

Perth to Exmouth via Coral Bay 11 days



Simple beach holidays are a right of passage for most Australians, and here in WA we're blessed with an array of stunning locations in which to enjoy sun, sand and sea. While there are plenty of locations close to Perth, those willing to venture a bit further can find an even greater array of uniquely beautiful spots. Coral Bay is one such location. With beautiful white beaches to laze on, the stunning Ningaloo Reef to snorkel through (or float over in a glass-bottom boat) and plenty of sunshine to enjoy, it's a popular spot for those seeking a relaxing getaway.

From Perth, it's a 12 to 13 hour drive but by breaking it up, it's easily manageable in two days, and there's plenty to see along the way. During wildflower season the Coral Coast comes alive, transforming the familiar arid landscape to one of colourful abundance. There's also an array of other must-see spots along the way, including Kalbarri Gorge, the wonders of Shark Bay, Geraldton's museums and much more. This ultimate road trip winds its way from Perth to Exmouth in Western Australia (WA), offering you every opportunity to immerse yourself in all that Australia's Coral Coast has to offer. From trekking through the rugged gorges at Kalbarri, to drifting weightlessly over coral reefs at Ningaloo, this itinerary has it all!



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Suggested itinerary

Day 1 » Perth to Geraldton 420km

Travelling north along the Indian Ocean Drive (continues north from Wanneroo Road), the first leg of the takes you through the coastal towns of Cervantes, Jurien Bay, Dongara, Port Denison and Greenough Hamlet - a charming National Trust town. First stop is Cervantes and the splendor of the Pinnacles Desert.

The road into the Pinnacles is sealed, and there is a car park within walking distance of the limestone structures. After exploring the Pinnacles, head to the Desert Discovery Centre to learn more about these mystical formations. Enjoy a swim at Hangover Bay or Thirsty Point in Cervantes before continuing north.

On arriving in Geraldton, treat yourself to some of the freshest seafood in WA, particularly the region's famous western rock lobster. Enjoy Geraldton's cosmopolitan vibe by eating out at one of the numerous restaurants and be sure to head up to the impressive HMAS Sydney II Memorial. Commemorating the lives of 645 sailors who died in World War II, it provides sweeping views across Geraldton and the Indian Ocean.

Day 2 » Geraldton to Carnarvon 480km

Continue north to the tropical fruit town of Carnarvon - a popular holiday spot for those chasing the winter sun. Sample the abundance of fresh flavours at local mango and banana plantations, or take a detour from your Ultimate Road Trip and follow the Gascoyne Food Trail.

Stopping at various producers, you can taste their delicious offerings, from fresh seafood to irresistible

condiments. Take an evening stroll along the Fascine, enjoying the magnificent sunset views before heading out to dine on fresh local produce.

Day 3 » Carnarvon to Exmouth 370km

As you head north out of Carnarvon be sure to stop at the blowholes, watching the water spray meters in to the air as it surges through the rocks. Heading north along the North West Coastal Highway, today you complete your outward journey from Perth to Exmouth, arriving at the pristine Ningaloo Reef and its unspoiled beaches. Starting just metres from the shore, this fringing reef is teeming with unique marine life. And should you visit between late March and early July, you'll also have the opportunity to experience a swim the whale sharks - the world's largest fish. Overnight at RAC Exmouth Cape Holiday Park.

Day 4 » Exmouth

Take a glass bottom boat cruise to view the reef's diverse marine life, or spend your day snorkelling the vibrant coral gardens of the Ningaloo Marine Park.

Nearby, Cape Range National Park offers rugged scenery of deep canyons, limestone ranges and spectacular gorges. Explore the park in your own four wheel drive, or take a tour from Exmouth. Stay a second night at RAC Exmouth Cape Holiday Park.

Day 5 » Exmouth to Coral Bay 150km

Depart early to begin your return journey from Perth to Exmouth. The shortest leg of the trip brings you to Coral Bay - a snorkeller's paradise with calm, protected waters and hundreds of fish and coral species. Here, the reef literally touches the shore, creating an endless underwater garden of marine life.

To explore further out, take a glass-bottom boat trip or join a snorkelling tour. Stay overnight at Ningaloo Reef Resort and spend the evening watching the sunset whilst dining at Shades Cafe.

Day 6 » Coral Bay

Coral Bay and surrounds: Stay another day in Coral Bay for more swimming and snorkeling, or throw in a line and try your luck at beach fishing. Fishing charters head out to sea regularly and adventurous types can join a scuba diving trip, a manta ray tour or swim the whale sharks (seasonal). When it's time to dry off, take a 4WD along the coast or hire a quad bike for some rugged adventure. Stay a second night at Ningaloo Reef Resort.

Day 7 » Coral Bay to Shark Bay 590km

Head south on the Northwest Coastal Highway to the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. Follow the interpretive signage along the Shark Bay World Heritage Drive.

Sites along the drive include the remarkable Hamelin Pool stromatolites - the oldest living fossils in the world - and the calm, crystal waters of Shell Beach - a 110km stretch of beach made entirely of millions of tiny shells. Stop at Eagle Bluff for spectacular ocean views along a 100m walkway, where sharks, dugongs and rays are regularly spotted.

If you've made good time on this leg of the Ultimate Road Trip, head to Peron Homestead, with its remarkable history of a late era around Shark Bay. Stay overnight at RAC Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort and enjoy a drink at the Monkey Bar or Boughshed Restaurant, whilst watching a magical sunset.

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Highlights

- » Snorkelling at various sites along the coast
- » Swimming with whale sharks during season
- » Meeting the dolphins at Monkey Mia
- » National Parks, cultural trails and scenic drives
- » Carnarvon banana plantations
- » The Pinnacles
- » The Abrohlos Islands
- » Wildflower trails
- » Indigenous communities, and sacred sites
- » Aboriginal Art Studio and galleries
- » Ningaloo Reef, Shell Beach, Carnarvon blowholes
- » Hamelin Pool Stromatolites and telegraph station
- » Wildflowers in season

Day 8 » Shark Bay

Spend some time at the water's edge, meeting the friendly bottlenose dolphins of Monkey Mia. The dolphins are fed up to three times each day, which accounts for just one third of their daily diet.

The first feeding is at around 7.30am. In the afternoon, enjoy Monkey Mia's facilities or take one of the many tours on offer throughout the region. Unwind on a sunset cruise aboard a magnificent catamaran before ending your day wining and dining by the beach. After dinner, join an astronomy or Indigenous cultural tour. Stay a second night at RAC Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort.

Day 9 » Shark Bay to Kalbarri 390km

The popular coastal holiday town of Kalbarri is located at the mouth of the Murchison River, and is the last destination on your return journey along the Ultimate Road Trip from Perth to Exmouth. Enjoy the rugged coastal scenery as you approach the Kalbarri township. Take in Kalbarri's famous sunset views from one of the many coastal walk trails. Or grab a surfboard and head for the renowned surf break Jacques Point, before tucking into a fresh seafood feast for dinner at one of the many local restaurants. After dinner, sit back and relax under the stars at the outdoor cinema.

Day 10 » Kalbarri

Wake up early and watch the daily pelican feeding on the foreshore at around 8.45am. Spend the day exploring the magnificent Murchison River gorges in Kalbarri National Park. Enjoy a fishing tour, river cruise or spend your day relaxing and taking in the sights of this unique coastline. Adventure lovers can join a range of extreme tours that take you abseiling, canoeing, sand boarding or touring the region on quad bikes.

Day 11 » Kalbarri to Perth 590km

Pack up the car this morning and head south for the final leg of your Ultimate Road Trip. Stop in at the Kalbarri coastal gorges on your way south, and be sure to stop in for a picture at the Pink Lake, incredibly pink in colour.

Stop in at the charming town of Northampton, declared a historic town by the national trust in 1993. Explore the sites around town before continuing your journey south to Perth.

Visitor Centres

Geraldton	(08) 9921 3999
Shark Bay	(08) 9948 1590
Monkey Mia	(08) 9948 1590
Kalbarri	(08) 9937 1104
Cervantes	(08) 9652 7700
Exmouth	(08) 9949 1176
Carnarvon	(08) 9941 1146
Denham	1300 135 887

Accommodation

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