



Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park

The remarkable Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park stretches 120 kilometres between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin with a diverse and captivating landscape of rugged coast, beaches, bushland, caves, forests and historic and archaeological sites.

With its temperate climate of cool winters and mild, warm summers and a plethora of recreational activities on offer, the region has become a popular destination for city dwellers, interstate and overseas visitors who rest in nearby resorts, vineyards, farms and townships.

Recreational activities at the park include abseiling, rock climbing, riding and bushwalking. It's important to note that some activities can be dangerous such as

swimming and surfing due to the large swells, rips and difficult conditions. Abseiling and rock climbing can also be dangerous, especially near the popular Bob's Hollow.

CULTURAL CONNECTION

It is of little surprise to the local Wadandi people that Leeuwin-Naturaliste is the most visited national park in the State. The Wadandi people, one of the fourteen Noongar tribes in the south-west of Western Australia, have an intimate knowledge of the land, its changing seasons and abundant natural foods.

The Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge is a major feature of the park running along the coast between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin, nestled in the land of the Wadandi people.

Aboriginal occupation of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste area dates back at least 40,000

years and is reflected in the names of many nearby sites such as Yallingup, which means 'place of caves', Meekadarabee 'the moon's bathing place' and Boranup 'place of the male dingo'. Nearby Cowaramup is the place of the parrot (*cowra*) or purple-crowned lorikeet, which, according to Noongar lore, brought fire to Earth. Injidup comes from the Noongar word (*inji*) for the lovely red pea flower (*Templetonia retusa*), which grows along the limestone cliffs in winter. To Aboriginal people, this area was a land of plenty, providing local tribes with a rich variety of edible plants, wildlife and fish.

NATURAL WONDER

Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park forms part of an internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot. Additionally, the densely vegetated thickets in rivers, streams and wetland systems of the

Above Canal Rocks.
Photo – David Bettini

Above top right Purple-crowned lorikeet.
Photo – Sallyanne Cousins

Above right Spider orchid.
Photo – Ann Storrie



Discover more about
Leeuwin-Naturaliste
National Park

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



Left Boranup Forest.
Photo – Marc Russo

Above Western ringtail possum.
Photo – Suzanne Trigwell/DBCA

Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge provide refuge for several native fauna species including threatened mammals such as the western ringtail possum, chuditch and brush-tailed phascogale. Thanks to DBCA's *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program, populations of these species are being protected in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park from the threat of foxes.

Western grey kangaroos are plentiful, and brushtail possums make regular visits to forest campsites, especially Point Road.

Fascinating spider orchids are one unusual group of plants in a huge diversity of plant and animal life in the park and the region boasts an incredible 7239 plant species, most of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

Boranup Forest between Caves Road and the coast is home to pale-barked karri trees that reach heights above 60 metres and is the furthest west you can find karri, the third tallest tree in the world. Boranup is a regrowth forest less than 140 years old, grown after timber tycoon Maurice Coleman Davies milled the trees in 1884. Trees from the timber yard were once used to build the iconic Hamelin Bay jetty that could once berth three ships at a time, and the mill itself has recently been developed

into a camping area called Jarrahdene. The campground has an enjoyable interpretative walk through old relics from the era when the mill was functioning (see *Step back in time: Jarrahdene, LANDSCOPE Summer 2019–20*).

LIGHTHOUSES, SHIPWRECKS AND LEGENDS

The first European sailing ship to arrive in the area was the Dutch ship *Leeuwin* in 1622. Almost 180 years later, the famed naval navigator, chart maker and explorer Matthew Flinders sighted the same rocky headland and named it Cape Leeuwin in honour of the Dutch ship.

The next year, French explorer Nicolas Baudin made landfall at Geographe Bay, giving French names to many landmarks along the coast.

A small group of British settlers, including the Molloy, Bussel and Turner families, moved to Augusta in 1831 and set up timber, agriculture and dairy farming industries. The Bussels moved soon after and formed the town of Busselton.

The profitable jarrah and karri industry saw tonnes of wood shipped from Augusta and Hamelin Bay during the timber boom of the 1890s. However, the wild beauty

of the coast between the capes was treacherous for ships. At least 22 ships wrecked at Cape Leeuwin and 12 ships off the most westerly tip of Australia, Cape Naturaliste, before lighthouses were built in 1895 and 1903 respectively.

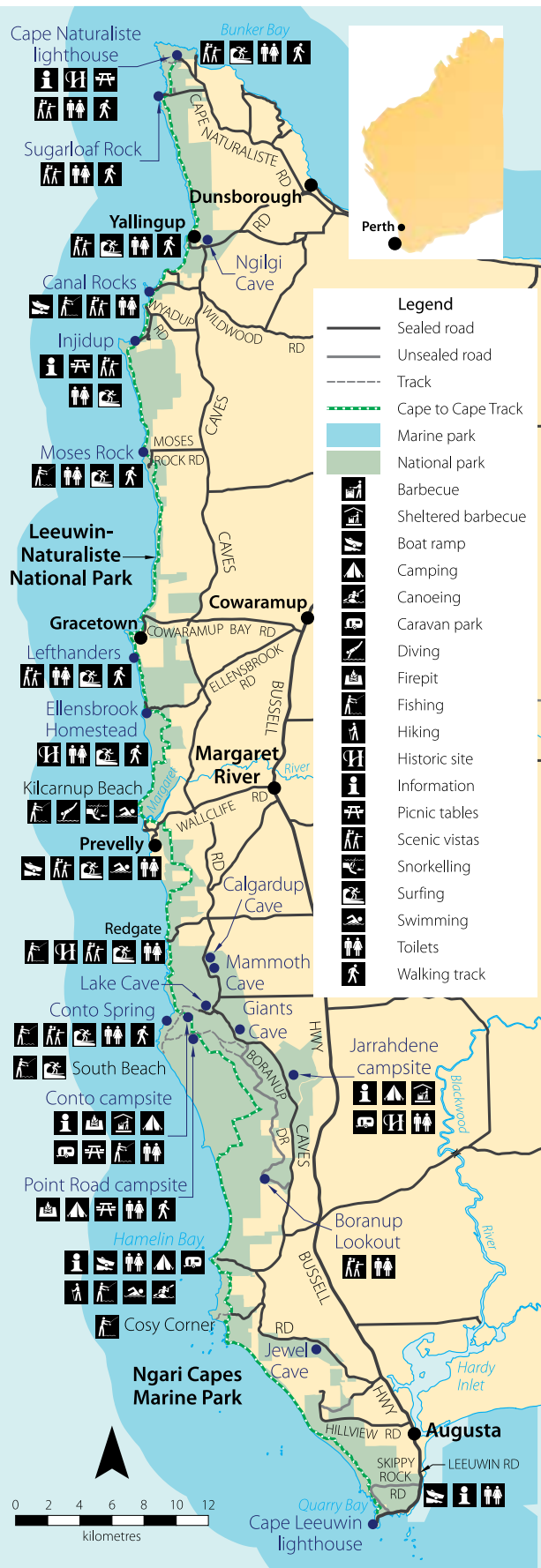
The lighthouses not only continue to provide safe passage for mariners but have become iconic landmarks of the area. Cape Leeuwin is an important collection site for meteorological data and boasts the longest unbroken record of weather data recording in the State since 1897.

CAPE TO CAPE TRACK

The premier walk trail along the Leeuwin-Naturaliste coastline is the Cape to Cape Track, winding 130 kilometres from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin.

The track takes five to seven days to walk and is one of only two long distance walk tracks in the south-west of WA. To the north, a 3.5-kilometre section of the track from Cape Naturaliste to Sugarloaf Rock has been developed to a higher standard to accommodate high visitor use including those with disability and the elderly, and is pram friendly. To the south, the track remains less developed to maintain a more remote experience.

Parks for people Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park



The Cape to Cape Track crosses the Margaret River where it meets the ocean and when the river mouth is open in winter and spring a track diversion is in place as it is difficult and dangerous to cross. The track is pleasantly challenging and takes walkers through breathtaking coastal scenery.

The rich sea life of the Cape to Cape coast is one of the great attractions of the track. From the track you can often see humpback and southern right whales migrating up and down the coast, bottlenose dolphins surfing along the beach, shorebirds such as the red-capped plover and sooty oystercatcher feeding in the shallows, and osprey circling overhead. An amble along the shoreline will reveal crabs, periwinkles and limpets clinging to the rocks with a variety of seagrasses and colourful seaweeds washed up on the beach.

For end-to-end walkers travelling north to south, Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse is an iconic departure point and Cape Leeuwin's tall visage, nestled out on the rocky south-west tip of WA, signals to walkers that they have reached their destination. Visit trailswa.com.au for more information about walking the Cape to Cape Track.

CAVES OF THE CAPE

The limestone of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge is home to caves, with a wide variety of caving experiences on offer, from self-guided, unlit Calgardup or more adventurous Giants Cave, to lit-up Mammoth Cave or guided tours such as Ngilgi, Lake and Jewel Caves.

Swamps and small streams supply water to some caves. Tree roots can make their way into these and form root

mats that in turn may harbour many communities of invertebrate life, some of which may not be found anywhere else in the world.

Fossils and archaeological specimens have been found in some cave deposits, including evidence of Noongar occupation and remains of extinct marsupials, reptiles and birds. The caves' constant temperature, humidity, alkalinity and protection from disturbance means that rich and diverse assemblages of fossil vertebrates have been well preserved and are some of the best examples of any Pleistocene deposits found in Australia.

Above left Cape to Cape Track, near the Wilyabrup Cliffs.

Above Ngilgi Cave.
Photos – Tourism WA

Do it yourself

Where is it? 92 kilometres south-west of Bunbury.

Total area: 19,000 hectares

Facilities: Information, toilets, picnic tables, gas barbecues, campgrounds, walk trails, bike trails, 4WD access, boat ramps, boat and canoe access, beach fishing

Recreational activities: Abseiling, camping, fishing, rock climbing, boating, bushwalking, surfing, swimming, wildlife viewing

Nearest Parks and Wildlife Service office: Blackwood District, 14 Queen Street, Busselton WA
Phone: (08) 9752 5555

Conto campground can be booked online at parkstaybookings.dbca.wa.gov.au