The Pinnacles

The Pinnacles Desert Discovery and the Turquoise Coast Visitor Centre passes are available at Parks and Wildlife Service offices, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery. Five-day, two-week and four-week and annual passes are available at Parks and Wildlife Service offices, the Turquoise Coast Visitor Centre and at the Cervantes Ranger Station, which is open 7 days per week between 8am and 5pm. Call (08) 9688 6000 for more information.

Caring for the park

Stay cool. Don't light fires. Visitors may use their own gas appliances anywhere in the park. There are free gas barbecues at Hangaree Bay and Kangaroo Point. Be clean. Put your litter in bins or take it with you. Bins can be found on the entry road into Cervantes. Pets are not allowed in Nambung National Park. Free basic dog kennels for park visitors are located at the Cervantes Ranger Station, which is open 7 days per week between 8am and 5pm. Call (08) 9688 6000 for more information.

Visitor fees help protect the park and improve its facilities. Day passes can be purchased at the gate house into the Pinnacles Desert Discovery. Five-day, two-week and four-week and annual passes are available at Parks and Wildlife Service offices, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery and the Turquoise Coast Visitor Centre in Jurien Bay. Respect the pinnacle formations. Do not climb, sit or stand on them. Stay clear of them as pinnacles can be top heavy, unstable and may fall over at any time – injuries have occurred.

Stay on the road. Follow signs in the park and stay on the roads marked in this brochure. Other tracks in the park are for experienced 4WD vehicles only. If you drive through these areas, you may spread infection. As a result, access to some parts of the park may be closed.

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Stay on the road. Follow signs in the park and stay on the roads marked in this brochure. Other tracks in the park are for management purposes only and cut across areas of Phyllophore ditches. If you drive through these areas, you may spread infection. As a result, access to some parts of the park may be closed.

Nambung National Park

The park's most popular attraction is the Pinnacles Desert. Thousands of limestone pillars rise up to 4m out of the stark landscape of sand rich in lime. Mark ancient shorelines on the Swan Coastal Plain. Three old systems of sand dunes run parallel to the WA coast from north of Perth. The park contains one of the most concentrated groups of pinnacles in the world. Pinnacles are the eroded remnants of what was once a thick bed of limestone beneath these dunes.

Vegetation forms an acidic layer of soil and humus. A hard cap of calcrete develops above the softer limestone. This acidic soil accelerates the leaching process, and a hard layer of calcrete forms over the remaining quartz sand.

Vegetation is low, open banksia woodland. Most animals in the park are nocturnal, and they are only one part of the 19,268-hectare national park. Beautiful beaches, coastal dune systems and trees and heathlands typical of this coast are found on the park. This is the best time of year to visit part of this park.

The Quindalup system of white, lime-rich sands is found immediately inland from the fore dunes and is constantly being added to by sand brought in from the sea. The silica-rich sands of Bassendean system quartz sands, often overlying limestone. The pinnacles are the eroded exposed heaths of acacia and myrtles extending east where the fertile soils and water table are higher. Casuarinas and banksias are also seen,

Coastal landscapes

Coastal landscapes determine the plants that grow on them. The further the dune systems are from the sea the older and more developed they become. The Quindalup system of white, lime-rich sands is found immediately inland from the fore dunes and is constantly being added to by sand brought in from the sea. The silica-rich sands of Bassendean system quartz sands, often overlying limestone. The pinnacles are the eroded exposed heaths of acacia and myrtles extending east where the fertile soils and water table are higher. Casuarinas and banksias are also seen, from the fore dunes and the beach. Acacia thickets are common in the Quindalup system.

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The formation of the Pinnacles

Vegetation forms an acidic layer of soil and humus. A hard cap of calcrete develops above the softer limestone. This is the most accepted theory:

Cracks in the calcrete are exploited by plant roots. The softer limestone continues to dissolve. Quartz sand fills the channels that form.

Lime leached from the sand by rain cements the lower levels of the dune into a soft limestone.

Winter rain leached the lime from these sands, cementing grains of the upper levels of the dunes. At the same time, an acidic layer of soil and humus exposed and shaped by prevailing winds blowing away the overlying rich sands and were carried inland by wind to form high, mobile dunes. This acidic soil accelerated the leaching process, and a hard layer of calcrete formed over the softer limestone below. Today this calcrete protects the softer limestone below.
Planning your visit

Nambung National Park is within easy driving distance of Cervantes and Jurien Bay. Both towns have accommodation, shops, fuel, restaurants, a post office and entertainment. Jurien Bay also has a medical centre, police station and banking services.

Access roads to recreation sites in the national park, sealed and unsealed, are suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles, trailers, caravans and busses. However, trailers are not permitted on the Pinnacles Desert Loop and can be parked in the car park.

The Pinnacles Desert Discovery complex has toilets, a shade shelter, an interpretive centre and shop. The Emu Walk Trail starts and finishes at the facility with the first 200m being wheelchair-accessible, leading to the Pinnacles View Lookout.

There is no camping in Nambung National Park. Local tours of the area can be arranged through the Pinnacles Visitor Centre in Cervantes on (08) 9652 7950 or the Turquoise Coast Visitor Centre in Jurien Bay on (08) 9652 2425.

Things to do

Pinnacles Desert Loop Drive and Lookout

A 4km one-way loop track winds through the Pinnacles Desert and the many pull-over bays give visitors the opportunity to get out and explore the desert on foot and to visit the Desert View Lookout at the northern end. The loop drive is unsealed and vehicles longer than 7m and caravans and trailers are not permitted on the track. These should be parked in the long vehicles bays provided in the car park.

Pinnacles Desert Discovery

Adding a different dimension to the pinnacles experience, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre is a stepping-stone into the landscape and has a strong relationship with the site. Construction materials are reflective of the area: free standing limestone walls were inspired by the pinnacles, the vertical timber beams are tuart, mimicking the northern woodland being engulfed by the shifting sand. Lower portions of these tuart beams were deliberately set on fire to reveal the significance of fire in the forming of this landscape. Engraved into the burnt wood are Nyoongar words provided by the local Yued people, echoing the mysteries of the Pinnacles Desert. The Pinnacles Desert Discovery Centre is a stepping-stone into the landscape and has a strong relationship with the site.

Hangover Bay

Hangover Bay is located near the turn-off to the Pinnacles Desert. With its wide sweep of sandy beach, the bay offers good snorkelling, swimming and surfing in the Jurien Bay Marine Park. There are free sheltered barbecues, a toilet and wheelchair-friendly path across the fore dunes with good views of the beach and ocean.

Hangover Bay got its name from a local tradition of frequenting the sheltered bay on New Year’s Day, for a relaxing day at the beach after New Year’s Eve celebrations. Beach shacks also existed on the bay in the 1970s and 1980s, commonly owned by farmer’s inland that would come to Hangover Bay for summer holidays. Remnants of the shacks can be found among the fore dunes.

Kangaroo Point

Kangaroo Point is located approximately 10km from Cervantes and provides an idyllic beach popular for fishing and boating. To the north-west you can see Cervantes at Thirteenth Point. Islands off Cervantes can be seen from the beach. Picnic, barbeque and basic toilet facilities are provided. Kangaroo Point is well named as western grey kangaroos are often seen feeding in the surrounding vegetation.

Lake Thetis

Lake Thetis is a small inland saline lake 1.25km from the Indian Ocean and 1.7km south-east of Cervantes. It is estimated that the lake became isolated from the sea about 4,800 years ago when sea levels dropped and coastal dunes formed around the lake.

The lake is one of only a few places in the world with living marine stromatolites, or living fossils. The microbes that build stromatolites are a species of cyanobacteria and are similar to those found in 3,500 million-year-old rocks. The lake’s stromatolites that look like rocky lumps have been dated to about 3,370 years old. Stromatolite communities grow as the thin layer of bacteria on their surface adapted to living in highly saline environments.

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Below Hangover Bay.

Fishing

Fishing is popular at Hangover Bay and Kangaroo Point. Contact the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development for the latest fishing rules and regulations. Boats are to be moored in the ocean side of the jetty and never to be left unattended. Boating MUST be within the white circle boundary at all times.

Fishing is popular at Hangover Bay and Kangaroo Point. Contact the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development for the latest fishing rules and regulations. Be aware there are sanctuary zones within the Jurien Bay Marine Park which is adjacent to Nambung. These are signposted where they are located. A brochure is available regarding the marine park from Parks and Wildlife Service offices and other visitor outlets. Please note that the offshore islands are all nature reserves, some of which have limited access restrictions, or are prohibited to access due to Australian sea lion breeding areas.
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Pinnacles Desert Discovery

Adding a different dimension to the pinnacles experience, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre is a stepping-stone into the desert. There is interpretive material that encourages you to use all your senses to identify the hidden wonders and signs of life in the desert.

Designed by John Nichols, who also designed the award-winning Karri Jini Visitor Centre, the Pinnacles Desert Discovery fits into the landscape and has a strong relationship with the site. Construction materials are reflective of the area: free standing landscape and has a strong relationship with the site.

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