

Top to tail

DAN AVILA reveals the very best of his big and beautiful home state, Western Australia.

When it comes to choosing a family holiday destination, **Western Australia** offers world-class choices that will please the entire family and encourage engagement with a diverse and pristine environment.

Stretching from the tropics of the north to the forests of the south, here's my pick of the best of the state from top to tail.

El Questro

El Questro is the essence of the East Kimberley and the embodiment of top end adventure. The property, stretching over 283,000 hectares offers all manners of

accommodation, from fastidiously maintained camping and caravan facilities on a river's edge at the El Questro Station, to spacious tented cabins at El Questro Emma Gorge. The beauty of the landscape is most dramatic in the early morning and at sunset so, while others sleep in, we suggest getting up for dawn as the sun paints the Cockburn Range orange. Pack your bathers and take the whole family for a one-hour walk from the eco lodges to the main waterfall and one of the world's prettiest swimming holes. And for those with a 4WD and a sense of adventure, sunset at Branco's Lookout is unmissable.

Broome

Broome is a place so magical that countless holidaymakers return year after year to enjoy its great outdoors. Visiting iconic and much-loved Cable Beach is a must and the beach is patrolled to ensure safe family swimming during the day. The stunning sunsets over low tide and easy beach access for 4WDs make it an ideal family picnic dinner spot. Cap off your visit with a ride on the beach-going camel train and take a camel selfie.

Fossil discoveries are being made in the area with new dinosaur footprints only recently found in Broome. Imagining the prehistoric battles is easy with local Indigenous guide Bart Pigram taking you to see both sauropod and T-Rex-style predator footprints perfectly preserved in the rock and visible at low tide.

Mackerel Islands

Located a short boat ride off the coast of Onslow in the Pilbara region, **Thevenard Island** is part of the **Mackerel Islands** and an unsung treasure that was once a secret hotspot for hardcore recreational fisherman. The island is now beautifully established with

new self-contained cabins dotted throughout the dunes. Setting off from Onslow across the glassy, warm water, there is action everywhere with whales, dolphins, giant billfish and tuna shattering the calm of the mirrored ocean surface. Buggies are waiting to deliver bags to the cabins and families need to bring little more than bathers to this wonderfully thought-out holiday spot. This eco paradise is completely powered by an emission-free solar farm and, if you're lucky, you can find turtles nesting steps from the chalets and baby turtle hatchlings making their mad scramble for the ocean.

Coral Bay

An ideal family holiday location, **Coral Bay** offers a protected bay, ample facilities and activities that range from sedate to adventurous. Its biggest drawcard is the beautiful **Ningaloo Reef** and the spectacular marine life it supports. A great way of being introduced to the reef is by glass-bottom boat, and the **Sub Sea Explorer** is a great way to view giant, friendly spangled emperor and local green sea turtles. For the more adventurous, **Ningaloo Marine Interactions** gets snorkellers up close and personal with





01 Sunset camel ride on Cable Beach 02 El Questro 03 Fremantle Markets 04 Incredible marine life © Tourism WA/Dan Avila Photography. Image 01, 02 & 03 © Dan Avila Photography

the graceful and harmless manta ray that live in and around the calm waters of the reef. Everyone, of every age, has an almost overwhelming reaction when these graceful, otherworldly giants glide by. Before returning to base, the charter boat often stops in to visit 'Big Albert', a giant loggerhead turtle, casually crunching up starfish and molluscs on the sandy bottom.

Perth

The city of **Perth** has transformed itself over the last decade from its reputation as an overgrown country town to a city of excitement and entertainment. With waterfront developments, cultural events, world-class shopping and tours, Perth offers everything you would expect of a major modern metropolis, with the added benefit of the world's best weather. From the **Perth Mint** to **Kings Park** and all manner of attractions on the mighty **Swan River**, Perth offers something for everyone.

Fremantle Markets

The eclectic port city of **Fremantle** has its own distinct vibe. Freo has a strong multicultural population, thriving art scene, and is dominated by the **Cappuccino Strip**, a procession of coffee shops, bar and eateries along its main street. At its historic centre are the **Fremantle Markets**, which have operated in a purpose-built hall since 1898. With more than 150 stalls, the markets have never been

more popular. Fresh fruit and vegetables remain at the heart of the markets while the city's best buskers and street entertainers pull large crowds in the street-side courtyards.

Rottnest

Perth's own holiday island is **Rottnest**. Perfectly set up for bike-riding and exploring its 63 beaches and bays, ferries leave daily from Fremantle to take daytrippers and holidaymakers to the relaxed island named after its population of adorable native quokkas, which are Insta-famous.

Accommodation varies from camping to luxury apartments with boating, fishing and snorkelling all popular activities. Segway tours are popular for those aged 12 and above and free guided walks take visitors into the natural quokka habitat, with joeys often seen peeking out of pouches from March to August.

Margaret River

A small town in the WA's Southwest, but with a big reputation, **Margaret River** pulls large numbers of tourists from around the world to

experience the best in WA fresh produce, some of the world's greatest wines and surf that attracts world champions. Margaret River is a beautiful spot any time of year and the surrounding areas feature some of the state's finest restaurants, farm experiences, forest walks, fishing and surfing. ▲

WA Report Card

Info westernaustralia.com

Getting there Qantas and Virgin offer flights to Kununurra to access El Questro, direct flights to Broome and flights to Onslow. Coral Bay is accessed with flights to Learmonth, near Exmouth. Fremantle is a 30-minute drive from Perth, while Margaret River is 3.5 hours south.

Stay elquestro.com.au

Do toursbroome.com.au

mackerelislands.com.au

coralbay.org subseaexplorer.com.au/coral-bay

fremantlemarkets.com.au

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