

Perth's pleasures

Perth is slowly gaining the reputation it deserves in the language travel world as a lively city with plenty to do for students. GILLIAN EVANS reports.

It's time to let you in on one of Australia's best-kept secrets: Perth. "Most people have heard of Perth but they generally do not know much about it," says Shelley McPhee at Phoenix English Language Academy (Pela). As a result, she continues, Perth often exceeds visitor's expectations. Kelly Smith, Marketing Manager of Study Group-Taylor's College in Perth, agrees. "Because [Perth] does not have the huge international profile of Sydney, visitors are pleasantly surprised by the wide variety of cultural, social and sporting opportunities available," he says.

Perth's attractions are many; it lays claim to the greatest amount of sunshine per day of any Australian capital and is good value for money for language travellers in comparison to other cities in Australia. It is also perceived as being extremely safe, says McPhee. "This is appealing to students travelling from overseas in the uncertain times of today, as it offers a level of security and comfort that is difficult to match elsewhere in the world," she comments.

Situated on the banks of the Swan River, just off the sandy coastline of the Indian Ocean, Perth is a city of 1.4 million people, who enjoy a relaxed, outdoor lifestyle.

"Most students comment that they are most impressed by how friendly people in Perth are," reports Smith. "Compared to the bigger cities of Melbourne and Sydney, Perth people have more time to stop and chat."

Being smaller than most other Australian cities has led to the misconception that there is little to do in Perth. Gary Maserow of

Geos Perth is keen to dispel this myth. "Many agents have not visited Perth and, therefore, cannot promote it enthusiastically [to students]. Many have the impression that Perth is a 'sleepy, nothing-to-do city'," he says. "This is untrue, as Perth [has] more restaurants per capita than any other city in Australia, our magnificent beaches are hard to beat [and] the night-life is vibrant."

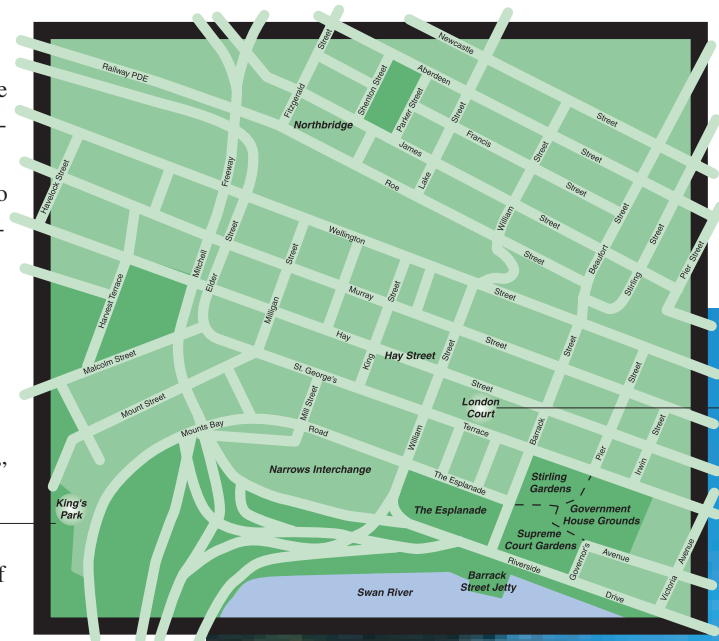
There is indeed much to see and do in Perth at whatever pace you wish to take. "The temperate climate affords the opportunity to experience 'Shakespeare in the Park' in Kings Park, with its breathtaking views of the city and Swan River," says Yvette Vittorio, International Marketing Officer at Murdoch College, part of Alexander Education Group. "A tram ride through the park and the city is a must, as is a film at one of the many outdoor theatres that boast both local and international films during the Summer Arts Festival."

Students generally enjoy shopping during

the day either in the centre of Perth or in Subiaco or Claremont, or relaxing at one of Perth's extensive beaches – the city has over 80 kilometres of white sandy beaches, making it a very popular destination for all kinds of water sports enthusiasts. "Scuba-diving is [popular] and there are numerous

courses that can be taken whilst in Perth," asserts Maserow.

The beaches are also lined with cafés, which are popular hangouts for students. At night, there are restaurants serving a whole range of international food, and lively pubs,



King's Park

Boasting magnificent views of the Swan River and Perth's impressive skyline, King's Park is a popular recreational area for local people and also plays host to the annual Wild Flower festival



London Court

Built in 1937, this mock Tudor shopping precinct near the centre of Perth has a replica of the Big Ben clocktower in London at one end and another of the Gros Horloge in Rouen, France

bars and nightclubs such as the Brass Monkey and the Hip-E-Club.

As Vittorio says, “There is something for everyone [in Perth], be it water sports such as surfing, swimming, scuba diving and fishing, or other sports such as soccer, basketball, badminton, tennis, Australian football, a round of golf on one of the world-class golf courses or just relaxing.”

Throughout the year, activities and social events, both in the city and outside, are arranged for students by the language schools. Students at Pela can put their new surfing skills to the test at a Surf Carnival or take part in a pub crawl, where a double-decker bus takes them from one bar to another through Perth. And you don’t have

to travel far to discover even more delights of Western Australia, as

McPhee points out. “Perth is an ideal base from which you can explore the diverse surrounding attractions. Only minutes away, you can visit wineries with sumptuous lunches, swim with wild dolphins in their natural environment, holiday on an island and explore the port city of Fremantle.”

One of the highlights of a student’s stay in Perth, according to schools in the city, is Rottnest Island, or “Rotto” as it is affectionately known by locals. According to John Paxton, at Perth International College of English, “Rottnest Island is an [internationally] unknown slice of paradise just 30 minutes by ferry off the coast [of] Perth. It

Agent viewpoint

“We send about 23 per cent of our students to Perth. ‘Sydney’ students usually come to us and they already know that they want to go to Sydney. But [potential] Perth students usually come to us with no idea which Australian city to choose. My colleague and I have visited all big Australian cities, and for us, it is very easy to suggest Perth as one of the best study destinations. There are plenty of very good quality colleges there, and we can always be sure that students will be happy. Our students like Perth because it is very clean, safe, sunny, not as busy as Sydney or Melbourne and has a very high standard of living. Our students like to go to the beaches, surfing, cycling, go to the pubs and nightclubs – there are plenty of activities in Perth.”

Ales Barta, Alfa Agency, Czech Republic

“We send students to Cairns, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Byron Bay, Adelaide, and Perth – which is very popular. Our clients generally choose to study in Perth because it is the cheapest city in Australia to study English. It also has a nice sunny climate and amazing beaches. The only real disadvantage is that there are too many Swiss students there.”

Niklaus Thür, Thür Lingua, Switzerland

“We send students to Brisbane, Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Cairns and the Sunshine Coast. We usually organise Australian Eves [promotional events] where we choose a different city every time to promote. I had the chance to visit Milner International College two years ago. I can give first-hand information about the city with the photos I took [while I was there]. Perth is my favourite city in Australia. It is a beautiful city with, in my opinion, the best college, Milner International College. The only disadvantage for our clients is that there are not as many possibilities for part-time jobs as in Sydney [for example].”

Christina Bolcskei, StudyGo Studio, Hungary

PHOTOGRAPHS: WESTERN AUSTRALIA TOURISM COMMISSION

Perth’s impressive skyline overlooks the vast expanse of the Swan River (main picture)

has, in smaller proportions, scuba-diving experiences just as spectacular as the Great Barrier Reef.” The warm waters and reefs surrounding the 11-kilometre long island are full of 97 species of tropical fish, while the island itself is home to a unique species of marsupial, the Quokka, similar to a wallaby.

In fact, although Perth is a modern buzzing city with plenty going on, you do not have to go far to find tranquility. According to Paxton, you can go to “a fabulous beach

and be the only person there”. Wide open spaces and the famous Aussie Outback are also never far away, and visitors can easily get close to nature – from swimming with dolphins at Monkey Mia to stroking some of Australia’s most famous inhabitants at the Kangaroo and Koala Park. □



Scarborough Beach

Situated 14 kilometres west of the centre of Perth, Scarborough Beach is a vast stretch of white sand that provides ideal conditions for surfers and other watersports enthusiasts