Have a 'whale' of a time down south!

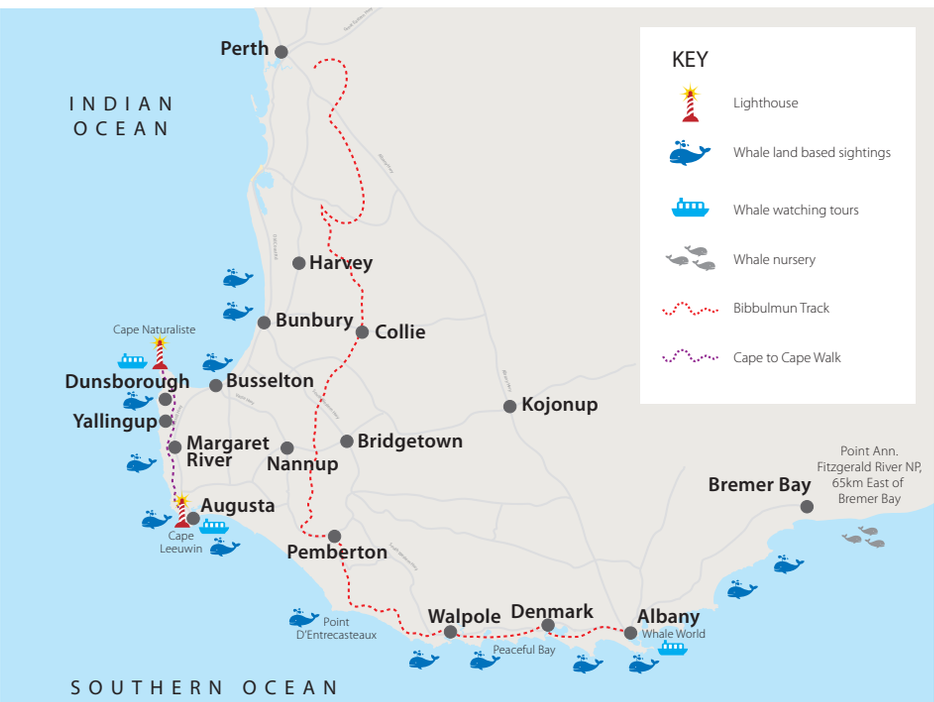
Humpback whale

Southern right whale

Whale watching tour

Seeing a whale up close is an experience many say they will never forget. Australia's South West has some of the most spectacular coastline in the world and during winter is the prime place to see amazing mammals. Hundreds of whales play, feed, breed and travel close to the coast during the months of June to December. Humpbacks and southern right whales are the most commonly sighted species, although enormous blue whales are also regularly spotted.

Keen to check them out for yourself? Our gigantic winter visitors are on show down south now!



Southern right whale and calf

Seasonality

The southern right and humpback whales are most prevalent in Australia's South West and migrate in large numbers. Humpback sightings start in the region from June. The best time to see them around Albany and Augusta is from June to August, and off the Dunsborough coast from September to mid December. The southern right whales are most commonly sighted in Albany and Augusta later in the season from August to October.

Blue whales are occasionally sighted in the Albany area from May to June and around Dunsborough from November to December.

Whale watching tours

Get up close and personal to these gigantic mammals on a whale watching tour. Tours operate out of Augusta from June to mid September, Albany from June to October and Dunsborough from mid September to mid December. Bookings can be made through a visitor centre. Visit Whale World in Albany to learn all about the history of the whales - great for the whole family.

Where to look

You don't have to go far out to sea to see these gigantic mammals and you can often see them frolicking close to the shore. See if you can spot some on one of the great walks below.

Cape Leeuwin & Flinders Bay, Augusta Numerous vantage points are along Leeuwin Road and enjoy fantastic views from the top of the lighthouse.

Point D'Entrecasteaux South of Northcliffe. This sealed access-friendly walk trail meanders around the headland with several lookout platforms.

Conspicuous Cliffs 15km east of Walpole there is a walk from Conspicuous Cliffs to a cliff top viewing platform.

Ocean Beach, Denmark There are two vantage points to choose from, Wilson Head and Lions Lookout.

Whale World 22km from Albany with uninterrupted views over King George Sound.

Sandpatch 15km from Albany enjoy easy walking along a boardwalk to a series of lookouts.

Rotary Lookout 3.5km from Albany an elevated platform above the boardwalk, views of King George Sound.

Tooleburrup Hill, Bremer Bay The lookout here is the highest point in Bremer Bay, providing the perfect vantage point for locating the whales before taking a closer look from the coast.

Point Ann, Fitzgerald River National Park 65km east of Bremer Bay, this is a famous whale nursery.

Cape Naturaliste Lookout Platform and Lighthouse 13km from Dunsborough take the 1.3km return-walk from the lighthouse car park.

Shelley Cove, part of Bunker Bay 13km from Dunsborough walk from the car park to the viewing platform above the limestone cliffs.

Canal Rocks Rotary Lookout 4km south of Yallingup take the 400m walk from the car park.

Hamelin Bay 18km north of Augusta, south of the boat ramp, follow the boardwalk up to the limestone headland.

Cape to Cape Walk This walk covers 140km between the lighthouses in Cape Naturaliste near Dunsborough and Cape Leeuwin near Augusta. It offers breathtaking coastal scenery, with opportunities to spot migrating whales from June and wildflowers from August. The start of the walk has been fully sealed for the first 2.2km, allowing easy access for wheelchairs and prams. This section of the walk provides views across the Indian Ocean and Sugarloaf Rock, which also offers tropical bird-watching opportunities. At the southern end of the track, there are excellent opportunities to spot whales especially from the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse at the end of the track.

Torndirrup National Park Take a walk along the coast where the rock formations nearly pre-date all life on Earth. Spectacular on fine winter days, The Gap and Natural Bridge walk is an easy 300m return, providing an access friendly walk to spectacular lookouts, ideal for spotting whales. Or, you can opt to take the 1.5km walk to a crackline in the granite which has created its namesake, a 'Blowhole', which noisily shoots air and spray high into the air.

Bibbulmun Track One of the most recognised walks in the region is the Bibbulmun Track, which stretches for nearly 1000km from Kalamunda in Perth to Albany on the south coast. Officially opened in September 1998, the award-winning track is now one of the world's great long distance walk trails. Along the southern part of the trail from Walpole to Albany there are some great spots to stop and look out to the ocean where walkers often spot whales on their annual migration.

Identifying a whale

Humpback Whale

Known to be the most acrobatic of whales, the humpback often provides awesome displays of breaching, spy hopping and tail slapping.

How to spot them:

- They have a dorsal fin
- They are the most acrobatic of the whales
- Characterised by their 'hump' back
- Rarely exceeds 15m in length

Southern Right Whale

These whales can be easily identified as, unlike most whales, they do not have a dorsal fin!

How to spot them:

- No dorsal fin
- Move slowly
- Commonly seen close to shore
- Grow up to 17.5m long and often looks like a floating log
- Large callosits on head

Blue Whale

The blue whale is the largest creature that has ever lived on earth, dwarfing even dinosaurs.

How to spot them:

- Can grow up to 31m
- Vary in colour from light blue grey to dark grey
- Seen later in the season

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Please note whales are natural mammals and although whale sightings during the season are very common, they are not guaranteed!