

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GREAT SOUTHERN

The Gap, Torndirrup National Park

The Great Southern is a destination for seekers of paths less-trodden, jaw-dropping natural environments that look out of this world, and authentic experiences with just the right amount of adventure. This South West road trip is well-worth the five-hour drive (or one-hour flight) from Perth, showcasing some of Western Australia's most impressive natural and manmade icons over the course of three to six days. Read on for more.

LEG ONE: THE GOLDEN OUTBACK

Perth > 2hr30min/225km > Katanning
> 1hr35min/145km > Porongurup >
40min/50km > Albany

The first leg of this Great Southern itinerary takes travellers through the heart of the South West's agricultural lands, where the landscape is interlaced with yellow canola fields and grassy green paddocks that stretch for miles and miles. It's then on to the Porongurup National Park – a diverse eco-system of native flora, fauna and an ancient mountain range.

ENROUTE

It takes approximately five hours to travel direct from Perth to Albany. The easiest and most direct route to Albany is via Albany Highway.

The Australia's South West team suggest stopping at the town of Williams – get a coffee and browse the stalls within the **Williams Woolshed**.

Then in Katanning, big and little kids can stretch their legs at Katanning's all ages playground. This free playground features sky scraping slides, giant seesaws, nature play areas and more, making it a great place to stop and explore.

Drive through Katanning itself and spot a plethora of vibrant artworks on a number of walls and transformer boxes, and if time warrants, visit neighbouring town Pingrup to view three giant murals by Miami-based artist Evoca1, painted on the town's grain silos.

The small village of Porongurup, and the monolithic, ancient rock formations found in the Porongurup National Park, are just an hour and a half's drive from Katanning.

Here, travellers will find walking trails galore, beautiful wildflowers (when in-season) and a handful of boutique wineries that boast jaw-dropping mountain backdrops. We recommend overnighting in Albany then adding another day to this itinerary to explore the Porongurup properly.

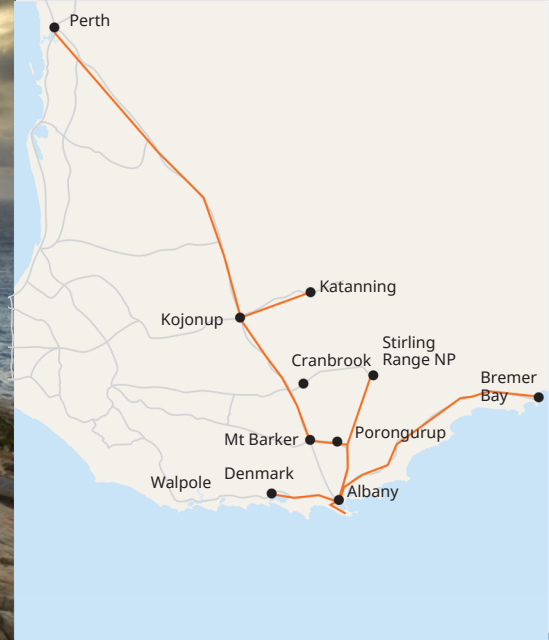
MUST-DOS

Join an **Albany Tours** guide as they meander through karri and marri forest and climb up granite rocks to the top of the breathtaking, 650m-high Granite Skywalk, sharing stories of the region's history, heritage and culture along the way. Savour a fine Porongurup wine over lunch at a local winery, before riding the blue bus back to Albany.

MUST-STAYS

Overlooking Albany's Princess Harbour, the newly opened **Hilton Garden Inn Albany** is a great choice for travellers wanting a new accommodation option that is superbly located close to the best things to see and do in Albany.

Quality Apartments Banksia Gardens's affordable apartment options feature open-plan living and dining spaces, free wifi and are serviced daily.



RECOMMENDED



SUGGESTED TRIP LENGTH
3 - 6 days



TOTAL LEGS
3



NUMBER OF TOWNS
5

NEED-TO-KNOWS

- As it can take a while to travel between towns, we recommend travellers spend one to two days enjoying each leg of this itinerary.
- The easiest way to travel to the Great Southern is by flying to Perth Airport or Albany Airport, then either hiring a vehicle, catching a taxi (from Albany) or organising an airport transfer.
- For Perth Airport transfers, we recommend Australian Transit Group (ATG). TransWA also run coaches between Perth and Albany every day. For transfers from Albany Airport, try Busy Blue Bus.
- Travellers who choose to self-drive should ensure they have a full tank of fuel and familiarise themselves with the route before hitting the road, as there are long stretches between fuel stations and reception can be irregular.
- Tourists are advised to check for alerts and road/park closures before commencing their travel on www.emergency.wa.gov.au and alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au.
- Most of Western Australia's national parks have [entry fees](#); we suggest buying a multi-park pass prior to travel.
- We have provided our top recommendations of trade-ready products and services below.

AUSTRALIA'S

SOUTH WEST
REGIONAL
TOURISM
ORGANISATION

[Click here](#) for Australia's South West's full trade-ready list.





Flinders Peninsula, Torndirrup National Park

LEG TWO: WHERE HISTORY AND WONDER CONVERGE

Albany town centre > 5min/3km >
Mount Clarence & Middleton Beach >
17min/18km > Torndirrup National
Park

The port city of Albany is where history and wonder converge. Western Australia's first European settlement, Albany also played an important part in World War I, as the final departure point for the first convoy of ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) troops before they reached the battlefields of the First World War.

It was also the site of Australia's first ANZAC Day Dawn Service, which was held more than 100 years ago, atop Mount Clarence.

It's at Mount Clarence where visitors can steep themselves in the region's military history, as well as the most spectacular views of Albany's Princess Royal Harbour and King George Sound.

Speaking of spectacular... About 17 minutes from Albany's town centre is the Torndirrup National Park, which is home to some of Mother Nature's best works.

Misery Beach is one that's well-awarded, having won the title of Tourism Australia's Best Beach in 2022. With a stark white shore, bright blue waters and a huge granite hill that shelters it from the wind, it's easy to see why.

The Gap and Natural Bridge, and the Blowholes are just 10 minutes away, carved by the Southern Ocean's sheer force and thousands of years of determination.

While nearby walking trails like Bald Head and Peak Head lead avid hikers through rugged coastal scrub that come alive during wildflower season (August-November), and on to sweeping vistas of the land and the Southern Ocean.

ENROUTE

Travellers from Perth will pass by wide open pastures and farmland before hitting the outskirts of Albany, a coastal city sprawled between large granite outcrops and the sea.

The city centre is situated on a gently sloping hill that rolls on down to Princess Royal Harbour. Heritage-listed buildings, shops, cafes and business fronts line the main street, York Street, which connects to Princes Royal Drive, a scenic road that hugs the harbour.

Mount Clarence is linked to the city centre via Marine Drive, which wraps around the hill and up to its peak, where the National ANZAC Centre, heritage-listed Princess Royal Fortress and must-dine restaurant and bar Garrison are located.

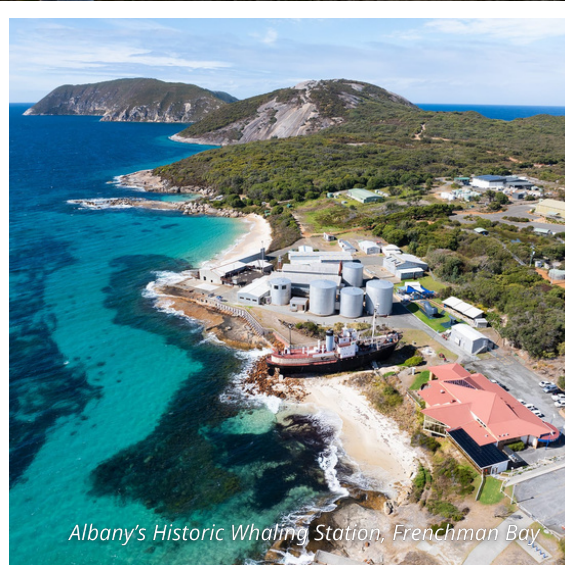
It also leads down to Middleton Beach and Ellen Cove on the other side. Here travellers will come across a beautiful, family-friendly bay lined by pine trees and grass – a great spot for a picnic in the sun, or a bite to eat at one of Middleton Beach's eateries (we love **Hybla Tavern**).

For a scenic walk, try the Ellen Cove Boardwalk, which can be accessed on the south side of the beach. Winding up the southern side of Mount Clarence, it presents amazing views of the cove and King George Sound below.

The Torndirrup National Park can be reached by heading west on Princess Royal Drive and turning left onto Frenchman Bay Road, which runs parallel to the harbour and Shoal Bay. Travellers will pass the Brig Amity – a full-sized replica of the 19th-century merchant vessel Amity – and whisky and gin distillery **Limeburners - Great Southern Distilling Company** along the way, before entering the park, where they can explore the area's spectacular natural attractions.

At The Gap and Natural Bridge, visitors can walk on an accessible viewing platform that hangs off the edge of a 45m-high cliff and watch the waves crash below, or marvel at a nature-made, solid granite bridge.

At the Blowholes, they can see and hear seawater being forced up cracks and holes in the area's granite top.



Albany's Historic Whaling Station, Frenchman Bay



Granite Skywalk, Porongurup National Park



National Anzac Centre, Albany

The weather in and around the national park can, at times, be wild and woolly, so travellers should check the weather report before they visit, and heed any warning signs they come across.

MUST-DOS

Discover Albany's eclectic collection of public street art on a walking tour with **Albany Tours**, or join the company's The Gap + Natural Wonders tour for an exhilarating outdoor adventure.

The **National Anzac Centre** uses an innovative blend of interactive technology and historical artefacts to tell unique and engaging stories of WWI. Upon arrival, assume the identity of one of 32 actual service people who lived during the Great War. Follow this person's journey through exhibits within the centre, and discover their fate at the very end.

Climb aboard the last whalechaser ship in Australia, stand underneath the skeleton of the last sperm whale harpooned in Albany and learn about Albany's whaling history at the town's former whale processing plant-turned- museum, **Albany's Historic Whaling Station**, located in Frenchman Bay, just before the Flinders Peninsula.

MUST-STAYS

BIG4 Emu Beach Holiday Park offers a fantastic holiday experience right on the shores of Emu Beach. It's an ideal choice for travellers looking for a relaxed, family-friendly atmosphere with direct beach access. Guests can enjoy a variety of amenities, including a swimming pool, playground, and barbecue facilities, making it a popular spot for fully immersing themselves in the beauty of Albany.

Find spacious and comfortable rooms, all with ensuites, at the centrally located **Albany Motel & Apartments**.

LEG THREE: JUST A DAY TRIP AWAY

*Albany > 45min/40km > Two People's Bay
Albany > 55min/80km > Stirling Range National Park
Albany > 2hrs/180km > Bremer Bay
Albany > 40min/55km > Denmark*

Albany makes a great base in which to explore the wider Great Southern region and its awe-inspiring attractions, which include ancient mountain ranges, secluded beaches, wildlife hotspots, beautiful forests and more.

ENROUTE

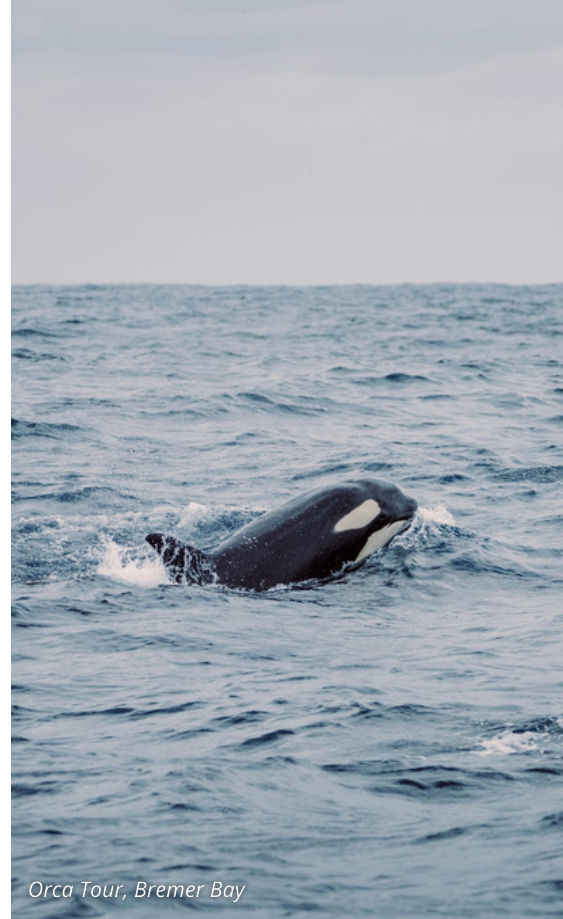
A 50-minute drive east of Albany, Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve is where travellers will find the iconic Little Beach, renowned for its squeaky white sand, bright blue ocean and two giant boulders that jut out in the middle of the shore.

Located approximately an hour's drive from Albany via Chester Pass Road, the Stirling Range National Park is home to the rugged peaks of the Stirling Ranges, including one of the highest in WA (Bluff Knoll), magical cloud formations, rare wildflowers and endless hiking and walking trails to suit all endurance levels.

Further northeast lays the quiet seaside town of Bremer Bay, which is home not only to friendly locals, but one of the largest congregations of orcas (killer whales) in the Southern Hemisphere.

Travellers who head southwest of Albany will reach Denmark, where the mighty sea and towering trees converge. Amongst the trees expect to see rolling valleys dotted with rows of vines, and boutique wineries producing some of the world's best cool-climate wines.

Given the distance from Albany, and the extensive experiences on offer, travellers may want to spend a day or two exploring each location before returning back to Perth.



Orca Tour, Bremer Bay

MUST-DOS

Encounter pods of wild orcas in their natural habitat during a whale watching cruise with **Naturaliste Charters** or **Whale Watch WA**, both of which offer full-day expeditions out to the Bremer Bay Canyon between January and April each year.

A visit to the Great Southern region is not complete without taking an Aboriginal cultural tour with **Kurrah Mia** to learn about how the Menang Noongar people moved throughout the land for hunting and gathering, ceremony and daily life.

Enjoy a hearty tasting platter with matching wines while soaking in lake and vine views from **The Lake House Denmark's** mudbrick cellar door and country garden-lined alfresco.

Discover a wine tasting with a difference. **Singlefile Wines'** 'A Sense of Place' experience offers a true behind-the-scenes insight into the history of the vineyard and people that showcases the best of the Great Southern wine region.

MUST-STAYS

Located midway between Albany and Denmark, **Cape Howe Cottages** features four distinctly different, secluded holiday retreats situated on 54 acres of private nature reserve.

Nestled above Denmark and between towering trees, **Karma Chalets** is ideal for couples and families looking for peace, comfort and spectacular views toward the Wilson Inlet.



Little Beach, Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, near Albany

ALL-INCLUSIVE: TAMING THE GREAT SOUTHERN

Perth > Great Southern

For travellers who prefer full package options, we highly recommend the following multi-day tours, which depart from and return to Perth and/or Albany:

For a snapshot of the Great Southern and the South West, jump on board **Australian Pinnacle Tours's** 4-Day South West Getaway tour.

Traverse the wild South West with **Untamed Escapes**, who offer all-inclusive gourmet, adventure, wildlife and retreat- style tours that encompass the very best of the Great Southern, including its ancient forests and moody coastline.

Experience barefoot luxury at its finest, on one of **Luxury Outback Tours's** private-yet-down-to-earth, four-wheel drive tours.

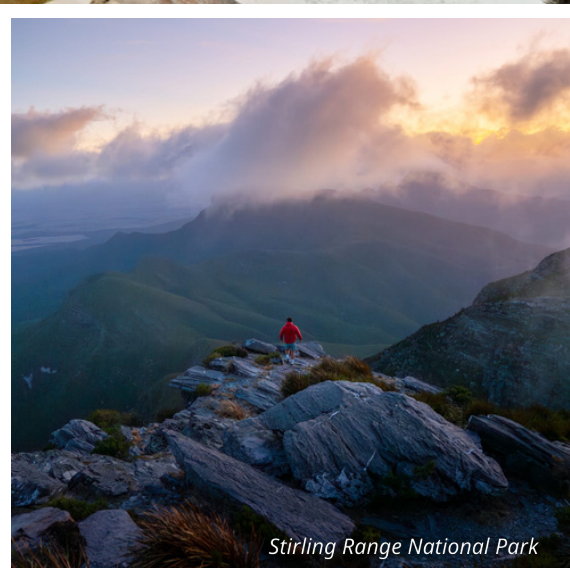
MUST-STAYS

For the luxury-inclined (and occasional celebrity), **Maitraya Private Retreat** provides a lavish, exclusive escape perched above the Southern Ocean. The retreat boasts a private location set on more than 600 acres, its own beach/ lagoon, a 20-seat movie theatre, full- sized tennis court, football oval, cricket pitch, indoor heated swimming pool and a dedicated 10km mountain bike track, plus a four-car garage, helipad and private airstrip.

Heyscape Tiny Cabins offers a unique off-grid escape nestled on Raintree, an 880-acre oceanfront farm. These thoughtfully designed tiny cabins provide a secluded retreat with stunning views of William Bay National Park, including glimpses of Greens Pool and Elephant Rocks. Guests can also enjoy locally sourced produce and experiences from **The Dam Restaurant** and **Cannabis Botanical Distillery**, both located on the farm.



Singlefile Wines, Denmark



Stirling Range National Park



Heyscape Tiny Cabins, Denmark