Geology

More than 1000 million years ago, a shallow sea covered the area. Minerals, sand, silt and the bones of tiny sea creatures slowly drifted down through the water to form layers upon layer of sediment. After the sea receded, over aeons of geological time, the layers of sediment were transformed into layers of rock by the pressure created from their own weight. Ripple marks can still be seen on exposed rock layers on the peaks. Massive forces created by the slow grinding of the Australian continent against other continents eventually caused the rocks to buckle and rise. Chester Pass and Red Gum Pass show the range's formation.

The weathering forces of wind, rain, heat and cold steadily worked to erode the range into the jagged shape you see today.

Fire

The Stirling Range, like much of Australia, is a fire-prone environment. Fire is a natural force that helped to forge the continent's remarkable biodiversity. However, too frequent intense large-scale bushfires can destroy habitat and whole ecosystems. Plants and animals respond differently to fire; some recover quickly, others take decades. Plant species with woody seed capsules, like hakea and banksia, rely on fire to release seeds and stimulate new growth. Prescribed fire management is necessary in the Stirling Range to conserve biodiversity and reduce the risk of bushfire. The goal of prescribed burning is to create a mosaic of vegetation differing post-fire ages. Lightning strikes are the cause of most fires in the park. When visiting the park, be aware of thunderstorms and of hot and windy days when fire risk is high.

Caring for Stirling Range National Park

- Protect habitat and wildlife by leaving rocks and plants undisturbed. Do not bring pets into the park.
- No camping or cooking fires are allowed in the park.
- Bins are not provided so please take your rubbish out with you, including food scraps and toilet paper. Make sure toilet waste is buried to 15cm deep.

Biodiversity

About 80km north of Albany, the rugged peaks of the Stirling Range spread east-west for more than 65km and is characterised by stark cliff faces, magnificent views and abundant, vibrantly coloured flowering plants. No matter what time of year you arrive, there will always be faces, magnificent views and abundant, vibrantly coloured flowering plants. Among the most beautiful and iconic of the plants are the darwinias, or mountain bells. Ten species of mountain bells have been identified in the park and only one of these is found outside the Stirling Range. These are found on particular peaks or in the valleys between them. Mountain bells are usually found above the 300m contour level on acid sandy clay soil. Each species occurs in a well-defined area, either on particular peaks or in the valleys between them.
Animals

Nearly 150 bird species have been sighted in the park including the western rosella, red-capped parrot, golden whistler, splendid wren, wedge-tailed eagle and western spinebill. Thirty-nine species of mammals were identified in the region by early European collectors. Only half of these species have been found in recent years. Land clearing, frequent bushfires and feral animals such as the cat and fox have adversely affected native wildlife. The most commonly spotted native mammals are the western grey quoll and death adders are present but rarely seen. Other mammals found in the range include the ash-grey mouse, bandicoot, tammar wallaby, eucalyptus mouse, tawny hand-ruffed gecko, lesser long-eared bat.

The cloud-touched peaks, sheltered valleys, exposed rock faces, moist gullies, windswept lowlands and protected crevices of the Stirling Range provide countless combinations of altitude, soil, rainfall, sunlight and exposure. The multitude of conditions enables more than 1500 species of flowering plants to exist here. Eighty species are found only in the range. The park is particularly rich in banksias, eucalypts, orchids and veronicas (heather flowers).

The landscape displays a mosaic of thicket, mallee-heath, woodland and wetland habitats plus a unique and threatened 'montane' plant community found only on the tops of the high peaks. Among the most beautiful and iconic of the plants are the dawarinas, or mountain bells. Ten species of mountain bells have been identified in the park and only one of these is found outside Stirling Range.

Mountain bells are usually found above the 300m contour level on acid sandy clay soil. Each species occurs in a well-defined area, either on particular peaks or in the valleys between them.

Biodiversity

Stirling Range is a species-rich area within south-western Australia, a region that is recognised internationally as one of the world’s top 35 hotspots for biodiversity. Stirling Range received Australia’s highest heritage honour in 2006 when, in recognition of its outstanding biodiversity, it was added to the National Heritage List.

Plants

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Stirling Range National Park

About 80km north of Albany, the rugged peaks of the Stirling Range abruptly rise from a surrounding landscape of lowlands, most of which has been cleared for agriculture. The range stretches east-west and is more than 30km wide at its widest. Stirling Range is one of the few places in WA where snow occasionally falls.

Cultural significance

The Aboriginal name for the range, Koi Kyoornu-ruff, means ‘mist moving around the mountains’ – a frequently seen occurrence. The lowlands surrounding the peaks were important sources of food for Noongar (Nyoongar) people. Women gathered roots, seeds and fruit while men hunted kangaroos, wallabies and other animals.

European settlers arrived and took up land, creating farms and raising livestock. Cattle, sheep, wool and sandalwood were transported through the range to the port in Albany. Displaced from their traditional land, many Noongar people worked on farms and lived on settlements or in missions.

Buffalo Knoll (Bubur Mii) continues to be of great spiritual significance to traditional Aboriginal people of the south-west as it is home to a powerful ancestral being.
Stirling Range Drive – 42km
The scenic drive travels through the heart of the national park and offers remarkable views when travelled in either direction.

Eastern Lookout (Bluff Knoll car park)
Discover ‘many eyes’ and ‘many faces’ on the craggy cliffs of Bluff Knoll, a place of great significance to the traditional Aboriginal custodians of the range, the Noongar (Nyoongar) people.

Central Lookout (mid-point on Stirling Range Drive)
Take a 30-minute-return walk to the top of a small knoll to enjoy impressive views of surrounding peaks and the Porongurup Range to the south.

Western Lookout (Ruby Barnett Hill)
Enjoy striking views of the range stretching to the east.

Picnic spots and barbecues
Gas barbecues are provided for your use free of charge. See the map for locations. Cooking fires are not allowed.

Camping
Camping is permitted at Mon Urg Spring Campground. Camping fees apply and are collected by the ranger.

Private campgrounds and caravan parks are located on the park’s northern boundary as well as near Porongurup National Park.

Park fees
Visitors are required to pay a fee at the entry station on the road to Bluff Knoll. Display your pass on your vehicle dashboard. Your fees help to protect the park and improve visitor facilities.

Mountain bushwalks, backcountry and adventure
Bushwalking and adventure activities are a great way to discover the scenic beauty and amazing features of the park, but careful planning and preparation are essential, especially when accessing remote areas.

Remember:
• All walks are steep and have uneven surfaces.
• Plan your walk based on forecast weather conditions – hot and windy conditions are not ideal for walking due to the risk of bushfire and conditions may change.
• Contact the ranger if you are considering the Stirling Range Drive – 42km.
• Let someone know of your plans, including when you expect to return.
• Contact the ranger for more detailed information on appropriate sites for abseiling, rock climbing.

Fighting dieback
Phytophthora dieback is a major problem in the Stirling Range. Caused by a microscopic water mould that dwells in the soil, this plant pathogen kills plants by rotting their roots.

More than 2300 plant species in south-western Australia are susceptible to dieback. Hundreds of vulnerable species and susceptible plant communities are found in the Stirling Range, some of which are threatened with extinction.

The steep slopes and moist conditions in the range create perfect conditions for the spread of dieback. Machinery, humans and animals spread the disease by moving infested soil to healthy areas.

Once present in the landscape, the dieback water mould can move in soil and water or by root-to-root contact between plants.

Dieback threatens biodiversity by not only killing plants but also by destroying wildlife habitat, placing the health and survival of whole ecosystems at risk.

No cure has been found for Phytophthora dieback. Susceptible rare plant communities are sprayed with phosphate, a non-toxic chemical that temporarily strengthens plant defence. Reapplying must occur every one to two years.

Walking in Stirling Range National Park

Bluff Knoll
(Class 4 – height: 1095m, distance: 6km return)
Allow three to four hours. Bluff Knoll is the highest peak in the southern half of WA and has the most popular trail in the park. Scale its heights to take in outstanding 360-degree views.

Mount Trio
(Class 4 – height: 856m, distance: 3.5km return)
Allow three hours. This walk includes three peaks linked by a plateau. The first third of the path is steep but the remainder is easy. It takes in sweeping views of Toolbrunup and other peaks to the south-west.

Mount Hassell
(Class 4 – height: 837m, distance: 3km return)
Allow three hours. This popular walk offers excellent views of Toolbrunup Peak.

Toolbrunup Peak
(Class 5 – height: 1052m, distance: 4km return)
 Allow three to four hours. This is the second highest peak in the park, with steep rocky sections near the top. It requires fitness and agility and provides magnificent views.

Mount Magog
(Class 5 – height: 856m, distance: 7km return)
Allow three to four hours. This trail starts in tall wandoo woodland and leads through open country and thick bush to provide excellent views.

Talyuberlup
(Class 5 – height: 783m, distance: 2.6km return)
Allow three hours. You’ll cross increasingly steep terrain through varied vegetation to a rocky crag at the summit where you can take in extensive views of the Stirling and Porongurup ranges.

Walk trail classifications
Parks and Wildlife walk trails are assigned a ‘class’ to indicate degree of difficulty. The walk classes range from Class 1 (universal access), which is suitable for wheelchair to Class 5, which require walkers to be fit, experienced and suitably equipped. Check trailhead signs at the start of walks for specific information.

You can help to prevent the further spread of dieback:
• Stay on designated tracks and trails.
• Avoid walking in wet soil conditions.
• Abide by management signs and do not enter restricted areas.
• Clean soil from footwear at the start and finish of any walks you do in natural areas.
• For regular bushwalkers, a small spray bottle of 100 per cent methylated spirits is ideal for cleaning footwear.
• Clean vehicle tyres before entering national parks.

Signs in the park will help you avoid spreading dieback. Look for these symbols.
**Scenic drive and lookouts**

**Stirling Range Drive ~ 42km**

The scenic drive travels through the heart of the national park and offers remarkable views when travelled in either direction.

**Eastern Lookout** (Bluff Knoll car park)

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**Western Lookout** (Baby Barnett Hill)

Enjoy striking views of the range stretching to the east.

**Picnic spots and barbecues**

Gas barbecues are provided for your use free of charge. See the map for locations. Cooking fires are not allowed.

**Camping**

Camping is permitted at Monsup Spring Campground. Camping fees apply and are collected by the ranger. Caravans are allowed but sites are limited and no showers or power facilities exist. No fires are permitted.

Private campgrounds and caravan parks are located on the park’s northern boundary as well as near Porongurup National Park.

**Park fees**

Visitors are required to pay a fee at the entry station on the road to the Mount Trio – 42km

Scenic drive and lookouts

**Walking in Stirling Range National Park**

**Bluff Knoll**

(Class 4 – height: 1095m, distance: 6km return)

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Once present in the landscape, the dieback water mould can move in soil and water or by root-to-root contact between plants. Dieback threatens biodiversity by not only killing plants but also by destroying wildlife habitat, placing the health and survival of whole ecosystems at risk.

No cure has been found for Phytophthora dieback. Susceptible rare plant communities are sprayed with phosphite, a non-toxic chemical that temporarily strengthens plant roots.

You can help to prevent the further spread of dieback:

- Stay on designated tracks and trails.
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(Class 5 – height: 856m, distance: 7km return)

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