

Discovering Western Australia: Essential Insights and Travel Tips with Tess Moon

Global Travel Planning Podcast features expert advice on planning your next travel adventure

Tracy: Planning a trip to Western Australia. In this episode, I chat with travel expert Tess Moon about what first time visitors need to know before exploring this vast and beautiful part of Australia. From must visit spots like Perth and Margaret river to key travel tips on distances, weather and budgeting, Tess shares her, insider advice to help you plan the perfect trip. Hi and welcome to the Global Travel Planning Podcast. I'm, your host, Tracy Collins, who with my expert guests will take you on a weekly journey to destinations around the globe, providing travel inspiration, itinerary ideas, practical tips and more to help you plan your next travel adventure.

This week we'll be exploring the beautiful state of Western Australia with guest Tess Moon

Hi and welcome to episode 46 of the Global Travel Planner podcast. This week we'll be exploring the beautiful state of Western Australia with guest Tess Moon. Now, Tess has been a previous guest on the podcast. In episode five, we chatted about her, three month travel adventure around Japan and Europe. But in this episode we are exploring a little closer to home for Tess. So hello again, Tess, and welcome back to the podcast. for those of us who haven't met you yet, would you like to introduce yourself and tell us

a little bit about where you live and what you do?

Tess Moone: Hey Tracy, thanks so much for having me back on. So I'm Tess. I'm born and bred in Perth. I used to be a corporate finance analyst and my career path naturally then became a travel blogger. As you do. of course, of course, yeah. So as a, as a Perth based travel blogger, I do write a lot about Western Australia, which is what we'll be talking about today. and I'm also blogging, a lot about Asia. So Japan is, one of my favorite countries in the world outside of Australia. So I write a lot of travel guides on my website about Japan as well as, sharing content on social media.

Tracy: So share the name of your website please, Tess. Ah, go for it.

Tess Moone: Of course. So I'm Tess. And I'm Tessa. Tess somewhere.

Tracy: Perfect. Now, were you born in Western Australia, Tess?

Tess Moone: Sure was. Born and bred.

Tracy: Perfect. So as, somebody who was born there, grew up there, if you were going to describe Western Australia? Because we're going to go for the whole of Western Australia and I know it's huge, but how would you describe its essence in, say, three words?

Tess Moone: I'm going to steal one word from the tourism Western Australia, tourism campaign because they really nailed it. But my three words are, otherworldly, diverse and natural.

Tracy: Perfect. I think that sums it up. I've only been there once, but I loved it and I will be, I will be visiting later on this year.

Tell us a little bit about Western Australia's size and population

But now for those listeners who are, not necessarily familiar with Australia, because we have listeners from all over the world. Where is Western Australia located? And tell us a little bit about its size and population.

Tess Moone: So I actually had to do a little bit of research because I didn't have the numbers on the top of my head. But, look, Western Australia, naturally located on the west coast, we're about a four hour flight from Sydney. So on the opposite side of the country from Sydney, the size of Western Australia is 2.6m million kilometers squared, which makes us larger than all of Western Europe and four times the size of Texas to give some context. So I thought that was pretty impressive. And Western Australia is also one third of Australia's total land mass. So in short, it's a very big state. I think one of our best assets is We've got over 20,000km of beautiful coastline, which I'll talk about quite a bit, over our podcast. And what's also interesting is that the whole population is just under 3 million and 2.3 million of that lives in Perth. So for such a large state, it's very, very densely concentrated in Perth, which is still quite small by global standards, sitting at 2.3 million residents.

Three tips for visitors to Western Australia before they arrive

Tracy: So that's a great introduction to the geography of, of Western Australia and it is immense. I don't think even I, before I moved to Australia, I just didn't understand just how huge actually Australia is in terms of just driving. I live in Queensland and driving that state kind of blew my mind. But Western Australia is kind of, on another level. So if somebody's arriving for the first time and they're thinking, oh, you know, I'm going to Western Australia, I'm really excited. What, what sort of things do they need to know before they arrive?

Tess Moone: So I kind of have three key things that I think people need to be aware of and that I, that I share with people. So number one, weather. So being such a large state, the weather varies so wildly. So when Margaret river in the southwest is having its beautiful, delightful summers up in the very north, up in Broome, it's tropical, it's humid, there's tropical cyclones. So it's like you've got two complete different weather systems. So you've really got to make sure you know what time of the year you're traveling and where you want to travel to, to line up to make sure that you're not traveling at the wrong time of the year. Because trust me, if you're in Broome in January, you're not going to have a really fun time. Unfortunately, even though it's the middle

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Tess Moone: of summer for Australia. I will say though, you can pretty much travel all year round. So Perth apparently gets more than 3,000 hours of sunshine per year. So Perth is really mild, quite, a Mediterranean climate. So that's great if you want to travel to Perth. we've also been known as one of the sunniest capitals in the world, so we'll have to fact check that one. But I think it checks out. And then the second tip I'd give is what we kind of spoke about is distances. So I can get in my car and drive all day for 10 or 12 hours and I'm still in Western Australia. So the biggest mistake I really see

people, make is when they come over here, is they just try to cover too much at once. And what that means is they're driving all this way. They might drive eight hours to Esperance, spend one day in Esperance, and they're in the car for five hours to drive to the next place. And it's just too much. Like that's probably the biggest mistake I see people make, which is just try to fit too much in and you're just covering too much distance in too little a time. So trust me, you'll have a better holiday if you optimize it, around those driving times. And then lastly, while I love the Perth cbd, I'd actually say some of the best things to do in Western Australia and Perth are actually outside of the cbd. So if you're coming to Perth, I really recommend, taking some day trips. I think it's some of the best things to do around Perth. Having a car isn't strictly necessary if you're just traveling, to Perth. But having a car can be quite beneficial, particularly for making those day trips. Although there is options for tours and if you're planning to really go outside of Perth, so whether that's going south to Margaret river or driving up to Exmouth, having a car is really beneficial.

Tracy: Yeah, absolutely. And when, when I was, I was over in, May for the first time because as you know, my daughter's moved over to Western Australia. So we visited and, I was bringing, my parents were here from the uk so actually trying to decide where to visit, obviously my daughter and obviously Perth, but we were trying to decide where to visit. So we actually went down to Margaret river and had a wonderful time. It was lovely. Now I'm planning to come over in May with me. And obviously I met up with you and Dean in Margaret river, which was lovely.

Tess Moone: In Margaret River. We met up in Margaret river, and.

Tracy: It'S such a lovely, lovely area. now I'm coming back again.

You've mentioned Margaret river and you've mentioned the Coral Coast

So you've mentioned kind of a couple of areas there. You've mentioned Margaret river and you've mentioned the Coral Coast. Now I'm planning my own trip for later on in the year. So where would you recommend that visitors go? And I know that's a really. Probably going to be a huge question to ask because it's a huge state, but where are the kind of most popular places that people head or that you would recommend?

Tess Moone: Yeah. So if you have a week in Western Australia, I would Recommend spending maybe 3 to 4 days in Perth and then spending your rest of the time either driving to, say, Margaret River. So I think three days in Margaret river is kind of the perfect amount of time. Margaret river in the southwest is a beautiful, wine region. So it's quite well known in Australia for its amazing wines. You can drive around from cellar door to cellar door sampling boutique wines. It's got beautiful beaches, beautiful carry forests. So if you love nature and food and gourmet experiences, I think Margaret river ticks a lot of boxes. so that's a really popular one. I think if you have a couple of more weeks. So say you had two weeks. That's when I would recommend, renting a car and driving along the Coral coast going up to, as far as, say, Exmouth is home to the Ningaloo Reef. I honestly think this is one of the best road trips in Western Australia, and maybe even Australia. So just some of the things you might see along the way after leaving Perth is you can go swimming with sea lions in Turian Bay, which is an amazing experience. I've done that a couple of times. You can go sandboarding, through towering sand dunes at Lancelin. That's a really unique experience and quite tricky as well. you also pass the Pinnacles Desert, which is, basically like a sea of yellow sand with these unique limestone formations rising out of the sand. And it's quite unlike anything else I've ever seen. and then you're only, you're only. You're not even halfway

there. There's also the Hut Lagoon, Pink Lake, which is honestly, like, not edited, just bright strawberry pink, salty, pink Lake. It's incredible. It's something you see on the COVID of, you know, tourism guidebooks for Australia and Western Australia. And it's really as good as it looks in the pictures. and then you're going to go past Kalbarri, which is home to the stunning Kalbarri national park, which is like these beautiful gorges, stunning hikes, picturesque watering holes. And then you reach Exmouth, which as I said is home to the Ningaloo Reef. So you can go snorkeling and swimming with the whale sharks at certain points in the year. Ah, there's turtles, manta rays, and just the marine life is incredible on the Ningaloo Reef. So I honestly highly recommend that road trip if you visit at the right time, which generally I say May to October is probably the best time of the year to do that. So yeah, it's pretty broad window.

Rottnes Island is a small island off the coast of Perth

And lastly I think a bucket list thing to do near Perth, which I highly recommend to all visitors is

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a visit to Rottnes Island. So this is a small island about 30 minutes off the coast of Perth. You reach it by ferry and it's a car free island. But it's probably most well known for its adorable quokkas. So I hope most people have seen the Quokka selfie. So that's really put Rottnes island on the map in Western Australia. and that's a beautiful trip, which you can do almost any time of the year but it's definitely best in summer so you can Enjoy the amazing 60 plus beaches of the island.

Tracy: Oh, I, it was one of my favorite trips that I did in May and actually Doug went over to see Dominique in November and it was the, it was top of his list to do. So they, they went over to the island. Absolutely cannot wait to visit again. And quokkas are just so cute.

Tess Moone: They are so cute. And I think it's just such a nostalgic feel going to a little island that you can just walk around, there's no cars, you ride your bikes to get everywhere. It's a really laid back, friendly vibe I guess.

Tracy: Yeah, it's a lovely place to visit.

For somebody planning Western Australia itinerary it can feel a little overwhelming

Now obviously you've talked about some of the must visit places and I mean Western Australia is amazing but ah, you know, for somebody planning the Western Australia itinerary it can feel a little bit overwhelming. So what tips would you share to help them put together their itinerary?

Tess Moone: So I know I'm harping on about it but I'm going to say it again. Don't underestimate the distances. You're really just make your trip a lot more enjoyable. So make sure you really check driving times and distances between places. make sure you visit the right region at the right time. As we spoke about, you probably don't want to go to the northwest of Australia during summer, whereas the southwest is a beautiful time of the year, in summer. So it's really important to time it right. and then lastly, I'd say just know you're not going to be able to fit it all in. It's such a huge state. I've lived here my

entire life, and I've still got corners to explore, explore. So just, I guess, really prioritize what you want to see in the time you have. And then lastly, visit my blog. I've got heaps of free Western Australia travel, guys. I've got some really detailed itineraries, particularly for my favorite road trips, like Perth to Margaret river and Perth to Exmouth. And I've also just released, in October last year, a Western Australia road trips guide ebook. So that's an ebook full of 90 pages of destination guides, custom itineraries, and all the essential travel tips and tricks that I've got from a lifetime exploring Walmart.

Tracy: And if, people need a little bit of help extra with that, you offer itinerary, consult as well.

Tess Moone: Yes. Just last week I actually launched the next phase of the ebook, which is offering, customized itinerary reviews like you do for UK and London. So that's a service I now offer as well.

Tracy: That's brilliant. And, I'm sure you'll be very, very good at it and very successful, Tessa. I wish you the best of luck with that. so that's brilliant. And we will put a link, in the show notes so I know if, if anybody's listening, thinking, I'd really like to chat with Tess and plan a trip around Western Australia. I will put a link to Tess's website and to her consultation service in the show notes.

If anybody's visiting Western Australia, what should they eat and drink

Now, I asked you a funny question, but not a funny question, but I kind of asked you, if anybody's visiting Western Australia, what should they eat and drink? And I know your reply was kind of like, well, it's the same as kind of everywhere in Australia. There's

nothing particularly specialized, to Western Australia. But I was kind of thinking, if you don't know anything about Australian food and drink or what to have, there are some things to have in West Australia. I'm kind of thinking wine here, Tess.

Tess Moone: Well, it's funny because when I thought about it and I only came up with alcohol, my suggestion was, yeah, Wineries and craft beer breweries. So I don't know what that says about Australia.

Tracy: Why not though? Why not? And the wineries, I mean Margaret river, it's fabulous, fantastic wine.

Tess Moone: Not Tracy wine. Not. Yeah. So when I do love the wine, I travel, I travel to Europe and I drink this beautiful Spanish wine and I just go, oh, I love my M Cab sav from Margaret river more than this. So I do think there is some really beautiful wine particularly in the southwest region. Margaret, river has some of my wineries, in Australia. but Perth also has a little wine region called the Swan Valley which you can do as a lovely day trip. So that's a really great way. If you can't make it down to Margaret river you can go just 30 minutes, out of the city and there's a little wine region called the Swan Valley and there's some delightful restaurants, beautiful wineries, quite like boutiques and I'door. So it's a really lovely day trip.

Tracy: Oh yeah, absolutely. I can't wait to return. And there's some wonderful accommodation options as well. We stayed in a beautiful place in Margaret River. Now it can be pretty pricey. Australia is the cheapest destination in the world to travel to for sure. So if, if I had it was on a slightly tighter budget.

Um, what budget friendly tips have you got for saving money when traveling in Western Australia

what budget friendly tips have you got for saving a bit of money when you're traveling around with we it is tricky.

Tess Moone: It can be quite expensive. I just read an article saying they've just crunched numbers for 20, 24 and the average price of a hotel room in Perth, just average price is \$225 Aussie dollars. So that's probably about I think 140 USD per night. So it can add up. So my tips, I've got a couple of tips. I do think it can be quite expensive dining out in Western Australia and Australia in general. So I love

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Tess Moone: getting accommodation with a kitchen or a kitchenette even when I travel up north. That's a great money saving tip because particularly when you kind of go out of Perth and into the more rural areas, accommodation is more expensive. Eating out is more expensive. So for me in Exmouth we had a small kitchenette when we stayed in Exmouth and it was a great way just to save on a few meals. So that's quite, I guess a general travel tip. my other tip would be you can get a National Parks pass for wa so if you're planning to visit multiple national parks, which I hope you're doing in your, in Your time in WA because it's some of the best places in Western Australia. There's unlimited ah, parks pass you can buy for five days, two weeks and I think up to a month as well. If you're a resident like me, I sometimes buy a year long pass and with that pass you can visit the national parks as many times as you like just for a one off fee. If you pay individually it's 17 doll each time you visit. So even if you have a short trip of five days, if you're planning to visit a few national parks that can really add up.

Tracy: Okay, that sounds like a good idea. I'll look into that for my visit later on the air test. That's great.

Tess Moone: Definitely. And then just the one other thing I just thought of is if you're looking at hiring a car, unfortunately because Western Australia is so remote, if you look to hire a car one way. So say if you're doing say just Perth to Exmouth and then you wanted to fly back from Exmouth instead of driving. Unfortunately most car rental companies slug you with a really exorbitant one way car rental fee. So it's almost always better doing point to point. So pick up a car hire in Perth and return it to Perth. I've had quite a few people that have made all their travel plans, booked all their accommodation, booked flights and then they realise they have to pay for the nose just to rent a car because they've done a one way car rental. So that's another good tip.

Tracy: Yeah, definitely a good idea to consider that in your budget and when you're hiring cars. yes, because that can certainly add up onto your budget for sure.

Western Australia has a very laid back and easygoing culture

Now I get asked a lot for visitors to the UK about you know, tipping and what should I do, what shouldn't I do so I don't offend anybody. so I think that's a great question to ask about visiting Australia as well. And WA like cultural norms, etiquette tips, things that people should or shouldn't do when they visit.

Tess Moone: Yeah. So you definitely don't need to tip. we're paid, we're paid for in our wages. So you definitely don't need to tip. Obviously if you've been on a tour and you've really loved your tour guide, I think you know, the tour guides would appreciate a small

tip but it's not expected and it's not required. And then I guess my other tip, and it's a bit of more of a humorous one, but Perth is really well known that everyone's quite relaxed, very laid back and easygoing. So don't be surprised if you see some, easygoing, blokes walking around the supermarket without shoes on sometimes maybe even in cafes.

There's a very different culture here. I know sometimes I have to tell my husband to put on shoes when we're going out. So I think it's something that some tourists laugh about because they go out in public and see people without shoes on. So that's kind of normal sometimes.

Tracy: Yeah, absolutely. It's very hot and it actually, it was one of the things that, I was used to from where I grew up because I grew up in Africa, so wearing shoes, we didn't used to bother. But I have to say, and I'm going to share this because this is my favorite story, but I was at my local supermarket a couple of years ago and there was a family, Mum and a dad and a little. He was probably about 18 months old, the little boy. And mum was very pregnant and between the three of them they had three items of clothing on. That was it. No shoes. It was just hilarious. So mum had a pair of shorts on and a little kind of band around her, boobs. And the father had a pair of shorts on and the little boy had. The little baby had a nappy on. And that was it. That was it. That was the sum total of their.

Tess Moone: Clothes, I can confirm. We usually wear a little bit more over here.

Tracy: Oh, that's good to know. That's good to know because that's the least I've ever seen. I have to see. It was quite an eye opener. But yeah, I mean walking around mountain shoes aren't definitely, something that you can expect to see at supermarkets, in shopping centre. See it all the time really. So, I'm glad to know that's not just Queensland, that's also a WA kind of relaxed living thing.

Tess Moone: Definitely. I definitely think Western Australia and Queensland are probably the two most similar states.

Tracy: Yeah, I think so. Definitely.

People need to know if they're visiting Western Australia for the first time

Now, if somebody's planning to visit WA for the first time, what is the one tip? And you've probably covered it, but I always ask at the end of, podcast episodes, so my listeners expect it. But what is the one tip that you'd share that? Absolutely. People need to know if they're visiting Western Australia for the first time.

Tess Moone: If I've done my job right, you're probably going to guess what this is. So I'm going to share this tip and then I'll give you a bonus tip. So my One key takeaway is not to underestimate how vast the region is. So no surprises there. We've mentioned that a few times. My bonus tip is do not underestimate the sun here. You see, I can tell when someone's just stepped off the plane from the UK because it might be a 25 degrees Celsius day in Perth and a poor Brit's gone to the beach. They haven't put any SPF or sun cream on and they are, bright red. The sun here is actually so harsh, you generally do need SPF 50. I've actually got burnt shoulders at the moment because I went for a walk this morning and I forgot to put my sun cream on. So don't underestimate how harsh the sun is. I think there's actually, It's proven that the ozone. Whole

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Tess Moone: layer, the ozone layer, hole is bigger over where we are. So it's definitely, an issue and it should be taken, It should be taken seriously.

Tracy: Yeah, definitely. I think that's was it. Mad dogs and Englishmen are only people that go out midday or something. The midday sun. And, yeah, 100% back, that up. You, really need to be very careful of the sun in Australia. It's, it's not a joke. It's. It's very serious. And, yeah, make sure that you take your sun cream specifically if you're coming from a destination, where it doesn't have as much sunshine as. As we do in Australia.

Tess Moone: Yeah. And the good thing is you don't need to bring it with you. Buy it over here. The Australian government subsidizes sun cream. It's the cheapest place in the world to buy sun cream, apparently. So you can get it for only a few dollars from the local supermarket. So no need to bring it over with you. Just get it while you're here.

Tracy: Perfect. Right. thanks so much, Tess, for chatting to us about wa. We're going to talk about Perth in a minute for a further episode, but it was great to chat with you, to get the lowdown on Western Australia.

Tess Moone: Thanks for having me. I love talking about it, so thanks for letting me share my tips with everyone.

Tracy: That's right. Actually, before we go, share again where people can find you, because you also have a very successful Instagram account as well. So share. Where can we find you?

Tess Moone: You can find me on my website and across all mainstream social media

as Tess Somewhere. So that's Tess and somewhere, but there's only two S's in the middle. But we'll put the links in the show notes.

Tracy: Anyway, we will do definitely. Well thanks so much Tess. It's always great to catch up with you and chat. Thanks Tracy thank you for joining us on this episode of the Global Travel Planning Podcast. For more details and links to everything we discussed today, check out the show notes@, globaltravelplanning.com Remember, if you enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on your favorite podcast app because your feedback helps us reach more travel enthusiasts just like you you. Anyway, that leaves me to say, as always, happy Global Travel Planning.

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