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Shark Bay, Western Australia
World Heritage since 1991

Monkey Mia

Parks and reserves



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



**PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**



Malgana
Aboriginal Corporation

Download this guide and take it with you.



Photo – Tourism WA.

Welcome to **Monkey Mia**

Monkey Mia is world-renowned for close encounters with wild Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins.

The Dolphin Experience

Join Parks and Wildlife Service staff to learn about these intelligent marine mammals and the importance of wildlife conservation.

Time: between 7:45am and 12:00pm daily

Frequency: up to three dolphin visits per day, depending on when the dolphins voluntarily come to shore

Meeting point: boardwalk steps in front of the Monkey Mia Visitor Centre

What to bring: a copy of your entry permit

If coming later in the day you may still be lucky to see the dolphins as they visit the shallows to hunt fish throughout the day.

Although rare, there are days when the dolphins do not visit the beach.

Call into the Visitor Centre for more information about things to do during your stay at Monkey Mia.



Gathaagudu

Monkey Mia, and much of the Shark Bay area, is the traditional home of Malgana people. The Malgana name for Shark Bay is Gathaagudu, meaning ‘two bays’.

For thousands of years, Malgana have had, and continue to have, a deep connection with these lands and waters. In 2018, Malgana people were recognised as the native title holders of Gathaagudu. In 2024, the Malgana Aboriginal Corporation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) established joint management arrangements to protect and conserve biodiversity, cultural heritage, recreational and commercial values.

World Heritage

Shark Bay was listed as a World Heritage area in 1991. Spanning 2.2 million hectares, 70 per cent of Shark Bay is comprised of pristine marine waters.

Monkey Mia showcases some of the best of Shark Bay’s World Heritage values with its rusty red sand dunes, white sandy beaches, and turquoise waters teeming with life. The world’s largest and richest seagrass beds, spanning 103,000 hectares, support a vibrant marine ecosystem of dolphins, dugongs, sharks, turtles, fish, and rays. It is also home to globally threatened plant and animal species.

History

Malgana Traditional Owners have fished the waters of Gathaagudu for thousands of years. Their deep connection to the land and sea continues to shape the region’s cultural and ecological heritage.



Above Buyungurra / green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

At Monkey Mia, dolphins have long interacted with humans. Historically, net fishing provided opportunities for dolphins to hunt fish that escaped the nets. By 1964, at least one dolphin—Charlie—was accepting hand-held fish from fishers. This led to the practice of hand feeding from the beach, which continues today in a carefully managed form.

The Monkey Mia Dolphin Experience is now one of the longest-running dolphin provisioning programs in the world. Backed by over 40 years of research and monitoring, the program uses a precautionary approach to ensure dolphins retain their natural foraging skills and social structures.

This experience not only supports the local tourism economy but also provides conservation education to over 100,000 visitors annually.

Things to do

Monkey Mia is known for its stunning natural scenery and unique wildlife experiences. Beyond the famous dolphins, you can spot sea turtles, rays, and a variety of fish species—even from the jetty.

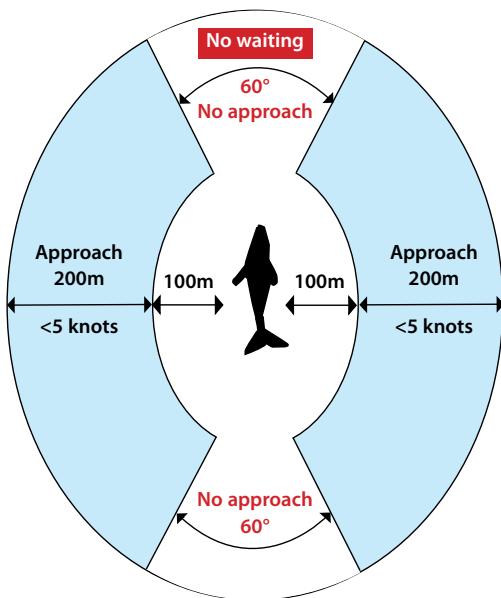
- Become a dolphin watcher – pick up a dolphin spotto sheet from the Visitor Centre to help identify individual dolphins.
- Explore the World Heritage Garden – gain insight into Shark Bay’s natural and cultural values through interpretive displays.
- Walk the Wulyibidi Yaninyina trail – enjoy birdwatching opportunities and the lookout with panoramic views.
- Beach activities – swim, snorkel, kayak, or try stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) in the calm waters of Monkey Mia beach.
- Book a marine wildlife tour – join a guided tour to learn more about Monkey Mia’s local wildlife and ecosystems.
- Relax in the Cinema Room – unwind and watch documentaries about local dolphins and Monkey Mia’s marine ecosystem.
- Plan your next adventure – call into the Visitor Centre to find out about visiting other iconic places in Shark Bay, including Shell Beach, Hamelin Pool, Francois Peron National Park, Steep Point and Dirk Hartog Island.

Shark Bay Marine Park

Most of Shark Bay Marine Park is zoned for general use but there are zones where certain activities are restricted. It is your responsibility to know your zones—grab a Shark Bay Marine Reserves brochure at the Visitor Centre or download it here:

Boating guidelines

The large number of boats at Monkey Mia can affect animal behaviour and survival over time. This diagram shows how you can enjoy watching marine mammals without putting wildlife at risk by disrupting their resting, nursing, breeding, feeding or sheltering.



Please also:

- Dispose of litter thoughtfully, especially plastics and fishing lines.
- Protect birds by not feeding them or leaving baited lines exposed.
- If a dolphin approaches you while fishing, please take your line out of the water.
- Observe speed limits within marked channels.
- Keep a lookout for dolphins, turtles and dugongs when boating to avoid boat strikes.
- Slow down when boating over seagrass beds. Do not cross seagrass beds at low tide.
- Anchor in sand to protect fragile reef, sponge and seagrass communities.

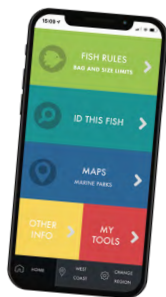


Above Wuthuga / dugong (*Dugong dugong*)

- Do not take a boat within 100 metres of a dolphin, dugong or whale.
- Do not attempt to swim with dolphins. This can result in mothers and calves becoming separated and leave calves vulnerable to predators.

Fishing regulations

Bag and size limits apply to protect fish stocks throughout Western Australian waters. Please observe fishing regulations and fish for a feed, not the freezer. Details are available at fish.wa.gov.au and we recommend downloading the Recfishwest app.



Fish remains

Never discard bait or fish remains near the shore as it attracts sharks. Fish cleaning stations are available at the RAC Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort and on Denham foreshore.

Monkey Mia recreation zone

The Monkey Mia recreation zone is in place to protect marine life and manage recreational activities safely. Some boating and fishing activities are restricted at Monkey Mia so check the map in this brochure and ensure you know the local rules.



Wildlife regulations

Feeding wildlife is unlawful without an authority under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and *Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018*.

Please do not feed wildlife, including emus, as they may become unwell, aggressive, and dependent on people. Keep food and rubbish out of sight.

Keep your bait and catch away from pelicans seeking out an easy meal. They may become entangled in fishing line.

Drones

You must comply with Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) rules. This includes maintaining a minimum distance of 30 metres between your drone and other people and never flying above another person – at any height.

- Your drone must not disturb wildlife or pose a danger or nuisance to other park visitors.
- Keep a minimum separation distance of 60 metres between a drone and whale sharks, whales, orcas, dolphins, dugongs and seals.

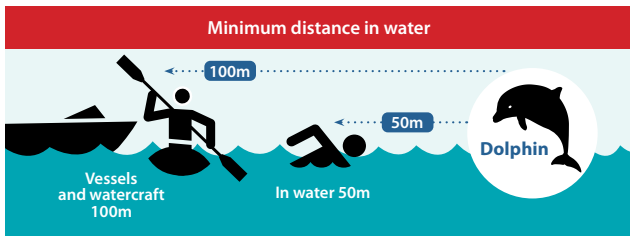
Below A damaged fin from fishing line on an irrabuga / Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*).



Please help look after the dolphins

With so many visitors to Monkey Mia, we must protect the dolphins' natural behaviour and safeguard their wellbeing.

- Maintain minimum distances (as illustrated below).
- Swim in designated areas only.
- Keep your dog on a leash when in the reserve and in the water. Dogs are not permitted in the dolphin experience area.
- Supervise children at all times.



If newborn calves are present

During the first eight weeks after a new calf's arrival, we must take care to ensure its safety. When a newborn calf is present, our dolphin experiences may operate differently.

Become a volunteer

Ask a Parks and Wildlife Service officer about volunteering at Monkey Mia or email monkeymiavolunteers@dbca.wa.gov.au

Stay safe at Monkey Mia

- Protect yourself from the sun.
- Ensure you drink enough water to avoid dehydration. One litre per person per hour when walking is recommended.
- Always swim, dive or snorkel with at least one other person.
- When in the water be aware of boats and potentially dangerous marine life.
- Be aware of stonefish and stingrays when wading in the water (wear reef sandals).

Visitor fees

Visitor fees apply to all people visiting Monkey Mia Conservation Park, including resort guests. Please keep your permit with you and available upon request.

Fees help to cover the costs of managing the dolphin experience and maintaining visitor facilities. A national park pass does not apply to Monkey Mia Conservation Park.

Scan this QR code to pay your visitor fee in advance.



Walk trail classification



Class 1 – Easiest All abilities access, flat, even, hardened surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for unassisted wheelchair users and prams. Clear directional signage. No bushwalking experience required.



Class 2 – Easy A trail with modified or hardened surface, and gentle hills or occasional steps. Clear directional signage. No bushwalking experience required. May be suitable for assisted wheelchair users (if ramps are provided at steps).



Class 3 – Moderate A trail that may have short steep hills, rough surface, many steps or some rock hopping. Directional signage. Some bushwalking experience and moderate fitness required.



Class 4 – Difficult A trail with rough surface that may have very steep hills or extensive rock hopping. Directional signage may be limited. Bushwalking experience, navigation and emergency first aid skills, and good fitness required.



Class 5 – Extreme A trail with very rough surface, and may have very steep hills, arduous rock hopping or rock scrambling. Limited or no directional signage. For very experienced bushwalkers with navigation and emergency first aid skills, and high level of fitness.

Wulyibidi Yaninyina trail (Walking Peron)

Choose from three walking options, two of which include walking on soft sand. It is recommended to walk in the cool of early morning or late afternoon.



Short return walk

Class 2 – Easy 1.1km return. Allow 45 minutes.

This trail meanders across white, coastal sandplain, then up a boardwalk to a lookout at the top of the red sand dune.



Medium loop walk

Class 3 – Moderate 1.5km loop. Allow 1 hour.

From the lookout, walk back down onto the sandplain and take the trail to the beach. Turn left at the beach to return to Monkey Mia.



Long loop walk

Class 3 – Moderate 2.45km loop. Allow 1.5 hours.

Continue from the lookout along the top of the red sand dune for 480 metres, then descend and cross the white coastal sandplain to the beach. Turn left and walk one kilometre along the beach back to Monkey Mia.

More information

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Parks and Wildlife Service – Gascoyne District

63 Knight Terrace, Denham WA 6537

(08) 9948 2226

Parks and Wildlife Service – Monkey Mia Visitor Centre

(08) 9948 2211

dbca.wa.gov.au

facebook.com/monkeymiadolphinexperience



Save the
app that
could save
your life



emergencyplus.com.au

Download the free Emergency+ app before your visit. Use the app in an emergency to call for assistance. If there is no mobile phone coverage you **WILL NOT** be able to call **000** but the app will provide you with your GPS location.

Check for alerts and updates directly related to parks and major trails at alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au and for all emergency information in Western Australia at emergency.wa.gov.au

Find more park visitor information, book campsites and share your experiences at exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au

@waparkswildlife



@exploreparkswa



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Publication available in alternative format on request.

