

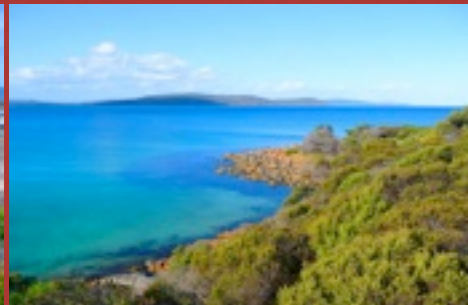


Albany

The coastline coming in to Albany was wild and rocky and there are many secluded beaches. We visited one of these - Elephant Rocks (the rocks look just like a herd of elephants).

Albany was the first settlement in Western Australia. It has a huge deep harbor with excellent vantage points to watch whales and their young as they rest and play before heading south to cooler waters around October. The harbor was large enough to hold 48 large ocean liners (with 40,000 soldiers) when they sailed to Europe in World War I.

We found a unit to stay for three nights, and then cycled around the coast where we learned that a French sailor (and the Dutch) surveyed the entire Western Australian coast before English settlement. We now understand why there are so many French (and Dutch) sounding place names.

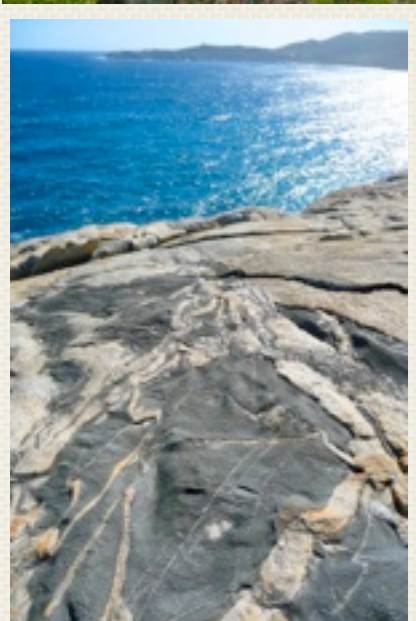
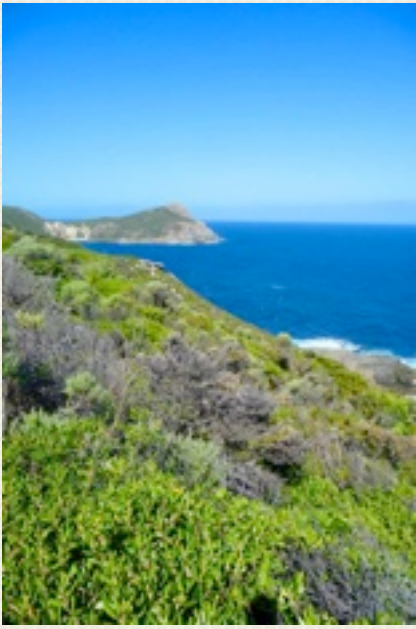


We spent the morning cruising Albany harbour – one of the six deepest / biggest harbors in the world – and learned about the history of this area. We saw pelicans, sea eagles, sting rays and fish on our 4 hour trip. In the afternoon we traveled along the coast enjoying distant views of wild seas, a windmill farm and many rocky features. A very satisfying day with more exploring tomorrow prior to traveling back to Perth.



Endangered Animals

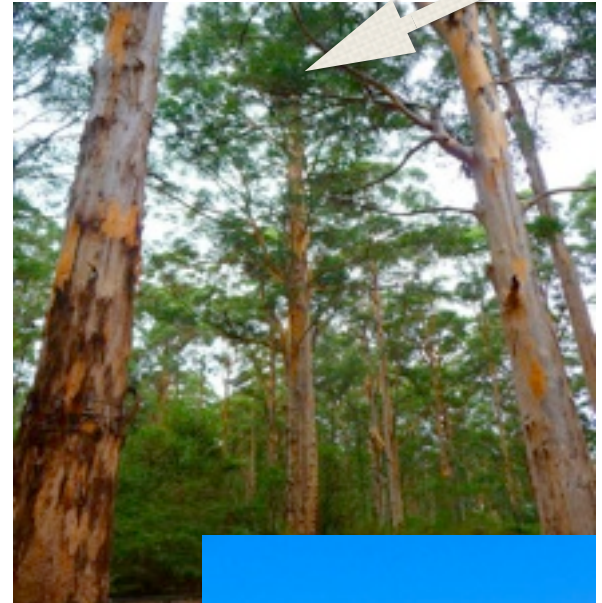
Today we heard about Australia's most endangered mammal – Gilbert's Potoroo - thought to be extinct but they were rediscovered in 1963. Its main diet is "truffles" or ground fungi used by local eucalyptus trees to help the trees take up soluble nutrients from very poor local soils. We also heard the distinct call (via a recording) of the Loud Brushtail - a rare bird thought to be extinct but also rediscovered recently. Its loud calls can be heard from two kilometers away.





We left Albany and drove back towards Perth. We ended up in Pemberton, a timber town, where we stayed two nights. Pemberton is in the middle of the largest National Park in the South West region. Like Walpole, the trees that grow here (Karri) are tall (second tallest in Australia). In the morning we visited one of the three fire

lookout trees that the public can climb. Sig climbed up the first 10 steps of the ladder and decided against going the remaining 275. This tree was too scary to climb – all 65m!! We agreed that neither of us could be a fire spotter. Fire fighters climb to the top and scan the horizon for bush fires from the “hut” on the top of the tree.



In the afternoon we decided the best way to learn more about this area was to go on a tour. We took an eco boat ride down the Donnelly River. This river is inaccessible except at one place in the upper reaches. The river is home to a number of endangered fresh water fish found nowhere else in Australia. The marron (fresh water crayfish) grow up to 3kgs!! Great relaxing trip to the sea and back. Wonderful.

