

Monkey Mia

Conservation Park and Reserve



Irrabuga Mia

Visitor guide

Dolphin experience

Monkey Mia is world renowned as a special place where people can experience and enjoy close encounters with dolphins.

Certain female dolphins are offered small amounts of fish up to three times during the morning. Dolphins are only fed under strict supervision of Parks and Wildlife officers with small feed amounts so that the dolphins continue to behave and hunt naturally and teach their young to hunt.

There are days when the dolphins choose not to visit the beach. There are no set times for dolphin experiences as they depend entirely on if and when the dolphins visit the beach between 7.45am and 12 noon. The best time to arrive is 7.45am, although the experience is less crowded if the dolphins return later in the morning.

World Heritage

At Monkey Mia you can see the unique landscapes, habitats and animals that make Shark Bay a World Heritage area.

Rusty red sand dunes—quartz with a coating of iron oxide—contrast with white sandy beaches and the turquoise bay. Scattered over the red sand dunes are acacias and other low shrubs sheltering a diversity of wildlife, including threatened native species.

Close to the main car park you may see the rare thick-billed grasswren, many other birds and a variety of reptiles.

Thayadi (snakes), jabi (small lizards), barnka (goannas), and the thorny devil are just some of the reptiles that live in and around Monkey Mia.

The bird hide along Wulyibidi Yaninyina walk trail is a good place to see wabagu (osprey or sea eagle), babbler, yalibidi (emu), crested pigeons, pipits, zebra finches, variegated fairy-wrens and the chiming wedgebill.

Along the trail at a lookout over the tidal flats you may see jurruna (pelican), terns, wanamalu (cormorants), oystercatchers, dotterels, red-capped plovers and other wading birds. Some are migratory, including the common greenshank, whimbrel, eastern curlew and bar-tailed godwit.

Significant ecosystems

Located where warm tropical and cool temperate waters meet, Shark Bay's waters are clear and shallow, generally less than 10m deep within 1km of the shore.

Seagrasses flourish in these shallow, sheltered waters with abundant light, and the bay is home to 12 of the 60 seagrass species found worldwide. The seagrass meadows here are the largest in the world and support more than 10,000 dugongs, one of the world's biggest populations.

Seagrasses stabilise the sea floor and provide food and habitat for hundreds of species. Seagrass meadows attract animals ranging from tiny worms and molluscs to sea stars, urchins, sea cucumbers and crustaceans. These small animals attract larger animals, beginning a complex food web.

The nearby Faure Sill is a bank of sand and seagrass that restricts water flow in the upper reaches of the bay. High evaporation, very little rainfall and the sill's effect on water flow combine to make the water south of the sill twice as salty as sea water. This hypersalinity determines what can live there, such as the *Fragum* cockle at Shell Beach and stromatolites at Hamelin Pool, and contributes to Shark Bay's World Heritage status.



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Malgana connections

This central part of Shark Bay is home to the people of the Malgana Aboriginal language group. The Malgana name for Shark Bay is Gathaagudu, meaning 'two bays', and Irrabuga is the name for dolphin. This name implies that dolphins have bad breath as it is derived from irra - 'mouth' - and buga - 'smells bad'.

Malgana people have lived on the rich marine resources of Gathaagudu for millennia. Evidence of past Malgana seafood feasts have been found in middens near Monkey Mia, along with other artefacts that indicate the Malgana traditionally used rafts and canoes to travel and hunt.

Malgana people continue to fish Shark Bay's waters, including as commercial fishers.

A place in Shark Bay's rich history

Dirk Hartog made the first recorded European landing in Shark Bay on 25 October 1616. However, European occupation of the region only began in the 1850s with the mining of guano from seabird colonies.

Shark Bay guano was prized as a high quality fertiliser and it did not take long to completely remove it from islands around the bay. Pearling followed in the 1860s and a large pearling camp was located in Red Cliff Bay, just north of Monkey Mia.

Warda (pearls) and wilyara (pearlshell) were both valuable resources and wilyara was used for buttons before plastic. Wilyara grew thickly on shallow banks and could be picked by hand at low tide but it was more economical to dredge them with sailing boats. This quickly stripped the banks.

Shark Bay warda are now commercially cultivated and the floating structure in Red Cliff Bay is the work platform of a pearl farm growing local pearls.

A pastoral industry was established by the 1880s and pastoralists supplemented their income by exporting local sandalwood to Asia.

The industries that established in Shark Bay increased maritime traffic. The Wulyibidi Yaninyina trail passes the grave of a three-year-old girl who became ill and died on the supply vessel, *Niola*.

Aboriginal people were and remain central to Shark Bay's industries.



Pelican



Thorny devil



Turtle

Look after yourself at Monkey Mia

- Protect yourself from the sun.
- Ensure you drink enough water to avoid dehydration, particularly along the walk trail.
- Always swim, dive or snorkel with at least one other person.
- When in the water be aware of boats.
- When in the water be aware of potentially dangerous marine life, including sharks.
- Be aware of stonefish and stingrays when wading in the water (wear reef sandals).
- Leave the water if a dolphin seems stressed – signs include tail slapping, head jerks, loud popping noises and open mouth with bared teeth.
- For your safety, leave the water if dolphins are fishing in the shallows.
- Do not approach or feed pelicans, emus or other wildlife. Dolphins are fed under strict supervision of Parks and Wildlife officers.

Become a volunteer

Ask a Parks and Wildlife officer about how you can join the volunteering team at Monkey Mia.

Visitor fees

Visitor fees apply to all people visiting Monkey Mia, including resort guests. Fees pay for the costs of managing the dolphin experience and maintaining facilities. Park passes do not apply to Monkey Mia Conservation Park.

More information

Shark Bay District

Ph: (08) 9948 2226

Fax: (08) 9948 2201

dpaw.wa.gov.au

Monkey Mia Reserve

Ph: (08) 9948 1366

Fax: (08) 9948 1512

sharkbay.org

Information current at January 2017.

This document is available in alternative formats on request.



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Please help look after the dolphins

With so many people visiting the bay to see the dolphins there is a risk to their health and natural habits. At Monkey Mia we appreciate your help looking after the dolphins.

- Please follow the instructions given by Parks and Wildlife officers and volunteers.
- Quietly leave the water when there is a new calf close to shore.
- Only feed dolphins when invited to do so by Parks and Wildlife officers and their volunteer assistants.
- Help maintain the wild dolphins' health and friendly nature by not touching them.
- Children should be supervised by adults at all times.

- If a dolphin approaches you in the water, watch it and remain still; do not pursue the dolphin.
- Do not try to attract dolphin attention by splashing the water – your fingers may look like a fish.
- If you are in the water, try to keep at least 30m away from any dolphins – swimming with dolphins can result in mothers and calves being separated.
- Do not wear sunscreen in the water at the dolphin experience area, as lotions and creams can irritate dolphin skin and eyes.
- Pets are not allowed in the dolphin experience area and must be on leads when in the reserve.
- If a dolphin approaches you while fishing, please remove your fishing line from the water.

Things to do at Monkey Mia

Swim and snorkel

Monkey Mia provides a wonderful opportunity to snorkel over the seagrass beds that support much of Shark Bay's marine life.

Boating and kayaking

Boating and kayaking are great ways to enjoy the waters around Monkey Mia. When out on the water you may see dolphins, dugongs, stingrays, turtles and other marine animals. During whale migration times in spring and autumn there are many humpback whales in the bay that are sometimes seen from the shore.

Camping and accommodation

The adjacent Monkey Mia Resort offers a variety of accommodation, including camp sites. Camping is not permitted within the Monkey Mia Conservation Park, reserve and car park. Entry fees still apply.

Tours

A number of tours operate from Monkey Mia. More information is available from the Parks and Wildlife tour booking office.

Display Centre

Discover what makes Monkey Mia and Shark Bay a World Heritage area, and find out more about dolphins and other marine life.

Theatrette

Watch nature documentaries about Shark Bay in air-conditioned comfort.

Picnicking

Enjoy a picnic on the beach, lawn or one of the picnic tables.

Bird watching

Look for thick-billed grass-wrens, babblers, emus and many other birds around Monkey Mia.

School holiday activities

The Wonderfully Wild school holiday program runs during most school holidays. Ask for a timetable at the Monkey Mia Booking Office.





A beach wheelchair is available. Ask a Parks and Wildlife officer if you would like to use it.



Dolphin experience area



Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort



Tour bookings and gift shop



Walk trail start



Bird hide



Wulyibidi Yaninyina Trail



Wulyibidi Yaninyina Trail

4km loop, allow 1.5 hours

Explore some of Shark Bay's World Heritage values, local history and Malgana Aboriginal culture along the Wulyibidi Yaninyina walk trail.

Wulyibidi Yaninyina is Malgana for 'walking Peron' and is an easy walk around this part of the Peron Peninsula. It starts at the large shelter along the entry road. Early morning and late afternoon are the best times to see birds.

