

Access for all

Western Australians and our visitors are spoilt for choice when it comes to enjoying beautiful, remote and fascinating places. But for the 20 per cent of Australians who have a disability, and their carers, a visit to the 'great outdoors' has not always been possible or practicable. Fortunately this is changing.

by Wayne Schmidt, Nathan Greenhill
and Tracy Churchill





“Universal access is in part based on the fundamental principles of equal opportunity and equity and is underpinned by the basic Australian philosophy of ensuring a ‘fair go’ for everyone.”

When it comes to experiencing the great outdoors, Western Australians and our visitors are among the luckiest in the world. Whether it’s a casual family picnic or weekend camping trip with friends, an extended hike or mountain bike ride lasting a few hours to several weeks, fishing or surfing along a pristine beach, exploring remote outback tracks by four-wheel drive or participating in a myriad of other activities, we have it all. And along with interstate and overseas visitors, Western Australians are making good use of these areas. During 2018–19 more than 30.35 million visits were recorded to WA’s national parks, marine parks, State forests and other reserves.

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Main Two new skywalks, sealed roads and 900m boardwalk provide access to scenic views in Kalbarri National Park.

Photo – Shem Bisluk/DBCA

Inset Bluff Knoll at Stirling Range National Park is one of many upgraded sites that now have facilities that cater to people of all ages and abilities.

Photo – Marie Lochman

Above Visitors to Nambung National Park can explore the Pinnacles on universally accessible paths. *Photo – DBCA*

The Parks and Wildlife Service at the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has the important and challenging responsibility of protecting and conserving 31.5 million hectares of WA’s natural environment and the diverse range of native animals and plants that occur there, while providing sustainable opportunities for people to access and enjoy these areas. It does this by providing a range of high quality, nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities and experiences, that encourage people to get out and enjoy nature, cater for them while they are there and are compatible with conservation and sustainable land management objectives. It strives to do this in a way that provides equitable access to everyone, including people with disabilities and the aged.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

According to current figures, about 20 per cent, or one in five Australians, identify themselves as having some form of disability, which vary significantly in type and severity. For some people their disability is caused by sensory, cognitive and intellectual impairments, while others cause physical limitations. There are also many Australians who suffer from chronic illnesses such as arthritis or emphysema, and others

who are temporarily incapacitated as a result of injuries and surgery. As human lifespans extend, the amount of disability experienced in our community will almost certainly increase.

So it is not surprising that the needs and expectations of people with disabilities is an issue of increasing national importance. Likewise, existing Commonwealth and State legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a disability and these laws encompass the right to access and use public services. Fortunately, there is now wide recognition and acceptance within the community that people with disabilities deserve to have access to the same services and facilities as people without a disability. This includes access to and enjoyment of WA’s extraordinary natural areas. And this does not just provide benefits to the individuals with a disability, but their families, friends and carers who might otherwise miss out on experiences and opportunities too.

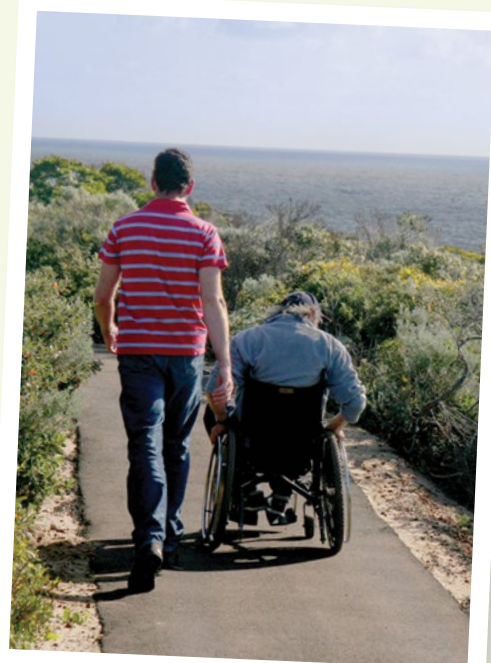
UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND BARRIER-FREE DESIGN

Outdoor recreation planners and managers who work in natural areas have a dual responsibility. On one hand, they seek to provide a range of recreational opportunities and experiences for a diverse range of users. At the same time, they must ensure the protection and



Did you know?

Parks and Wildlife Service offers concession entry fees to people who hold a Seniors' Card, Age Pension, Disability Support, Disability Support (Blind), Carer Payment, Carer Allowance, Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), or a Companion Card. Accompanying companions/carers of a Companion Card holder are not required to pay entry fees. Parks and Wildlife Service will consider waiving entry fees for organised outings for groups of people with disabilities and aged and infirm members, and education and study groups accompanied by their carers. Contact us if you would like to apply for a fee waiver. Visit exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au for more information or call (08) 9219 9000.



proper management of those very same natural areas that attract visitors in the first place. Successfully achieving these potentially conflicting objectives is a challenge.

DBCA's *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan* sets out the framework to ensure that everyone in the community can access, use and enjoy mainstream facilities, services and programs. This is where the philosophy of 'access for all' or 'universal access', as it is sometimes termed, fits in.

Universal access is in part based on the fundamental principles of equal opportunity and equity and is underpinned by the basic Australian philosophy of ensuring a 'fair go' for everyone. That is, all members of the community, irrespective of their age or ability, deserve to be treated equally and should be able to access and enjoy public services and facilities, which most of us take for granted.

Effective universal access is about designing 'barrier-free' places and spaces for the people who are going to use them. This can best be achieved by identifying potential access obstacles during planning and employing innovative or creative solutions to eliminate or minimise these in a way that is appropriate to the site, the environment and the community's expectations.

Although the concept of universal access is not new, it is only in recent

decades that the process of providing equitable access has become mainstream in the planning, design and development of community facilities and services. While there is still some way to go, considerable progress has been made to create more accessible environments throughout the State.

EXISTING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING ACCESS FOR ALL

There are a range of 'barriers' to achieving more accessible environments and creating facilities and services that are accessible to all. Arguably the biggest hurdle in the past has been a general lack of awareness about the specific access needs of people with disabilities and the aged, and a lack of understanding of how these can be met through the application of universal access design principles. This issue is being addressed through legislation and standards, and through advertising and training programs aimed at increasing public awareness.

Another significant barrier is the nature of the physical environments in which we live, work and recreate. Planning and designing universally accessible facilities and services is difficult enough in our cities, suburbs and other built-up areas. However, in outdoor environments and natural settings such as those managed by DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service, the physical barriers frequently encountered

Above left Brenda Welsh enjoyed the Tree Top Walk with her seeing-eye dog.

Above The Cape to Cape Track is suited to users of all ages and abilities.
Photos – DBCA

are significantly greater. This is largely due to the inherent characteristics of the natural environment and the fact that many of the most attractive and popular outdoor recreation settings are located in rugged landscapes with significant physical contrasts to urban environments. The design and development of universally accessible facilities and services in heavily wooded areas, steep river valleys, deeply incised gorges, rocky headlands, undulating dunes and beaches for example can be very challenging indeed.

In addition, building codes and Australian standards that guide the development of accessible buildings and facilities are most relevant for urban settings and are not particularly appropriate for rugged natural settings. Outdoor recreation planners and natural area managers are faced with the conundrum of how far they should go to create accessible facilities while maintaining the integrity of the

Looking for somewhere to go?

Here are some accessible attractions

Torndirrup National Park – State-of-the-art viewing structure at The Gap and Natural Bridge provide safe and accessible views of the beautiful and dramatic coastal environment.

Walpole-Nornalup National Park – The facilities at the world-class Tree Top Walk are universally accessible and wheelchair hire is available.

Nambung National Park – View the Pinnacles from the wheelchair-accessible path and lookouts and soak up the information provided at the universally accessible Pinnacles Desert Discovery Centre.

Mount Frankland National Park – Cast your eyes across the vast expanse of Mount Frankland National Park from the Wilderness View lookout or have a picnic in the wheelchair-accessible shelters.

Fitzgerald River National Park – Visit many of the new recreation sites in the east of the park including the sculptures at Barrens Beach and the spectacular views from the Cave Point lookout while staying in the accessible Four Mile Campground, or look out for whales from the shelters and viewing areas at Point Ann.

Yanchep National Park – Access the gardens and barbecue facilities on a number of wheelchair and pram-friendly paths, journey around Loch McNess or through the koala viewing facility.

Bluff Knoll, Stirling Range National Park – Witness the scale of Bluff Knoll from the lookouts and picnic facilities located adjacent to the car park and lookout over the spectacular topography of the Stirling Range.

Karijini National Park – Soak in the cultural heritage and interpretation of the Karijini Visitor Centre or view the amazing folded geology and pools of Hamersley Gorge from the wheelchair-accessible lookout.

Cape Range National Park – Stay awhile in this beautiful park and camp beside the Ningaloo Marine Park at Kurrajong or Osprey Bay in assisted access campsites with accessible toilets.

Monkey Mia Conservation Park – View the dolphins at feeding time from the wheelchair-accessible deck or roam the interpretation centre at Monkey Mia.

Kalbarri National Park – Enjoy coastal views, scenic gorges and soaring cliffs along the Murchison River over two accessible skywalks, sealed paths and a 900m boardwalk.

Camping – Accessible camp sites, toilets and camp shelters have been constructed at Logue Brook, Potters Gorge, Lucky Bay, Conto Field, Osprey Bay, Nanga Mill and Credo campgrounds giving people with disabilities and their families a range of camping options.

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1 The viewing platform at The Gap, Torndirrup National Park.

Photo – DBCA

2 People of all ages and abilities can enjoy sections of the Cape to Cape Track.

Photo – Friends of the Cape to Cape Track

3 Osprey Bay, Cape Range National Park.

Photo – Peter Nicholas/DBCA

4 Fitzgerald River National Park.

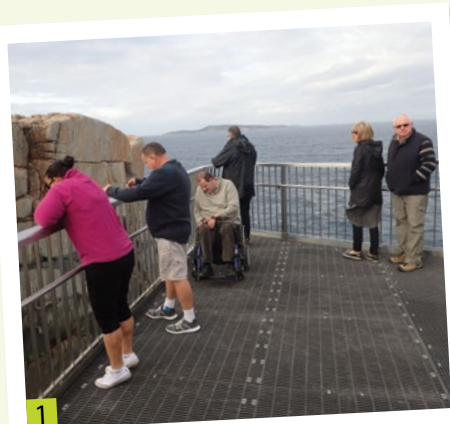
Photo – Jiri Lochman

5 Bluff Knoll, Stirling Range National Park.

Photo – Tourism WA

6 New accessible skywalks at Kalbarri National Park.

Photo – DBCA





Top Clive, Sally and Tracey Wright-Smith, campground host volunteers Barry and Jeanette Ewers, ranger Erin David, and Tracey's assistance dog Molly at Bandilngan National Park (formerly Windjana National Park).

Photo – Courtesy of Clive Wright-Smith

Top right Lookouts help everyone enjoy Deep Reach Pool.

Photo – Scott Godley/DBCA

Above The gentle slope of the Tree Top Walk is accessible for all ages and abilities.

Photo – Rory Cabrera



“... she was particularly appreciative of the experience, having been able to enjoy it in the same way as any visitor who does not use a wheelchair.”

experience that has attracted people in the first place. Developing accessible facilities often requires significant alterations to the landscape, and the provision of roads, car parking, trails, toilets and other accessible facilities could fundamentally impact the conservation values in remote locations.

One approach to overcoming this dilemma is to plan and manage for a range of experiences and access levels on a continuum from highly developed and easily accessible, to remote areas with no assisted access and visitor facilities. DBCA's recreation planners and land managers weigh up the need for accessibility against the protection of the area and employ the approach that facilitated access should be avoided where it will fundamentally alter the area's conservation values or the nature of the experience.

CASE IN POINT

While all this is a challenge, there have been a number of wonderful success stories. The Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk near Walpole is a great example of how innovative design can deliver user-friendly and accessible facilities that are environmentally sustainable. Landscape architects

and forest managers of the then Department of Conservation and Land Management worked with architects and structural engineers in designing and constructing a world-class visitor experience in a very challenging and sensitive setting. The resulting development received a number of state, national and international awards as well as the Disability Services Commission's top honour in their 2009 Count Me In Awards.

For disability advocate Samantha Jenkinson the Tree Top Walk was a quality experience. As Samantha and her family reached the highest platform of the walk 40m above the ground, she said she was struck by the beauty of her surroundings, and a wonderful feeling of space among the treetops. Samantha's comments echo those of almost everyone who visits the Tree Top Walk, yet she was particularly appreciative of the experience, having been able to enjoy it in the same way as any visitor who does not use a wheelchair.

Conversely, when the Bluff Knoll trail in Stirling Range National Park was upgraded, it was deemed inappropriate to provide access for all to the summit. The trail to the top is very steep and challenging, even for people who have



“... there’s little point in spending tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars providing universally accessible facilities if visitors are unable to access these because of other access barriers not considered in the planning process.”

Above left The Natural Bridge lookout in Kalbarri National Park offers views across the cliffs.

Above The Perth Hills Discovery Centre provides a range of camping opportunities.
Photos – DBCA

few physical limitations. Providing access for everyone, assuming it was even possible, would have required a huge amount of infrastructure at an enormous cost and would have forever altered the experience of the trail for all visitors. Instead, defined parking areas, accessible paths to viewing decks, toilets and other facilities were installed at the day-use area so those unable to make the very challenging trek to the top could still see and experience the landscape and seek the best view of Bluff Knoll possible.

Other examples of recreation site redevelopments where Parks and Wildlife Service has incorporated universal access into the planning and construction include the Fitzgerald River National Park Improvement Project, Pinnacles Desert Discovery Centre and Pinnacles Walk, a section of the Cape to Cape Track from Cape Naturaliste to Sugarloaf Rock, Hamersley Gorge in the remote Karijini National Park, The

Gap and Natural Bridge at Torndirrup National Park and an accessible campground at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre. These sites provide impressive facilities and experiences for all visitors in a variety of landscapes.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The impetus of DBCA and its predecessors to improve accessibility to WA’s parks and reserves can be partly attributed to the partnerships it has formed with organisations whose primary role is to serve the needs of people with disabilities and the aged. These include the Disability Services Commission’s Community Access and Information Branch, ACROD and the Independent Living Centre. Their expertise, advice and support have proven invaluable in identifying and eliminating access barriers as well as improving staff awareness about the nature and extent of disability in the community through in-service training

programs. On occasion, the department has also engaged the services of various specialists such as occupational therapists who are skilled in technical planning and design matters and who regularly assist with the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities.

DBCA staff and volunteers have completed detailed access assessments of several hundred of its nature-based recreation and tourism sites and facilities (from entry stations, parking areas, scenic lookouts, trails, campgrounds and picnic areas to visitor information and interpretive facilities) for inclusion on the Explore Parks WA website (exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au). Information such as the type and firmness of surfaces, the availability of accessible parking, the gradients of walkways and ramps, the width of doorways and the internal dimensions and manoeuvrability within toilet facilities have been recorded along with a comprehensive photographic record.



Above Families with prams enjoying the benefits of access to all facilities.

Photo – Friends of the Cape to Cape Track

Right Jamie Dunross.

Photo – West Australian Newspapers Limited

Access facilitates life change

For Paralympian Jamie Dunross, what started as a 'trip down south' became a life-changing move made possible by accessibility in WA's national parks.

Jamie, who has used a wheelchair since being injured in a mining accident in 1988, visited Mandalay Beach in D'Entrecasteaux National Park and was delighted to find it was accessible with assistance.

"I've travelled all over the world and had never seen anything like this – in fact it was more accessible in the national park than it was in town," he said.

"Parks and Wildlife Service has got it really right and it's not just at one spot as a token gesture, but across the board, within reason."

"And this doesn't just benefit people with access issues but also mums with prams who can come to these areas, use the paths and get a pram into the toilets where they can change their babies.

"People with scooters and walking aids can also use these facilities."

Based on his experiences in the area, Jamie moved to north Walpole where he fully immersed himself in the local community and is credited for leading the reinvigoration of the yacht club which operates out of Walpole-Nornalup Marine Park.

"The local yacht club was looking to change its name or be shut down completely, but I asked them to hold off until I moved down," he said.

"The yacht club had 50 years of history and is set in one of the most idyllic locations in the world; there are not many places where you have big trees coming into the water."

A massive community collaboration to fix up the clubhouse revitalised the sport in the area, and the 'Walpole in the Trees' regatta has now become the largest regatta outside the Perth metropolitan area.

"This event engages people from across Australia of all ages – from kids paddling in the water to the 80-year-olds who love the opportunity to get their boats out," Jamie said.



LESSONS LEARNT

The implementation of the department's access for all principles and the planning and design of universally accessible recreation areas and facilities has not been without its challenges. Eliminating access barriers requires careful thought and informed planning coupled with creativity; in many cases recreation designers and land managers have been required to come up with innovative solutions that are not specified in manuals or standards.

They have found immense value in consulting widely and seeking advice from intended users early in the process to gauge the needs and expectations of the community.

They have also found that many additional costs incurred to provide increased access can be avoided through careful planning and design of appropriate infrastructure. They also recognise the importance of identifying

and eliminating all access barriers within a recreation site, however minor they might seem, as there's little point in spending tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars providing universally accessible facilities if visitors are unable to access these because of other access barriers not considered in the planning process.

A CLEAR PATH TO THE FUTURE

People frequently interpret the word 'access' as only referring to physical access, but this is just one aspect of improving access to facilities and services for everyone in the community. While there have been many significant physical access improvements across the conservation estate that have benefitted all users, we have yet to comprehensively address the needs of people with sensory, cognitive or other disabilities. This, combined with a continued

commitment to identify, minimise and eliminate the physical and social barriers which have in the past prevented some members of our community from experiencing and enjoying the 'best of the west' will result in a more accessible park system, one that we can all be proud of.

Wayne Schmidt worked for the former departments of CALM and DEC and, since retiring, has assisted department staff carrying out disability access assessments of recreation sites and visitor facilities.

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A large shark is swimming in the ocean, its dark body and dorsal fin visible above the water. In the background, a small boat is visible on the horizon under a clear blue sky. The water transitions from a deep blue in the distance to a lighter, greenish-blue near the shore.

Access to more, for more

It is a well-known fact that spending time in nature is good for the mind, body and soul. But heading outdoors and experiencing our natural attractions can be a bit trickier for the one in five Australians who identify as having a physical, sensory, psychiatric, neurological or intellectual disability. However, with the advent of new technology, appropriate aids, services and accessibility measures, the question is becoming less about where people with disability can go, and more focused on where they want to go, to reap the benefits of spending time in nature. We've put together a list of some of WA's best and most accessible attractions.



The benefits of spending time in nature have been well-documented and continue to be wholly felt by park visitors. Acknowledging that visitors of all abilities should, wherever possible, have the opportunity to access and therefore benefit from Western Australia's natural assets helps guide the planning and redevelopment of sites and facilities. As a result, the number of accessible sites on DBCA-managed lands and waters is increasing every year, and more people than ever are experiencing the benefits of our natural areas. DBCA's commitment to maximising accessibility is outlined in its *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2020*. This document sets out the ways in which the department will ensure that the one in five Western Australians who have disability have access to its facilities and services.

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Main Monkey Mia's resident dolphins delight visitors.
Photo – DBCA

Above Mount Frankland Wilderness lookout.
Photo – Cliff Winfield

Above right A female competitor uses an adaptive handcycle in the Cape to Cape Mountain Bike Race.
Photo – Travis Deane

“Across the State, recreation sites are designed and managed for a range of experiences and access levels – from highly developed and easily accessible, to remote areas with no assisted access and visitor facilities.”

However, it's important to acknowledge that not all recreation sites and facilities are universally accessible. While accessibility is always a major consideration during planning and design, with the goal of providing as much access as possible, this must be achieved without compromising the natural or cultural values that attracted visitors there in the first place. Across the State, recreation sites are designed and managed for a range of experiences and access levels – from highly developed and easily accessible, to remote areas with no assisted access and visitor facilities.

BEYOND ACCESS

For some people, actually visiting an area is not possible. While for others, visits need to be planned thoroughly. This is where technology is literally changing lives.

The sensory experience of virtual reality (VR) is not a new concept, however the immersive technology is being applied in a variety of ways, such as treating phobias, distraction-free learning for children with ADHD and

as a way to help people with disability explore the world that might be difficult or impossible to access in real life.

Many popular VR headsets are expensive, but Google Street View is now available via virtual reality and relatively inexpensive VR cardboard headsets can be purchased online for about \$10. All that's left to do is download an app, slide in a smart phone and explore virtual worlds from a wheelchair, bed or couch.

DBCA's free 3D 360-degree immersive virtual reality app *Explore Parks WA - VR Edition* provides a tour of some of Western Australia's most popular natural areas and nature-based tourism attractions. The app has about 50 locations to visit in Perth and the south-west, and guides people along the rugged south coast, through the treetops at the Valley of the Giants and even underground in caves of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, just to name a few. Audio and information pop-ups are also available, which provide more information about each place.



Never too old for the outdoors

Research is showing that nature can have sweeping benefits for seniors, too. Several recent studies have concluded that seniors who spend time outdoors may experience less anxiety, depression and stress than those who do not. Gentle sloping walkways, sealed paths and accessible carparks feature in parks whenever possible and help with the physical hurdles that prevent some seniors from getting outside. *Concession rates apply to Seniors Card holders when purchasing park passes.*



Google Street View is a handy tool for pre-trip planning – an important process for people with disability and their families. In 2018, DBCA partnered with Google to capture imagery on key tourist trails and attractions for inclusion on Google Street View (see ‘Going off-road’, *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2018–19). Departmental staff and volunteers carried the Street View Trekker backpack, complete with a camera system on top, and travelled by foot, bike and boat on 100 trails covering 3000 kilometres, capturing images of trails and other areas not accessible by the Street View vehicle.

From mountain biking, trail running and camping, there is a groundswell of

innovation and collaboration towards challenging people’s perceptions of what people with disability can do, what they might want to do outdoors, and creative ways of getting them out into the natural world (see ‘Breaking the Boundaries’ on page 16).

ACCESS TO NATURE

Many major attractions in WA cater to people with a range of accessibility requirements. Organised outings for groups that include people with disability, carers, the elderly or infirm may be eligible for an entry fee waiver.

It’s always a good idea to contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service office before adventuring into the great

outdoors, but we’ve compiled 10 must-see destinations, both north and south of Perth, that provide assisted accessibility.

Top left A partnership with Google resulted in 360-degree imagery from some of the State’s most remote parks.

Photo – DBCA

Above left A free virtual-reality app is helping more people explore the State’s natural attractions.


Top Yalgorup National Park.
Photo – Cliff Winfield

Above The Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk.
Photo – DBCA

Access to nature north of Perth

1 **Kalbarri National Park** 570km, 6.5-hour drive from Perth

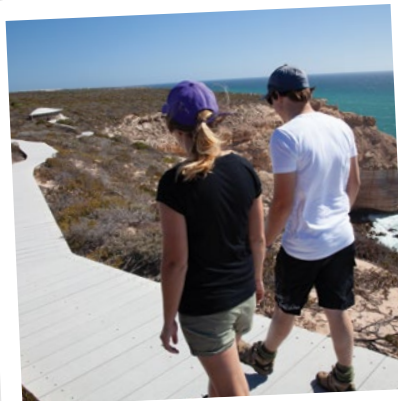
Offering both coastal and inland attractions, Kalbarri National Park surrounds the lower reaches of the Murchison River, which cuts a magnificent 80-kilometre gorge through the red and white banded sandstone. You can experience scenic gorge views from The Loop parking area, Hawks Head and the Ross Graham Lookout and soaring sea cliffs from Red Bluff, Natural Bridge and Island Rock. Two skywalks with a connecting boardwalk jut 25 metres and 17 metres beyond the rim of the Murchison River Gorge at one of its highest points at West Loop. There are designated parking bays, unisex accessible toilets and sealed paths at each site, but no toilets at Red Bluff and Island Rock. A 1.2-kilometre section of the Bigurda Trail between Natural Bridge and Island Rock has been improved, with sealed paths and an 800-metre boardwalk to provide more accessibility. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information contact **Parks and Wildlife Service Geraldton office on (08) 9964 0901**.

 **Ranger's tip** Amazing wildflowers set the park ablaze with colour from July to November. Be aware that the park can be very hot at times, and there is no drinking water available at recreation sites.

Above Geikie Gorge boat tour.
Photo – Jesse Murdoch/DBCA

Inset above Bigurda Trail, Kalbarri National Park.
Photo – Rory Chapple/DBCA


Inset above right Monkey Mia Visitor Centre.
Photo – Tiffany Taylor



Kalbarri National Park

2 **Monkey Mia Reserve** 846km, 9-hour drive from Perth

For one of the best-known up-close wildlife experiences, head to Monkey Mia Reserve in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area, where you can be within metres of wild bottlenose dolphins that visit the shores every morning. Three generations of dolphins living in Shark Bay Marine Park are now regular visitors to the beach. The Monkey Mia Visitor Centre has interpretive displays providing insight into dolphins and the unique Shark Bay regions. There is designated parking, unisex accessible toilets and sealed paths throughout the site. The beach is accessible on a 1:14 timber ramp, and you can borrow a beach wheelchair with large pneumatic tyres, which can be immersed in water, from the visitor centre at no charge. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information contact **Monkey Mia Visitor Centre on (08) 9948 1366**.


 **Ranger's tip** As wild animals, the Monkey Mia dolphins visit the beach at a time of their choosing, but it is generally in the morning. So it is best to allow plenty of time in your travel schedule and phone the centre to ask about the best time to visit. While in the area, check out Eagle Bluff Lookout, Shell Beach and Peron Homestead.

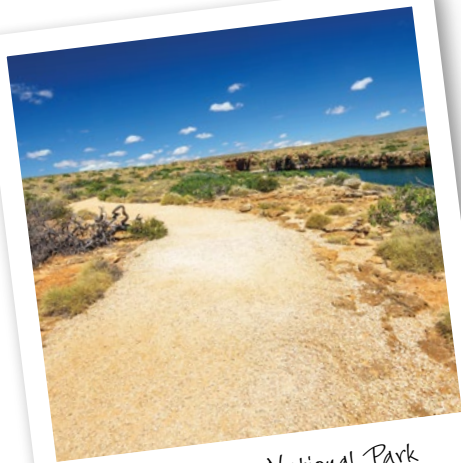


Monkey Mia Reserve

3 **Cape Range National Park and Ningaloo Marine Park** 1300km, 13.5-hour drive from Perth 40km from Exmouth

Where the desert meets the sea, Cape Range National Park boasts rocky gorges of arid, rugged ridges and provides a spectacular contrast to the vibrant Ningaloo Marine Park. Both in the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area, the parks can be appreciated along the stunning drive on sealed roads all the way to Yardie Creek. Along the way, stop off at Milyering Discovery Centre for interpretive displays, designated parking, accessible toilets, a small shop that sells souvenirs and refreshments and beach wheelchairs for hire. Turquoise Bay, Sandy Bay and Yardie Creek are worth a visit, where you will find designated parking, unisex toilets and hardened paths. If you like to camp, check out the facilities at Kurrajong, Osprey and Mesa campgrounds. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact **Milyering Discovery Centre on (08) 9947 2808**.

 **Ranger's tip** Temperatures soar in summer so ensure you have plenty of water and wear appropriate clothing. There is no drinking water available other than at the discovery centre.



Cape Range National Park

Above Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park.

Right Oxer lookout, Weano Gorge at Karijini National Park.

Photos – Christian B./Alamy

Below right Snorkelling at Turquoise Bay, Ningaloo Marine Park.

Photo – Tourism WA

While in the area, the Jurabi Turtle Centre and nearby Hunters Beach in Jurabi Coastal Park are worth a visit to watch the humpback whales or turtles (seasonal) from the purpose-built viewing platforms and shelters along the beach.

4 Karijini Visitor Centre, Karijini National Park

1385km, 15-hour drive from Perth
100km from Paraburdoo

The Karijini Visitor Centre is a great place to start exploring the expansive Karijini National Park with its spectacular rugged scenery, ancient geological formations and variety of arid-land ecosystems. The design of the visitor centre building represents a goanna moving through the country and is symbolic to the Banyjima Aboriginal people. The world-class interpretive displays take you on a journey of places and people, past and present, through stories of geology, plants, animals and Aboriginal people and their culture. Local Banyjima people manage the centre, and are available to share their stories. There is designated parking, accessible toilets and showers and a small shop selling refreshments and souvenirs. For more information, contact Karijini Visitor Centre on (08) 9189 8121.



Ranger's tip Look out for the goanna artwork on the rock at the front door of the centre explaining the building design concept.

While in the area, check out Fortescue Falls Lookout and Circular Pool to the east of the park, and Hamersley Gorge in the north-west. Although access into the gorge may not be possible, there are sealed paths to lookouts giving spectacular views. During summer, temperatures frequently top 40 degrees Celsius. There is no drinking water in the park except for purchase at the visitor centre.

5 Dangg National Park

2577km, 27-hour drive from Perth
20km from Fitzroy Crossing, 280km from Derby, 390km from Broome

Famed for its spectacular multi-coloured gorge, abundant wildlife and awesome boat tours, Dangg National Park is sacred land for the Bunuba Aboriginal people. The gorge has been carved by the Fitzroy River through part of an ancient limestone barrier reef that snakes through the west Kimberley. Geikie Gorge boat tours take place from May to October and are a great way to experience the stunning river landscape and river wildlife. The new boat, the Ms Casey Ross, can accommodate people in wheelchairs. There is a charge for the boat tour, with concessions. There is designated parking, accessible toilets,

shelter and hardened paths throughout. For more information, contact Parks and Wildlife Service Broome office on (08) 9195 5500.



Ranger's tip Don't forget your hat, sunscreen and water particularly if you're going on a boat tour as it can get quite hot.

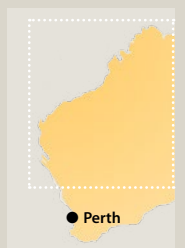


● Derby
● Broome

Fitzroy Crossing ● 5



Ningaloo Marine Park




Access to nature south of Perth

6 Cape to Cape Track, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park

262km, 3-hour drive from Perth

The Cape to Cape Track is a 125-kilometre-long coastal walk trail traversing the length of Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Tackling the whole trail is an extreme challenge, however a 3.8-kilometre section has been designed as a more accessible experience. The sealed walk trail starts at Cape Naturaliste and undulates gently downhill through the coastal landscape to Sugarloaf Rock with a gradient up to 1:12. The trail has about a kilometre of timber boardwalk with seats along the way and no steps. There are designated parking bays and unisex accessible toilets at both ends of the trail. Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse has a small shop and tours of the lighthouse. For more information, contact the Parks and Wildlife Service Busselton office on (08) 9752 5555.

 **Ranger's tip** Look out for wildflowers, and dolphins and whales from the many vantage points along the trail.


While in the area, enjoy a visit to Canal Rocks, Hamelin Bay, Cape Leeuwin and the lovely drive through Boranup State Forest on Caves Road south of Redgate.

7 Barna Mia Nocturnal Wildlife Experience, Dryandra Woodland

166km, 2-hour drive from Perth

Barna Mia is an animal sanctuary with a difference, where you can see native animals such as bilbies,

woylies, quenda and boodies in a natural landscape using specially-placed lights. The site has parking, gravel paths, and an accessible centre and toilets. Tours operate several times per week beginning after sunset. There is a tour fee, with concessions. For more information, contact Parks and Wildlife Service Narrogin office on (08) 9881 9200.

 **Ranger's tip** Keep an eye out for the gentle bilby with soft, blue-grey fur, long ears and black and white tail – Australia's answer to the Easter bunny. While in the area, drive the wonderful Darwinia Drive Trail and see the new Gnaala Mia Campground.

8 Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, Walpole-Nornalup National Park


431km, 5-hour drive from Perth

The Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk is a great example of how innovative design can deliver user-friendly and accessible facilities that are environmentally sustainable.

The 600-metre structure is inclusive of six 60-metre-long spans with 1:12 gradient. It rises through the spectacular tingle trees taking you into the forest canopy 40 metres above the ground. There are designated parking bays and sealed paths with gradients up to 1:14. The unisex accessible toilets, shop and education centre are about 50 metres from the parking area. Complimentary wheelchair and stroller hire are available. Admission fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact the



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk on (08) 9840 8263 or at ttw@dbca.wa.gov.au.

 **Ranger's tip** If you are in a wheelchair and have someone with you who can manage the chair on a small number of steps, check out the Ancient Empire Walk for a great experience of the forest from ground level.

While in the area, Coalmine Beach, Circular Pool and Conspicuous Cliffs Lookout near the carpark are worth seeing. The drive along Coalmine Beach Road and Knoll Drive is spectacular from the car.

9 The Gap and Natural Bridge, Torndirrup National Park

428km, 5-hour drive from Perth

Lookouts at both The Gap and Natural Bridge provide outstanding views of the Southern Ocean and the coast from Bald Head to West Cape Howe. The new lookouts provide a safe and enjoyable experience of the beautiful and dramatic coast.





Access to nature trails

WA has many trails in natural areas that can be explored in a car, on foot, in a wheelchair, by bicycle, horse, kayak or with a snorkel. Hidden gems around the State feature gentle sloping trails, accessible fishing platforms and lookouts, short loop trails and plenty of interpretive information to take in as you rest along the way.

South of Perth

- Crooked Brook Forest near Dardanup
- Big Brook Dam near Pemberton is on the Karri Forest Explorer Drive
- Pupalong Loop Trail at Point D'Entrecasteaux, south of Northcliffe, in D'Entrecasteaux National Park
- Beedelup Falls lookout in Greater Beedelup National Park near Pemberton
- Karri Forest Explorer Drive around Pemberton. Big Brook Dam, Beedelup Falls and Cascades have accessible facilities.
- Heartbreak Drive Trail in Warren National Park
- Darwinia Drive Trail in the heart of Dryandra Woodland near Narrogin

North of Perth

- Pinnacles View Lookout in Nambung National Park
- Lake Thetis Loop Trail near Cervantes
- Lesueur Walk Trails in Lesueur National Park
- Hamersley Gorge and Weano Gorge in Karijini National Park
- Hawks Head and Ross Graham lookouts and picnic areas in Kalbarri National Park
- Hidden Valley Road through Mirima National Park
- Monkey Mia Reserve in Shark Bay World Heritage Area
- Cape Range National Park and Ningaloo Marine Park
- Millstream Homestead Walk Trail within Millstream Chichester National Park
- Koala Boardwalk Trail and Dwerta Mia Trail in Yanchep National Park

Grated floor panels in the state-of-the-art viewing platform at The Gap provide a see-through view of the surging water 40 metres below, delivering a thrilling experience for everyone, including those in a wheelchair. There are designated parking bays and the maximum gradient on the concrete paths is 1:14. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact **Parks and Wildlife Service Albany office on (08) 9842 4500** (see also 'Parks for people: Torndirrup National Park', *LANDSCOPE*, Autumn 2020).

Ranger's tip Get there early or late in the day to avoid the crowds, giving you a front row view of the ocean.

10 Fitzgerald River National Park

505km, 7-hour drive from Perth

Fitzgerald River National Park is one of the most botanically significant national parks in Australia. The centre of the park is designated as 'wilderness' and closed to vehicles for its protection. However, there are opportunities to experience the remote and vast coastal landscape at each end of the park. The south-eastern end of the park is accessed through Hopetoun, providing a stunning sealed drive past accessible recreation sites of Four Mile Beach, Barrens Beach, Barrens Lookout, East Mount Barren and West Beach culminating at Hamersley Inlet. Access Cave Point's amazing lookout via a 600-metre-long sealed assisted access path. Leaving Bremer Bay, drive along the gravel Pabellup Drive at the south-western end of the park to Point Ann. All these sites were redeveloped in the past few



Opposite page

Above Bush Ranger Cadets from Albany Secondary Education Support Centre at Barna Mia.

Photo – Albany Secondary Education Support Centre

Far left Visitors enjoying The Gap and Natural Bridge.

Photo – DBCA

Left Cape to Cape Track, Sugarloaf Rock, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

Photo – Ann Storrie

Inset above Cave Point lookout, Fitzgerald River National Park.

Photo – DBCA

years providing designated parking, unisex accessible toilets and sealed paths to lookouts and picnic areas. Park entry fees apply, with concessions. For more information, contact **Parks and Wildlife Service Albany office on (08) 9842 4500**.

Ranger's tip In winter, look out for southern right whales close to shore with their newborn calves.

For a comprehensive listing of accessible sites and facilities in Western Australia, visit the Disability and Inclusion Commission **AccessWA** website (accesswa.com.au).

Lauren Cabrera is a project officer in DBCA's Publication Information and Corporate Affairs Branch.

For more information visit explore.parks.dbca.wa.gov.au.

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

by Lauren Cabrera



A campaign to provide people with disability access to adaptive mountain bikes is helping to get a range of users out onto Western Australian trails.

When one in five Australians has a disability, Andrew Liddawi found it difficult to conceive he was the only person in a wheelchair who wanted to race down a bush track with his mates for the sheer thrill of it. And his answer to anyone who asks why he enjoys it, is: “Freedom. Simple”.

GETTING OUT THERE

Andrew was involved in outdoor sports like running and mountain biking most of his adult life, but was left paralysed from the waist down after a mountain biking incident in 2008. Determined not to let his disability get in the way of being active, Andrew was keen to find new ways of spending time outdoors. But it wasn't long before he came up against a range of challenges.

“I hate using the word ‘confined’, but the truth is that’s how it can feel when you’re stuck using a chair. To be able to get away from that feeling, even just for a few hours, is a luxury. Especially outdoors in a country as beautiful as ours,” he said.

“Three years after my accident, when my friends asked if I wanted to go trail running at night with them, I thought – why not? I tied a couple of occy-straps around my legs and one around my waist to secure me to my chair and headed out onto the track. Annoyingly, I had to be pushed up and down the gravelly hill climbs by my mates. When I returned home I couldn't help but think there must be a better way.”

MOVING MOUNTAINS

After discovering that off-road handcycles were not available in Australia, and those made overseas cost about \$12,000 each, his mission was clear. After a year of researching, collaborating, networking and learning, Andrew had enough information to create breaktheboundary.com.au – an information hub for adaptive mountain biking in Australia, designed to support people with disability to be able to go ‘beyond flat surfaces’.

Adaptive mountain bikes come in a variety of shapes and sizes to suit the rider's physical, intellectual, neurological and sensory abilities. Readily established adaptive equipment includes handcycles, leg cycles and tandem bikes.

Andrew sought donations through Rebound WA and was soon able to purchase an adaptive handcycle, then went on to become the first Australian with disability to cycle a hand-trike across a 57-kilometre section of the Cape to Cape Mountain Bike Race in WA's south-west in 2013.

“The momentum just kept building and I began to realise I had a growing collective of passionate, like-minded individuals around me, all dedicated to advocating for accessibility and inclusion of people with physical and neurological disability in mountain biking,” he said.

“In 2018 I decided it was time to turn the online presence into a formalised not-for-profit association and Australian charity.”

The trike that Andrew rode at the Cape to Cape event, along with a small collection of other adaptive mountain bikes and a Trailrider (see ‘Running on wheels’ on this page) is now available for hire through the organisation, with guided tours, coaching clinics and a range of other services to suit individuals.

Break the Boundary runs an annual camp and assembles riding groups for adaptive mountain biking. The national association also manages guidelines to give direction to mountain bike event organisers trail builders, land managers and other groups on how they can be more inclusive.

“If you ask me what my goal for Break the Boundary is, I would say it is to become redundant,” Andrew said.

“I would love it if adaptive mountain biking is so commonplace and readily available that there is no need for us.

“Having an exhilarating experience in nature has the potential to really change your mindset and I believe everyone should have the opportunity to feel alive.”



Opposite page

Left Andrew Liddawi rides an adaptive handcycle in the Cape to Cape Mountain Bike Race.

Top A cyclist rides a kneeling handcycle.
Photo – Travis Deane

Above Hear more about adaptive mountain biking.
Video – DBCA

RUNNING ON WHEELS

For people whose disability inhibits them from being able to go bushwalking or trail running, a Trailrider is an excellent option and is available for hire through Break the Boundary, generously donated by the Ability Centre. The Trailrider is a specially designed single-wheeled wheelchair that is carried by two ‘sherpas’, one at either end. It is ergonomically designed with the wheel in the centre under the passenger and has a lightweight aluminium frame so it can easily negotiate narrow trails.

Perth Trail Series is looking at ways to incorporate Trailriders into trail running events in national and regional parks near Perth (see ‘Running for the hills’, *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2017–18).

Series director Melina Mellino was immediately on board when she heard about Break the Boundary.

“I was blown away when I heard about what Andrew was doing,” Melina said.



Above Riders using a variety of adaptive recumbent handcycles and trikes.

Right Rachel and Melina from Perth Trail Series test the timing of the Trailrider.
Photos – Travis Deane



“We all know how amazing being in nature is and that’s what Perth Trail Series is all about; getting out onto the trails with a strong community of people and being inclusive so everyone can give it a go.”

Perth Trail Series is timing how long it takes two runners to carry someone around the trails on the Trailrider and is looking to offer a less-demanding course to cater to Trailriders and runners with less experience, ability or confidence.

WHAT’S NEXT

When Parks and Wildlife Service’s assistant director of Parks and Visitor Services Rod Annear heard about Break the Boundary, he thought a partnership was a natural fit. Rod, an avid mountain biker and bushwalker, envisioned an opportunity to make adaptive mountain bikes and Trailriders available for visitors to every national park (see all ‘Access to more, for more’ on page 8).

“Being outdoors in nature is good for the body, good for the mind and good for the soul,” Rod said.

“Having a disability shouldn’t be a barrier to getting outdoors and Andrew and his team provide that important link.”

The department is a principal sponsor of the Break the Boundary Adaptive Trail Hub at Kalamunda and Rod believes this is just the start of a strong partnership. The organisation and its community of volunteers provide feedback and advice to the department on trail design and features, to ensure they are suitably inclusive. As such, Break the Boundary has developed *Australian Adaptive Mountain Biking Guidelines* to assist trail planners and land managers.

“Recently, Jesse Donovan came out on the newly developed trail in Arklow Forest (see ‘Adventure ahead for cyclists with a disability’ below) on his handcycle to give his feedback and

Do it yourself

For more information about Break the Boundary or to hire an adaptive mountain bike, visit breaktheboundary.com.au.

For more information about how Parks and Wildlife Service is working to improve accessibility for visitors to its lands and waters, visit exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au.

make sure the new trail designed for adaptive mountain bikes was fit for purpose,” Rod said.

“The plan is to continue to work closely with Break the Boundary and other partners to provide equipment and organise volunteers across the State so that people with disability can get out on the trails wherever they travel.”



Adventure ahead for cyclists with a disability

A new mountain bike trail in the State’s south-west is giving cyclists with a disability the opportunity to ride through the scenic Arklow forest, north of Collie.

The new 9.5-kilometre loop trail has been designed to accommodate hand cycles and connects to the Munda Biddi Trail. It forms part of the \$10 million Collie Adventure Trails initiative to establish Collie as Western Australia’s premier trail adventure town, with 100 kilometres of high-quality mountain bike trails between Wellington National Park and the town of Collie (see also ‘Putting Collie on the map’, *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2019).

When completed, these trails will challenge all levels of cyclists and have the potential to attract national and international cyclists and tourists.

Left Arklow Forest provides opportunities for a variety of users.

Right Hear more about the new trail at Arklow Forest near Collie.
Photo/video – DBCA



Kids of all abilities enjoy getting nearer to nature

DBCA's *Nearer to Nature* program runs fun, curriculum-linked, educational, hands-on activities that bring kids of all ages and abilities up close and personal with some of Western Australia's plants and animals in some very special places.

Almost every *Nearer to Nature* program activity can be or has been adapted to suit children of varying levels of ability and the activities are popular with education support units because they are very tactile and engage all the senses. Nearly all programs are wheelchair accessible; accessible camping is available at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre and there is even a sensory trail experience where you can get blindfolded to experience what it would be like moving through the bush if you couldn't see!

The programs are so popular some schools have done every single program in the calendar. Students from Belridge Secondary Education Support Centre (SESC) in Beldon have enjoyed the activities so much that one of the teachers from Belridge SESC came to speak with *Nearer to Nature* leaders to educate them about best practices in providing specialised learning experiences for students with disability.

You can find out more about the programs at pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/n2n

Right Albany Secondary Education Support Unit School Perth Hills campsite.
Photo – Sue Bailey



Youth-based conservation turns the tables

WA's *Bush Rangers* youth-based conservation and community development program caters to students with a range of abilities and has the highest number of participants with disability of all the Cadets WA programs.

The program supports young Western Australians to take an active role in the conservation of the natural environment and supports cadets to get out into the community.

For those students who have disability and require assistance, the program offers them the opportunity to turn the tables and be the ones to help others. Participants undertake personal development training while developing their conservation skills and knowledge through involvement in practical nature conservation projects.

Feedback from *Bush Ranger* cadets who have disability has been overwhelmingly positive; they report the program gives them a renewed sense of confidence.

You can find out more about the programs at pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/n2n



Above Albany Secondary School revegetation project at Lake Seppings.
Photo – Sue Bailey



This page People of all ages and abilities can enjoy the facilities at The Gap, Torndirrup National Park.

Photo – DBCA

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