



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Tourism Australia

Ningaloo-Shark Bay

Spontaneous, free and naturally serene.

The intensely surreal hues of the World Heritage listed Shark Bay and neighbouring Ningaloo Reef on Australia's most western edge juxtaposes a myriad of marine blues, desert ochres and sandy whites across more than 2000 kilometres. Life's perpetual motion flows across the open spaces connecting ancient rocks, untouched shorelines, crystal waters and unique plants and animals that make up this world class environment.

There is a striking contrast between the seascape and the colours of the ancient and rugged landscape which offers a feast for the eyes and the mind. From sparkling blue waters in shallow lagoons to vivid white beaches, to spectacular and varied gorges, to red dunes scattered with sage green acacia scrub, wildflowers and spinifex vegetation.

SHARK BAY WORLD HERITAGE

Bordered by a series of islands, the sheltered waters of Australia's largest bay are less than 15 metres deep. The clear waters reveal spectacular sea grass meadows on the bay floor, covering 4,000 square kilometres. The 1,030 square kilometre Wooramel Seagrass Bank is the largest of its type in the world.

Marine life abounds, including humpback whales, loggerhead turtles, dolphins and manta rays, not to mention the world's largest population of the threatened dugong (sea cow). The bay is home to 320 fish, 80 coral and 218 scallop, clam, mussel and oyster species.

NINGALOO REEF HERITAGE

Stretching for almost 300 kilometres and situated unusually close to the continental shelf, Ningaloo Reef is a World Heritage listed coral reef system – the only major coral reef system on the west coast of any continent in the world.

A meeting point of warm tropical and cool temperate water, the reef contains a diverse range of species including more than 250 corals, 500 fish, and 600 different types of molluscs.

WHALE SHARKS

Ningaloo Reef is seasonally home to the majestic whale shark — the largest fish species in the world. Growing up to 18 metres long, each animal's pattern of spots is unique, acting as a 'fingerprint' to identify individual sharks. Snorkellers can swim up to four metres from these gentle, awe-inspiring creatures.

Ningaloo is one of most reliable places in the world to view whale sharks. They arrive shortly after the mass coral spawning in March or April each year and stay in the area until July to take advantage of the abundance of food.

Very little is known about the biology of these animals, including where they live, how they find each other to mate and how long they live for.

MAJESTIC MANTA RAYS

Inhabiting the waters of Ningaloo–Shark Bay all year round, graceful manta rays fly through the ocean waters, performing spectacular loop the loops as they gather food. Growing up to seven metres, manta rays are the largest rays on earth. Unlike sting rays, manta rays do not possess a poisonous barb in their tail and snorkellers and boaters can easily get a close glimpse of these graceful giants.

PROJECT EDEN

Francois Peron National Park, about 80 kilometres from Carnavon, is undergoing a sea change of its own thanks to Project Eden.

Once home to 23 mammal species, introduced predators like cats and foxes reduced the number to just nine. Today the park has successfully reintroduced animals such as the Mallee fowl, greater bilby and woylie, also known as the brush-tailed bettong.

The project to remove all introduced plant and animals species is having other benefits beyond the success of the reintroduced animals. Native plants are looking healthier and the park is seeing stronger and stronger populations of many other native animals and birds.

ANCIENT BEGINNINGS

Geological and climatic history has shaped the landscape where the desert meets the sea. Encounter the earth's history, spanning hundreds of millions of years, revealing major stages in the record of life and significant ongoing geological change. The Cape Range peninsula is characterised by low, steep karst limestone built from the skeletons of marine creatures deposited in ancient tropical seas and eroded over millennia into the majestic shapes of the karst terrain.

More than 130 archaeological sites show three Indigenous groups — the Malgana, Nhanda and Yingkarta — have lived in the Shark Bay area over the past 30,000 years.

Shark Bay is the first recorded landing site of Europeans in Australia. Dutch seaman Dirk Hartog arrived at Cape Inscription in October 1616 after being blown off course en-route to Indonesia. His reports marked the start of several exploration expeditions to the Australian continent.



HELP PROTECT THIS UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

Biodiversity is life — conserving our natural world means clean water, clean air and fertile soil for us all. You can make your own contribution to conserving our natural world when you visit Ningaloo - Shark Bay. Low-impact activities such as bushwalking, cycling and canoeing all provide fantastic opportunities to get off the beaten track and discover new worlds that are like nothing else on earth.

Experience the area's natural values and make an unforgettable contribution to important scientific research:

- Monitor turtle nests along the bays of Ningaloo in December and January every year. For more information go to: www.ningalooturtles.org.au
- Help to manage human-dolphin interaction at Monkey Mia Conservation Park. To volunteer on a range of projects visit: www.dec.wa.gov.au/
- Support Earthwatch oceans research by visiting: www.earthwatch.org/donate



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