



**MY
WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

**By
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WELCOME

I first came to Western Australia as a six year old in 1966. I have seen it change from a quiet backwater to a modern dynamic state but with the changes there have come growing pains.

I miss the old W.A., the place where you could leave the back door open, drive down to the shops, hop out of the car and leave the keys in the ignition and when you got back nothing was missing.

I suppose everything must change but there are still quiet unspoiled places far from the 'madding crowd' where you can still catch a glimpse of the old Australia.

Those are the places I want to celebrate in this book and share with you the wonder and beauty of the world's second largest state.

I have travelled to other states and cities in Australia but nowhere will ever be home for me except W.A. It is the place my heart belongs.



A DRIVE THROUGH THE SOUTH WEST

Apart from the metropolitan area, the south west is the most populous area of Western Australia.

People are attracted by a cooler climate and an abundance of natural beauty.



Lake Clifton and the thrombolites

On the way south from Perth you will pass a chain of lakes where, hidden away, are some remarkable life forms.

They may not look very impressive but they have quietly existed on Earth for an estimated 3,500 million years.

Fresh water thrombolites and their cousins the salt-water stromatolites, were responsible for building up the oxygen content of the atmosphere to about 20% and this allowed the evolution of oxygen breathing species including human beings.



Busselton Jetty

Continue south from Lake Clifton and eventually you will reach the popular seaside town of Busselton.

This was one of the earliest areas settled in the south west and it is now a tourist 'Mecca' during the long hot summer months. The weather here is generally cooler than Perth and there is much to see and do.

Busselton is the gateway to the Margaret River wine region and a great spot to base yourself for exploration further south.

The Busselton jetty was once the longest in the southern hemisphere and there is an excellent underwater observatory at the end.



Canal Rocks

Follow the coast around the edge of Geographe Bay to Cape Naturaliste and then turn south and you will eventually find a side road leading to the very picturesque Canal Rocks.

As you pass Dunsborough, you leave behind the wide sandy beaches stretching north towards Perth and enter a coastline of weathered granite rocks and small sandy bays that continues for many kilometres.

Slightly inland from this coast is perhaps the most popular region for visitors in the whole of the state.



Splendid fairy wren (male)

The area is now referred to as 'The Capes region' and it runs from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin, the most south-westerly point in W.A.

You could spend a couple of weeks exploring this relatively small corner of the state and still not be able to see and do everything that is on offer here.

Margaret River is the centre, the heart, of this area and it is surrounded by beautiful coastline, farmland and wonderful stands of forest.



Bootleg Brewery, Cheese and Chocolate factories.

The wonders of nature aren't the only things that attract people to this area. There are also, any number of man-made attractions including a Lavender Farm, Providore Fine Foods, Cheese Factories, Chocolate Factory, Olive Products, Deer Farm, Micro Breweries, Berry Farm and of course more wineries than you can poke a stick at.

About 50 kilometres south of Margaret River is perhaps our favourite town in W.A.

We have lost count of the times we have visited over the years but we are drawn back again and again.

Augusta was the first town settled in the south-west corner but life was so difficult and it was so remote from the Swan River settlement (Perth), that after a few years it was abandoned.

Eventually new settlers moved in and one of the most attractive towns in the state began to develop.



The Blackwood River flows into the Hardy Inlet and past the small town and on into the Southern Ocean.

Augusta is a 'town at the end of the track', which means it is not a place on the way to somewhere else. If you go to Augusta, it is because that is your intended destination and what a beautiful destination it is.

The sheltered waters of the river and inlet are a magnet for fishermen. Those with larger boats head out into open waters seeking larger fish but care must always be taken as squalls and storms can appear without warning and the south west corner can be an unforgiving shore in the wrong weather.

Natural limestone caves are common here and several are open to visitors. There are over 400 caves between Augusta and Busselton and those that people can enter offer varying levels of difficulty and adventure.

Jewel Cave, Mammoth Cave, Lake Cave, Ngilgi Cave and Bride's cave are just a few examples of caves that you can visit here.



Jewel Cave, Yellow Eyed Pelicans on the Blackwood River and Cape Leeuwin

It would be possible to write an entire book on the region alone, in fact many people have, but we need to move on and see what else this huge state has to offer.

Heading inland towards 'timber country' you will probably pass through the charming little town of Nannup.

The town is the centre of one of the most picturesque regions in the whole of the south west with 85 percent of the shire being covered by forest. The road between Nannup and Bridgetown winds its way over a series of hills and is best seen at the end of winter.



From Nannup the choice is to keep heading east to Bridgetown or turn south towards Pemberton.

We are taking the long-way-round so the next stop will be Bridgetown.

There is a bridge at the southern edge of town but although this is the longest jarrah bridge in the state and is a fine looking bridge, the town wasn't named for this imposing structure.

The name originates with a ship of the same name that carried produce from the area for export.



Freemasons Hotel and the bridge at Bridgetown.

Heading south we reach deeper into the tall timber and by the time we reach Manjimup, we are really in the heart of a timber cutting area surrounded by forests. The Jarrah (an Aboriginal name) was originally called Swan River mahogany by the first settlers. The largest tree in the area is over 90 metres

tall and has a girth of over 11 metres. Some trees may be as much as 1200 years old.

One of the many attractions in the area are the tower trees. These are fire lookout platforms built at the top of some of the tallest trees. The first of them was constructed in 1938.

Timber Park recalls the area's timber cutting history and is an informative look into the past for visitors.



Coronation Park - Manjimup

10 kilometres south of town via the South West Highway is the Diamond Tree. The lookout was constructed in the top of this huge tree in 1940 and is used as a fire watch tower. It is quite a tourist attraction and those brave enough to do so can climb it. I remember going up there as a child and standing on top while the tree swayed in the breeze. Not something I would contemplate doing today. These days, children are not permitted to climb the tree and adults that do so, do it at their own risk.

South of Manjimup the timber continues on over rolling hills. Here and there farms create open spaces among the trees but the predominant impression is trees, trees and more trees.

The next town, Pemberton is a mixed farming and timber town.

A state saw mill was established in 1913 to supply 500,000 sleepers for the trans-Australia railway. By 1939 it was the largest milling complex in Australia and today remains one of the largest in W.A.

The surrounding forest is breath taking. An under storey of ferns and bracken is usually damp and earthy smelling. Smaller trees and bushes clump together beneath majestic karri trees making the forest almost impenetrable.



Pemberton



Travel a little west from Pemberton and you reach a junction. Continuing west will take you back to the Margaret River area and turning south leads to the small town of Northcliffe.

Northcliffe is a bit off the usual tourist routes but tourism is becoming increasingly important to the local economy.

The Pioneer Museum gives an insight into the hardships faced by the group settlers with displays that recall the lives of people who first attempted to settle the area.

Looking at the forests that still remain, it is easy to understand just how enormous the task of settling this part of W.A. must have been.



Tall timber country

From Northcliffe you turn continue south and cross over The Blackwater, a swampy area that used to be very difficult to cross.

At the end of the sealed road is the aptly named Windy Harbour.

Located 27 kilometres south of Northcliffe, this small settlement is a popular holiday retreat which, thanks to its relative remoteness, still retains a laid back easy going atmosphere.

There is a caravan park/campsite, holiday shacks and beaches and not much else.

It is the only place on the coast between Augusta and Walpole that is accessible by sealed road.

For many years it was the favourite holiday retreat for residents of hinterland farming towns but in years gone by it was far harder to reach than it is today.



A collection of wonderful shacks at Windy Harbour



Now you have to re-trace your steps back to Northcliffe before turning east and then south to the last stop on this very brief tour of the south west.

You will travel over rolling hills and through some of the thickest forest in the state before reaching a town that sits on the coast between the tall timber and the sea.

Walpole is the last town in this region before you cross over into the Great Southern.

In 1920 Professor Wilson of Harvard University described the area around Walpole as follows:

"You have got everything here, wonderful forest scenery, mountains, landscapes, seascapes, boating, fishing. It is one of the most beautiful single sights I ever saw in all my life."

It is hardly any surprise then, that this area is dotted with bed and breakfast accommodation, farms stays and many other places for visitors to stay while they explore and immerse themselves in the natural splendour that abounds here.

12km east of the town you can find the turn off to the Valley of the Giants. From here it was a short 6km drive to the Tree Top Walk that really must be on your 'to do' list while you are down this way.

The large span walkways reach 40 metres into the air and you can see the trees from a very different vantage point.



Tree Top Walk

Conspicuous Beach Walpole



Here ends our very brief look at an area that you could easily spend a whole lifetime getting to know properly.

In these few short pages I could never hope to do justice to such a large, diverse part of Western Australia but hopefully this will give you the inspiration to go and see it all for yourself.

There is far more here than I have covered including Mandurah, Bunbury, Donnybrook and many, many more places of interest and natural beauty.

In Part Two we will enter the Great Southern and travel the southern coast before turning north into the southern wheat-belt.

The pictures below are from just a few of the attractions I have not been able to cover above.



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THE END