

National parks *in your pocket*

The remoteness of some of Western Australia's parks and reserves is a drawcard for many, but can also pose problems with navigation. The WA Parks Foundation has teamed up with DBCA and BHP to create topographical maps that can be used offline on a smartphone for a growing number of national parks and reserves.

by Ainslie de Vos





Western Australia's spectacular network of terrestrial and marine parks encompasses more than 31 million hectares, including three World Heritage areas. The greater south-west of the State is one of only 36 internationally recognised biodiversity hotspots.

However, navigating around this vast natural estate of extraordinary beauty, biodiversity and cultural heritage can be a challenge in itself.

Recognising the need for park visitors to be able to download topographical maps for off-line use, the WA Parks Foundation developed Smart Park Maps

to assist with preparation, exploration and better experiences in the natural environment.

HOW IT WORKS

The idea is to download the Smart Park Maps onto the Avenza app before heading out. The maps are free to download from the Avenza map store, with the Avenza app freely available for Android or iOS devices.

Provided the maps are downloaded while there is an internet connection, they can be used in real time in the parks without a network connection or roaming charges.

The maps are useful for planning, providing information about accessibility, camping areas, caravan sites and other facilities as well as recreational things to do.

Once in the park, even when out of internet range, the maps can be used by park visitors to pinpoint where they are, see what is nearby, navigate trails, show the roads and campgrounds and find the way to sites of special interest.

The interactive maps enable you to see how far you have hiked or driven, plot photos and drop and move placemark pins with a tap of the finger.

SMART SERIES

Karijini is WA's second largest national park, and was the first park to be mapped in the Smart Park Maps series. Six other

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Main Frenchman Peak, Cape Le Grand National Park.

Photo – Tourism WA

Inset left Smart Park Maps can be used in real time without an internet connection.

Above Kangaroo at Lucky Bay, Cape Le Grand National Park

Photo – Tourism WA



Discover more about the WA Parks Foundation

Scan this QR code or search for the WA Parks Foundation on YouTube.





much-visited national parks have since been mapped, Kalbarri, Cape Range, Stirling Range, Francois Peron, Cape Le Grand and Fitzgerald River.

“I had the pleasure of trialling the new maps for that superb park and was amazed at the ability to track my location even from the bottom of some of Karijini’s most spectacular gorges and rock formations,” the Hon Kerry Sanderson AC CVO, WA Parks Foundation Chair said.

“As well as being helpful from a safety viewpoint, the maps are fun to use.

“Recognising that many of our national parks have little or no mobile reception, we adopted the development of downloadable maps as one of our priority projects and the rollout on a priority list of 15 parks is going well.”

MANY HANDS

The Smart Park Map series has been developed in partnership with DBCA and is sponsored by BHP.

The joint aim is to have geo-referenced maps developed for all of WA’s national parks, now numbering more than 100.

BHP’s Minerals Australia President, Edgar Basto said Smart Park Maps help educate more people about responsible and safe experiences.

“BHP is pleased to partner with the WA Parks Foundation to support

the Smart Park Maps project, which enables an impressive level of detail and streamlined navigation to be shared with visitors while they are exploring some of WA’s most beautiful landscapes,” he said.

DBCA assistant director of Parks and Visitor Services Rod Annear said Smart Park Maps offer an alternative to the traditional park brochure with a map.

“The maps are useful and provide confidence for hikers, campers and park visitors, by providing them with as much information as possible, in real time,” he said.

“Users know what facilities, trails and activities are available when preparing their visit, as well as discovering where the next lookout, toilet, picnic area or swimming hole is as they adventure through the park.”

WA Parks Foundation’s Robin Piesse had the pleasure of venturing out into the wilderness to test the validity of the maps through ground truthing surveys.

“Our plan is to have another three national parks smart mapped within the 2021 financial year—Purnululu, Mount Augustus and Millstream Chichester,” she said.

Above left WA Parks Foundation Chair, Hon Kerry Sanderson AC CVO (centre) and friends, enjoying the Smart Park Maps in Karijini National Park.

Photo – Kerry Sanderson

Above Fitzgerald National Park is the latest park in the map series.

Below Francois Peron National Park.

Photos – Tourism WA



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You can find out more about Smart Park Maps at ourwaparks.org.au/project/smart-park-maps/ and can download the Avenza app from the Apple store or Google Play.

