

# Western Australia

Covering over two million square kilometres, the gargantuan state of Western Australia offers some truly theatrical landscapes and is the gateway to an authentically Australian lifestyle. NICOLA HANCOX explores.

Australia's western region has it all!" exclaims Michelle Von-Karlowitz, Marketing Manager at Perth Institute of Business and Technology (PIBT) in Perth, WA. "Fabulous weather, friendly people and a natural environment that is as stunning as it is diverse," she sums up.

Despite being around nine times the size of Japan, and having an area equal to that of continental Europe, the state remains largely unpopulated – in fact 85 per cent of the state's population inhabit the southwest corner – with mini centres like Broome, Albany, Bunbury and Kalgoorlie strewn haphazardly across the expanse.

Perth – the state capital – is located in the region's southwest and owing to its close proximity to Jakarta and Singapore (Canberra, Australia's capital, is in fact further away) it is often the first port of call for Asian visitors downunder. "This vibrant, sophisticated city is the closest point of entry into Australia from Asia, Africa and Europe," notes Von-Karlowitz. Consistently rated as one of the world's most liveable cities, Perth's unique culture is sure to appeal to intrepid learners, she says. "Perth has a unique cultural

mix – it is home to people from all corners of the globe giving it a vibrant, cosmopolitan atmosphere."

The central business district (CBD) – located on the banks of the Swan River – is a hive of action and students will find an abundance of shops, bars and restaurants

to amuse them while in town. However, Mailee Martin, International Marketing and Administration Officer at the Phoenix English Language Academy in West Perth, WA, relates that the foreshore of the River Swan – named after the native black swans that inhabit the area – is a must-see in itself and visitors can either amble along the banks of the river, take in the glorious Perth skyline from one of the riverside restaurants or take to the water for fishing or sailing.

Kings Park, meanwhile, is located on the western fringe of the central business district and at four square kilometres it is reported to be one of the largest inner city parks in the world. Providing respite from all the hustle and bustle of downtown Perth, the magnificent botanical gardens are an oasis of calm in the city. Students can take a tour – with a designated tour guide filling them in on all the flora and fauna – enjoy some Shakespeare (performed by the aptly named Deckchair Theatre) or during the summer (from December to March), can picnic with a group of friends at the open air cinema.

Students can escape the city life even further by jumping on a ferry from the Barrack Street jetty to neighbouring Rottnest Island. Lying 19 kilometres off the coast of Perth, this island is a popular retreat for locals and tourists and Martin enthuses that its "tranquillity, the clear blue ocean and fascinating sea creatures" make it a real wildlife retreat. Absolutely car free, it boasts some excellent heritage trails and is one of the few remaining places where the rare Quokka (a small marsupial) can be found.

The port of Bunbury is situated 175 kilometres south of Perth and Jenny Byatt, Director of Studies at West Coast College in Bunbury, WA, affirms it is one of the fastest growing cities in the region. She also relates that being in a smaller city stands them in good stead with students. "Most colleges in Australia are located in large cities, and I felt there was a need to provide a regionally based alternative in Western Australia," she says. "Our college is small by choice and surrounded by natural attractions."

Almost an island, the city of Bunbury is surrounded by water on three sides, which



PHOTOGRAPH: TOURISM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Kings Park in Perth provides a magnificent view of the city skyline

led to the city eventually being nicknamed the City of Three Waters. Consequently, water-based activities are in ample supply and Byatt recommends students either visit Bunbury Dolphin Discovery, where they can swim with wild bottlenose dolphins in the shallow water interaction zone, or take to the waves at several world-class surfing hotspots in the region.

Flanked by the Indian Ocean, Bunbury has some magnificent stretches of coastline. "The beaches are pristine and the sunsets are breathtaking," notes Byatt. "So my favourite place is the beach or any of the lookouts near the beach," she adds. Natural phenomena like basalt rock formations can also be found here. Formed from a volcanic lava flow believed to have occurred 150 million years ago – it is one of only two places in Western Australia where this rock can be seen above ground.

Students with a nose for wine and a penchant for surfing would do well to visit regional portal, Margaret River. Situated 270 kilometres south of Perth, Martin says its "vast landscape of lovely forests and award winning wineries" make it another one of her firm favourites. With some 200 vineyards to choose from, visitors are certainly spoilt

for choice and with a number of local companies offering day or half-day wine tours, students can fully immerse themselves in the whole wine tasting experience.

Self confessed surf enthusiast Olivier Charpenay, Marketing Manager at the Centre for English Language Teaching at the University of Western Australia, adds that water activities are well and truly on the agenda in the Margaret River region. "The whole region abounds in great aquatic activities such as diving, surfing, kite surfing and surfing," he observes and as the undisputed surf capital of the world, Margaret River has over 40 kilometres of scenic coastline to be discovered. However, those who prefer land-based activities won't be short of things to do either and Charpenay relates that students can hike or cycle their way round the beautiful Karri tree forests – a native tree unique to the southwest region of Western Australia.

Should students wish to discover some more remote areas, Broome and Wyndham in the north of the region are as isolated as it gets. Thanks to the unpolluted waters that surround the area, Broome became the pearling capital of the world in the late 1800s and several pearling farms offer extensive tours and even the chance >>



A student at West Coast International College of English in Bunbury gets close to the natives



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In Broome, markets are held on the main beach to celebrate the full moon between March and October which creates an optical illusion of a 'staircase to the moon'

to purchase the finished product. Keen divers can also swim with harmless whale sharks, the world's largest fish.

Broome is also famous for a natural phenomenon called the Staircase to the Moon. Tam Le, Marketing Officer at Perth Institute Western Australia in Perth, WA, relates that this fantasia is visible three nights per month from March until October. "Only in Broome can you view the staircase to the moon. When the full moon raises over the exposed mudflats of Roebuck Bay at extremely low tide, it creates the illusion of a staircase reaching the moon."

Meanwhile, the historic town of Wyndham is perfect for those seeking a little adventure in the outback. Situated on the crocodile infested banks of the Cambridge Gulf, this harbour town is the most northerly locale in Western Australia. Proud of their reptilian friends, the town even has an 18-metre long, three-metre high crocodile sculpture which provides some great photo opportunities. Students can jump in a four-wheel-drive, tramp through bushland and explore scenic hotspots like the gorges at El Questro Wilderness Park – just one hour's car journey from Wyndham.

Indeed, lots of amazing facts surround this amazing and relatively isolated region of Australia; not only does it possess cattle stations the size of England, but according to Le, it even has an independent sovereign state in its midst. "The principality of Hutt River was formed in 1977," relates Le. "It has its own stamps, currency, visas and drivers licences!"

## Agent viewpoint



**Nora Falencik, Bridge Agency, Poland**

"Western Australia is a great destination for all those who are looking for a friendly student lifestyle. Everything is perfectly balanced here; studying, working, having fun – and the weather. As a region, Western Australia offers great facilities and because of its economic boom, it conducts well-prepared campaigns encouraging newcomers. Most students come from big cities so naturally they would avoid places with no student lifestyle. That's why most of them prefer to choose Perth as it's a great combination of bigger city uproar, studying possibilities and entertainment.."



**Stefan Brandenburger, Agroverde GmbH, Switzerland**

"Our clients like to travel as much as they can and love the seaside but also the countryside. Students love to go sightseeing in cars, travelling as far as they can. We organise agriculture work in WA and send our trainees first to the language school in Bunbury. WA is the perfect spot for them to go working during our winter time in Europe. Australia is known as an interesting place with different animals."



**Mahul Shah, Australian Education Consultants (AEC), Kenya**

"Perth has always been an appealing destination for students from East Africa. It is a friendly city that welcomes international students, has a good choice of higher education institutions, and great climate. Students like the people, the friendly relaxed atmosphere and the conducive learning environment. It is less busy than other cities, and in a great location, with the river or the beach not being too far away."

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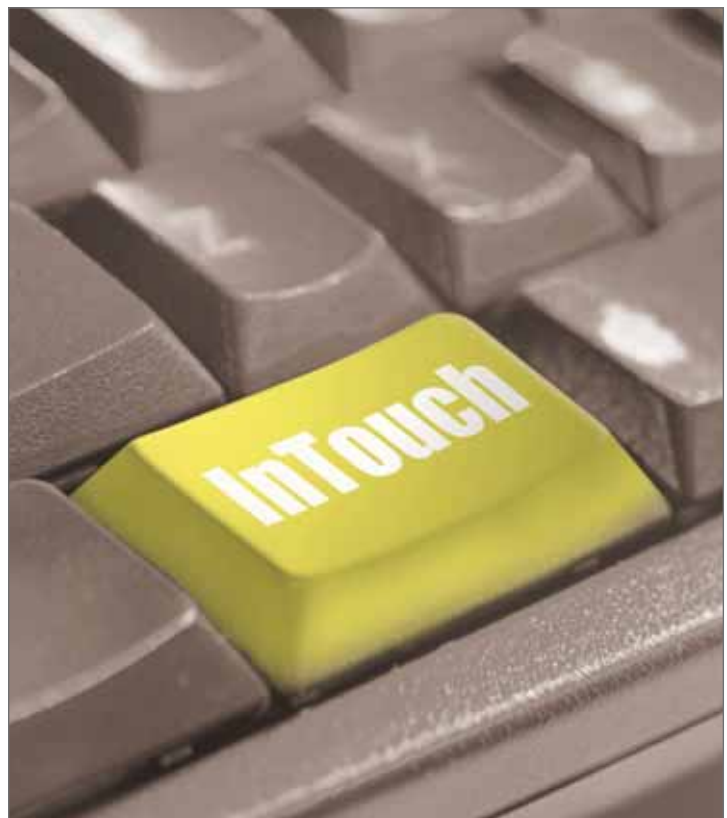
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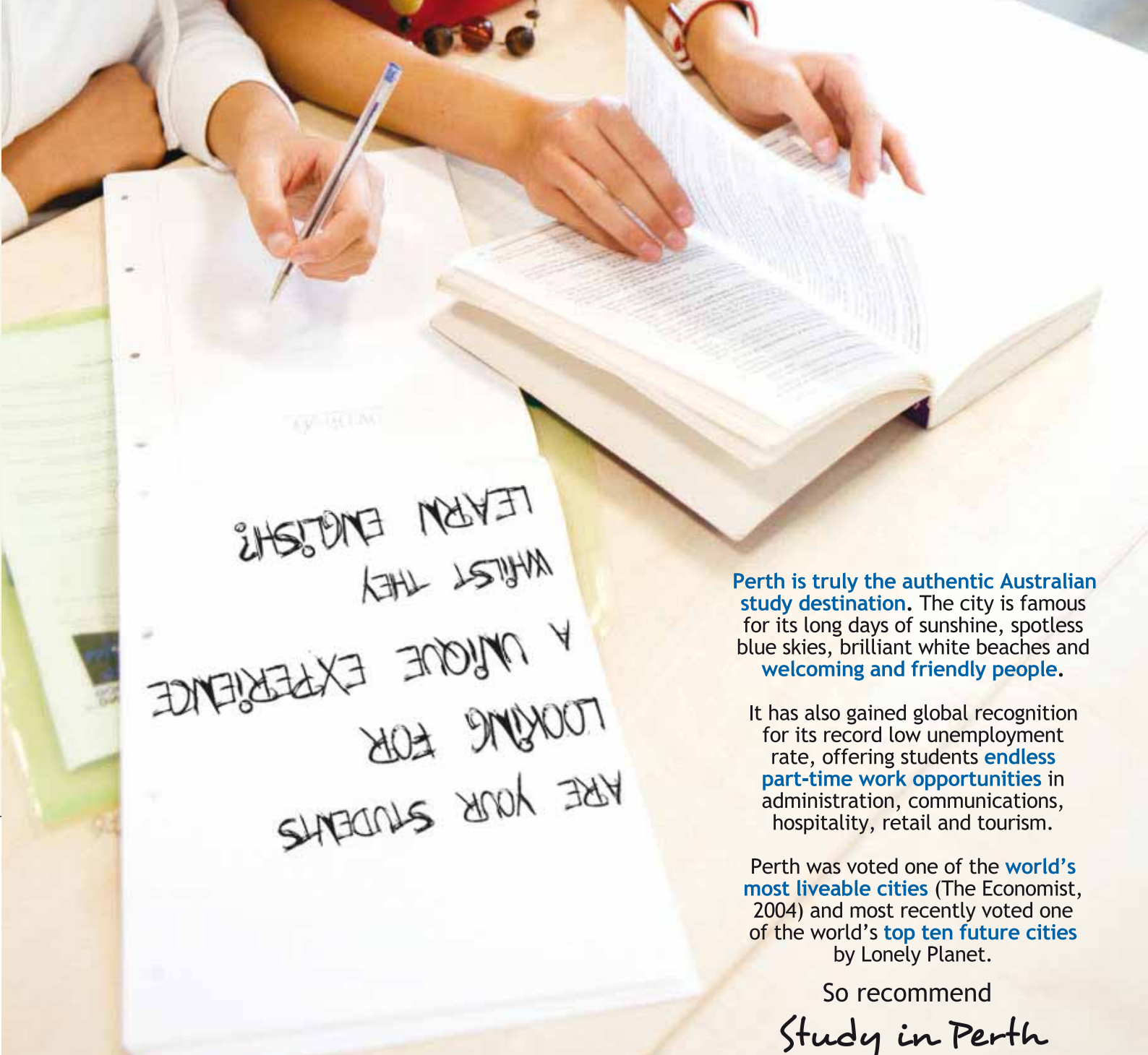
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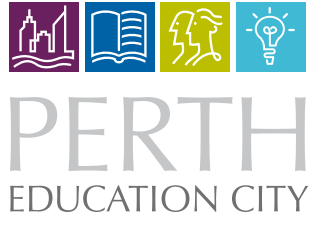
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