

TRAILING AHEAD

Intrastate travel has exploded in Western Australia, and people have been exploring every inch of the State in record numbers. There has been a noticeable spike in the popularity of outdoor recreation and the demand has prompted investment in the upgrade and creation of hiking and mountain biking trails.

by Mike Wood







Lately, Western Australians have been out rediscovering their passion for WA's natural places and local attractions (see 'Embracing biophilia: Prescribing nature in a pandemic' *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2020).

The demand for adventure trails has prompted significant investment and intensive community consultation in the creation of trail networks across WA

“Walkers and cyclists from all over Australia and the world, as well as WA, come to experience their unique offering.”

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Main Harewood Trail.

Photo – Mike Wood

Inset Munda Biddi Trail.

Photo – Gerhard Sauracker/Lochman Transparencies

Above The Bibbulmun Track between Peaceful Bay and Conspicuous Cliffs.

Photo – Bron Anderson

Above right WOW Trail near Denmark.

Photo – Cheryl Freak

including in Dwellingup and Collie (see 'Trails firing up Dwellingup' *LANDSCOPE* Winter 2021 and 'Not the Collie you know' *LANDSCOPE* Summer 2020–21).

WA tourism and regional businesses were given support in July 2020 as part of the State Government's \$5.5 billion WA Recovery Plan including \$20 million to be allocated over four years to upgrade and build new walking, cycling and paddle trails and associated site facilities.

Torndirrup, Walpole-Nornalup and Porongurup national parks all have trail opportunities under the plan and a number of trail projects have already been completed in the first year. Attention has now turned to the Great Southern Adventure Trails project.

MAKING WAY

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) and the City of Albany partnered to move the Bibbulmun Track and the Munda Biddi Trail southern terminus to York Street in the middle of Albany. Both trails now have trail markers leading right into the town centre of Albany, which will bring tourism and have economic benefits for the community.

“It was essential to draw attention to these trails as they are such important

assets for Western Australia,” DBCA's Parks and Visitor Services Assistant Director Rod Annear said.

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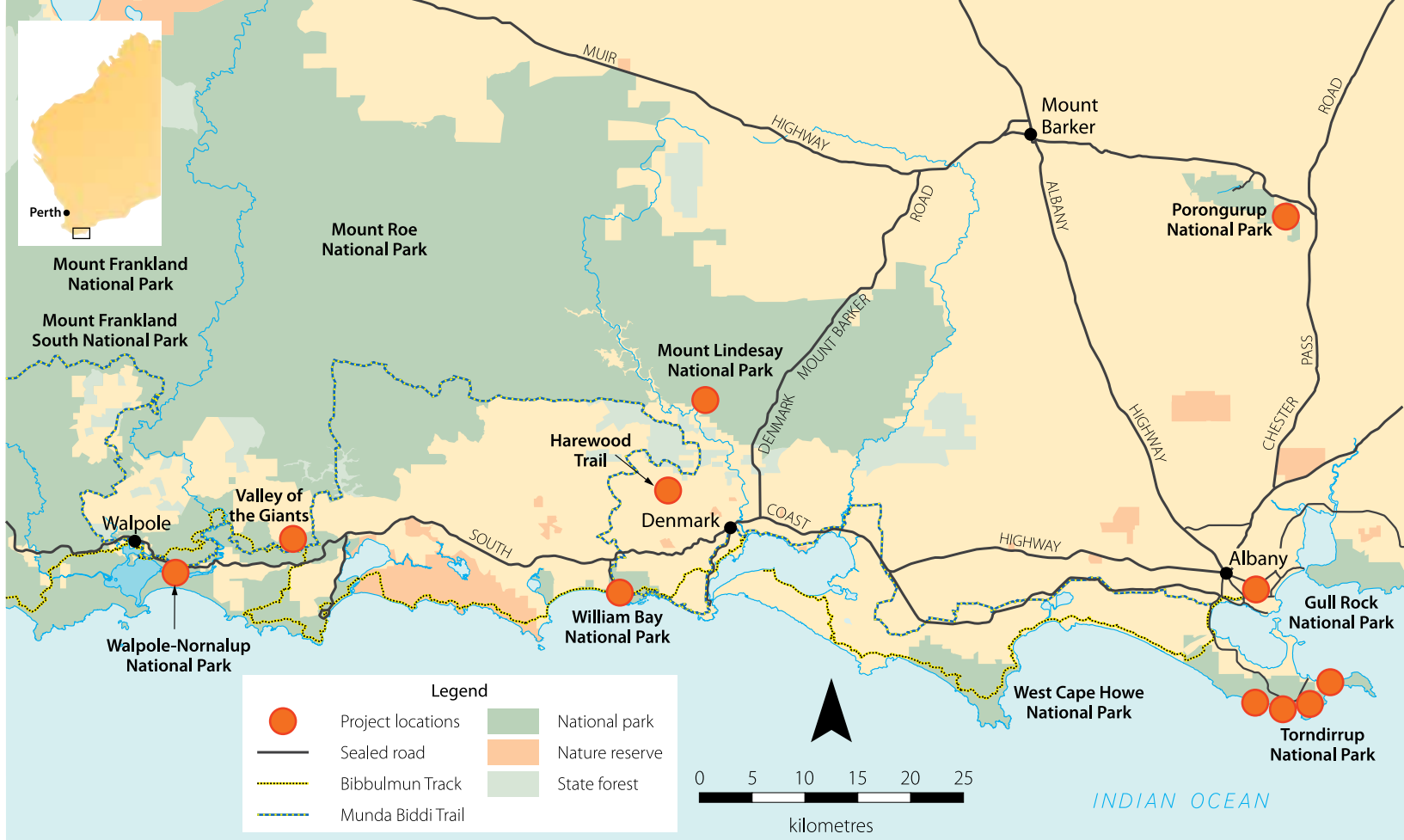
The new southern terminus was officially opened in November 2021.

WILLIAM BAY

A major drawcard of WA's south-west is William Bay National Park, which now has improved road access, a new car park, beach access and amenities (see Parks for people: William Bay National Park, *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2021).

As part of the Great Southern Adventure Trails project, a new shared-use trail has been added from Elephant Rocks to Waterfall Beach. This 2.6-kilometre surfaced trail includes all-mobility access from the Greens Pool carpark to a new lookout above the spectacular Elephant Rocks, accommodating walkers and cyclists and incorporates the Munda Biddi Trail as it heads towards Denmark.

Planning is underway to link this all-mobility trail to the existing Wilderness Ocean Walk from Lights Beach, through the Denmark Wind Farm and on to Ocean Beach, where cyclists could join the trail to Denmark.



Learn about consultation with Traditional Owners

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



Above New southern terminus in the centre of Albany.

Right Cyclists at the start of the new William Bay Trail.
Photos – Jarred Pedro/DBCA





TRAIL EXTENSIONS

A 2.2-kilometre extension has recently been added to the existing out-and-back Harewood Trail off Scotsdale Road creating a three-kilometre loop. This trail is used extensively by the Denmark community, is dog friendly and creates a more convenient and interesting circuit trail highlighting the fungi that are abundant there.

Significant upgrades are underway at the iconic Bald Head Trail on the Flinders Peninsula within the Torndirrup National Park. The challenging 12.5-kilometre return trail traverses the ridge line of the Peninsula, which provides stunning views of the Southern Ocean, around to King George Sound and of the broader City of Albany.

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Above Lights Beach looking east.
Photo – Pippa Engledow

Above right Working on the Harewood Trail.
Photo – Melanie Humphries/DBCA

Left Harewood Trail.
Photo – Bron Anderson/DBCA

Many people travel to Albany specifically to challenge themselves on this spectacular walk trail. However, due to the increased visitation and the exposed nature of the trail, Parks and Wildlife Service staff have noted concerns such as increasing sand blow outs, loss of vegetation caused by wind and water erosion and a widening of the trail surface. These issues have been addressed by the inclusion of low impact stairs and walkway structures to raise the trail above eroded areas and to stabilise its sandy surface.

VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

“One of the most exciting opportunities is a network of trails proposed for the Valley of the Giants, situated in Walpole-Nornalup National Park,” DBCA’s WA Recovery Plan project coordinator, Clinton Hull said.

The trails proposal comprises 38 kilometres of cycling trails and eight kilometres of walking trails. This includes 15 kilometres of shared-use trails which, when combined with the existing Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail that pass through the national park, offer a myriad of trail loops and experiences from Walpole, Nornalup and surrounding areas.



“While this project showcases the unique environment of the region, particularly endemic species like the giant tingle trees, it is an opportunity for local tourism businesses to leverage off the trails and sustainably grow the local economy, providing future job opportunities for local families,” Clinton said.

Extensive community consultation has taken place to ensure the Valley of the Giants trail network offers a diverse range of hiking, trail running, cycling and paddling experiences that showcase the beauty and the uniqueness of the valley.

“Ensuring the trail alignment is sensitive to the landscapes, and protecting the natural environment and its values, is extremely important and is the basis for a high-quality trail,” DBCA’s coordinator of the Recreation and Trails Unit, Kerstin Stender said.

The Kapagup paddle trails in the Walpole-Nornalup Inlets Marine Park explore the inlets and rivers systems. The paddle trails will be accessible via a ramp and floating platform in Nornalup and the monastery landing site will include a new landing structure, stairs and improve site layout.

“Walpole is an incredible place, and as an active community member as well

as a trail user, I am really excited to have these trails built in our region,” said Cherie Smith, head of the Walpole Community Resource Centre.

“I see them as a resource for attracting visitors to the region and a means of creating locally sustainable jobs”.

INTO THE FUTURE

DBCA’s Parks and Wildlife Service is currently building new trail networks in other regional centres such as Dwellingup, Collie, Margaret River and John Forrest National Park. Some local governments such as the Shire of Nannup and the Shire of Plantagenet, are building their own trail networks to add to the offering, with some exclusively focusing on mountain bike networks while others are developing

a mixed offering that also includes walking trails.

Trails really have a bright future in WA and they offer the world a very different and uniquely WA experience.

Top left Stone steps on the Harewood Trail.
Photo – Monkey Rock Trail Co

Above left Frankland River.
Photo – Bron Anderson/DBCA

Above Tingle trees, Valley of the Giants.
Photo – Cliff Winfield

Below Monastery landing, Walpole-Nornalup Inlets Marine Park.
Photo – Bron Anderson/DBCA



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Up to date information on trail projects in WA can be found at projects.trailswa.com.au or exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/connect.