Karri Forest Explorer

Warren National Park

Warren National Park protects magnificent virgin karri forest along the valley of the Warren River. The one-way Heartbreak Trail follows the river, sometimes level with the water and sometimes high above it. The steep track was built by hand to clear a path down to the river for firefighters. Its name reflecting the hardship of the job. Heartbreak Trail can be slippery when wet and is not recommended for caravans or buses.

The rapids of Heartbreak Crossing and Warren Lookout, high above the river, are good stopping places along the trail and are excellent camping sites for those looking for a longer stay.

Warren National Park also contains the Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree, one of the three fire lookout trees open to the public in the Pemberton area. It was pegged in 1988 as part of Australia’s bicentennial celebrations.

Visitors can also climb the Gloucester Tree in Gloucester National Park and the Diamond Tree, south of Margaret River on the South Western Highway.

Another tree in the park is named after Marianne North, the English artist whose 1880 painting of the misshapen karri now hangs in a gallery at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Visitor fees

Park entry fees apply in Warren, Gloucester and Greater Beedelup national parks. For current information on fees please see the Park visitor fees brochure at exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/fee/fires

Annual Local, Holiday, Annual All Parks, and Gold Star passes are available at Parks and Wildlife Service outlets and visitor centres in Western Australia or online at shop.dbca.wa.gov.au.

These fees assist in conservation and park management including the improvement of visitor facilities and services.

For more information

Parks and Wildlife Service Pemberton Office
Kennedy Street, Pemberton
Phone (08) 9776 1207
dcba.wa.gov.au

Pemberton Visitor Centre
Phone (08) 9776 1133
pembertonvisitor.com.au

Information current at December 2017

This publication is available in other formats on request.

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Big Brook Forest

Big Brook is a young forest, regenerated after logging in the 1920s. In 1930, by which time about 2,000ha of karri had been clear-felled to produce logs for Pemberton Mill, a spark from a steam locomotive started a bushfire. The fire and the seed germinated the following winter. Remaining karri dropped their seed on the ash bed from the fire lookout in 1947, one of a network of lookouts built in the area after the Second World War.

Big Brook Forest (there’s great trout and marron fishing in season) or picnic spots from the suspension bridge, go bushwalking, or fishing. Choose to stop for a wine tasting, coffee or a gourmet meal; visitors can explore the forest at their own pace. Stop for a picnic above the river, sometimes level with the water and sometimes high up on the cliffs; you’ll find trail-side timber town of Pemberton, but you can join it at several points along the way, depending on which way you’re travelling, or where you’re staying.

The Karri Forest Explorer Drive was developed and funded by the department with support from the Pemberton tourism industry. It winds through some of the south-west’s most magnificent karri forest.

Visitors can explore the forest at their own pace. Stop for a picnic at Big Brook Dam, climb 60m to the Gloucester Tree lookout, see Beedelup Falls from the suspension bridge, go bushwalking, or fishing, or just sit and take in nature. You’ll find trail-side information to guide you through the forest, including a series of tourist radio stops (88 FM).

Visitors can stop for a wine tasting, coffee or a gourmet meal; visit a gallery or craft centre or cast your rod for trout. Choose from the wide range of places to stay and give yourself longer to explore the 86km drive.

The Karri Forest Explorer Drive starts just outside the historic timber town of Pemberton, but you can join it at several points along the way, depending on which way you’re travelling, or where you’re staying.

Kari (Eucalyptus diversicolor) grows up to 90m high, making it the tallest tree in Western Australia and one of the tallest in the world.

The main belt of karri forest grows south from Nannup to Manjimup to the Frankland River, then east to Denmark and Torbay, near Albany.

Kari has a long, straight trunk with smooth bark that is shed each year. The outer bark changes colour as it matures, so the trunks are multi-coloured in shades of pink, orange, grey and white. Karri produces white flowers in spring.

Best known for the Gloucester Tree lookout, this park is 3km south-east of Pemberton and a main attraction on the Karri Forest Explorer Drive. The 40m Gloucester Tree was chosen for a fire lookout in 1947, one of a network of lookout towers built in the karri forest between 1937 and 1952.

The Gloucester Tree was named after the then Governor General of Australia, His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, who was visiting Pemberton when the lookout was being built. Today, visitors can climb 80m to see one of the most spectacular views of the karri forest.

At The Cascades, in the southern end of the park, the Lefroy Brook tumbles over a series of rocky shelves. Lookout platforms provide good views of the falls coming down from the Cascades, which is south-east of Pemberton and a main attraction on the Karri Forest Explorer Drive.

Above Gloucester National Park. Photo – Wendy Eiby
Exploring the karri forest on foot

There are lots of great opportunities to get out of your car and discover the forest on foot along the Karri Forest Explorer.

Warren National Park

The Warren River Loop Walk is a 10.5km, moderately hard walk trail that passes through some of the region’s most magnificent old-growth karri forest. Rated as one of WA’s Top Trails, this loop trail can be started from any point and can also be walked in short sections varying in length from 300m to 2.8km.

Gloucester National Park

There are several walking options leaving from the Gloucester Tree ranging from the easy 400m Dukes Walk to the more challenging 10km Gloucester Route.

In the southern section of the park at The Cascades, the Lefroy Brook Loop Walk is a 1.2km trail that follows the Lefroy Brook before climbing out of the valley through karri and marri forest.

You can also walk the 6km between the Gloucester Tree and Cascades along the Bibbulmun Track.

Big Brook Dam

An easy 3.4km sealed walk trail circles this picturesque dam and is suitable for prams and wheelchairs. You can also walk the 1km to Big Brook Arboretum along a walk trail that leads off from the upper reaches of the dam.

A bit more adventurous?

If you are into mountain biking, drop into the Pemberton Visitor Centre and ask about the mountain bike trails located at the Pemberton Mountain Bike Park. There are a range of circuits that cater for beginners to the more experienced riders.

You can also take a ride on the Munda Biddi Trail, Western Australia’s long distance off-road cycling trail.

The Pemberton Visitor Centre can help you out with more information on canoeing, four-wheel driving, cycling, mountain biking and local tours.

Camping along the Karri Forest Explorer

Why not spend a few days seeing the sights of the Karri Forest Explorer and camp in the forest surrounding Pemberton?

There are excellent camp sites in Warren National Park. Draftys Camp has two camping loops with shady camp sites spread along the Warren River. There are 22 camp sites, toilets and a camp kitchen with picnic tables and free gas barbecues.

Warren Camp offers six camp sites that are well shaded in the magnificent karri forest and close enough to the river to hear the water flowing past. Picnic tables and toilet facilities are provided.

Big Brook Arboretum also offers camping in a large open grassed area. Toilet facilities are provided.

Nestled among marri and jarrah forest, the Carey Brook camp sites, Snattygobble Loop and Grasstree Hollow, present a secluded camping experience close to the pristine Carey Brook. There are tent sites, a site suitable for groups, a camp kitchen and toilets.

Camping fees apply to all of these campgrounds.

Campfires are permitted in Parks and Wildlife Service supplied fire rings only except during the bushfire season when no fires are allowed. Please bring your own firewood and do not collect it from surrounding national parks. Portable gas stoves are recommended.

There are many other accommodation options around Pemberton and the Karri Forest Explorer. Please contact the Pemberton Visitor Centre for details.


Riding through the karri forest. Photo – Leon Ewing.

Care for the trail

Follow the seven Leave No Trace principles:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
   Your safety in natural areas is our concern, but your responsibility.

2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
   Stay on paths and help prevent erosion. Follow signs and stay on roads marked in this brochure. Normal road rules apply.

3. Dispose of waste properly
   Put your litter in bins or, better still, take it with you.

4. Leave what you find
   Leave the natural environment as you find it.

5. Minimise campfire impacts
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6. Respect wildlife
   Do not disturb animals, plants or rocks.

7. Be considerate of yourself, your hosts and other visitors

Camping along the Karri Forest Explorer.

Camping at Big Brook Arboretum.
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Camping at Big Brook Arboretum.