

Murujuja National Park



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



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Cover Nganjarli. **Above** Murujuga National Park. *Photos – DBCA*

Murujuga National Park

Murujuga National Park covers an area of 5134 hectares and is located on the Burrup Peninsula near Dampier. The area is home to one of the largest, densest and most diverse collections of rock art engravings in the world, some dating back 50,000 years.

The word Murujuga in local Aboriginal language is thought to mean ‘hip bone sticking out’, referring to the peninsula’s alignment on the Pilbara coast. Murujuga National Park is Western Australia’s 100th national park, created in January 2013. It is also unique in that it is the first jointly managed national park in Western Australia.

The land is vested as freehold land with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) comprising traditional custodians the **Ngarluma (N)**, **Yindjibarndi (Y)**, Yaburara, Mardudhunera and the Woon-goo-tt-oo, known collectively in local language as ‘Ngarda-ngarli’, pronounced as Nar-da Nar-lee. The land is leased back to the Western Australian Government and managed by a park council.

Murujuga Park Council is made up of representatives from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) – Parks and Wildlife Service, Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC), and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, who meet regularly to discuss park management.



Above Petroglyphs.

The park's approved management plan guides decision making and these arrangements aim to conserve, protect, and promote Aboriginal cultural and archaeological values, natural and recreational values and provide for managed access and recreation on Murujuga.

Over the long term, Ngarda-Ngarli seek to manage the park with a greater degree of independence. This will be achieved through ongoing joint management and the sharing of knowledge and ongoing training opportunities between DBCA and MAC.

Pronunciation of Aboriginal words used in this publication

- Ngarluma – Nar-lu-ma
- Yindjibarndi – Yind-ji-barn-di
- Yaburara – Yab-oo-ra-ra
- Mardudhunera – Mar-doo-thun-u-ra
- Woon-goo-tt-oo,
- Cold time – Muthu (ma – thu)
- Hot time – Garrbarn (N) (gar-barn), Garrwarn (Y) (gar-warn)

On signs in the park, the **Ngarluma (N)** name is shown in brown and the **Yindjibarndi (Y)** name is shown in teal.



Above Conzinc Bay.

Inscription on the World Heritage List

In 2007 the Dampier Archipelago, including the Burrup Peninsula and Murujuga National Park, was placed on the Australia's National Heritage List in recognition of it containing one of the world's greatest concentrations of rock art engravings and other significant sites including middens, fish traps, rock shelters, ceremonial sites, quarries, stone tools and stone arrangements.

In 2023, a detailed nomination for World Heritage Listing of the Murujuga Cultural Landscape was submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Evaluation of the nomination is underway in 2024/25. The nomination demonstrates that Murujuga is the only place on Earth where the story of a people and their changing environment has been continuously recorded through art for more than 50,000 years.

The nomination also demonstrates a collaborative and cooperative approach to protection of Murujuga's outstanding values. MAC led the development of the nomination for World Heritage Listing in partnership with the Western Australian Government, and with the support of the Australian Government and stakeholders.

For further information visit www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/world-heritage-areas/murujuga-world-heritage-nomination



Above Spinifex seeds ground to make flour using grinding stones.

Murujuga Ranger Program

Rangers from Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) conduct patrols and undertake works throughout the national park. The Murujuga Rangers are mostly local language group Aboriginal people employed by MAC, working alongside the DBCA Parks and Wildlife Service to provide land management services throughout the national park. MAC also offers cultural tours and important cultural awareness sessions, which include a brief history of Murujuga, information on rock art, the importance of cultural safety and an introduction to MAC.

Climate

Murujuga lies at the western edge of the semi-desert tropical Pilbara region within Australia's arid zone. The climate is commonly described as having two seasons; this is recognised in the two identified by local **Ngarluma (N)** and **Yindjibarndi (Y)** Aboriginal people. The cold time (April to October) **Muthu (N, Y)** the hot time (November to March) **Garrbarn (N) Garrwarn (Y)**.

The high temperature and low humidity of the Pilbara are moderated by the influence of the sea, which virtually surrounds Murujuga. The microclimate of the peninsula is cooler and more humid than the inland Pilbara with no point on the peninsula more than two kilometres from the sea.

As Murujuga runs in a north south direction its climate benefits from the prevailing winds throughout the year. Most significant rainfall occurs between November and April and is associated with tropical cyclones or scattered summer thunderstorms.

Right Jingu/caustic bush seed pods.





Above White mangrove (*Avicennia marina*) at high tide.

Geology and landforms

The rocks of Murujuga are comprised mostly of granophyre (a fine-grained granite) and gabbro that intruded as a sill of magma between layers of surrounding volcanic and sedimentary rocks. The sill is at least two kilometres thick and was formed around 2717 million, or 2.7 billion years ago.

The archipelago was formed between 5000 and 6000 years ago when the sea level was rising following the last ice age. This once hilly area, was flooded, leaving hilltops as islands. Coastal dunes of shelly lime-sand then accumulated around and partly over the newly formed islands whose grains later formed limestone.

Murujuga and the islands of the Dampier Archipelago tend to be aligned in a north-east orientation, because the dominant grain and structures of the rocks run in this direction. Most of the channels, straits and embayments like Flying Foam Passage, Searipple Passage and King Bay owe their origin to fractures and joints that crosscut the rocks in various directions. This encouraged erosion and weathering which formed the current valley systems and hills including the Pistol Ranges.

Rock piles

The rock piles of Murujuga National Park are one of its most unique features. The first question that springs to mind when viewed is 'Did someone dump those there?' The answer is no they did not. They are unique to this part of the Pilbara coastline and are a result of the physical breakdown of the parent material, the fine-grained Gidley granophyre, and the coarse-grained gabbro. Both are resistant to erosion. Oxidation of the rock surface over thousands of years has created the rich red colour we see today. A recently split rock is blue grey inside.

While they look intriguing, the rockpiles also protect fire sensitive plants and special ecological communities. The increased humidity around them means moisture collects amongst the rocks and plants growing here have a close affiliation with the Northern Botanical Province or 'Kimberley' species, including the native rock fig (*Ficus brachypoda*).

Other species have a more restricted distribution like the rock kurrajong (*Brachychiton acuminatum*) with its large, hand shaped foliage and *Terminalia supranitifolia*, a small, spreading tree to about four metres tall, which are unique to the Pilbara region.

A low-density population of the Rothschilds rock-wallaby (*Petrogale rothschildi*) lives in areas away from vehicles and people.

Rock pools

The rock pools of the park are also special ecological communities. They fill after heavy rain and others, that are near permanent are fed by seepages and often contain small fish and invertebrates.

Most contain tufa deposits. Tufa is a highly porous sedimentary rock (limestone) composed of calcium carbonate. This is formed by biological and chemical precipitation of calcite from cold super saturated surface or ground waters. The rocks in the surrounding gullies are often blue/grey where the water washes the oxidation layer away.

The Pilbara olive python (*Liasis olivaceus barroni*) is one of Australia's largest snakes growing to around five metres long. It can be found on Murujuga where it shelters during the day in caves and crevices and beneath large boulders. Its diet consists of rock wallabies, small kangaroos, flying foxes and birds. It is never too far from fresh water.



Above Nganjarli Trail.

Things to see and do

Walk trail

Nganjarli Trail



Class 2 – Easy, 700m loop

Allow 45 minutes

Located off the Hearson Cove Road, the Nganjarli Trail is an easy trail, accessible for wheelchairs and consists of concrete paths, steel ramps and walkways with seating to enable visitors to see some of the areas unique rock engravings or petroglyphs. The best time to view them is early morning or late afternoon. Interpretive panels along the trail tell of the life lead by Ngarda Ngarli who once camped at Nganjarli. Highlights include a shell midden, grinding stone, and medicine plants. For information on guided tours by MAC, visit experiencemurujuga.com

Walk trail classification



Class 2 – Easy. Well defined trails with a firm surface.

May include gentle hill sections and occasional steps.

Suitable for all levels of experience and fitness but may present difficulties for people with mobility impairments.

Swimming

Many of the beaches surrounding Murujuga are ideal for swimming. If you are lucky, you may even get a beach to yourself. Refer to **Things You Need to Know** for information on jellyfish and crocodiles.



Above The end of the Nganjarli self-guided trail.

Bird watching

Every year, thousands of migratory shorebirds visit the beaches of Western Australia's north-west on their mega journeys across the globe. Sand bars, rocky shores, beaches, salt marshes, intertidal flats and mangroves are all important feeding and resting habitat during spring and summer when the birds escape the harsh winter of their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere.

While many are travellers, there are some that are resident all year round and both can be spotted in a quiet moment in the coastal parts of the park. Grab your binoculars and favourite bird book and see what you can find.

Plan your visit

Safe walking tips

Take care when hiking in the park. Temperatures can be extreme, exceeding 50°C from November to April. It is recommended that you hike in the cooler months of the year.

Do not climb on rock piles as rocks can be unstable and present a physical and cultural safety hazard. Wear sturdy footwear and remain on established trails. Avoid heat stress and sunburn – wear a hat, long-sleeved, loose clothing and apply sunscreen regularly.

As a minimum, carry and drink 1 litre of water per hour of hiking per person.

Hike with a companion and plan to complete your hike before dark.

The Murujuga Elders have requested that visitors avoid taking photographs or videos of rock art depicting humanoid figures and faces, and do not take-home rocks or other natural items from the landscape.

Water

Fresh water is not available in the park. Please bring your own drinking water. Avoid dehydration by drinking small amounts regularly.

Recreational fishing

Fishing is popular in the waters surrounding Murujuga.

For the most up-to-date information on fishing regulations, download [Recfishwest](#). This app has the most up to date WA fishing rules and fish ID at the touch of a button. You can also use it when there is no phone or internet reception.

Boat launching

Visitors can access the national park beaches by boat. There is an informal boat ramp at Withnell Bay (outside the national park).

Access roads north of Withnell Bay are extremely rough and normally require high clearance or four-wheel drive vehicles.

Check the local tide tables for tidal movements before driving on beach tracks near the water.

There are two boat ramps in Dampier: the public ramp near the Windy Ridge Oval and the private ramp at the Hampton Harbour Boat and Sailing Club (See map for locations).

No camping

Camping is not permitted in Murujuga National Park.

Below Turtle egg rock art.





Above Yigara/white mangrove.

Things you need to know

Emergency app

Install the free Emergency+ app on your mobile phone www.emergencyplus.com.au to help provide location details when you call 000 (Triple Zero). Ensure your phone is fully charged and location services is turned on. Please note if there is no mobile coverage on any network where you are, you will not be able to reach Emergency Services via a mobile phone.

Bushfires

Bushfires are dangerous and are common in Western Australia. They can start without warning throughout the year and can spread rapidly on hot, windy days. Avoid the risk of bushfire by planning your visit during mild weather conditions.

During bushfire season, for your safety, have a bushfire survival plan. Bushfires can pose extreme risk to visitors and must be avoided. Watch for signs of bushfire such as smoke and the smell of burning bush. If you see or smell signs of a bushfire put your safety first and act immediately, monitor wind conditions and move to a safer place as quickly as possible if it is safe to do so, do not wait to see as the consequences can be catastrophic.

In case of bushfire call 000 and the Parks and Wildlife Service – Pilbara Region on (08) 9182 2000.

Listen for Bushfire Alerts (warnings) on the local ABC radio station or by visiting emergency.wa.gov.au

Reporting damage or disturbance to Aboriginal sites

If you notice damage or disturbance to any Aboriginal heritage sites or rock art, please report it to Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation on (08) 9144 4112 or the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (08) 6551 8002.

Toilets and facilities

There are public toilets and facilities (barbecues, shade shelters and picnic tables) located at Hearson Cove beach. Hearson Cove is not part of the national park and is managed by the City of Karratha. Public toilets are also located at Windy Ridge Oval the Dampier Foreshore Playground in Dampier (refer to the park map for locations).

Telephones

There are no public telephones in the park. Mobile phone reception is good in most areas, especially in elevated sites.

Crocodiles

Saltwater crocodiles are occasionally seen in the area so take care launching your boat. Always supervise children.

Jellyfish

Stinging jellyfish occasionally occur in surrounding waters, particularly in the summer months. While the risk of being stung is low, especially if stinger suits are worn, be aware of general first aid for jelly fish and other marine stingers.

Baiting for feral animals

1080 baits are laid within and surrounding the park to control feral pests such as foxes and feral cats. 1080 is poisonous to humans and will kill dogs and cats if eaten. Pets are not permitted in the park.



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could save
your life



[emergencyplus.com.au](https://www.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.

More information

Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation

Lot 501 Griffin Road, Burrup WA 6713

PO Box 1544, Karratha WA 6714

Phone: [\(08\) 9144 4112](tel:0891444112)

Parks and Wildlife Service – Pilbara Region

Lot 984 Woodbrook Rd

Karratha Industrial Estate

Phone: [\(08\) 9182 2000](tel:0891822000)

Email: karratha@dbca.wa.gov.au

dbca.wa.gov.au

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

140 William Street

Perth WA 6001

Phone: [\(08\) 6551 8002](tel:0865518002)

dplh.wa.gov.au

Karratha Visitor Centre

Lot 4548 Karratha Road

Karratha WA 6714

Phone: [\(08\) 9144 4600](tel:0891444600)

karrathaiscalling.com.au

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](https://www.instagram.com/waparkswildlife)



[@exploreparkswa](https://www.instagram.com/exploreparkswa)



Information current at November 2024.
Publication available in alternative format on request.

Murujuga National Park



Heat stress can kill.

Summer heat can be extreme and temperatures can rise sharply. Carry and drink one litre per person, per hour when hiking and more in hotter weather.

Wear loose long sleeved clothes and a hat. Avoid the heat of the day and hike early in the morning.



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