

West Coast Epic: Stage 2 Geraldton to Coral Bay

The Coral Coast Ride

Wednesday 23 May, 2018 to Saturday 02 June, 2018

Day to Day

Imagine waking up in the early daylight and looking around and wondering where you are. You may have just spent the night under an impossibly starry sky in the great Australian outback, a beachside resort by a marine sanctuary, or a donga room in a remote outback roadhouse. Either way, you want to get up and get on your bike again ready for another day on this legendary AllTrails long-haul cycle tour from Perth to Broome.

After a hearty breakfast you head on your way as the AllTrails team load your luggage and head up the road to set up your morning tea. The food breaks are at set times enabling all riders to plan their day and the amount of time required to enjoy the sights along the way before arriving at the next food break.

You depart morning tea with a clear focus and understanding of the next leg of the day to lunch which is arranged and/or prepared by our crew. Lunch is a great time to relax, refuel your body and chat to your friends, be it in a bakery, a country pub, the rest area of a remote highway, overlooking the ocean, or deep in a National Park.

Our safety and support vehicles are never far away, one trailing the group as a warning to motorists of the cycling group ahead, and at least one other vehicle travelling among and ahead of the group preparing the food stops, arranging directional signage where required and being on-call for cyclists with mechanical failures or other requirements.

We have 2-way radio communications with trucks and other large vehicles on the road to further increase safety for our cyclists as well as first-aid qualified, and bike mechanic qualified staff. Safety is our number one priority and we strive to make each day as safe as possible - another great advantage of cycling on a tour with AllTrails.

After reaching your overnight destination, usually mid-afternoon, you check in and enjoy a cuppa and snack, shower, or soak in the bath. Often there is a pool for you to lounge around and cool off in, or you may decide to explore the surroundings, go for a walk, share a cold drink with friends or simply relax. It is your life, it's your ride, enjoy it.

A briefing for all cyclists at 6pm before the evening meal is always interesting, finding out what happened that day, and a run-down on the sights and special attractions to look out for the next day. Lots of laughs and stories are shared before we settle down to a good healthy meal and a few drinks. The famous camaraderie developed on an AllTrails bike ride lasts a lifetime.

Bedtime is not far away, where you put your head down remembering the day and dreaming of tomorrow...

A typical day on the ride:

- Breakfast 7am, Depart 8am
- Ride 25-30km to morning tea around 9-10am, half hour stop, usually on the side of the road. Coffee/tea with home-made biscuits, slice, fresh fruits, served up, of course, with some entertaining banter and fun.
- Ride 35-45km to lunch around 12-1pm. Half hour to an hour, often in a bakery or cafe.
- Ride 35-45km to our overnight accommodation, usually arriving around 3pm. Check-in, make a cup of tea or have a drink by the pool, or a soak in the bath. Explore the town or visit the local attractions.
- Evening briefing at 6pm with lots of laughs and stories about today's ride and safety tips for tomorrow, followed by dinner – usually at the motel restaurant.
- Off to bed!

Location	Distance	Date	B	L	D	A
Geraldton (Arrive Day)	NA	Wed 23 May 2018	--	--	Y	Y
Geraldton to Kalbarri	157km	Thu 24 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kalbarri to Murchison River (Bush Camp)	81km	Fri 25 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Murchison River to Billabong	119km	Sat 26 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Billabong to Nanga Bay	126km	Sun 27 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Monkey Mia / Indigenous Experience (Rest Day)	NA	Mon 28 May 2018	Y	--	Y	Y
Nanga Bay to Wooramel River Retreat	154km	Tue 29 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Wooramel Retreat to Carnarvon	126km	Wed 30 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Carnarvon to Minglya Roadhouse	142km	Thu 31 May 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Minglya to Coral Bay	101km	Fri 1 Jun 2018	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coral Bay (Rest Day)	NA	Sat 2 Jun 2018	Y	--	--	--
Total distance cycled	1006km		10	8	10	10
Average daily distance	126km					

Meal and accom inclusions noted as B, L, D, A (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Accommodation)

Geraldton (Arrive Day) — NA — Wed 23 May 2018 — - - D A

PRE TOUR, Day 5. Make your way to Geraldton anytime today. This afternoon we will have a registration and briefing at our tour hotel followed by a group welcome dinner. Geraldton began in the 1850's as an outpost for convicts who built many of the beautiful historic buildings. It has since grown to a major port and service centre for the region. A few not to be missed highlights are the HMAS Sydney Memorial, a moving tribute to the sailors who died in Australia's greatest maritime disaster and built on top of a hill with breath-taking views. Every day at 10:30 am there is a free tour where volunteers explain its significance. For those who love their history, or even a good story, the museum is a must. The region has an enthralling maritime history with a great display of the Batavia, a Dutch ship that ran aground in 1629. The survivors made it to land only to face a slow and bloody mutiny where over 100 were killed. The story is depicted with fascinating displays and includes the stone portico that was found on the ship.

Geraldton to Kalbarri — 157km — Thu 24 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 6. STAGE TWO – CORAL COAST RIDE. Out of Geraldton the gradual climb becomes steadily steeper as the road leaves the coast and heads inland to Northampton. With a myriad of buildings dating back to the 1850's it is one of Western Australia's oldest settlements. Here we leave the North West Coastal Highway and point ourselves back to the coast and enjoy some nice long downhills back to sea-level. Hutt Lagoon (near Port Gregory) is a lake of many colours, most commonly seen as a bright pink lake, then as the sun sets it becomes a dark purple. The colour is caused by algae trapped in the salt which is farmed for Beta Carotene vitamin. We finish off the day with one last climb and a lovely winding downhill cycling past some spectacular coastal scenery and gorges with evocative names like Red Bluff, Pot Alley, Eagle Gorge and Natural Bridge. The best way to view the coastline, where the cliffs rise up to 100 metres above the ocean, is to ride out to the designated lookouts. While enjoying the views keep an eye out for the tell-tale spray of water that signifies the migration of the humpback whales. It's a long first day on the bike but it's all worth it as you park up at Kalbarri in our resort-style accommodation with a pool and lovely landscaped gardens. Kalbarri itself is a lovely little holiday town, tucked between the picturesque lagoon and the scenic beaches. Head up to the cliffs to try to spot some whales and enjoy spectacular views of the coastline.

Kalbarri to Murchison River (Bush Camp) — 81km — Fri 25 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 7. Today begins and ends with the Murchison River. Kalbarri is the point at which the river hits the ocean and you can wave good-bye as you head out of town this morning. It's a flat ride through town then a long gradual uphill as we head inland and up onto the plateau on which lies Kalbarri National Park. Here the coastal heath consists of a diverse array of plants including banksias, grevilleas, wattles, native Hibiscus, Kurrajongs and amazing colourful wild flowers. The region has over 800 species and likely still more to be discovered. We hit the NW Coastal Highway again before the last 15km to our camp for tonight which is on the banks of the Murchison River. Tonight is a bush camp for all cyclists as we are too remote for any accommodation. If camping isn't usually your 'thing', don't worry as it's always a fun experience where friendships and bonds are strengthened – not to mention the impossibly starry night sky that will blow your mind on a clear night (which they usually are). The Murchison River is the second longest river in Western Australia and a great place to cool off. It flows for about 780 km from central Western Australia near Meekatharra to the Indian Ocean at Kalbarri where it has created a picturesque tributary popular with anglers. It is an ancient river, unchanged in its path, carving a massive gorge

over millions of years through what is now Kalbarri National Park.

Murchison River to Billabong — 119km — Sat 26 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 8. Changing landscapes is the theme of the day today as you make your way from the riverside and its colours to tree-lined roadsides, to wheat fields, into some rolling hills and the lovely smell of the gum trees, followed by increasingly arid heath land. Billabong pretty much marks the end of any trees near the highway – for the coming days it will be tough to spot any on the main road until Coral Bay with the exception of a few creek lines, Carnarvon township and when we veer off the main road towards to ocean. Billabong is in the middle of nowhere but our accommodation is famous for its hospitality, offering basic but clean accommodation, good healthy food, good coffee and always a smile. You're sure to meet a character or two in the pub as well.

Billabong to Nanga Bay — 126km — Sun 27 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 9. Start the day with a 50km venture into the increasingly arid landscape as we head further north into a more inhospitable climate for vegetation. You will notice the difference as we turn onto Shark Bay Road and in particular the patch of green 'lawn' in the playground area of the Nanga Bay Resort will come as a surprising contrast to the browns that your eyes have been used to today. The resort itself has a pool, supplies store, bottle shop and most anything else that you would need from an outback accommodation. [Dirk Hartog Island](#) is not far from here, where Dirk Hartog, Captain of a Dutch trading ship was the first white man recorded to set foot on Australian soil in 1616. It was not for another 200 years that white people begun to think about settling in the country after viewing the arid landscape. Even the local aboriginal population of the Nganda and Malgana lived predominately from the bountiful ocean. Still today, not far from the town of Denham on the Peron Peninsula two rows of rocks that were used by aboriginal people to trap fish can be seen at low tide.

Monkey Mia / Indigenous Experience (Rest Day) — NA — Mon 28 May 2018 — B - D A

Day 10. Another great thing about our resort is that it is only a short drive (1 hr) to Monkey Mia – one of Western Australia's most famous (and remote) coastal attractions. The stars of the show are the bottlenose dolphins that have been coming close to shore for more than fifty years. Rangers from the Department of Parks and Wildlife supervise the experience where a few lucky visitors can feed the dolphins. It is best to arrive early as [dolphins experiences](#) may finish well before noon so we will head out there early this morning. Apart from dolphins you may see dugongs, sharks, rays, turtles and a variety of fish in the water. Beside the water you are likely to meet pelicans and emus. Thick-billed grasswrens are often seen near the carpark. While at Monkey Mia, step away from the water to explore the area's natural and cultural history along the Wulyibidi Yaninyina trail, a 1.5 km loop walk over dunes and along the beach. After visiting here we will head to the lovely town of Denham on the way back to Nanga Bay. Tonight is a very special event as we learn more about the local indigenous culture, traditions and the beautiful land as part of our Didgeridoo Campfire BBQ evening. This insight into the deep spiritual connection between the local people and this amazing saltwater country will provide another layer of intrigue to this tour and give you a reference point for many things that you will see, experience and learn on this trip where the land and the aboriginal culture is an ever-present backdrop to each day's experiences and interactions.

Nanga Bay to Wooramel River Retreat — 154km — Tue 29 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 11. From Nanga Bay we head back out to the main highway and continue the journey north. While the country may in parts be flat and arid, hidden-life abounds, and on a bike, you might just see it. You may notice as you ride along a small, brown-streaked bird that flies on ahead as you approach, flashing the two white bands in its tail. This is the Australasian Pipit, a common roadside visitor. You are likely to hear the loud 'squeaky gate' or 'did-you-get-drunk' call from the Chiming Wedgebird. The ringneck parrot, more commonly known as the 'Twenty Eight Parrot' after the sound they make can often be heard in the mornings. Zebra Finches, Rainbow Bee-eaters and flocks of Budgerigars are among the more colourful birds that can be seen. Pulling up to our overnight homestead accommodation tonight is a treat as it sits quietly under the majestic gum trees on the bank of the Wooramel River. One of the highlights will be the naturally heated therapeutic artesian bore baths. Waters travel from a depth 240m below the ground to the surface under its own pressure and is then piped into free-flowing pools for you to sit down and relax. The water is approximately 33 degrees with a high mineral content that is reputed to have soothing effects on tired muscles – perfect for a cyclist coming off a 150km+ ride!

Wooramel Retreat to Carnarvon — 126km — Wed 30 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 12. The road is flat with slight undulations, which you are surely getting used to. The vegetation is light; however, scattered patches of wildflowers make for a pleasant colourful distraction. As we hit the outskirts of Carnarvon we turn left onto HMAS Sydney II Memorial Drive that has 645 plaques and palm trees representing the sailors that died when their ship sank in 1941 after a battle with the German raider, HSK Kormoran, which also sunk. It is a long road of remembrance, especially on a bike as you travel slowly past each tree, recognising another young life lost. The plaques list the names of men predominantly between the ages of 17 and 21. Our Motel in Carnarvon is a sign that we are in a more populated location with accommodation, function room, bar, restaurant, swimming pool and, more noticeably, an actual town right next to it! Highlights include the One Mile Jetty walk (and the Coffee Pot tram that takes those not wanting to walk it), and the trail that leads to the heritage precinct across the mangroves where mullet can be seen jumping from the water on the incoming tide.

Carnarvon to Minilya Roadhouse — 142km — Thu 31 May 2018 — B L D A

Day 13. As you head out of town, a landmark impossible to miss is the 'Big Dish'. The OTC satellite dish played an integral part in the 1969 moon landing. After tracking Halley's Comet in 1987 it was decommissioned. You will also notice the Gascoyne River, fed by rivers and creeks which flow underground to create the largest of Western Australia's Rivers. This river and its hidden flowing stream is the source of the oasis of fruit orchards and vegetable gardens surrounding the town of Carnarvon. These plantations with their pumps running under the sand extend for 16 kms along the banks of the river producing mangoes, paw paws, bananas, pineapples, melons, tomatoes and beans. While the river continues east, we head north through undulating red sand dunes and flowering shrubs as well as surprisingly green roadside grasses to Minilya Roadhouse. Another friendly place in the middle of nowhere providing welcoming shelter and food for our overnight stop tonight.

Minilya to Coral Bay — 101km — Fri 1 Jun 2018 — B L D A

Day 14. An exciting day today as we push through on our last day of this stage and The Tropic of Capricorn serves as a good halfway marker for the day's ride. This is a great example of how the west coast is vastly different from the east coast. To get an idea, look about then compare what you see with the green paddocks of Rockhampton in Queensland which the Tropic of Capricorn crosses 5,000 kms on the other side of Australia. Reflecting on this stage of the tour you can see why this whole area is known as the 'Outback Coast', so named because it is here that the desert meets the ocean. The warm Leeuwin current runs down the continent creating coral growth as far

down as Perth and sustaining a startling array of marine life, which stands in stark contrast to the coastline. The landscape consists of red sand dunes, grass plains and giant termite dirt mounds that appear as remnants from some other ancient time. Coral Bay is as idyllic as the name suggests. With a sweeping bay of white sand and the world-renowned Ningaloo Reef only steps off the beach. It is perfect place to relax or if you are feeling more adventurous, hop aboard a catamaran to see the humpback whales, dugongs, manta rays and turtles. Our ride is also timed with Whale Shark season (see tomorrow's activities).

Coral Bay (Rest Day) — NA — Sat 2 Jun 2018 — B - - -

Day 15. Today is a changeover point on the ride so some cyclists may be leaving us here after Stage 2 and some may be joining us for Stage 3. Either way, there is an opportunity to [swim with a Whale Shark](#) (optional extra on the booking form) on today's rest day as we have made a group booking for this activity. Our accommodation also has a tour desk and ticket hut right next to reception which will give you all of the other options to make the most of your free day here. Hire a snorkel and head for the beach or jump on a tour to explore more of Ningaloo Reef. If you are leaving after Stage 2 and you wish to partake in some of the rest day activities you will need to stay an extra night in Coral Bay with us tonight (optional extra) then head home tomorrow.

