



world heritage **DRIVE** >>>





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Shark Bay is testimony to the wonders of the natural world. So significant is its natural values and beauty that the region earned a prestigious World Heritage listing in 1991.

Shark Bay is famous for its friendly Monkey Mia dolphins, yet the dolphins are only one part of the remarkable Shark Bay story.

Celebrating its World Heritage status, Shark Bay now offers the Shark Bay World Heritage Drive, a 130km drive commencing at the Overlander Roadhouse on the North West Coastal Highway through to Monkey Mia.

The Drive encompasses the most fascinating features of the area. Here you can get in touch with the Earth's evolutionary and biological history, its unique natural formations and seek out habitats where threatened species survive.

There are few places in the world that offer so much. Discover it all on the Shark Bay World Heritage Drive.

HAMELIN POOL STROMATOLITES

Shark Bay is one of only two places in the world where living marine stromatolites exist. These living fossils contain microbes similar to those found in 3,500 million year old rocks – the earliest record of life on earth. As such, the stromatolites provide a record of local environmental changes.

Stroll along the boardwalk, read about the history of Stumpy's stromatolite family and take in the biology of these ancient organisms.



SHELL BEACH

Shell Beach, as the name implies, is not your everyday sand beach. Instead, it's a beach made of trillions of tiny shells, all from one type of animal. The shell, known as the Hamelin Cockle, lives in prolific numbers in the area because of the super salty water. The discarded shells have heaped into massive piles up to 10m thick! It is a sight to behold; tonnes of bleached white shells forming a beach up to 1 km wide and many kilometres long!

This beautiful shoreline gives way to crystal clear water of the most intense greens and blues.



EAGLE BLUFF

Eagle Bluff is one of the best places in Shark Bay to view marine life. The shallow waters of the Shark Bay Marine Park below the boardwalk are teeming with life including rays, turtles, sharks and the occasional dugong, especially in the summer months.



There are excellent views of two small limestone islands, once mined for guano and now important bird breeding colonies, and marine life that frequents the inshore waters.

On a clear day you get excellent vistas across Shark Bay to the western peninsula and Edel Land. Interpretive signs along the boardwalk explain the significance of the area.





LITTLE LAGOON

Almost perfectly circular in shape, Little Lagoon was once a land-locked birrida (gypsum pan) that was inundated by the sea several thousand years ago. This pristine waterway is a natural nursery for several fish species. The waters are a marine recreation zone that allows recreational fishing but prohibits the use of nets.

A popular spot for fishing, swimming, canoeing and kite-boarding, the lagoon has facilities that include shade shelters and barbecues around the lagoon shore. Close by there is a viewing platform and disabled fishing platform over the narrow channel linking the lagoon to the sea.



PERON HERITAGE PRECINCT

Located within the stunning Francois Peron National Park, the Peron Heritage Precinct provides an insight into how life was when the park was a working sheep station. A self guided walk trail around the precinct explores the history of the area, visiting the shearing shed, shearer's quarters and stock yards, with signs explaining the station's interesting history along the way.

A small interpretive centre depicts stories of Indigenous inhabitants, European colonisation and current day conservation programs such as Project Eden. The artesian hot tub is a popular spot to relax and soak in the hot artesian waters that originally supplied vital water to the station's stock. A barbecue and lawns are provided for picnicking.

MONKEY MIA

Monkey Mia is world famous for its dolphin interaction experience, a rare encounter with wild animals that has become a major tourism attraction.

In an amazing wildlife ritual that has been going for over 40 years, a small number of dolphins come ashore at Monkey Mia almost every day to the delight of patient onlookers. These bottlenose dolphins are fed a small amount of fish up to three times a day between about 8am and 12pm. Department of Environment and Conservation staff supervise the feeding and ensure the wellbeing of the animals is maintained. The chance to see dolphins is almost guaranteed and days when these wild dolphins do not visit the shore are rare.



SHARK BAY WORLD HERITAGE DISCOVERY CENTRE

For everything there is to know about Shark Bay and the World Heritage Area, visit the Shark Bay Discovery Centre. Essentially a one-stop informative display covering all of Shark Bay's natural and cultural features, this centre is a must-see for every visitor to the area.

The Centre is located in the township of Denham and brings the World Heritage story together with state-of-the-art displays, including soundscapes, historical and contemporary film footage, interactive multimedia and objects of rare scientific and historical significance.



SHARK BAY WORLD HERITAGE DISCOVERY CENTRE



A range of fascinating artefacts are exhibited including items from early maritime expeditions to sections of a real stromatolite. Of particular interest are some amazing historical artefacts including a bottle left behind by the French in 1772 when they annexed Australia for France, and old coins and clay pipes from the 1800's, unique reminders of the area's fascinating cultural history.



SHARK BAY WORLD HERITAGE DISCOVERY CENTRE

Another captivating part of the display is the two 'talking points' where recorded interviews with Shark Bay identities recall past and present activities across the Bay. The speakers cover a diverse range of topics from fishing to conservation, Aboriginal culture to pearling. Those speaking are clearly filled with emotion as they recall their involvement in the area.

The Discovery Centre is also the accredited Visitor Centre for Shark Bay.



OTHER ATTRACTIONS

In addition to the stunning World Heritage attractions, the World Heritage Drive also offers a host of other supporting attractions and facilities along the route.

HAMELIN POOL HISTORIC TELEGRAPH STATION, MUSEUM AND TEA ROOMS

Built in 1884 as part of the Northwest Telegraphy Network, this historical settlement now includes a caravan park, tea rooms and stromatolite museum. Guided tours of the museum are provided.

NANGA BAY

Nanga Bay on the western side of Peron Peninsula is a peaceful location with access to the waters of Shark Bay Marine Park. Once an operating pastoral station, part of the station has been converted into a tourist resort with full accommodation and recreational facilities and the remainder has been purchased for conservation. It's a great fishing spot that also supports a café for visitors taking the drive to get refreshments.

DENHAM

Once a ramshackle town that grew up around a pearling camp, Denham is now the main administrative and population centre of the Shark Bay area. Located on the western coastline of Peron Peninsula, with views across the waters of Shark Bay towards Dirk Hartog Island, it is an attractive town with a lot to offer.

Offering full visitor servicing facilities, shops, cafés and accommodation, Denham is an ideal township in which to base your stay in the World Heritage area. There are also a range of activities available in Denham from eating out, to 4WD tours, fishing charters and mini-golf, while a grassed foreshore with playground provides a picturesque backdrop to the town.



OCEAN PARK

Find out more about the marine creatures of this world heritage region from the guides at Ocean Park. Seven kilometres south of Denham, the Park features a man made lake with an island in the middle as well as magnificent ocean views. See the speed of the pink snapper as they flash through the water, the friendly 'old man cod', turtles lolling in the water and discover the beauty of the sharks.



MONKEY MIA

Dolphins may be the main attractions, but Monkey Mia offers a host of other activities. These include beach camel treks, wildlife cruises from the deck of a catamaran to get closer to dugongs and other exotic marine life, Indigenous tours, opportunities to view pearling operations and much more.

Take a walk and discover the fascinating natural and cultural history on the Monkey Mia Walk Trail (Wulyibidi yaninyina). An easy stroll of about 1.5 km, the trail loops from the visitor centre into the surrounding sand dunes and back to the beach.

If your interests lie with aquatic activities, take the opportunity to go swimming, snorkelling, kayaking and sailing in the Shark Bay Marine Park, one of the world's most diverse and pristine marine environments.

If you're looking for a more leisurely option, why not take to the sky? Flying is one of the best ways to see the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. Scenic flights can be booked at Monkey Mia or Denham, departing from the airport, located 16 km from Monkey Mia (8 km from Denham).

There are also plenty of facilities at Monkey Mia, including a public boat ramp, jetty, barbecues, public toilets, public telephones and drinking water. The Monkey Mia Visitor Centre features an interpretive display, theatrette, amphitheatre, kiosk and souvenir shop.





What is world heritage?

World Heritage Areas embody the diversity of the planet and are places of beauty and wonder; mystery and grandeur; memory and meaning. In short, they represent the best Earth has to offer.

Why is Shark Bay a World Heritage Area?

The Shark Bay World Heritage Area covers 2.2 million hectares on the coast of Western Australia. Its colourful and diverse landscapes are home for a profusion of animals and plants, including some found nowhere else on Earth.

Its vast seagrass meadows feed and shelter globally endangered species. Complex interactions between these plants, the climate and the marine environment have allowed unusual 'living fossils', stromatolites, to thrive, much as they did at the dawn of time. Shark Bay's extraordinary natural riches are of outstanding global significance.



Shark Bay was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1991 for its natural heritage values. To be inscribed, properties must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one of ten selection criteria set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Shark Bay satisfied all four of the natural criteria for World Heritage listing:

- Natural Beauty
- Earth's History
- Ecological Processes
- Biological Diversity

As of May 2008, Shark Bay was one of just 20 places on Earth to satisfy all four of the natural criteria for World Heritage listing. Other properties that satisfy all the criteria are the Great Barrier Reef, the Galápagos Islands, and the Grand Canyon.

By satisfying all four natural criteria, Shark Bay ranks as one of our planet's most important wilderness regions.

Look out for these signs as you drive



SHARK BAY

Carnarvon

NORTH

WEST

COASTAL

HWY

Peron Homestead

Monkey Mia

World Heritage Discovery Centre

Little Lagoon

Denham Ocean Park

Eagle Bluff

Shell Beach

Nanga

Hamelin Pool
Stromatolites

Overlander Roadhouse

Shark Bay World Heritage Area (land)

Shark Bay World Heritage Area (marine)

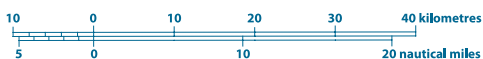
World Heritage Attraction

World Heritage Drive (sealed road)

Highway

Unsealed roads

Scale



Shark Bay WA

