

Western Australia

Australia's largest state is often smallest in the minds of walkers but it shouldn't be. In the southwest corner of Western Australia (WA), and in isolated pockets around the rest of the state, there are walking opportunities that rival anything in the rest of the country.

A day on a West Australian walking track is never dull. On the Bibbulmun Karri and Coast walk, you will wander through karri forest that seems to touch the sky and past enormous tingle trees, endemic to just a tiny area around Walpole. Hours later you will be walking along a rock-strewn coast with barely a tree in sight. On the Cape to Cape Track you can look out across the Indian Ocean and hope – often not in vain – to witness a breaching humpback whale. And everywhere you walk there are wildflowers, with spring in the west heralding the finest floral display in the country.

Mountain walkers are better served in eastern Australia or Tasmania, though there are a couple of notable exceptions. The Stirling Range covers just a small area but it offers knife-sharp ridge lines and unexpectedly rugged terrain – the scramble up Toolbrunup Peak will dispel any notion that small doesn't equal challenging. The adjacent Porongurup Range is the geometric opposite, with rounded domes and boulders that balance atop smooth sheets of granite.

This chapter concentrates on WA's southwest region, between Albany and Bunbury, with a few suggestions for walks elsewhere in the state on p301.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Catching a first glimpse of bone-white **Boranup Beach** (p288), before realising you are going to have to walk its sandy length
- Being dwarfed by one of the country's great forests on the **Bibbulmun Karri and Coast** (p290) walk
- Admiring the Devil's Slide from a boulder-top vantage point on **Nancy Peak** (p296)
- Scrambling your way to the summit of **Toolbrunup Peak** (p300)
- Scaling the highest peak in southern WA, **Bluff Knoll** (p299)

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 08

■ www.naturebase.net

■ www.westernaustralia.com

ENVIRONMENT

By any definition WA is large – 10 times the size of the UK, and almost as large as Argentina. It has more than one-third of the Australian coastline, nearly half its islands and, more even than the rest of the country, settlement here is pressed hard against the coast by the large deserts at its back.

For all that, even just the small pocket that is southwest WA boasts remarkable environmental diversity. Behind the heath-lined coast and the thousands of wildflower species (see below) are forests of a type found nowhere else on earth, with the magnificent karri, jarrah and tingle trees endemic to this part of the state. Each of these trees is worth seeing – you can see all of them on the Bibbulmun Karri and Coast walk (p290) – with the karri tree among the most beautiful eucalyptuses in the country, right up there with the snow and ghost gums. For more detailed information about karri and tingle trees, see p295.

While trees and wildflowers are the natural stars of WA's southwest, there is also plenty of wildlife. You won't see the state's more iconic critters (such as the quokka and bilby) on the walks in this chapter, but the tall forests around Walpole do support the state's highest diversity of marsupials. If

you're lucky you might spot a honey possum, a remarkable creature in several ways. This tiny marsupial (not actually a possum) somehow gets all its dietary requirements from nectar and pollen, and in the southwest there are always enough flowers for it to survive. The male's sperm is larger than that of the blue whale, and it has the largest testicles (relative to body size) of any mammal: if men were so well endowed they'd have the equivalent of a 4kg bag of potatoes between their legs.

The heath and its wildflowers are also good for a field guide worth of birds.

INFORMATION

When to Walk

All the walks in this chapter are at their very best in spring, when wildflowers cover much of the state's south. For other factors influencing individual walks, see the relevant When to Walk sections.

Maps

If you are travelling just in the area covered by the walks in this chapter you won't need a complete state map – Quality Publishing Australia's 1:926,000 *South West Western Australia* map is a better option, with a bonus blow-by-blow description of tourist

WILDFLOWERS

The initials WA might just as easily stand for Wildflowers Abound, this state being one of the best places in the world to witness a seasonal native flower show. There are more than 12,000 recorded types of wildflower in WA, including around 4000 in the southwest. And though the marketing machines have chosen an area north of Perth to be a designated 'Wildflower Way', some of the best displays are in walking areas covered in this chapter.

The Stirling and Porongurup Ranges are particularly noted for flowers – more than 1000 flowering plants have been recorded in the Stirlings, including about 80 that are found nowhere else. The Stirling Range is noted for its Darwinias, or mountain bells, which have clusters of bell-shaped flowers enclosed by brightly coloured leaves (or bracts). There are 10 known species of mountain bell, and nine are endemic to the Stirling Range. They grow on slopes above 300m; Bluff Knoll is a great spot to see them.

Another flower with plenty of character, and easily found, is the sundew. These beautiful carnivorous plants have given up on the soil supplying their nutritional needs and have turned instead to trapping insects with sweet globs of moisture on their leaves, and digesting them to obtain nitrogen and phosphorus. On bright days these gluelike globs can be seen glowing in the sun.

If you have come to WA especially to walk among wildflowers, you might also want to check out one of the annual wildflower shows. In late September you'll strike the Albany Wildflower Festival and Walpole Native Orchid Show, while the Porongurup Wildflower Walks are in October.

A couple of good wildflower websites are CALM's **FloraBase** (<http://florabase.calm.wa.gov.au>) and the **Wildflower Society of Western Australia** (<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~wildflowers/manydays.htm>).

features, plus details of camp sites, climate and driving distances. The Bibbulmun Track and its camp sites are also marked. Strip maps for driving routes can be downloaded from the **RACWA** (www.rac.com.au) website.

Most of the maps you will need for walks in this chapter are either in the NATMAP 1:100,000 series or CALM's 1:50,000 series. Special track maps exist for the Bibbulmun and Cape to Cape Tracks. For details of maps covering individual walks, see the Planning section under each walk.

Pick up your maps at the Perth Map Centre (p278) or call ahead to order them from the Albany Map Centre (p289).

Books

A copy of Lonely Planet's *Western Australia* will enhance your travel experience around the state.

Wild Places Quiet Places, published by CALM, is a good and colourful guide to the national parks south of Perth, and it includes all the parks mentioned in this chapter. CALM's two-volume *Family Walks in Perth Outdoors* series describes 104 walks near the capital, most of them less than 10km long. *Bushwalks in the South-West* details 49 walks through WA's forests, along the coast past Esperance, and into the mountains; the background information is excellent.

CALM has also produced what it calls a Bush Books series. Titles of particular interest to walkers include *Common Wildflowers of the South-West Forests*, *Geology & Landforms of the South-West*, *Common Trees of the South-West Forests* and *Common Birds of the South-West Forests*, while *Bush Tucker Plants of the South-West* might help supplement your walking diet.

A Long Walk in the Australian Bush by William Lines offers an account of a walk along the Bibbulmun Track, looking at the much-debated and vexed issue of forestry in Western Australia.

Information Sources

Get started on your visit to WA by checking out the following agencies:

CALM (☎ 08-9334 0333; www.naturebase.net) Website contains details of individual parks, and the online Nature-Base Bookshop.

Discover West Holidays (☎ 1800 999 2435; www.discoverwest.com.au) Offers a state-wide hotel booking service.

Western Australian Visitor Centre (☎ 1300 361 351; www.westernaustralia.net)

Park Fees & Regulations

A day pass (car/motorcycle \$9/3) is required for Porongurup and Stirling Range National Parks, but entry is free to all other parks in this chapter. The All Parks Annual Pass (\$51 per vehicle) gives you access to all WA parks for a year, while the Holiday Pass (per vehicle \$22.50) offers the same benefit for four weeks. Passes can be purchased at CALM Outdoors (p278) or other CALM offices.

See the Planning sections of individual walks for details of fire restrictions; for information on Total Fire Bans, see p24.

Guided Walks

Bibbulmun Track Foundation (☎ 08-9481 0551; www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au) A selection of walks along the Bibbulmun Track; can also arrange private guided walks for groups.

Environmental Encounters (☎ 08-9306 1810; www.environmentalencounters.com.au) Walks on the Cape to Cape Track and in the Stirling and Porongurup Ranges.

Inspiration Outdoors (☎ 08-9378 2523; www.inspirationoutdoors.com.au) Seven-day Cape to Cape Track walk and a variety of walks along sections of the Bibbulmun Track.

Leeuwin Naturaliste Treks (☎ 08-9757 1021; www.moonline.com.au/treks) One- to four-day treks along the Cape to Cape Track.

Wildside Walks (☎ 08-9844 8091; www.wildsidewalks.com.au) Albany-based company offering short walks along the Bibbulmun Track.

World Expeditions (☎ 1300 720 000; www.worldexpeditions.com.au) Seven-day Bibbulmun Track (including a day in the Stirling Range) and four-day Cape to Cape Track walks.

GATEWAY Perth

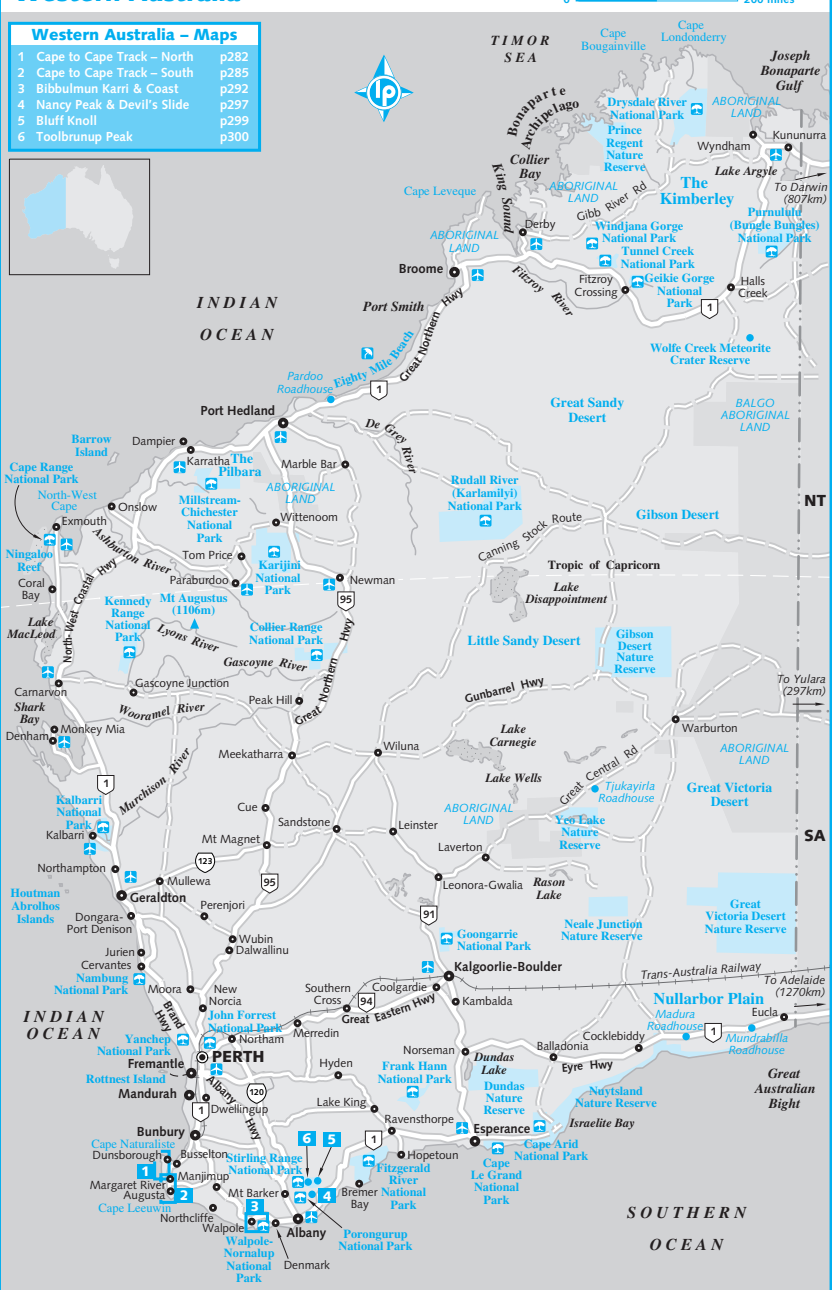
☎ 08 / pop 1.4 million

With its nearest large city, Adelaide, being around 2700km away, Perth is often called the world's most isolated city, and it is a place of beaches and bush as much as buildings. It is also within a day's drive of the five major walks described in this chapter.

INFORMATION

Bibbulmun Track Foundation (☎ 9481 0551; www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au; 1st fl, 862 Hay St) Make a stop here (above Mountain Designs) if heading out on the Bibbulmun Track.

Western Australia



CALM Outdoors (☎ 9399 9746; 40 Jull St, Armadale; ☎ 9am–2pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri) Buy park passes here and gather literature on parks and walks. It's convenient if you are heading out to Albany or the Stirling Range but less so (25km from the city) if you are getting organised in Perth.

Perth Map Centre (☎ 9322 5733; 900 Hay St) Call ahead to be sure maps will be in stock (and you are better off folding your own).

Western Australian Visitor Centre (☎ 1300 361 351; www.westernaustralia.net; Albert Facey House, cnr Forrest Pl & Wellington St) Books tours and you can flick through brochures over a coffee in the café attached.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

Perth's outdoor enclave, where you will find **Paddy Pallin** (☎ 9321 2666), **Mountain Designs** (☎ 9322 4774), **Mainpeak** (☎ 9322 9044) and **Kathmandu** (☎ 9226 0562), is on central Hay St, between King and Milligan Sts. You can buy groceries as you leave town at **Woolworths** (Murray St Mall), just 100m from the bus station. **City Provisions** (868 Hay St), among the outdoor stores, has a small but excellent range of groceries, especially if your bush palette comes down on the gourmet side.

SLEEPING & EATING

Pinched between the Swan River and the airport, the somewhat cramped **Central Caravan Park** (☎ 9277 1704; www.perthcentral.com.au; 34 Central Ave, Ascot; powered sites for 2 \$30, cabins from \$88; ☎ ☎) is the closest camping option to the city.

Grand Central Backpackers (☎ 9421 1123; grandcentralbp@hotmail.com; 379 Wellington St; dm/s/d \$20/38/52, d with bathroom \$60) has rooms fit for battery hens, and was seemingly furnished by the early settlers, but is convenient to everything as its name suggests.

Governor Robinsons (☎ 9328 3200; www.governorrobins.com.au; 7 Robinson Ave, Northbridge; dm/d/tr \$20/55/75, d with bathroom \$65; ☎) is more like a communal B&B, with leather sofas, a large dining table and a cottage-style kitchen, quietly removed from Northbridge's scruffier edges.

Hotel Northbridge (☎ 9328 5254; 210 Lake St, Northbridge; budget s/d \$45/55, d \$120–170; ☎ ☎) has a country-pub exterior, but is like a boutique hotel inside. The guest veranda has perfect city views. The **restaurant** (lunch \$10, mains \$20–30; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) is a cut above the usual pub fare, getting its salmon from Tasmania and cheese from Gorgonzola.

Settle into a second home at **Pension of Perth** (☎ 9228 9049; www.pensionperth.com.au; 3 Throssell St,

Northbridge; s/d \$115/135; ☎ ☎ ☎), overlooking leafy Hyde Park. Exquisitely furnished and sociable, it has discounts over winter and for extended stays.

The converted, self-contained apartments at **Riverview on Mount Street** (☎ 9321 8963; www.riverview.au.com; 42 Mount St; ste Sun–Thu \$85–99, Fri & Sat \$105–115; ☎ ☎) have the best address in town, eyeballing the city high-rises but with Kings Park as their backyard. Front rooms overlook the Swan River.

At **No 44 King St** (44 King St; breakfast \$9–15, mains \$18–32; ☎ 7am–late) you can sift through a global list of coffees, cakes and wines, or settle in for a large breakfast or classy dinner from a menu that changes weekly.

Expect more than lager louts at the **Belgian Beer Café Westende** (cnr Murray & King Sts; mains \$23–32; ☎) lunch & dinner), where the menu includes warm goat's cheese and slipper lobster; you will love the food even if you hate Brussels.

Perth is closer to parts of Asia than it is to Sydney, and this is reflected in the number and variety of Asian restaurants around the city. **Sparrow** (434a Williams St, Northbridge; mains \$4–7.50; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon–Sat) is a popular Indonesian joint with the cheapest prices this side of Denpasar, while **Lido Restaurant** (416 William St, Northbridge; mains \$8–15; ☎) lunch & dinner) straddles the Vietnam/China food border, making it possible to follow rice-paper rolls with any number of sweet-and-sour dishes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The domestic and international terminals of **Perth Airport** (☎ 9478 8888; www.perthairport.net.au) are 10km and 13km east of the city respectively. **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) and **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) operate regular flights between Perth and other Australian cities. **Skywest** (☎ 1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au) flies from Perth to Albany (\$120, one hour, one to four daily) and Darwin (\$260, three hours, daily). The **Perth Airport City Shuttle** (☎ 9277 7958; www.perthshuttle.com.au) provides transport from the airport to the city centre, hotels and hostels (domestic/international terminal \$12/15).

Bus

For masochists, **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) buses leave from the Wellington St bus station for Darwin (\$680,

60 hours, one daily). The intrastate bus services of use to walkers are **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) and **South West Coach Lines** (☎ 9324 2333); the latter departs from a bus terminal on Mounts Bay Rd.

Car

It is mostly the usual suspects of car-rental agencies, except for local company Bayswater. All of the following, except Bayswater and Apex, also have an airport office.

Airport Rent-A-Car (☎ 1800 331 033; www.airportrentacar.com.au) Is at the airport.

Apex Rent-A-Car (☎ 1800 777 779; www.apexrentacar.com.au; 141–151 Adelaide Tce)

Avis (☎ 9325 7677; www.avis.com.au; 46 Hill St)

Bayswater Car Rental (☎ 9325 1000; www.bayswatercarrental.com.au; 160 Adelaide Tce)

Budget (☎ 9480 3111; www.budget.com.au; 960 Hay St)

Europcar (☎ 9226 0026; www.deltaeuropcar.com.au; 3–5 Gordon St, West Perth)

Hertz (☎ 9321 7777; www.hertz.com.au; 39 Milligan St)

Thrifty (☎ 9464 7444; www.thrifty.com.au; 198 Adelaide Tce)

Train

Great Southern Railway (☎ 13 21 47; www.gsr.com.au) operates the *Indian Pacific* between Perth and Adelaide (seat/sleeper/gold-class sleeper \$310/960/1250, 43½ hours) and Sydney (seat/sleeper/gold-class sleeper \$515/1250/1640, 70 hours) twice a week. Trains are of no use to walkers for getting around the areas covered in this chapter.

LEEWIN–NATURALISTE NATIONAL PARK

CAPE TO CAPE TRACK

Duration	7 days
Distance	133.5km
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Cape Naturaliste
Finish	Cape Leeuwin
Nearest Towns	Dunsborough (p280), Augusta (p281)

Transport

Summary WA's premier coastal walk, with a tantalising mix of walking, waves and whales, and a pair of lighthouses at the start and finish posts.

WA has the longest coastline in Australia, so it is only right that you should take the time to explore it. For walkers, the Cape to Cape Track is the showpiece coastal walk in the state, connecting Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin (and lighthouses) in the state's far southwest. You will pass over high cliffs, through a variety of bush, across long, isolated beaches and through the westernmost stand of karri forest in the country.

Most of the walk falls within Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park, which runs the length of this coast – sometimes it is nearly as narrow as the path, other times it butterflies inland for up to 5km.

Facilities are good along the track: you can throw down your tent in dedicated walker camp sites or break it up with stops in towns such as Yallingup and Prevelly Park. All the camp sites along the track have toilets and picnic tables. And all except Point Rd also have water tanks, though you shouldn't rely on them entirely – there have been instances of tanks being stolen.

There are additional accommodation options to those listed here if you are prepared to do some extra walking (or can arrange a pick-up from an accommodation provider). All places listed in the walk description are within about 1km of the track.

ENVIRONMENT

The dominant feature of the Capes region is the Leeuwin–Naturaliste Ridge, composed of 600-million-year-old granite overlaid with relatively new limestone (about two million years old). The ridge parallels the coast, rising up to 200m, and is a constant sight as you walk the Cape to Cape Track; there are around 300 caves along the ridge.

On the windswept western slope of the ridge, the two main vegetation types are woodlands of aromatic peppermint gums and colourful banksias, and low heathland with wattles, honey-myrtles (bottlebrush), coastal daisy bushes, pimelias and other natives. On the eastern side, which you venture across to on Day 6, there are small areas of jarrah and marri eucalyptus forest and, at Boranup, the westernmost occurrence of karri forest. This forest, less than 100 years old, is secondary regrowth after clear-felling occurred here from the 1880s and 1913.

Birds are a feature of the coast – expect to see splendid fairy-wrens, western rosellas

and '28' parrots. Snakes, of which this coast has three species, are also fairly common. Tiger snakes (black) and dugites (brown) should be given a wide berth – tiger snakes can be aggressive – while a more welcome sight is the mottled and nonvenomous carpet snake. Walk brochures describe the latter as a 'rare treat', though during our research they were abundant, including a nest of six large carpet pythons beside the track near Willyabrup Cliffs. Play safe, and give all snakes a wide berth.

PLANNING

When to Walk

The track can be walked year-round, though one of the best times is during the whale migration: humpback whales frequent the area from around October to December (which coincides with a great wildflower display); southern right whales can be seen between June and September. The presence of the warm Leeuwin Current offshore makes winters here relatively mild and feasible for walking, though river crossings may be tricky. This coast, particularly Dunsborough and Prevelly Park, is a party favourite among school leavers so, unless you find drunk 17-year-olds charming, you might want to avoid late November and early December.

Maps & Books

The Cape to Cape Track is covered by two NATMAP 1:100,000 topographic maps – *Busselton* and *Leeuwin* – though neither shows walking tracks. In mid-2006 CALM issued a new two-part waterproof map covering the length of the track. These are available at the online **NatureBase Bookshop** (www.naturebase.net), operated by CALM. Another option is to buy the *Cape to Cape Track Guidebook* by Jane Scott and Ray Forma, which has copious track information and 19 detailed maps.

Information Sources

For information on Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park and the Cape to Cape Track, contact the **CALM Busselton office** (☎ 08-9752 5555; 14 Queen St). **Friends of the Cape to Cape Track** (www.capetocapetrack.com.au) maintains an excellent website, with details of accommodation options, guided walks, a general map of the track and a FAQ section filled with useful tidbits.

Permits & Regulations

Campfires are not allowed along the track, so carry a fuel stove.

NEAREST TOWNS

Dunsborough

☎ 08 / pop 1600

With its beaches protected by Cape Naturaliste, Dunsborough is one of southern WA's top holiday spots, even though it feels a bit like a beachside suburb. The **visitor information centre** (☎ 9755 3299; Naturaliste Tce) has a free accommodation booking service.

SLEEPING & EATING

Dunsborough Lakes Holiday Resort (☎ 9756 8300; Commonage Rd; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$20/24, cabins \$65-175; ♿) is a large, cabin-dominated park on the town's eastern edge – the only things small here are the golf (mini) and tennis (half-court).

The dorms at **Dunsborough Inn** (☎ 9756 7277; www.dunsboroughinn.com; 50 Dunn Bay Rd; dm \$23, s/d \$25/50; ♿) are a bit cell-like but it is a case of location, location, location, with the hostel smack-dab in the centre of town.

Dunsborough Rail Carriages & Farm Cottages (☎ 9755 3865; www.dunsborough.com; Commonage Rd; carriages \$90-100, cottages \$125-160; ♿) is set among red gums on a 104-acre property just east of town. There are resident, free-ranging roos, and lemon trees and herb gardens to help spruce up your meals in the self-contained cottages.

If you want some pre- or post-walk pampering (or the nearest access to Cape Naturaliste), try the Capes' newest slice of luxury, **Quay West Resort Bunker Bay** (☎ 9756 9100; www.mirvachotels.com.au; Bunker Bay Rd; studio from \$210, 1-bedroom villa from \$280; ♿ ♿ ♿), 12km west of Dunsborough. There is a day spa and wildflower gardens, and it is a 3km walk along the coast to Cape Naturaliste lighthouse.

Stock up for the walk at **Coles** (Dunsborough Centrepoint, Dunn Bay Rd) or **Dewsons** (cnr Dunn Bay Rd & Naturaliste Tce).

Groovy **artèzen** (234 Naturaliste Tce; breakfast \$9-17, mains \$14-30; ♿) breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Wed-Sat), on the main shopping strip, has a wide-ranging menu, from *pannini* to local venison and fish, all cooked to perfection.

If you (literally) have a healthy appetite, **Sonja's** (2/1 Naturaliste Tce; salads \$5-10, burgers \$8-9) is for you, with tofu and tempeh burgers, free-range chicken rolls and a range of salads.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Dunsborough is 260km south of Perth and 24km west of Busselton. **South West Coach Lines** (☎ 9324 2333) and **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) have daily services between Perth and Dunsborough (\$31, 4½ hours).

Augusta

☎ 08

Australia's most southwesterly town is the literal end-of-the-road, which seems to isolate it from the hype of nearby Margaret River. The **visitor information centre** (☎ 9758 0166; cnr Blackwood Ave & Ellis St) has a range of brochures, including a free walking trail guide of the town.

SLEEPING & EATING

Grassy and shaded by melaleucas, **Turner Caravan Park** (☎ 9758 1593; turnerpark@westnet.com.au; 1 Blackwood Ave; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$20/23) has good views across to the mouth of the Blackwood River.

Baywatch Manor Resort (☎ 9758 1290; www.baywatchmanor.com.au; 88 Blackwood Ave; dm \$23-25, s \$45-80, d \$55-80; ♿) is faultlessly clean and the staff are particularly helpful – two reasons it has been named YHA Australian hostel of the year for most of the last decade. Walkers can request foot spas. Two doors down, **Georgiana Molloy Motel** (☎ 9758 1255; www.augustaaccommodation.com.au; 84 Blackwood Ave; s \$85-105, d \$89-115) is just as neat, with larger-than-average, self-contained rooms.

SupaValu (Blackwood Ave), opposite the hotel, has sufficient supplies for a week on the trail, while **Squirrels** (Blackwood Ave) is that unlikely mix of fish 'n' chipper-cum health-food store, with pasta, rice, couscous, nuts and dried fruit lined up in bulk bins.

At the **Augusta Hotel** (Blackwood Ave) there is a trio of eating options: **Café Cumberland** (mains \$22-29; ♿) lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat), grill-your-own **Jimmy's Bar & Grill** (mains \$14-18; ♿) dinner Fri-Mon) and counter meals with a grandstand view of the wide Blackwood River.

You had better go hard on the steaks, pastas and couscous veggie stacks at **Colourpatch Café** (98 Albany Tce; mains \$19-28), since it is billed as the 'last eating house before the Antarctic'. Service can be suitably glacial.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Augusta is 325km south of Perth, along the Bussell Hwy. **South West Coach Lines** (☎ 9324

2333) and **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) have daily services between Perth and Augusta (\$40, six hours).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Cape Leeuwin lighthouse is 8km from Augusta, along Leeuwin Rd. Cape Naturaliste lighthouse is around 13km from Dunsborough, along Cape Naturaliste Rd. **Augusta Taxis** (☎ 0417 914 694) will transport you between Augusta and Cape Leeuwin for around \$15. **Dunsborough Taxis** (☎ 9756 8688) can take you to Cape Naturaliste from Dunsborough for around \$20. If you want to shuttle between the two towns to use the taxi services, Transwa buses run twice daily (once on Saturday) between Augusta and Dunsborough (\$13).

If you've some excess energy at the start, you can walk to Naturaliste lighthouse from Dunsborough, following the 13.5km Meelup Trail through Meelup Beach Eagle Bay and Bunker Bay. You could walk this and reach Mt Duckworth camp site in a day.

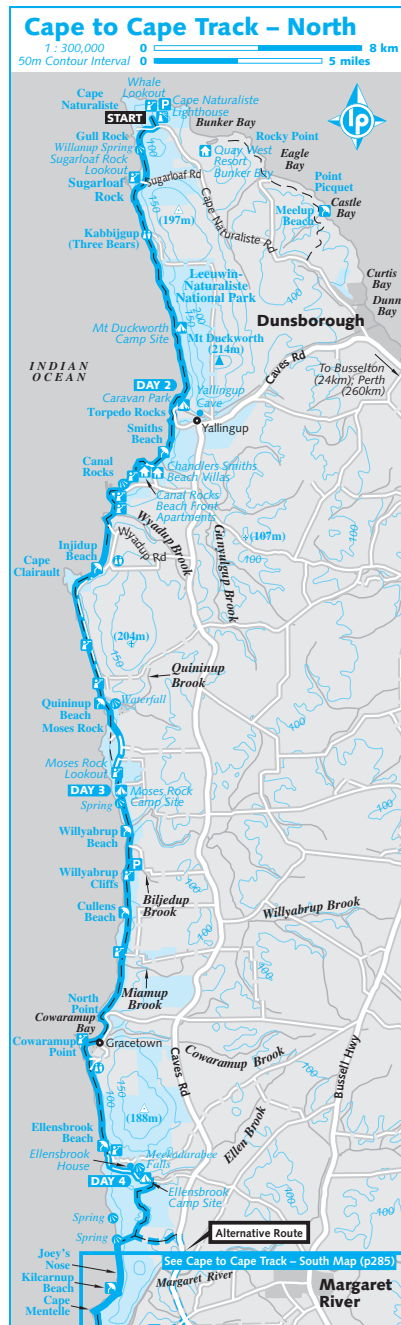
THE WALK

Day 1: Cape Naturaliste to Yallingup

3½–4 hours, 13.7km

From the lighthouse car park, begin along the sealed path southwest to a track junction. The track turns left but if you are walking in winter or spring, it is worth first checking out the track to the right, which leads 600m to a cliff-top **whale lookout**. You can dump your pack at the track junction (there is a good hiding tree a few steps south of the junction). After turning left, cross West Coast Rd. The track here is wide and sandy, passing through low heathland (at the time of research this section was being upgraded to allow wheelchair access through to Sugarloaf Rd).

After 45 minutes the track turns west, paralleling and then crossing Sugarloaf Rd. As you walk on, there are good views back along the coast you have just walked but barely seen. In about five minutes you reach a junction. The track heads left but it is worth dumping your pack and taking the short side track to the right to **Sugarloaf Rock lookout**. The rock itself is home to the most southerly breeding colony of red-tailed tropicbirds in Australia – the bird is distinguished by its two long, red tail streamers that are almost twice its body length.



Back on the track, long vistas soon open up to Yallingup, spilling down the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, and the sandy tip of Cape Clairault. The track generally follows the weathered edge of the low limestone cliff until Kabbijgup Beach (better known to surfers as Three Bears) comes into view. Near the Kabbijgup car park (with toilet), take the steps down onto **Three Bears** (45 minutes from Sugarloaf Rd), ploughing through the soft sand until near the beach's end. Here, the track climbs to the cliff top, following it for around 30 minutes before joining a 4WD management track.

About 1¼ to 1½ hours from Kabbijgup car park, with the knee-high heath having yielded to thick tea-tree, you pass Mt Duckworth camp site, set back from the track. Continue along the sandy track, taking the path straight ahead where the track turns inland. Cross a gully and ignore a sandy track to the right, climbing and following the coastline to Rabbits car park. Take the steps down onto the beach and grind your way to its southern end. Cross the limestone outcrops to a second small beach, where you climb the stone steps up into **Yallingup** (45 minutes from Mt Duckworth camp site).

YALLINGUP

☎ 08 / pop 300

Better known as 'Yals', Yallingup is more famous for its waves than its walks, but it is a convenient stop to ease you into the track. For a town that occupies a fair chunk of the ridge, there is little actually here.

Yallingup Beach Holiday Park (☎ 1800 220 002; www.yallingupbeach.com.au; cnr Yallingup Beach & Valley Rds; sites for 2 \$20-29, cabins \$50-125), on the foreshore, claims itself as the 'best located park in Western Australia', which is only a minor exaggeration. Prices go silly (sites \$45, cabins up to \$225) during school holidays and long weekends.

Seashells Caves House (☎ 9755 2131; www.seashells.com.au; Yallingup Beach Rd; d \$175-495, mains \$18-35) is about 800m inland and was completely refurbished in 2005. All (but one) rooms have a spa, and there is a restaurant and bar.

Step from the surf to surf 'n' turf at **Surfside Café** (Valley Rd; lunch \$10-21, dinner \$16-30; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Thu-Mon) – the only dining option by the beach. It also does battered takeaways in another part of the building.

SURF TALK

You are going to see more surfers than walkers on the Cape to Cape Track, so it is handy to know a little about the local waves. There are more than 20 noted surf breaks between Cape Naturaliste and Redgate Beach, while Contos and Boranup Beaches offer good waves further south. The following is a rundown of some of the major breaks you will walk past:

- **Three Bears** – One of the best, with three waves (Papa Bear, Mama Bear and Baby Bear) offering left and right breaks.
- **Yallingup** – Its long breaking lefts are a favourite among Malibu riders, while the right break offers consistent barrels.
- **Supertubes** – Fast right-hand tubes over a shallow reef at the northern end of Smiths Beach.
- **Guillotine** – Fast-breaking lefts and rights over a shallow onshore reef at the southern end of Cullens Beach.
- **North Point** – World-class right hander that is only for the brave: the entry is by leaping off the North Point headland. If the swell is up you will see some amazing waves as you round this point near Gracetown.
- **Lefthanders** – As the name suggests, a left break over a shallow reef. Very popular.
- **Margaret River Mouth** – One for the beginners, offering a gentle beach break. Popular spot for surf schools.
- **Margaret's Main Break** – The wave that put Margaret River on the surf map, with an ever-reliable left break.

For a more comprehensive rundown on the surf, find yourself a copy of the *Yallingup-Margaret River Surf Map*, usually available at Yallingup Beach Holiday Park.

The **general store** (Caves Rd) is about 1km from the track, with a rudimentary selection of supplies – OK if you don't mind carrying tins.

Day 2: Yallingup to Moses Rock Camp Site

5–6½ hours, 20.3km

Return to the top of the stone steps, turning south along the sealed path, which in turn swings right at the road, following beside it to a car park. Take the signposted Torpedo Trail, passing Torpedo Rocks below. Soon after, look for a stepped path to the right, which leads down onto **Smiths Beach**. Walk the length of the beach, then climb to a sealed road (45 minutes to one hour from Yallingup). The mustard-coloured buildings here are the **Canal Rocks Beach Front Apartments** (☎ 08-9755 2166; www.canalrocks.com.au; Smiths Beach Rd; studio \$195-220, 2br unit \$210-305), where all apartments have a spa, and the front ones have terrific beach views – you can wake to the sight of surfers on Supertubes. About 300m east, and staggered up the hill, all units at **Chandlers Smiths Beach Villas** (☎ 08-9755 2062; www.chandlerssmithsbeach.com.au;

Smiths Beach Rd; 2br units \$110-180) have views along the coast to Sugarloaf Rock. At the time of research a new resort was being constructed next door to the Beach Front Apartments. It was expected to open in late 2006 and plans included a few camp sites.

Turn right at the road above the beach and walk to its end. From here the track snakes through some large granite boulders to a short, stiff climb skirting a rocky outcrop. Resume the snaking course, this time through heathland, to a **lookout** with a view across to Canal Rocks. Five minutes on, a signposted side track to the right leads 100m to a permanent **spring** seeping from a limestone outcrop.

Cross Canal Rocks Rd, contouring and then climbing above it to **Rotary Lookout** (30 minutes from Smiths Beach), which stares down onto Canal Rocks and back to Sugarloaf Rock. A short way past the lookout, the trail descends again towards the coast, with great views of Cape Clairault and Injidup Beach ahead. Cross Wyadup Brook and follow a fence around the point. Cross Wyadup Rd and wander through grassland and heath to drop onto **Injidup Beach** either just before

or just after Mitchell Rocks (45 minutes to one hour from Rotary Lookout).

Leave the beach soon after you pass below a lookout platform, turning up a vehicle track and then immediately right onto a path that tunnels through the tea-trees. At the head of a long flight of steps, turn right (ignoring a set of long steps that continue up southeast into private property) and later right again onto a sandy 4WD track. Rounding the crest of Cape Clairault, you come to a set of gates. Take the track to the left (with the darker sand) to be greeted by a new view: Gracetown and Point Cowaramup away on the southern horizon.

As the track continues along the cliffs, ignore a pair of roads heading inland. Fifty metres past the second road, turn right onto an overgrown walking track (it quickly gets better). This wanders atop the cliffs, rounding a headland with several **lookouts** back onto the weathered coast. At the next track junction, circle what looks like a tea-tree roundabout and continue straight on. Soon you rejoin the main vehicle track, turning right to enter a hollow behind the dunes.

At the car park, walk west down a track to **Quininup Beach** (1½ to two hours from Injidup Beach). Crossing Quininup Brook (or its sandbar), look upstream and you will see the red walls of a **waterfall**. A track of sorts goes up the south side of the brook to the falls, though try to stay off the darker sand, which is sacred to local Aboriginal people.

Around 100m past the brook, the track turns up into the dunes (including one steep sand climb that will shred your calves) and onto solid ground atop the cliffs. The national park is very narrow at this point (note the house just away to the east).

Round a couple of gullies and pass through Moses North car park (with toilet) to begin a gentle climb. Switching across to an old vehicle track you soon turn inland, leaving the track and joining a walking trail. Cross a couple of 4WD tracks to ascend to the platform at **Moses Rock Lookout** (45 minutes to one hour from Quininup Beach). Over the ridge to the south are the grooved Willyabrup Cliffs, popular with climbers, and a closer-looking Gracetown.

Climb on, before descending gradually into a thick archway of tea-trees. Just beyond the next road is Moses Rock camp site, with tent areas burrowed into the tea-trees.

Day 3: Moses Rock Camp Site to Ellensbrook Camp Site

5½–6 hours, 21.5km

Begin west from the camp site, turning south after 100m to descend to a small permanent spring. About 200m on, as the 4WD track swings inland, take the faint path that continues along the coast to **Willyabrup Beach** (30 minutes from camp). Cross Willyabrup Brook on the large stepping stones, turning off the beach 100m beyond. Climb to a car park and turn right along a 4WD track. At the next road junction, turn right and walk 200m to where a set of wheel tracks heads away south through the long grass – this short section can get very overgrown so be wary of snakes.

Skirting the park boundary fence, you begin to get good, close views of **Willyabrup Cliffs**. Descend steeply to cross Biljedup Brook, with an equally steep climb back out, crossing a road to reach a lookout platform. (If you turn right at the road you will come to Willyabrup car park with toilet and water tank; the tank is used by climbers also, so don't rely on it for water.) Continue south through the heath for about 25 minutes, descending a set of log steps to **Cullens Beach**. The marked track runs behind the foreshore dunes but you can just as easily wander along the beach.

Near the beach's end, follow the signs back up through the dunes to pass a lookout at the encouragingly named surf break, **Guillotine** (Gallows is just behind you). Ten minutes on, turn right onto a sandy vehicle track, continuing south beside the coast. Just past the first stream, turn left onto a sandy road and cross Miamup Brook (a reliable water source). As the road swings inland around another stream, turn right onto a faint path and wander south, just a few metres in from the rocky shore. Near North Point you will almost have to bullock your way through the thickening scrub, emerging onto a wide, sandy track.

Cross a sandy clearing to join a track that heads to the exposed edge of **North Point** (1½ hours from Cullens Beach). Follow the track markers down off the edge of the point to a lower shelf of rock. Round the point and pick up the track as it drops into a thicket of tea-trees. Descend to the boat ramp and follow the soft beach (and a scramble across a rock outcrop) into **Gracetown**. For a

feed or a bed there's **Sea Star Café** (☎ 08-9755 5000; 4 Bayview Dr; r \$95; baguettes \$10-15, mains \$24-27). Rooms are in a house at the back of the café; the upstairs double has a bed with a view, looking across the bay to North Point. Next door, **Bay Store** (2 Bayview Dr) sells a basic range of groceries and a better selection of alcohol. There is also a caravan park in town but it is 3km off the track.

Walk 50m past the café, along the main road, and turn right into Percy St. At its end, follow the short footpath to a second road and car park. From the car park, take the wide track (not the steps) southwest through the overreaching tea-trees. As the track swings west, climb the steps to the right. Just before the lookout platform (with your last view of Cape Clairault), the track steps off the boardwalk into an open area of limestone. Cross Point Cowaramup (better known as South Point) and momentarily re-enter heath before traversing another barren patch of limestone and sand. Pass a set of wooden steps and a car park before entering the large Left Handers' car park (with toilet). For the next hour it's steady as she goes: a southerly bearing through heath, tea-trees and a lookout platform at **Ellensbrook Beach**. The first 1km is through sand, which slows things down, but it then gets firmer underfoot.

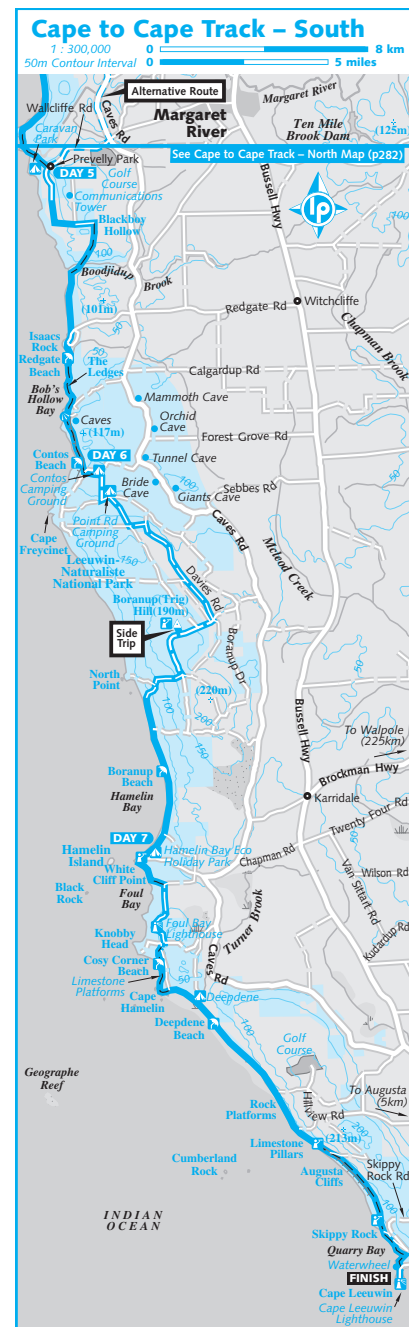
After skirting around Ellensbrook Beach, turn up the true right bank of Ellen Brook, watching for another turn to the right after about 300m. Squelch across a small swamp to enter the grounds of **Ellensbrook House**, built by settler Alfred Bussell in the 1850s. Go around the homestead and inland along the creek to climb onto a boardwalk. It is a paved path from here to Meekadarabee Falls, 800m away. Passing the first grotto, the track leaves the pavers, heading away southeast (**Meekadarabee Falls** are 50m further along the sealed track at a mossy grotto). Five minutes on, the track forks – either path will deliver you to Ellensbrook camp site.

Day 4: Ellensbrook Camp Site to Prevelly Park

3–3¼ hours, 11.5km

This short day should freshen you up for longer to come. You can walk past Prevelly Park today but the next site is 18.5km on.

From Ellensbrook camp site, climb southeast into tall forest. Stay with the road



as it swings south along the park boundary. Ignoring a track to the east, the road turns back west, passing by some large grass trees (blackboys). Coming to a T-junction, turn left and walk along the crest of the ridge for a while (a stretch of land popular with white-tailed black-cockatoos). Turning right at the next T-junction, you begin your return to the coast. As the forest slips away there are good views south to Cape Mentelle and Kilcarnup Beach. Over the next rise the track turns south and, after a steep descent, crosses a couple of low ridges to merge with another road. Turn right at the next junction – turn left if you are taking the Alternative Route (below). This road swings south as it comes in behind the foreshore dunes of Kilcarnup Beach. Drop onto **Kilcarnup Beach** 50m before a protruding limestone cliff known as **Joey's Nose** (1½ to 1¾ hours from camp). This beach is generally firmer (and whiter) than those you have previously walked, which is a good thing since you will be on it for 2km.

Towards the end of the beach, near the tip of Cape Mentelle, turn up the vehicle track and then swing right onto a walking track after 50m. About 200m on, turn left onto a sandy road. Turn off again at the second track to the right to go through a gate labelled 'Emergency Access' – you qualify as an emergency. Fork left at the next junction. This track skirts the edge of three small bays cut into the cape, heads through a sand blow and descends to the mouth of **Margaret River** (one to 1½ hours from Joey's Nose). Wade through the river (or cross the sandbar in summer) and climb to the car park. Follow the road out for 100m, turning left onto a walking track that ascends in behind the Wallcliffe Cliffs. After about 15 minutes the track comes to a bike path. The Cape to Cape turns left but Prevelly Park is to the right.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: MARGARET RIVER WINTER CROSSING

1½ hours, 6km
If Margaret River is high (you can check by ringing CALM at Busselton), it can be a deep and fast-flowing crossing. To avoid this, turn left instead of right as you come over the low ridges on the southbound road about 1¼ hours from Ellensbrook camp site – there is a sign and map posted at

the junction. Turn left again at the next junction and follow this track to Caves Rd. Turn right and cross Margaret River, turning right again onto the bike path beside Wallcliffe Rd about 2km on. You rejoin the main track above Prevelly Park.

PREVELLY PARK



Prevelly Park is an unobtrusive holiday town by the mouth of the Margaret River – if you don't make the turn into town, you won't even notice it is here.

About 400m off the track, **Prevelly Park Beach Resort** (☎ 9757 2374; 99 Mitchell Dr; sites per person \$11-17, on-site vans \$50-90, cabins \$70-120) is a sprawling, open caravan park. Across the road, **Prevelly Villas** (☎ 9757 2277; www.prevellyvillas.com.au; 30 Pearce Rd; 3br villa \$125-250) offers a beach-house kind of experience. If you crane your neck, you might be able to see the ocean.

The general store is in the caravan park office, with a noodles-and-pasta range of supplies. **Sea Gardens Café** (Mitchell Dr; pizzas \$13-23, mains \$23-27; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner), beside the caravan park, has a stepped outdoor patio so that everybody gets a view of the dunes and the surfers' point breaks.

Day 5: Prevelly Park to Contos Camping Ground

5–6 hours, 18.5km

Return to the bike path, following it up and across busy Wallcliffe Rd. The path then parallels the road for a few hundred metres. Turn off it at an old vehicle track to the right. As this track swings east, cross straight over another 4WD track onto a faint trail. At the top of the hill, turn back south onto a more defined path. At its end, turn left and then right to swing around a communications tower (45 minutes from Prevelly).

Walk south along the 4WD track for 15 minutes (in spring look for kangaroo paw flowers at the road side) turning left at its end. This track skirts **Blackboy Hollow**, so named for the number (and size) of blackboys (grass trees) in the fringing scrub. As the road curls away north, turn right (south) onto a narrower track, which meanders past a couple of enormous grass trees.

Climb gently for 20 minutes to cross a road. Ten metres beyond the road, turn right and pass through a gate. At the top

of a short climb, turn left to begin a 120m descent to **Boodjidup Brook** (one to 1½ hours from the tower). Cross the creek on a metal footbridge and climb out through a mini-forest of arum lilies. Walk above the creek, following it all the way to the beach – much of this section is through long grass so watch out for snakes.

Turn south along the beach – ahead is another 2km of sand walking, far softer and slower than the last. Round the rocky point and at the end of the next small beach, below the calcified cliffs, climb up to a car park (1¼ to 1½ hours from the Boodjidup Bridge).

From the car park's southern edge, head straight back to the sand of **Redgate Beach**. The better news is that it is firm and white again. Exit the beach at the far end, climbing through heath and then into a dense, skeletal stand of tea-trees. Turn left at a 4WD track, then fork right as the road splits.

Across the headland known as 'the Ledges', there is a maze of vehicle tracks. Follow the well-placed track markers, generally bearing south until you emerge at a sandy road. In about 500m turn right and then fork immediately right again. In 50m the track swings right and narrows through a jumble of limestone. In a couple of minutes there is a good view north across Bob's Hollow Bay. From this point, scramble down through the limestone escarpment (there is a tiny castaway beach to your right if you are after some R&R) and wander along the base of the cliff to a set of steps. These lead up past a series of **grottoes** (and a spring) to the top of the cliffs (one hour from Redgate Beach car park), the highest of the walk so far.

For the next 3km, the track ambles along the cliff top with great views down onto the coast and ahead to Cape Freycinet. As the cliffs veer briefly inland you are rewarded with the best view of all, straight down onto the white crescent of Contos Beach.

Walk east, turning right at Conto Rd and then quickly left. About 300m on, turn right onto a narrow track, brushing through grass trees to a T-junction (one hour from the grottoes). Turn left and enter **Contos camping ground** (sites \$6).

Day 6: Contos Camping Ground to Hamelin Bay

5½–6½ hours, 21.5km

Return to the T-junction just outside the camping ground, and walk straight on (south), descending steeply. Follow the ruler-straight road for 15 minutes, dipping into marri woodland. Pass through a gate and turn left into **Point Rd camping ground** (sites \$6). Continue straight on, entering a stand of karri trees and turning right onto Georgette Rd. Climb steadily to intersect with Brozie Rd. Turn left and then right into Davies Rd (signposted throughout as Daves Rd), 30 to 40 minutes from Point Rd camping ground. For the next one to 1½ hours this road will be your guiding line through some of the Capes' most impressive forest: grass trees, banksias, marri and the country's most westerly karri trees, isolated from other areas of karri growth.

Turn right at Trig Rd and ascend through a hollow blanketed in grass trees to the crest of the Leeuwin–Naturaliste Ridge. After crossing Georgette Rd and coming to the top

ONE-DAY WONDERS

If you haven't the time to commit to a week on the Cape to Cape Track but fancy a glimpse, there are some good sections that can be walked out and back in a day. The following is our pick of the options – each has vehicle access and can be walked. Distances given are one way.

- Yallingup to Wyadup Rd (Day 2, 6.8km) – Pick through the rocky outcrops on Smiths Beach before an extended look at Canal Rocks; a great section for whale watching in spring.
- Willyabrup Cliffs to Gracetown (Day 3, 8.5km) – Check out the climbers' cliffs, then the surfers' breaks before rounding exposed North Point into Gracetown.
- Redgate Beach to Contos Beach (Day 5, 6.5km) – Wander past the grottoes at Bob's Hollow Bay, then climb to cliff-top views – the equal of any along the track.
- Hamelin Bay to Deepdene Beach (Day 7, 9km) – Climb to Foul Bay lighthouse, then discover the wonderful limestone platforms beside Cosy Corner Beach before rounding Cape Hamelin.

of the ridge, an unmarked track to the right leads to Boranup (Trig) Hill (see the Side Trip, below). Walk straight on, turning left at a T-junction and heading south until you intersect with Boranup Rd.

Turn right here, heading west. After the road swings briefly south, take a walking track straight on at the next road bend. Descend towards the coast, turning left when you join a road at a hairpin bend. Follow the road's spiralling course onto spectacular **Boranup Beach** (1½ to two hours from Davies Rd). Soak it in; it is yours for the next 6km and it is not often firm.

About two hours later, at the very end of the beach, climb up the steps before the boat ramp into **Hamelin Bay Eco Holiday Park** (☎ 9758 5540; www.augusta-resorts.com.au/hamelin.html; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$18/22, cabins \$70-125). It is the sort of park where you might stand out, not because you are walking but because you don't have a boat. The beauty of the location, however, might just have Yallingup's boastful caravan park trumped. The kiosk stock suggests sauce and vinegar and little else gets eaten here, so carry your own provisions for this night.

SIDE TRIP: BORANUP (TRIG) HILL 15 minutes, 800m return

From atop the ridge the unmarked trail heads north along the crest (stomp around as you walk – it sounds as though there is a cave beneath at one point) before curling back south to a lookout tower atop **Trig Hill**. There is a view across the forested slopes of the ridge and a peep of the ocean, but it is slowly being overgrown. Return on the same path.

Day 7: Hamelin Bay to Cape Leeuwin 7–8 hours, 26.5km

From the boat ramp, climb the wooden steps to the west, which lead up onto White Cliff Point. Just before the **lookout platform** at the tip of the headland, drop away south through sand onto a wild stretch of beach – it is soft enough here that snowshoes could be an asset. As you approach the first lot of rocks the track turns steeply east into the dunes to join a 4WD track. Follow this for 10 minutes, until a walking track peels away left, wandering up and down some steep sand ridges to **Foul Bay lighthouse** (1¼ to 1½ hours from Hamelin Bay), perched

on a hilltop 90m above the sea. From here, there is a good view back to White Cliff Point and Hamelin Island, with its WWII radar station.

Turn right to arc around the lighthouse and follow a gravelly track down to Cosy Corner Rd. Turn right, then left onto a 4WD track in about 100m. Fork right about 100m after the track begins descending, and follow this road to the coast. The road turns south, away from popular Cosy Corner Beach, and crosses a line of **limestone platforms** that have been weathered into a series of pillars and potholes – the potholes can turn into blowholes in heavy seas so care needs to be taken. Peer into them and you will see the ocean coming and going.

At the end of the platforms the track crosses behind the rocky point. Pass through a makeshift car park and back down onto a small beach on the point's northern side. Near the beach's end, turn off into the heath, the track adhering to the edge of the lichen-smear boulders (and sometimes on them) that form the point of **Cape Hamelin**. Dropping off the boulders, it winds through heath to a small, shelly beach. Cross through the first of the rock outcrops and then take the path back into the heath to avoid the next, larger outcrop. Cross two small beaches, join a 4WD track and veer right onto **Deepdene Beach** (one to 1¼ hours from the lighthouse). This is pretty much the track's final beach, and also its longest – 8km, depending on conditions around the rock platforms ahead – and among the softest. All the beach walking of previous days has been training for this one.

If you are planning to stay at Deepdene camp site (or need water), turn up into the third (and widest) sand blow in the dunes, about 10 minutes along the beach. There is an old vehicle track on the southern side of the blow; the camp site is about five minutes inland.

After about 1½ hours of beachcombing you come to a line of **rock platforms**, similar to those at Cosy Corner Beach. Conditions here fluctuate. Some seasons you can continue along the beach at their base, but if the beach has been washed away (as it regularly is), walk along at the back edge of the platforms, where there is a path of sorts. As the platforms become more stable (and flat), drop down and walk across their

tops. Scramble around the rocky point beyond the platforms and continue along the beach – Cape Leeuwin lighthouse looks a lot closer now.

At the beach's end (one hour from the start of the rock platforms), climb up onto more platforms and follow the track through the dunes, paralleling the coast beneath an assortment of **limestone pillars**. Climb above a sandy cove and turn left along a 4WD track (the right turn leads 100m to a lookout). The road climbs sharply inland for five minutes, turning right onto a walking track. Follow this path (constructed in 2005 to move the route closer to the cliffs) for 25 minutes, merging with another track and continuing south. Wander through heavy scrub for about 40 minutes to a lookout (set just off the track to the right) for a view back to Deepdene Beach's southern end.

Descend more steeply now to Skippy Rock Rd, turning left and then immediately right, ducking beneath some overhanging peppermint trees to reach the coast. Walk across the granite slabs, cutting across the point to the small beach at **Quarry Bay**, where you will find a number of seeps and a remarkable set of orange **tufa cliffs**, created by a combination of spring water, algae and bacteria. Go up the wooden steps to find a path heading south from the car park. The track follows the coast, first through long grass and then across granite slabs to a small cove with a water wheel, once used to supply water to lighthouse keepers. From the water wheel car park, take the sealed

path and then the road to **Cape Leeuwin lighthouse** (40 minutes from the lookout).

You can purchase an end-to-end walkers' certificate at the lighthouse if you want documented proof of your week.

SOUTH COAST

The south coast defies simple categorisation. From flat, treeless coasts it rises to the forests of Walpole–Nornalup National Park, where you can forget about not being able to see the forest for the trees – in few other places in Australia will you be so overwhelmed by a walk through a forest. Even far from the karri trees of Walpole–Nornalup, 100km away in the Porongurup Range you will find an island of karris, but the main attractions here are wildflowers and granite.

ACCESS TOWN Albany

☎ 08 / pop 22,400

Set on large King George Sound, Albany is WA's oldest settlement. When the sun comes out, the action moves east to the suburb of Middleton Beach. Within 120km of the Stirling and Porongurup Ranges and Walpole, it is a feasible base for all south-coast walks.

INFORMATION

Albany Map Centre (☎ 9841 1179; 126 York St) A small collection of walking maps.

Albany visitor information centre (☎ 1800 644 088; www.albanytourist.com.au; Proudlove Pde) Beside a

THE LONG WALK

If a day of walking out and about around Albany has you tired, consider the experience of the first non-Aboriginal walkers in the area, James Newell and James Manning. In 1835 the cutter *Mountaineer*, with Newell (and his sister Dorothea) aboard, was wrecked in Thistle Cove, inside what is now Cape Le Grand National Park (p302). The survivors sought refuge on Middle Island, in the camp of a sealer-turned-pirate, the notoriously violent John 'Black Jack' Anderson.

Newell and Manning – who had travelled as a passenger on Anderson's boat from Kangaroo Island – were later put ashore by Black Jack near Cape Arid, west of Esperance. They were left without food and given no guns with which to hunt. Albany, the outlier of civilisation, was about 650km away. They began walking. Months later they arrived, supposedly having survived on tree roots and limpets. They were almost too weak to talk, their bodies like skeletons.

As a postscript to the walk, Anderson was charged with theft, an accusation made against him by Manning. Anderson was acquitted on the evidence of Dorothea Newell, who had become Black Jack's mistress.

For a fictionalised account of Newell and Manning's journey, pick up a copy of Sarah Hay's Vogel Award-winning book *Skins*.

lean-to that serves as the Bibbulmun Track's southern trail-head, and stocking a *Walking Naturally in Albany* booklet. **CALM** (☎ 9842 4500; 120 Albany Hwy) The main contact point for the Stirling Range and Porongurup Range National Parks. It also has a display on each park in the area.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

For camping or walking supplies, try **Trailblazers** (☎ 9841 7859; 184 Albany Hwy). Take your supermarket pick from **Coles** (cnr Albany Hwy & Lockyer Ave) or **Woolworths** (Lockyer Ave); they are metres apart.

SLEEPING & EATING

Middleton Beach Holiday Park (☎ 9841 3593; www.holidayalby.com.au; unpowered sites for 2 \$26-31, powered sites for 2 \$27-32, cabins \$93-200; 🚻) has prime real estate, just a dune from the ocean, and prices to match.

Albany Bayview (☎ 9842 3388; albyayha@westnet.com.au; 49 Duke St; dm \$20, d from \$50; 🚻) is a rambling and comfortable YHA hostel, 400m from town. There are bikes for hire and a free barbecue on Wednesday nights. Take an upstairs room if you want bay views.

Vancouver House (☎ 9842 1071; www.vancouverhousebnb.com.au; 86 Stirling Tce; d without/with bathroom \$100/125; 🚻) is a B&B to stay at after, not before, a walk to reacquaint yourself with a few charms and civilities. There is port and chocolates in the lounge each evening, a different breakfast menu every day of the week and bathrobes and a foot spa in each room.

Just a salt shake from the beach, **Norfolk Sands** (☎ 9841 3585; 18 Adelaide Cres, Middleton Beach; s/d incl breakfast \$55/80) has tidy, simple rooms furnished in Asian style. There is a common room for self-caterers. The same owner runs **Bay Merchants** (18b Adelaide Cres, Middleton Beach; sandwiches \$8-11, breakfast \$5-15), a quality café-cum-provedore with fantastically fresh sandwiches.

For a relaxing read and feed, try **Stirling Terrace Bookcafé** (168 Stirling Tce), where the fare includes such items as coconut salad and pan-fried sardines. For more of a splurge, dine next door at **Ristorante Leonardos** (☎ 9841 1732; 164 Stirling Tce; mains \$29-32; 🍷 dinner Mon-Sat), where you will find local produce prepared in European style.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au) flies daily between Albany and Perth (\$120, one

hour). **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) runs a Perth–Albany bus service (\$40, six hours) via Mt Barker, and a longer route (\$60, eight to nine hours) through Walpole. The fare between Walpole and Albany is \$18 (1½ hours).

You can rent a vehicle from **Albany Car Rentals** (☎ 9841 7077; 386 Albany Hwy), **Avis** (☎ 9842 2833; 557 Albany Hwy) or **Budget** (☎ 9841 7799; 360 Albany Hwy). The latter two also have offices at the airport.

BIBBULMUN KARRI & COAST

Duration	4 days
Distance	61.4km
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Walpole (opposite),
Finish	Peaceful Bay (opposite)
Transport	private
Summary	See some of Australia's finest forest and a remote slice of coast as you sample part of the great Bibbulmun Track.

More than any other part of the Bibbulmun Track, it is the section between Walpole and Peaceful Bay that highlights the track's *raison d'être* – to showcase southern WA's forest and coast. Out of Walpole the track heads into forests of tall karri and stout tingle trees, exiting a couple of days later to wander along an isolated and beautiful section of coast.

For most of the walk, you will be inside the Walpole–Nornalup National Park, established in 1911 and encompassing around 18,100 hectares of forest, heathland and coast. Nornalup is an Aboriginal word for 'place of the tiger snake', and it is pretty fair to assume that you will see a few; give them a wide berth.

The track is marked throughout with yellow triangles and a black Waugal, or rainbow serpent, and it is quite feasible to walk it without a tent. The Bibbulmun Track's three-sided shelters – the site of each night's stop – have raised platforms for sleeping. You can also complete the walk in three days by 'double hutting', combining Days 3 and 4, though if you want to rush through this country you should probably question why you are here.

Carry a bit of cash so you can stop in at the Tree Top Walk (p295).

PLANNING

When to Walk

You can't have a great forest without great rain, and Walpole is regularly the wettest place in WA, averaging more than 1000mm annually. If you want to witness Walpole–Nornalup's great show of wildflowers, November is the driest of the spring months. September and October receive around 100mm.

Maps & Books

Map 7 *Walpole* of CALM's 1:50,000 *Bibbulmun Track* series covers the route in topographic detail, with the helpful addition of elevation profiles and distance tables. The pocket-sized *A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track: Southern Half* is a handy reference that won't take up much room in your backpack.

The Bibbulmun Track has become something of a publishing industry, and you can prepare for (or remember) your walk by purchasing the *Bibbulmun Track on the South Coast* CD-ROM or the instructional *Getting on Track* video or DVD, intended to help walkers gear up for a Bibb Track epic. All of these items are available online at the **NatureBase Bookshop** (www.naturebase.net).

Look out for *In Praise of a National Park* by Lee and Geoff Fernie, a comprehensive rundown on the history of the national park.

Information Sources

Details of track conditions or section closures along the Bibbulmun Track are available on the **CALM website** (www.calm.wa.gov.au/tourism/bib_news) – be sure to check this page before you head out. The Bibbulmun Track Foundation (p276) is an excellent source of track information. Park information is available at CALM in Walpole (below).

Permits & Regulations

Camp fires are not permitted in Walpole–Nornalup National Park, so carry a fuel stove.

NEAREST TOWNS

Walpole

☎ 08 / pop 400
Surrounded entirely by Walpole–Nornalup National Park, Walpole is so inextricably linked to the large forests that it is almost

deserving of its own scientific name. The helpful **visitor information centre** (☎ 9840 1111; Pioneer Cottage, South Coast Hwy) sells Bibbulmun Track maps and guides, while **CALM** (☎ 9840 1027) has an office at the western end of town.

SLEEPING & EATING

Coalmine Beach Holiday Park (☎ 1800 670 026; www.coalminebeach.com.au; Coalmine Beach Rd; unpowered/power sites for 2 \$21/24, cabins \$65-100; 🚻) has a great setting on the shore of Nornalup Inlet. There is a three-night minimum stay for cabins during school holidays and Easter. You walk through the park on Day 1, so you could consider starting here.

Tingle All Over (☎ 9840 1041; tingleallover2000@yahoo.com.au; 61 Nockolds St; dm from \$20, s/d \$36/52; 🚻) is a basic hostel presented with a touch of care. Prepare yourself for the psychedelic carpets; they are bright enough to keep you awake at night.

The **Tree Top Walk Motel** (☎ 1800 420 777; www.treetopwalkmotel.com.au; Nockolds St; d \$80-119; 🍷 🚻) has an opportunistic name – the Tree Top Walk is about 20km away – but also large, neat rooms and Walpole's only genuine **restaurant** (mains \$23-28; 🍷 dinner).

In the Ampol service station, **Pioneer Store** (Nockolds St) is the best of Walpole's two supermarkets, with a decent range of supplies.

Eagle Rock Café (Nockolds St; mains \$11-17) caters for walking appetites with its Kitchen Sink burger. You will just about need rope and karabiners to work your way around it.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Walpole is on the South Coast Hwy, 120km south of Manjimup and 67km west of Denmark. The town is serviced by the daily **Transwa** (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) bus between Perth (\$54, 7½ hours) and Albany (\$18, 1½ hours).

Peaceful Bay

☎ 08
In school holidays this shack town defies its name but at other times, with its beautiful bay almost enclosed by rocks, it suits it.

Burrowed into the peppermint trees, **Peaceful Bay Caravan Park** (☎ 9840 8060; www.valleyofthegiants.com.au/pbcaravanpark; unpowered/power sites for 2 \$10/12, on-site van per person \$15) is basic but grassed and shady, with special prices (as above) for Bibb Track walkers. You can

even roll out your sleeping mat inside a gypsy wagon (\$15).

Peaceful Bay Chalets (☎ 9840 8169; www.valleyofthegiants.com.au/peacefulbaychalets; Peppermint Way; per person \$20) is about 1km off the track and also has special walker rates (also as above). Whether you end up in the ultra-basic room or the party-sized house is at the discretion of the manager, though expect the former. There is free laundry to help you scrub up a bit.

The Peaceful Bay store is in the caravan park office. It has a small range of supplies and does basic takeaways; fish 'n' chips require 1½ hour's notice.

There is no public transport to Peaceful Bay but the Transwa Perth–Albany service stops at Bow Bridge, 8km away on the highway. If you are staying at the chalets, the manager may drive you out to Bow Bridge.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

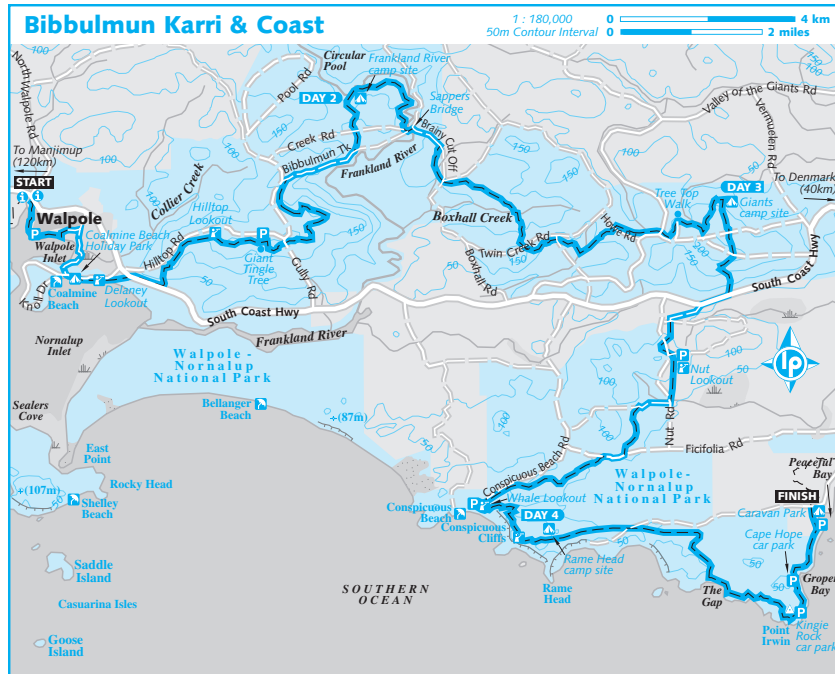
Walpole Taxi & Tours (☎ 08-9840 1041), run by the owners of Tingle All Over, operates a set-fare service between Walpole and Peaceful Bay (\$45).

THE WALK

Day 1: Walpole to Frankland River Camp Site

4½–5 hours, 17.4km

From the highway at the western end of Walpole, walk south along Boronia St. After 300m turn right down a gravel track and then left onto the signposted Bibbulmun Track. Following the shore of **Walpole Inlet** you pass a jetty and, five minutes on, the track turns away from the inlet, coming to a Y-junction. Turn right, walking through bracken and kangaroo paw flowers for five minutes to reach a junction with a sandy track. Turn right and immediately right again, joining the Coalmine Beach Heritage Trail. Rounding Walpole Inlet, the track passes through heathland that's a rainbow of colour in spring. Cross Collier Creek on a boardwalk to enter Walpole–Nornalup National Park, and go through thick melaleuca, crossing sealed Knoll Dr to enter a car park. After checking out **Nornalup Inlet** straight ahead, turn left onto the sealed path, heading up into Coalmine Beach Holiday Park (p291), just over an hour from Walpole.



BIBBULMUN TRACK

In all regards the Bibbulmun Track (commonly known as the Bibb Track) is one of the great long-distance walks in the country. The scenery is fantastic and varied, the walking can be as easy or as difficult as you like, and its walking infrastructure is the benchmark for all Australian trails.

The 964km route begins in Kalamunda, on Perth's eastern fringe, and extends to Albany. Named after an Aboriginal people who walked long distances for ceremonial gatherings, it was conceived as an idea in the 1970s and completed in 1998. Using existing 4WD tracks and purpose-built walking trails, it has 48 camp sites, situated at roughly 20km intervals. Each site has a three-sided shelter with sleeping platforms, a picnic table, tent sites, toilets and a water tank. All facilities are free of charge.

Track signage is exceptional, with a yellow marker showing the Waugal, or rainbow serpent, every 200m (on average). Any temporary changes to the track are shown with white Waugal markers.

From Kalamunda, the route goes for around 200km through varied forests and over granite peaks to Dwellingup. There follows 50km through the forested Murray River valley, then karri and jarrah forests continue southwards for more than 350km to near Northcliffe. Islands of forest, rivers and plains (prone to flooding between July and November) lead down to the coast at Mandalay Beach and on to Walpole (another 130km). The track then heads up through tingle forest and back to the coast at Conspicuous Beach for the final 160km section to Albany.

The track passes through several small towns including Dwellingup, Pemberton, Northcliffe and Walpole, all useful for supplies and accommodation. One coastal inlet is crossed by boat, another by canoe and two must be waded.

Most people take around 55 to 60 days to walk the track in its entirety, though during the spring of 2005 a group walked it in less than 17 days (about 55km a day).

The track is managed by **CALM** (☎ 08-9334 0265; www.naturebase.net/tourism/bibbulmun_splash.html) with a lot of help from the **Bibbulmun Track Foundation** (☎ 08-9481 0551; www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au), a nonprofit community organisation. Both websites are a good starting point for any Bibb Track wannabes.

CALM has published eight 1:50,000 topographical maps of the track and two superb pocket guides for the northern and southern sections, with succinct track notes and practical background information. These are available at CALM offices, visitor centres and CALM's online **NatureBase Bookshop** (www.naturebase.net).

About 200m beyond the caravan park (and ignoring a few vehicle turnouts) join a foot track heading away to the right, walking between the road and the inlet. Passing **Delaney Lookout**, with views along the inlet cliffs, you come to an unmarked junction. Turn right and say hello to the faster world as you cross the South Coast Hwy. Say hello also to the forest as you step from coastal heath into some of Australia's finest tall timber.

The track begins a gentle climb, swinging right and levelling out before turning left again and returning to the business of climbing. About 40 minutes from the road



the track passes below **Hilltop Lookout**; wander up the few steps for a keyhole look at the coastal headlands and the eastern edge of Nornalup Inlet.

The track now takes in a fantastic bit of forest, passing by some impressive tingle trees, their branches like the waving arms of an octopus, and the taller, smoother karri. You will also see plenty of karri oaks. Thirty minutes from the lookout you come to a junction with a wide track. Take the right arm of the track, which leads straight on to a boardwalk around the **Giant Tingle Tree**, its hollowed trunk so wide that visitors

used to park their cars inside it. Follow the hard-rolled track out, continuing straight on when it turns left to the car park (where there is a toilet). Turn right at Gully Rd, then immediately left onto a foot track.

About 30 minutes from the Giant Tingle Tree the track rounds a hill (so-called Douglas Lookout, where there is no lookout) and turns back west, twisting and turning on a gradual descent to a creek. Ten minutes beyond the creek you reach a 4WD track, turn right and follow it for 30 to 40 minutes. Keep a watch as you descend for glimpses of the Frankland River to your right. At the hairpin bend across a stream, take the foot track straight on and up to Creek Rd. Cross straight over and wander on to the Frankland River camp site, 20 minutes ahead. A possum with Rambo tendencies has staked a claim on the camp site and has been known to chew through backpacks to get at food. Use the supplied food box (and stick a rock on top of it).

Day 2: Frankland River Camp Site to Giants Camp Site

3½–4 hours, 13.9km

The track heads east from the hut, first along the river and then around a spur. Just beyond a steep flight of steps, turn right along a 4WD track, then quickly left. The track wanders up and down and arrives at Sappers Bridge across the **Frankland River** (45 minutes from camp). Cross it and turn right along Brainy Cut Off, climbing on this road for 10 minutes through karri and jarrah forest.

Turn right onto a walking track, heading through a magnificent stand of jarrah. Cross a creek, then a 4WD track and climb to unsealed Boxhall Rd (30 to 40 minutes from Sappers Bridge). Continue straight on, crossing the separate arms of Boxhall Creek. After the third bridge begin a steady climb, crossing Twin Creek Rd. There are a couple of potentially boggy creek crossings before you cross a 4WD track and descend to another slushy creek. A few minutes on, the wide track kinks right; take instead the unmarked path straight on. Tingle trees soon begin to reappear.

Turn right along unsealed Howe Rd and immediately left onto a narrow path. About 1km of overgrown track on, cross the sealed road and ascend to also cross a gravel road.

Veer left slightly to pick up the path into the **Tree Top Walk** (adult/child \$6/2.50) car park, five minutes on. If you want to check out this world-class attraction (see opposite), leave your pack on the bench in view of the ticket office; staff will keep an eye on it for you.

From the Tree Top Walk entrance, continue east on the sealed path, turning left down steps to a boardwalk. Cut straight across a 4WD track, climbing steadily to a sharp left bend. Soon you begin the descent to Giants camp site (30 minutes from the Tree Top Walk), deep among tingle, karri and marri trees.

Day 3: Giants Camp Site to Rame Head Camp Site

4½–5 hours, 17.7km

As you begin for the highway this morning, you will pass some of the finest tingle trees of the walk.

Head east along a 4WD track, turning right after 200m. It's a gentle climb before you turn right then immediately left at the second 4WD track. Brush through the swordgrass, descending to cross the South Coast Hwy (45 minutes from camp).

Fifty metres beyond the highway, turn right along the formation of the former Denmark–Nornalup railway line. Almost immediately, you leave the forest, entering scrubby, sandy coastal country dominated by tea-trees and low gums. Cross a sandy vehicle track and then a swamp, coming to a wall of scrub about 20 minutes from the highway. Turn left here, crossing a creek and keeping to the right of a barbed-wire fence to re-enter the forest for a last look at a few tingle and karri trees. Climb on through tea-trees and grass trees, crossing one disused 4WD track, then veering right onto another. Swing right again after 50m to pass below **Nut Lookout**, with views east to West Cape Howe. The best views are just beyond the lookout, where the heath thins.

The track descends through mixed woodland and a skeletal, fire-burnt section of forest, crossing a sandy vehicle track and promptly joining another, turning right and following it as it reverts to a narrow track. Cross Nut Rd, continuing down through wildflower-peppered heath, then turning left and descending to unsealed Ficifolia Rd. This road is named after the red flowering gum (*Eucalyptus ficifolia*) you

have been walking past. A rare find in the bush, they are a common and recognisable garden plant, especially when flowering between January and March.

Turn right and follow Ficifolia Rd for 400m, leaving it along a walking track to the left (one hour from Nut Lookout). This leads through heathland for about 600m before turning right. The sandy track wanders up and down through woodland. About 2km on, a steep descent leads to the edge of a small lake. From the swampy lake fringe, climb to a long sandy ridge. Turn left at the T-junction (Conspicuous Beach car park is to the right). At the next junction you can diverge left to a **whale-watching platform**, with a fine view of the beach – in spring you might see southern right and humpback whales. After this, follow the track to the right, go down some steps and along a boardwalk. Cross or bypass the small stream (depending on its depth) as you step onto **Conspicuous Beach** (one hour from Ficifolia Rd).

Turn left along the beach towards **Conspicuous Cliffs** and grind through soft sand for about 200m (until just past the whale-watching platform above). The track turns up into the dunes before dropping into a small swamp. Cut across the swamp below the sand blow and begin a circuitous ascent to the top of Conspicuous Cliffs. A fire in

2004 stripped most of the bush here but the wildflowers have returned with added intensity. About 30 minutes from the beach you reach a **high point** with magnificent views east and west. Good views of the rugged west side of limestone Rame Head also unfold as you continue – at about the same point the hut at Rame Head camp site comes into view. Five minutes on, turn left at a track junction to reach the hut, which has one of the best positions on the entire Bibbulmun Track, staring east along the coast.

Day 4: Rame Head Camp Site to Peaceful Bay

2¼–3¼ hours, 12.4km

From the hut toilet follow the wheel tracks northeast through heath and, seasonally, a burst of flowers. After 45 minutes cross a 4WD track and continue on the narrow walking trail, climbing along the ridge of a set of compacted dunes before dropping back down beside the 4WD track. The track soon begins veering back towards the coast, passing a phytophthora station and squelching through a swamp to reach a disused vehicle track. Turn right to meet a 4WD track, where you turn right and immediately left onto a walking trail, climbing through dunes to the beautiful beach at the **Gap** (1½ to two hours from Rame Head).

FOREST GIANTS

In WA's southwest, karri, tingle and jarrah trees are like a holy arboreal trinity. Found nowhere else in the world, they rule these forests with their height (karri) and their bulk (tingles). Karri can grow to 90m, making it one of the tallest trees in the world. It has a slender white trunk, turning pinkish in autumn, soaring 30m straight to the lowest branches.

There are three types of tingle tree – red, yellow and Rate's – and they occur only across a 6000-hectare area in Walpole–Nornalup National Park, between Deep River and Bow River. They are the only eucalyptus with buttressed trunks, and red tingles – the largest of the trees – can be as large as 16m around. Bushfires can burn through the heart of the trees, commonly leaving a huge hollow. The tree survives because its growth is concentrated in the outer layers of the trunk. Yellow and Rate's tingles can be difficult to distinguish from young red tingles.

Less spectacular, but more prevalent, is the jarrah, which has grooved, reddish-brown to grey bark. Among all these trees, you will also develop a fondness for the karri oak, with its cork-like wood and she-oak-like branchlets.

In the suitably named Valley of the Giants there is the opportunity to walk not only past some of these giants, but also atop them. The Tree Top Walk is one of WA's major tourist stops. Its centrepiece is an aerial walkway, 600m long and rising to 40m from the ground, offering a possum-like perspective on both tingles and karris. Also here is the Ancient Empire Walk, a 400m-long path through some of the most impressive tingles in the land. You will have seen lots of tingle trees before you get here, but none as furrowed and grumpy-looking as 'grandmother', a tree 12m around, 400 years old and bumpier than a desert track.

WARNING

Near Kingie Rock car park grows a bush with shiny green leaves called blister bush. For some people, contact with the bush can cause blisters, so steer clear.

At the beach's end follow the track through the scrub, meeting a 4WD track that turns down onto the rocks. Follow the smoothest line across the rocks to join a track that edges behind the rock platforms to a small **beach**. Cross this and turn inland, climbing several dunes en route to Castle Rock car park. Climb on to reach a trig point atop **Point Irwin** (30 to 40 minutes from the Gap) and an edge-of-the-world view of the Southern Ocean. West, you will see Rame Head and the distant Point Nuyts; east, the now-familiar West Cape Howe.

Rounding Point Irwin you turn north, passing through Kingie Rock car park – if you are lucky you might spot fur seals on the rocks below. The path continues around and onto the beach at **Groper Bay**. Cross the rocks at the beach's northern end to a small beach cut off from the sea by rocks. Turn left and then right on vehicle tracks at this beach's end to another small beach. Cross the rocks and one more longer beach before scampering over the dunes to the **Peaceful Bay** beach. About 200m along the sand a set of stairs leads up into the town (45 minutes to one hour from Point Irwin).

NANCY PEAK & DEVIL'S SLIDE

Duration	2½–3 hours
Distance	7km
Difficulty	easy–moderate
Start/Finish	Tree in the Rock picnic area
Nearest Town	Porongurup (right)
Transport	private

Summary Climb through unexpected slopes of karri forest to open granite domes and views of the Stirling Range and coast – the granite slabs are their own reward.

With the Stirling Range, the Porongurups are the only other true mountain range in southern WA. From a distance, they look like a standard run of hills but their beauty is in the detail. Just 12km long, and rising

to 670m, they have a skin of granite and the most easterly karri trees in the country. Unusual rock formations are the range's party piece.

The range is protected by the 2500-hectare Porongurup National Park and has two main walking areas: Castle Rock and a selection of tracks around Nancy Peak and the Devil's Slide. The walk described here combines the trails in the latter area for an appealing half-day walk.

If none of that is enough to draw you here, there's the little matter of ending your walking day with a drop of red from the wineries at the foot of the range.

ENVIRONMENT

The Porongurups' bedrock is 1100-million-year-old granite, much of which is in full view across the granite domes that characterise the range. A second feature is the presence of a virtual island of karri trees, 100km east of the main areas of karri forest. The Porongurups receive less rainfall than other karri areas but the trees are fed by the extra runoff from the granite domes.

There are around 750 plant species along the range – most below the line where the karris take over the forest – including more than 70 orchids. Spring colour is dominated by wattles and heaves.

**PLANNING
Maps**

CALM's 1:50,000 topographic map *Mt Barker & Porongurup* covers the walk.

Permits & Regulations

Camping is not permitted in the park.

**NEAREST TOWN
Porongurup**

☎ 08

Surrounded by both wilderness and wineries, there is a lot to like about tiny Porongurup, even if there isn't much here. The **Porongurup Range Tourist Park** (☎ 9853 1057; Porongurup Rd; unpaved/powered sites for 2 \$18/20, cabins \$55; 🚻) is large, attractive and grassy, with new owners planning to add a few motel-style units.

Porongurup Village Inn (☎ 9853 1110; www.porongurupinn.com.au; Porongurup Rd; s/d with shared bathroom \$25/50, unit \$80; 🚻) is attached to the general store and was refurbished in 2005. There is an in-house naturopath, and you

are welcome to pick and cook your veggies from the garden. The store **tearooms** (mains \$12-15) will prepare evening meals for guests if requested.

Next door, **Bolganup Homestead** (☎ 9853 1049/1102; www.bolganup.com.au; Porongurup Rd; d \$95) has homestead and cottage accommodation on a 500-acre property abutting the national park. You can walk from the homestead across to the range, or stroll purpose-built kangaroo and wildflower walks.

If your timing is right, head 5km west out of town to perhaps Australia's most isolated Thai restaurant, **Maleeya's Thai Café** (☎ 9853 1123; 1376 Porongurup Rd; 🍽️ lunch & dinner Fri-Sun), which gets rave reviews. Otherwise, try the restaurant at **Karribank Country Retreat** (☎ 9853 1022; Porongurup Rd; mains \$21-28; 🍽️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) for fine food with a view.

There is no public transport to Porongurup, but the Porongurup Village Inn can arrange guest pick-ups in Albany or Mt Barker with notice.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

From Porongurup, take Bolganup Rd (opposite the caravan park) for 3km to its end at the Tree in the Rock picnic area.

THE WALK

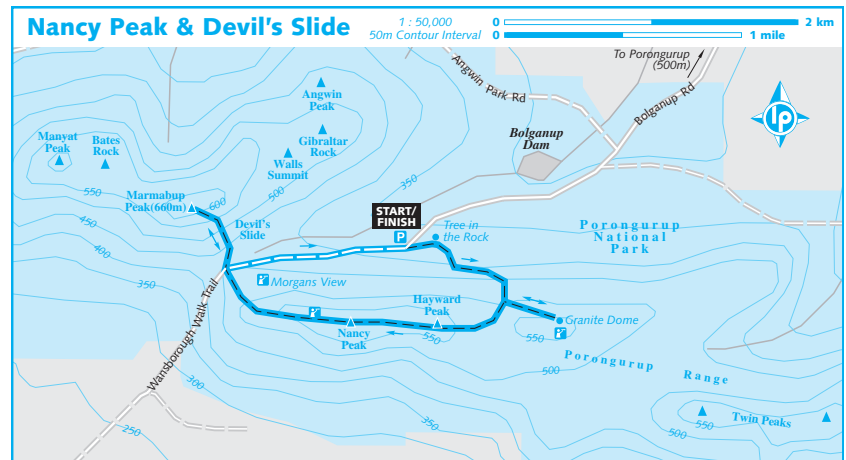
Head northeast on the signposted Nancy Peak Circuit, crossing over a 4WD track to **Tree in the Rock**, where a karri tree grows out of a crevice in a large granite outcrop. Begin climbing through tall karri forest. As you

swing back west after 20 minutes, look up and you will see the sort of granite dome that characterises the range. A few minutes on, a short side track leads away left to the top of this **dome** for views across to the Devil's Slide, Hayward Peak and north to the jagged teeth of the Stirling Range.

Return to the main trail, which follows the ridge west. Climb onto the next granite slab, following the trodden line north through the lichen. Veer west again as you step onto a second slab to re-enter the bush. Clean your boots at the phytophthora station and climb another slab to the summit of **Hayward Peak**, with views north and south.

Continue along the ridge, rising to **Nancy Peak** (named after a cow), one hour from the car park. There are excellent views along the climb (especially of Twin Peaks, east along the ridge), though the summit is covered in thick, view-stealing scrub. Just beyond the summit you reach another slab of granite with an almost perfectly round boulder balanced atop it, and your best views yet of the ominous sheets of granite that form the Devil's Slide.

Descend west along the ridge to Morgan's View – you will have had better views along the ridge. A few minutes beyond Morgan's View, the track swings north, dropping off the ridge and descending more steeply into the simply named Pass. Cross straight over the Wansborough Walk Trail and begin up the opposite slope. Follow the ill-defined, trodden line through the lichen on the granite –



you are now on the **Devil's Slide** – heading up to a bridge that avoids a particularly slippery section of rock.

From the bridge the route becomes more of a track, climbing between the 'slides' of rock. In a few minutes you come to a steep bit of rock. The track appears to head onto the rock, but look to your left instead and you will see a white-topped stake. Follow this up through the scrub. Climb through two sets of steps to the granite boulders that form the summit of Marmabup Peak. Edge left around their base until the track climbs onto one of the flatter boulders, and follow the painted arrows up and around the rock to reach a break in the boulders. Climb through this and you pop out onto the summit of **Marmabup Peak** (660m), the highest point in the range (one hour from Nancy Peak). As well as the familiar wider view, you will also be looking down onto a host of granite domes.

Return to the Wansborough Walk Trail, turning left and descending through ever-more-impressive karri forest to reach the picnic area in 20 to 30 minutes.

STIRLING RANGE NATIONAL PARK

The Stirling Range is like a gift to mountain-starved WA. The only significant mountain chain in the state's south, you expect it to be worn down to a stub but it stands remarkably resilient. Stretching 65km east-to-west, the most striking feature of the range is the sharpness of its main ridge.

The national park was WA's third, established in 1913, though walking tracks weren't constructed until the 1960s. Today, it is inarguably the best mountain region for walkers in WA.

Phytophthora (see p47) is a problem in the park, and CALM has introduced strict control measures to try to limit its spread. Special protection areas, including the area around Yungermere Peak and a tract south of Stirling Range Dr, are out of bounds.

ENVIRONMENT

The range consists of tough sandstone, quartzite and slate, rising steeply from the surrounding plains up to 300m in the west

and 850m in the east. More than 1500 plant species have been recorded along the range, said to be more than the number of species in the UK. Of these, around 1100 are flowering plants, including about 80 endemic to the range. Woodlands of jarrah, marri and other eucalyptuses are widespread. The range is famed for its wildflowers, of which mountain bells, or Darwinias, are its trademark (see p275).

Most of the 35 species of mammal in the park are shyly nocturnal, though there is a chance you will see western grey kangaroos and western brush wallabies. Of the numerous species of bird, the smaller, colourful honeyeaters, wrens and robins are usually the most common.

PLANNING When to Walk

Spring is prime time in the Stirling Range, with September and October the most profuse wildflower months. If you arrive late in the season and find few flowers near the trailheads, don't despair. From about November through January, the higher slopes are more likely to support wildflowers.

What to Bring

Even if the plains, foothills and lower peaks are bathed in sunshine, the summit of Bluff Knoll can be windy or shrouded in mist, and this mist and cloud can drop down with little warning. Bring your protective clothing.

Maps & Books

CALM's 1:50,000 map *Chester Pass & Ellen Peak* covers both walks in this section, though they look more like an architect's plans than a traditional topo. To venture further afield than the walks mentioned here, consider picking up the two-book series *Mountain Walks in the Stirling Range* by AT Morphet. They are usually available at Stirling Range Retreat (opposite).

CALM's *Mountains of Mystery* is the definitive natural history guide to the range, and includes chapters on plants, animals, walks and the human history of the area. Also published by CALM, *Wildflowers of the Stirling Range* will transform the pretty colours into names. Buy both ahead of your visit at CALM's **NatureBase Bookshop** (www.naturebase.net).

Information Sources

There is a ranger station at Moingup Spring (p300). There is also an information shelter as you turn onto Bluff Knoll Rd from Chester Pass Rd.

Park Fees & Regulations

Entry to the national park costs \$9 per car (or \$3 per motorcycle). Camping in the park is allowed only at Moingup Spring (p300).

ACCESS TOWN

See Albany (p289).

BLUFF KNOLL

Duration	2½–3 hours
Distance	6.2km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Bluff Knoll car park
Nearest Town	Porongurup (p296)
Transport	shuttle
Summary	Skirt high cliffs and thread through a myriad of wildflowers to scale the highest peak in southern Western Australia.

From its trailhead, Bluff Knoll's sheer sandstone escarpment looks unassailable but apart from a bit of sustained climbing, southern WA's highest mountain (1095m) offers a straightforward ascent. A clearly defined track leads up through a wide, well-hidden break in the cliffs to the summit plateau.

Though the walking is relatively straightforward, this climb should not be underestimated, for you must ascend around 640m into notoriously enigmatic weather. Regularly, there is a scarf of cloud draped over Bluff Knoll's shoulders, and this is the only place in WA that sees any real snow, even if only occasionally (up to 5cm has been recorded).

The mountain's Aboriginal name is Bular Miali, meaning 'many eyes', a reference to the many slits in the imposing escarpment. During spring and early summer, the track is a veritable avenue of wildflowers; it would be worth carrying a field guide so you can pick your sundews from your mountain bells.

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

See Porongurup (p296).

Stirling Range Retreat

At the northern edge of the national park, with a great bush setting and eco-credentials, **Stirling Range Retreat** (☎ 08-98279229; www.stirlingrange.com.au; Chester Pass Rd; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$20/26, dm \$20, cabins \$59-120; ♿ ♿) peers out onto Toll Peak and Mt Trio. It is not serviced by public transport but the hop-on hop-off Easyrider Backpacker Tours (p376) stops at the Retreat.

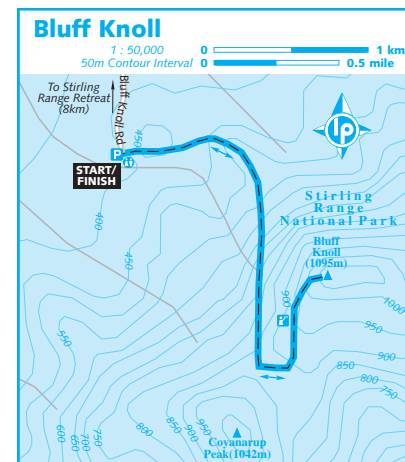
Bluff Knoll Cafe (mains \$16-27; ☎ 8am-9pm), 200m south of the Stirling Range Retreat, cooks up mountain-sized serves of pub-style fare.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Around 200m south of the Stirling Range Retreat entrance (12km north of Moingup Spring), turn onto the signposted Bluff Knoll Rd. The car park is 8km along this sealed road. Stirling Range Retreat (above) runs a shuttle service to the trailhead (\$15).

THE WALK

Start from the northern side of the car park, following the sealed path across to a rounded spur, where the climb really begins. Follow the crest of the spur east to reach a **creek** that plummets straight off the cliffs, bringing boulders like glacial erratics with it. Climb beside the creek for a couple of minutes before the track swings back southwest, cutting across the mountain to find a break in the cliffs in the gap between Bluff Knoll and Covanarup Peak. Here, the



woodland gives way to heathland, dotted with grass trees.

The track doubles back, ascending the summit ridge a few metres in from the line of the cliffs. As you skirt a rocky outcrop, a tiny side track to the left rewards you with **views** across a chain of lakes to the south – the Porongurup Range is just visible behind Coyanarup Peak. Bluff Knoll's **summit** is around 10 minutes further on, offering 360-degree views highlighted by lumpy Ellen Peak, and Toolbrunup Peak to the west. Retrace your steps to the car park.

TOOLBRUNUP PEAK

Duration	2½–3 hours
Distance	4km
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Toolbrunup car park
Nearest Town	Porongurup (p296)
Transport	shuttle
Summary	A steep, rocky ascent with some scrambling to a superb view from the Stirling Range's second-highest summit.

Conceding a mere 43m in height to Bluff Knoll, Toolbrunup Peak offers a shorter but rather more gymnastic climb. If you are wanting something challenging while you are in the Stirlings, this sharp-tipped peak should be your first choice. You ascend about the same height as on Bluff Knoll – 600m – but in 2km instead of 3km, and you will need to be confident and agile to negotiate your way up (and especially down) the scree-choked gully at the heart of the climb. More so than on Bluff Knoll, you will feel that you are at the heart of the range as you stand atop Toolbrunup Peak. Watch as you climb for ripple marks on sandstone boulders – evidence that the rocks here once lay beneath an ancient sea.

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

See Porongurup (p296).

Moingup Spring Camp Site

Immediately south of the Toolbrunup Rd turn-off, **Moingup Spring camp site** (per person \$5) is on the grassy bank of Moingup Spring, with glimpses through the gum trees of Toolbrunup Peak. It has flush toilets and water tanks.

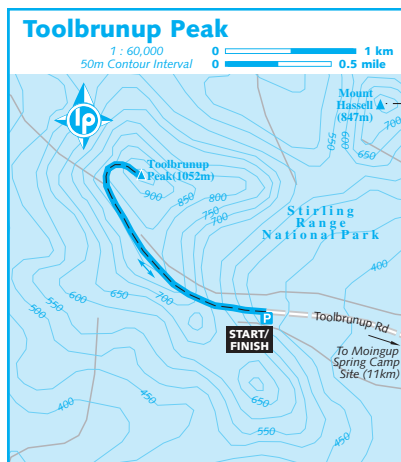
GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Access from Chester Pass Rd is along the signposted Toolbrunup Rd, 12km south of Stirling Range Retreat or 200m north of Moingup Spring camp site. The car park is at the end of the 4km-long gravel road. Stirling Range Retreat (p299) operates a shuttle service to the trailhead (\$26).

THE WALK

The narrow track heads out through marri woodland and, seasonally, a colourful carpet of wildflowers. In 10 minutes it comes to a fairly deep gully and steepens to reach a scree drift. From here it gets serious about climbing. The forest becomes more open, giving way to thicket, until it reaches the foot of a long run of bouldery scree. The way up is clear enough, with yellow-topped stakes helping to show the route. The track makes a short, flattish chicane to the right, then follows the base of the cliffs steeply up to the main ridge (one to 1¼ hours from the start). Straight ahead are views of the western tail of the range, where the peaks look more like islands than a connected range. Turn right, scrambling through a narrow defile, along a wide ledge and then left for a final scramble up to the **summit**, with its comfortably flat rock slabs. The view stretches the length of the range, with the Porongurups away to the south.

Be prepared for a slow return to the car park, as you will need to step carefully on the descent through the scree.



STIRLING STROLLS

A good selection of the peaks in the Stirling Range can be reached on day walks. Bag the following, and you will feel like something of a Stirling specialist.

Mt Hassell (847m)

This thumb-like nib of rock looks like Toolbrunup Peak in miniature. This 2km walk begins on Stirling Range Dr, 4km west of Chester Pass Rd, and ends with a steep scramble up the summit dome.

Mt Trio (856m)

Offering the best views onto Toolbrunup Peak (climb in the morning for the best light), Mt Trio's name refers to its three separate summits, the westernmost being the highest. From the trailhead on Mt Trio Rd, it is a 500m climb to the summit. This 2km walk is good for viewing mountain bells.

Talyuberlup Peak (783m)

With a name that sounds like it has been gargled, Talyuberlup Peak is topped with rock spires, and the ascent requires some scrambling over rock ledges. The 2km walk begins on Stirling Range Dr, 21km from Chester Pass Rd.

Mt Magog (856m)

At 7km, this is a longer outing, close to Talyuberlup, climbing to Mt Magog's double summit. The overgrown trail begins at Mt Magog picnic area beside a short circuit road off Stirling Range Dr, about 27km west of Chester Pass Rd.

Ellen Peak (1012m)

The easternmost peak in the range, and offering the most difficult ascent, climbing 900m on a vague track to shapely Ellen Peak. Proficiency in navigation and route finding is crucial. The 22km walk begins from Gnowellen Rd, about 29km from Chester Pass Rd.

The major overnight outing in the park is along the Stirling Ridge. For details on this challenging walk, see below.

MORE WALKS

PERTH REGION Coastal Plain Walking Trail

A good way to see some of the sand plains around Perth is to take this 55km trail between Yanche National Park and Mela-leuca Conservation Park.

Wandering through heath and wattle scrub, it makes for a relatively flat three-day walk. By camping at Ridges and Moitch camp sites, you have comfortable days of 16km, 20km and 10km.

CALM's 1:50,000 topographic maps *Yanche* and *Muchea* cover the length of the track. Detailed track information is available from the rangers at **Yanche National Park** (☎ 08-9561 1004).

Eagle's View Walk Trail

This 15km trail through John Forrest National Park (WA's first national park) was created by the Perth Bushwalkers Club in the mid-1990s. It loops around a northern section of the park, passing National Park and Hovea Falls and offering a mix of valley and ridge walking. It also has good views across Perth. The *Eagle's View Walk Trail* brochure, available at the registration point beside the trailhead, has a contour map sufficient for the walk.

STIRLING RANGE NATIONAL PARK Stirling Ridge Walk

Often called the only alpine walk in WA, the Stirling Ridge connects Ellen Peak to Bluff Knoll and is one of the more demanding walks in the state. Though only 19km

separates the two peaks you can expect it to take three days, with plenty of scrambling, steep climbs and descents, and potentially tricky route finding through thick bush – there is no marked track and the route is easy to lose. Nights are spent bivouacking in sheltered caves. This is a linear trail, and you will either need two vehicles or transport can be arranged through Stirling Range Retreat (p299).

Walkers must register with the **park ranger** (☎ 08-9827 9230). The 1:50,000 topographic map *Chester Pass & Ellen Peak* map covers the ridge.

TORNDIRRUP NATIONAL PARK Bald Head

Information on the walk can be obtained from the CALM office (p290) in Albany. This small, popular park protects most of the rugged headland of Flinders Peninsula, 10km south of Albany. The park has some fantastic rock features and is worth general exploration, but for walkers the main attraction is Bald Head, the eastern point of the peninsula. This 10km return walk heads across Isthmus Hill and Limestone Head to Bald Head; you return along the same route. A fire burnt the peninsula in 2003 but it has recovered well.

A map is scarcely necessary but the NATMAP 1:100,000 topographic maps *Albany* and *Mt Barker* are useful for identifying the many features you will see as you walk. There is a caravan park on Frenchman Bay, near the trailhead.

CAPE LE GRAND NATIONAL PARK

Discover some of Australia's best beaches as you wander the 15km coastal trail through this park, 50km from Esperance. The trail connects Le Grand Beach to Rossiter Bay, passing through Hellfire Bay, Thistle Cove and Lucky Bay along the way. For an aerial perspective, climb to Frenchman Peak, with its granite summit undercut by a cave. For information on the park and walk, contact the Esperance office of CALM (☎ 08-9071 3733; 92 Dempster St). NATMAP's 1:100,000 topographic map *Merivale* covers most of the park. There are camping grounds at Lucky Bay and Le Grand Beach. Esperance can be reached from Perth by air or road, though you will need your own transport to reach the park.

NORTH OF PERTH Kalbarri National Park

North of Geraldton, Kalbarri National Park protects a section of cliff-lined coast and a gorge carved by the Murchison River. Experienced and hardy walkers can follow the river for 38km – about four days – between Ross Graham Lookout and the Loop. There are no tracks and you will need to cross the river numerous times, but you will be rewarded with great viewpoints at Hawks Head and Z-Bend. The Murchison is brackish so search out seeps in the gorge walls for your drinking water. Walkers must register with the **park rangers** (☎ 08-9937 1140). NATMAP's 1:100,000 topographic map *Kalbarri* covers the area. The town of Kalbarri makes an excellent base, and can be reached from Perth by bus.

Mt Augustus

Despite popular perception, Uluru is not the world's largest rock, or even Australia's largest – Mt Augustus, or Burringurrah, in WA's Gascoyne region holds that honour. Twice the size of Uluru, it looks less dramatic because of partial vegetation cover but is still one for the walking scrapbook. The track to the summit begins at Beedoboondy (where you will find Aboriginal engravings) and climbs over 6km to the 1106m rock summit.

Camping is not permitted in Mt Augustus National Park, but there is camping and accommodation at **Mt Augustus Outback Tourist Resort** (☎ 08-9943 0527; unpowered/power sites for 2 \$18/22, d \$80-140) at the foot of the rock. You will need your own vehicle to access this isolated mountain, about 500km inland from Carnarvon.

Mt Bruce

The gorges of spectacular Karijini National Park don't easily lend themselves to walks beyond a couple of hours but Mt Bruce, in the south of the park, does. The 9km return walk to the summit of WA's second-highest mountain (1235m) is accessed off Karijini Dr, and brings views over classic Pilbara country (think *Japanese Story*) dotted with spinifex, and down into Marandoo Mine. Expect to take four to five hours. NATMAP's 1:100,000 topographic map *Mt Bruce* will help identify the landscape. You will need your own vehicle to access this

inland Pilbara region. Information is available from the **Karijini Visitor Centre** (☎ 08-9189 8121) inside the national park.

Piccaninny Gorge

The World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park, better known as the Bungle Bungles, protects a series of beehive-like sandstone domes. Between them are some spectacular gorges; the best of these for walkers is Piccaninny Gorge. This soaring gorge requires a 15km walk in, camping a

night inside the gorge, then walking back out. Walkers must register at the visitor information centre at the park entrance. For an overall perspective carry NATMAP's 1:100,000 topographic maps *Linnekar* and *Osmond*. Halls Creek or Kununurra are your likely bases, though it is a long and brutal drive in wherever you begin. There are also two drive-up camp sites in the park. Information on the park and walk is available from the Kununurra office of CALM (☎ 08-9168 4200; Messmate Way).

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