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact Milyering Discovery Centre on (08) 9947 2808.

 **Ranger's tip** Temperatures soar in summer so ensure you have plenty of water and wear appropriate clothing. There is no drinking water available other than at the discovery centre.



Cape Range National Park

**Above** Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park.

**Right** Ozer Lookout, Weano Gorge at Karijini National Park.

Photos – Christian B./Alamy

**Below right** Snorkelling at Turquoise Bay, Ningaloo Marine Park.


Photo – Tourism WA

While in the area, the Jurabi Turtle Centre and nearby Hunters Beach in Jurabi Coastal Park are worth a visit to watch the humpback whales or turtles (seasonal) from the purpose-built viewing platforms and shelters along the beach.

#### 4 Karijini Visitor Centre, Karijini National Park

1385km, 15-hour drive from Perth  
100km from Paraburdoo

The Karijini Visitor Centre is a great place to start exploring the expansive Karijini National Park with its spectacular rugged scenery, ancient geological formations and variety of arid-land ecosystems. The design of the visitor centre building represents a goanna moving through the country and is symbolic to the Banyjima Aboriginal people. The world-class interpretive displays take you on a journey of places and people, past and present, through stories of geology, plants, animals and Aboriginal people and their culture. Local Banyjima people manage the centre, and are available to share their stories. There is designated parking, accessible toilets and showers and a small shop selling refreshments and souvenirs. For more information, contact Karijini Visitor Centre on (08) 9189 8121.

 **Ranger's tip** Look out for the goanna artwork on the rock at the front door of the centre explaining the building design concept.


While in the area, check out Fortescue Falls Lookout and Circular Pool to the east of the park, and Hamersley Gorge in the north-west. Although access into the gorge may not be possible, there are sealed paths to lookouts giving spectacular views. During summer, temperatures frequently top 40 degrees Celsius. There is no drinking water in the park except for purchase at the visitor centre.

#### 5 Danggu Geikie Gorge National Park

2577km, 27-hour drive from Perth  
20km from Fitzroy Crossing, 280km from Derby, 390km from Broome

Famed for its spectacular multi-coloured gorge, abundant wildlife and awesome boat tours, Danggu Geikie Gorge National Park is sacred land for the Bunuba Aboriginal people. The gorge has been carved by the Fitzroy River through part of an ancient limestone barrier reef that snakes through the west Kimberley. Geikie Gorge boat tours take place from May to October and are a great way to experience the stunning river landscape and river wildlife. The new boat, the Ms Casey Ross, can accommodate people in wheelchairs. There is a charge for

the boat tour, with concessions. There is designated parking, accessible toilets, shelter and hardened paths throughout. For more information, contact Parks and Wildlife Service Broome office on (08) 9195 5500.

 **Ranger's tip** Don't forget your hat, sunscreen and water particularly if you're going on a boat tour as it can get quite hot.



● Derby  
● Broome

Fitzroy Crossing ● 5



3 ● Exmouth

● Karratha

4

● Paraburdoo

● Carnarvon

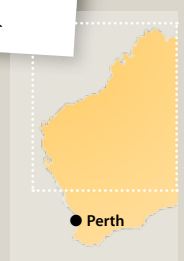
2

1

● Geraldton



Ningaloo Marine Park




● Perth

## Access to nature south of Perth

### 6 Cape to Cape Track, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park 262km, 3-hour drive from Perth

The Cape to Cape Track is a 125-kilometre-long coastal walk trail traversing the length of Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Tackling the whole trail is an extreme challenge, however a 3.8-kilometre section has been designed as a more accessible experience. The sealed walk trail starts at Cape Naturaliste and undulates gently downhill through the coastal landscape to Sugarloaf Rock with a gradient up to 1:12. The trail has about a kilometre of timber boardwalk with seats along the way and no steps. There are designated parking bays and unisex accessible toilets at both ends of the trail. Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse has a small shop and tours of the lighthouse. For more information, contact the **Parks and Wildlife Service Busselton office** on (08) 9752 5555.

 **Ranger's tip** Look out for wildflowers, and dolphins and whales from the many vantage points along the trail.

While in the area, enjoy a visit to Canal Rocks, Hamelin Bay, Cape Leeuwin and the lovely drive through Boranup State Forest on Caves Road south of Redgate.



### 7 Barna Mia Nocturnal Wildlife Experience, Dryandra Woodland 166km, 2-hour drive from Perth

Barna Mia is an animal sanctuary with a difference, where you can see native animals such as bilbies, woylies, quenda and boodies in a natural landscape using specially-placed lights. The site has parking, gravel paths, and an accessible centre and toilets. Tours operate several times per week beginning after sunset. There is a tour fee, with concessions. For more information, contact **Parks and Wildlife Service Narrogin office** on (08) 9881 9200.

 **Ranger's tip** Keep an eye out for the gentle bilby with soft, blue-grey fur, long ears and black and white tail – Australia's answer to the Easter bunny. While in the area, drive the wonderful Darwinia Drive Trail and see the new Gnaala Mia Campground.


### 8 Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, Walpole-Nornalup National Park 431km, 5-hour drive from Perth

The Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk is a great example of how innovative design can deliver user-friendly and accessible facilities that are environmentally sustainable.

The 600-metre structure is inclusive of six 60-metre-long spans with 1:12 gradient. It rises through the spectacular tingle trees taking you into the forest canopy 40 metres above the ground. There are designated parking bays and sealed paths with gradients up to 1:14. The unisex



accessible toilets, shop and education centre are about 50 metres from the parking area. Complimentary wheelchair and stroller hire are available. Admission fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact the **Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk** on (08) 9840 8263 or at [ttw@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:ttw@dbca.wa.gov.au).

 **Ranger's tip** If you are in a wheelchair and have someone with you who can manage the chair on a small number of steps, check out The Ancient Empire for a great experience of the forest from ground level.


While in the area, Coalmine Beach, Circular Pool and Conspicuous Cliffs Lookout near the carpark are worth seeing. The drive along Coalmine Beach Road and Knoll Drive is spectacular from the car.

### 9 The Gap and Natural Bridge, Torndirrup National Park 428km, 5-hour drive from Perth

Lookouts at both The Gap and Natural Bridge provide outstanding views of the Southern Ocean and the coast from Bald Head to West Cape Howe. The new lookouts provide a safe and enjoyable experience of the beautiful and dramatic coast.



Grated floor panels in the state-of-the-art viewing platform at The Gap provide a see-through view of the surging water 40 metres below, delivering a thrilling experience for everyone, including those in a wheelchair. There are designated parking bays and the maximum gradient on the concrete paths is 1:14. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact **Parks and Wildlife Service Albany office on (08) 9842 4500** (see also 'Parks for people: Torndirrup National Park' on page 8).

 **Ranger's tip** Get there early or late in the day to avoid the crowds, giving you a front row view of the ocean.

## 10 Fitzgerald River National Park

505km, 7-hour drive from Perth

Fitzgerald River National Park is one of the most botanically significant national parks in Australia. The central core of the park is designated as 'wilderness' and closed to vehicles for its protection. However, there are opportunities to experience the remote and vast coastal landscape at each end of the park. The south-eastern end of the park is accessed through Hopetoun, providing a stunning sealed drive past accessible recreation sites of Four Mile Beach, Barrens Beach, Barrens Lookout, East Mount Barren and West Beach culminating at Hamersley Inlet. Access Cave Point's amazing lookout via a 600-metre-long sealed assisted access path. Leaving Bremer Bay, drive along the gravel Pabellup Drive at the south-western end of the park to Point Ann. All these sites were redeveloped in the past few years providing designated parking, unisex accessible toilets and sealed paths to lookouts and



*Fitzgerald River National Park*

*Opposite page*

**Above** Bush Ranger Cadets from Albany Secondary Education Support Centre at Barna Mia.

*Photo – Albany Secondary Education Support Centre*

**Far left** Visitors enjoying The Gap and Natural Bridge.

*Photo – DBCA*


**Left** Cape to Cape Track, Sugarloaf Rock, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

*Photo – Ann Storie*

**Inset above** Cave Point Lookout, Fitzgerald River National Park.

*Photo – DBCA*

picnic areas. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact **Parks and Wildlife Service Albany office on (08) 9842 4500**.

 **Ranger's tip** In winter, look out for southern right whales close to shore with their newborn calves.

For a comprehensive listing of accessible sites and facilities in Western Australia, visit the Disability and Inclusion Commission **AccessWA website (accesswa.com.au)**.

## Access to nature trails

WA has many trails in natural areas that can be explored in a car, on foot, in a wheelchair, by bicycle, horse, kayak or with a snorkel. Hidden gems around the State feature gentle sloping trails, accessible fishing platforms and lookouts, short loop trails and plenty of interpretive information to take in as you rest along the way.

### South of Perth

- Crooked Brook Forest near Dardanup
- Big Brook Dam near Pemberton is on the Karri Forest Explorer Drive
- Pupalong Loop Trail at Point D'Entrecasteaux, south of Northcliffe, in D'Entrecasteaux National Park
- Beedelup Falls lookout in Greater Beedelup National Park near Pemberton
- Karri Forest Explorer Drive around Pemberton. Big Brook Dam, Beedelup Falls and Cascades have accessible facilities.
- Heartbreak Drive Trail in Warren National Park
- Darwinia Drive Trail in the heart of Dryandra Woodland near Narrogin

### North of Perth

- Pinnacles View Lookout in Nambung National Park
- Lake Thetis Loop Trail near Cervantes
- Lesueur Walk Trails in Lesueur National Park
- Hamersley Gorge and Weano Gorge in Karijini National Park
- Hawks Head and Ross Graham lookouts and picnic areas in Kalbarri National Park
- Hidden Valley Road through Mirima National Park
- Monkey Mia Reserve in Shark Bay World Heritage Area
- Cape Range National Park and Ningaloo Marine Park
- Millstream Homestead Walk Trail within Millstream Chichester National Park
- Koala Boardwalk Trail and Dwerta Mia Trail in Yanchep National Park

**Lauren Cabrera** is a project officer in DBCA's Publication Information and Corporate Affairs Branch.

For more information visit [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au).