

Shark Bay and Western Wildflowers

Dates: Sunday, 28th September to Saturday, 11th October, 2008 (14 days)
Cost: \$2,600 **Style:** Budget Accommodation **Start and Finish:** Perth

The south west corner of Western Australia is one of the most biodiverse hotspots in the world with 11,000 plant species ranging from giant karri trees to underground orchids and brightly coloured wildflower. Enjoy it during spring to see its best floristic display. Also discover the rich marine life of World Heritage inscribed Shark Bay which boasts dolphins and dugongs and a great diversity of whales, turtles and sharks plus the world's best collection of stromatolites, life forms which have survived for 3,500 million years. See some of Australia's rarest and most endangered mammals as well as rugged and spectacular rock forms, from the Pinnacles to grand gorges of Kalbarri. Experience the diversity of a range of contrasting environments: coastal and inland, the South West's tall forests and Shark Bay's temperate to tropical aridity.

Leaders: John Sinclair will lead this safari, which traverses the South West from Shark Bay to Albany. He will be joined by Alan Notley, an experienced Western Australian naturalist, to help safarists appreciate this botanically mega-diverse region and identify its rich array of plants and animals.

Style: Safarists travel in a 22 seat Coaster bus and share budget accommodation (more than two people to most rooms) from youth camps and cabins to country pubs.

The Season: Spring is a reliably dry usually with balmy weather. The water is warmer for swimming and wildflowers are at the peak of their spectacular display.

The Area: The region has enormous floristic diversity. Shark Bay boasts one of the oldest life-forms on Earth, the stromatolites. Associated with this is a fauna which differs significantly to that of Eastern Australia — nearly 3,000 native species of animals and birds and fish.

Draft Itinerary

Day 1; Sunday, 28th September: Depart Perth from Wellington Street Bus Depot at 8.00 am. To the 17,500 ha Nambung National Park where thousands of ancient limestone pillars, "The Pinnacles" (up to 4 metres tall) stand in a landscape of yellow sand. Accom: Jurien Bay.

Day 2; Monday, 29th September: Meet Don and Joy Williams of Hi Vallee Farm, forward thinking landholders who retained important pockets of bush rich in biodiversity. Discover Mt. Lesueur's mega diversity. Accom: Jurien Bay.

Day 3; Tuesday, 30th September: Follow the spectacular coast north via Green Head, Dongarra, Greenough and Geraldton. Visit the stunning coastal lookouts of the Kalbarri National Park before settling into accommodation near the Murchison River. Accom: Kalbarri.

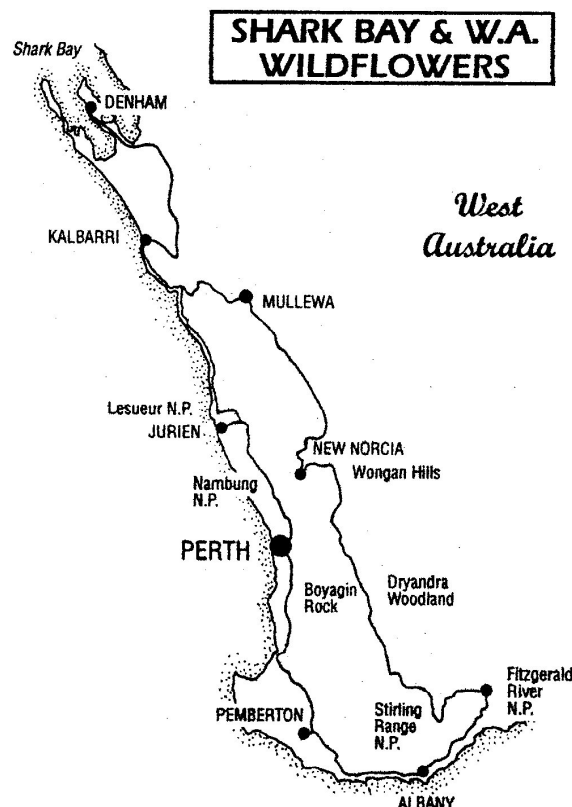
Day 4; Wednesday, 1st October: Visit spectacular gorges section of the Kalbarri National Park where the Murchison River meanders through a spectacular landscape. Then proceed to Monkey Mia via Denham. Accom: Monkey Mia.

Day 5; Thursday, 2nd October: Explore the World Heritage Shark Bay. See Peron National Park and watch dolphins and dugongs at close quarters while sailing on a catamaran to avoid intruding on the marine life. Accom: Monkey Mia.

Day 6; Friday, 3rd October: After a stop at Shark Bay's Hamelin Pool, where ancient stromatolites survive take the Brand Highway south to Northampton making various stops to view wildflowers en-route. Accom: Northampton.

Day 7; Saturday, 4th October: To Mullewa and via the Wildflower Way to Morawa and on to monastic New Norcia, with its rich Benedictine history. Accom: New Norcia.

Day 8; Sunday, 5th October: See wildflowers in the Wongan Hills and Boyagin Rock. At night spotlight for small mammals (woylies, Tamar wallabies, possums, etc) in Dryandra Forest Park. Accom: Dryandra Forest.



Day 9; Monday, 6th October: Explore the Dryandra Woodlands in the morning. After lunch head to Stirling Ranges National Park to discover its great floristic diversity. Accom: Stirling Ranges.

Day 10; Tuesday, 7th October: Discover the beauty and diversity of the Stirling Ranges with its many endemic species and incredible biodiversity with a walk up Bluff Knoll and other botanical excursions. Accom: Stirling Ranges.

Day 11; Wednesday, 8th October: The botanic diversity in the Fitzgerald River National Park more than justifies its International Biosphere Reserve status. Visit Cape Ann to see Right Whales and a magnificent floral display of the extensive heathlands in this reserve.. Accom: Qualup.

Day 12; Thursday 9th October: To Bremer Bay and on to Two Peoples Bay National Park, home of the endangered Noisy Scrub Bird and Gilbert's Potoroo, then on to Albany with its magnificent harbour. Accom: Albany.

Day 13; Friday, 10th October: Drive north through tall karri and jarrah forests before reaching the Tree Top walk in the Valley of the Giants. Then see a range of nocturnal mammals at Perup Ecology Centre. Accom: Perrup.

Day 14; Saturday, 11th October: Return to Perth via Bunbury and Peel Inlet, stopping at Yalgorup National Park. Planned arrival in Perth about 5.30.