



Rottnest Island is a great place to camp.

Rocking out at Rotto

Rottnest Rangers give tips on what to do on Rottnest Island when camping:

Fishing
 • Squid and herring fishing off the Main Jetty, Georgie Jetty and Army Jetty at night.
 • Herring, tailor and whiting fishing at Pinky Beach and Henrietta Rocks.

Snorkelling
 • Little Armstrong Bay — this is sheltered by the reef and protected from the southerly winds.

• Green Island — this is sheltered by reef and protected from the northerly winds.

• Mary Cove — this secluded bay is protected from the easterly winds, with low reefs.

• Henrietta Rocks — snorkel around the Hopper barge wreck just metres off the beach and reef.

Activities
 • Play beach cricket at Pinky Beach and view the city lights at night from the Bathurst Lighthouse.

• Hire a bike and ride the bike-friendly roads and pathways to any point on the island.

• Fly a kite in the afternoon sea breeze on the campground and oval.

• Gabbi Karminy Bidi — walk the lakes section of the Wadjemup Bidi, taking the short trail loop from Georgie Bay along the wondrous salt lakes, spotting migratory birds along the way.

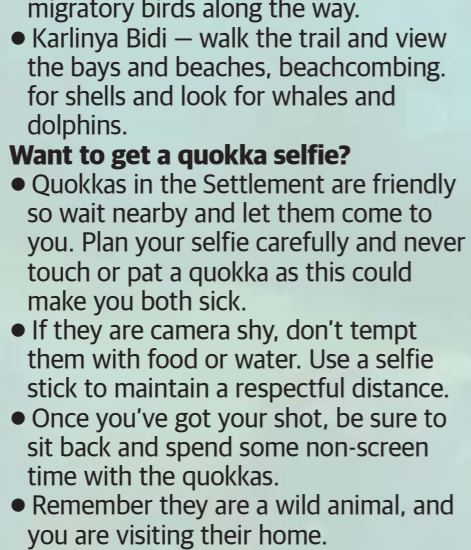
• Karlinya Bidi — walk the trail and view the bays and beaches, beachcombing, for shells and look for whales and dolphins.

Want to get a quokka selfie?
 • Quokkas in the Settlement are friendly so wait nearby and let them come to you. Plan your selfie carefully and never touch or pat a quokka as this could make you both sick.

• If they are camera shy, don't tempt them with food or water. Use a selfie stick to maintain a respectful distance.

• Once you've got your shot, be sure to sit back and spend some non-screen time with the quokkas.

• Remember they are a wild animal, and you are visiting their home.



Lincoln Lewis gets a quokka selfie.
Picture: Tourism Australia

There's something special about this time of year. The warmer weather, the wildflowers and the thought of exploring the outdoor wonders of Western Australia. But first things first — make a plan.

BEFORE YOU GO

Before you pitch your tent, you must first make some important decisions: Where to go? How long do we have? What type of camping?

Where you go will be dictated by how much time you have and of course the season. If you're wanting to travel in summer, head south to explore the forests and beaches. During winter, it is best to travel north to follow the sun. If you're heading south, the national parks and townships are generally set up for families but of course camping grounds can get quite crowded during school holidays. Going north generally means less crowds but not as many campground facilities.

What to take?

SOMETHING TO SLEEP IN

A good tent will make or break your camping experience. If this is the first time under canvas then make sure to road test the tent. Check that all the necessary equipment is present and that you can erect the tent without spending hours reading the instructions. Oh, and don't forget to pack a hammer.

SOMETHING TO SLEEP ON

There are so many options available from stretchers and self-inflating mattresses to swags and sleeping bags. For a good night's sleep, don't forget to pack a good pillow. All sleeping bags are rated for temperature comfort and regular campers recommend having a bag that will keep you warm even during the coldest nights as the best option. If you camp in summer they suggest opening the bag and sleeping with a light sheet. A stretcher bed that is just off the ground will provide a much warmer night's sleep and will give you better back support, something that will be appreciated the following morning.



Picture: Getty Images/Image Source

A must-have for any camp cuisine is marshmallows for roasting over the fire.

SOMETHING TO EAT

Car fridges or eskies are the best options for storing food and of course you'll need plates, bowls, cups and utensils. Camp fires are usually the most fun way for cooking up a camp meal but there are times during the year many campgrounds do not allow the lighting of fires. Another option is the gas cooker.

When it comes to food, think simple. Cook up some casseroles or pasta dishes beforehand and bring along something easy to barbecue. Wrapping potatoes in foil and placing them under the coals is also fun. Because you're out in the fresh air, healthy snacks are important such as fruit, nuts or muesli bars. And a must-have for any camp cuisine is marshmallows for roasting over the fire.

SOMEWHERE TO WEE

If you're really 'roughing' it just a spade will do for when nature calls, but nowadays many campgrounds provide toilet and shower blocks for convenience. Some campgrounds have 'long-drop' toilets, that is, a deep hole in the ground covered by a concrete slab with a hole in it. Portable chemical toilets can be brought along as well as pop-up canvas change rooms with solar-powered showers.

SOMETHING TO SEE WITH

The camp fire is the best source of light when camping but head torches or head lamps are great for looking

into the treetops at night or a late night toilet trip. Battery-powered lanterns are useful inside the tent for any late-night games or reading.

SOMETHING TO DO

Camping is a great activity in itself but there are other things that can add to the experience:

- Explore the surroundings by bushwalking or beachcombing. Take along a camera or mobile phone to capture the experience
- Create dream catchers with a collection of sticks and some wool
- Collect shells for making a necklace or a work of art
- If near a lake or ocean, pack a rod or just a hand line for some fishing fun
- Lantern Stalk is an all-time favourite game for night time. Place a lantern at the top of a hill or in a field. One team has to guard the lantern, the other has to capture it.
- Explore the star constellations at night without the light pollution
- Card games are so much more fun around a camp fire

TIPS ON KEEPING SAFE

- Avoid setting up camp on ant hills and trails, near stagnant water where mosquitoes thrive or under gum trees that might drop branches
- Pack sunscreen, insect repellent and enough drinking water
- Don't eat wild fruits or berries
- Don't drink water from lakes or streams
- Keep food in boxes with lids and store away from animals
- Never leave a camp fire burning
- Pack a whistle to help you call for help if you are lost.



Where to go

Don't want to go far from home? There are wonderful places to camp within an easy drive from the city.

1. Beelu campground, Perth Hills Discovery Centre, Mundaring

- Great for families and first-time campers
- Just a 40-minute drive from the city
- Powered and unpowered campsites, a sheltered camp kitchen with free gas barbecue and fridge, hot showers, toilets

2. Lake Leschenaultia, Perth Hills

- Powered and unpowered camp sites, barbecues, hot showers, toilets, washing machines and dryers
- White sandy beaches and the clear waters of the lake are perfect for canoeing and swimming
- Walk and bike trails

A bit further afield

3. Congelin campground, Dryandra Woodland, near Congelin Dam

- A two-hour drive south east of Perth
- Communal gas barbecues and fire ring sites, long-drop bush toilets, must take your own drinking water
- Walk trails, chance to see rare marsupials up close

4. Dampier Peninsula, West Kimberley

- Nearly a 4-hour drive from Broome
- So many activities to do such as mud crabbing, fishing, whale watching, swimming, snorkelling, bird watching and beachcombing.
- A variety of camping options from pitching a tent near the beach to glamping at Cape Leveque.

5. Coral Bay

- Almost a 12-hour drive north of Perth, Coral Bay has a host of caravan parks that provide camp sites.
- Beach is protected and perfect for glass bottom boat tours, snorkelling, swimming with whale sharks, kayaking and exploring the beautiful Ningaloo Reef.



Tara and brother Brett at Nanga in 2012. Pictures: Julie Turner



Tara Loves Camping

Tara, 10, heads to the outdoors with her family every chance she gets. ED! has a chat with her about her love of camping.

ED!: Where is your favourite spot to go camping?

Tara: I love to go to Nanga Mill at the Lane Poole Reserve in Dwellingup. It has lots of mud and the river is just near our camp site.

ED!: What is it about camping that you like?

Tara: I like the mud and exploring in the bush with my Dad and Aslan, my dog.

ED!: Can you tell me any funny stories that happened to you when camping?

Tara: The first time camping, when I was five, we made a friend and played in the mud in our gum boots. We got stuck (bogged) and needed my friend's Dad to pull us out with the shovel. We were covered in mud, so were our clothes. It was the best fun!

ED!: Apart from the usual — tents and sleeping bags — what are three things that you always take on camp?

Tara: A torch, a first-aid kit and a SUP, a stand-up paddleboard. Our dog Aslan likes to ride on it with us on the river.

Tara and her dog Aslan enjoying paddleboarding last year.

WHAT TYPE OF CAMPER ARE YOU?

If your idea of camping is sleeping in a motel without wi-fi then perhaps "glamping" would be more your style. "Glamping" is camping but with all the luxuries of home. There are several glamping resorts in Western Australia with wilderness tents complete with beds and ensuites. Chefs are on hand to create gourmet meals and some resorts even have "bush butlers" to help you enjoy your time away.

Camping - it's in tents!

As the days warm up, it's time to dust off the camping gear and head into the forests or to the beach. Heather Zubek pitches the tent and lights the campfire before taking a look at where to stay and what to do in the great outdoors this spring.