

Balingup Rail Group (BRG) (Balingup Progress Association)

Cultural Tourism: Festivals, Events and Attractions on the Proposed Blackwood Link Rail Line Bridgetown to Bunbury Western Australia

This document is a supplement to the *Zero Emissions Tourist and Commuter Railway Feasibility Study and Business Case Bunbury to Bridgetown Western Australia* August 2024





Wadandi Boodja is a five-and-half-metre steel bust sculpture on Koombana Bay Bunbury representing a Noongar face and South West families.

Commissioned by the City of Bunbury and funded by the State Government's Royalty for Regions program, the sculpture is the work of local artists Alex and Nicole Mickle of Safehaven Studios.



Gallery | Balingup Medieval Carnivale



Manjimup Truffle and Southern Forests Fine Foods Festival

For an electronic copy of the *Tourist and Commuter Railway Feasibility Study and Business Case Bunbury to Bridgetown Western Australia August 2024* please email balinguprailgroup@outlook.com

PREFACE

Proposed Blackwood Link Railway Line Western Australia

Cultural Tourism: Festivals, Events and Attractions

- ♦ Bridgetown
- ♦ Tours From Bridgetown to Manjimup, Pemberton, Donnelly River and Nannup
- ♦ Greenbushes
- ♦ Balingup
- ♦ Donnybrook
- ♦ Dardanup and the Ferguson Valley
- ♦ Bunbury

This document provides a glimpse of the richness and diversity of cultural tourism, events and attractions on the towns along the proposed Blackwood Link tourist and commuter rail line between Bunbury and Bridgetown. It is not meant to be exhaustive. For comprehensive information, please visit the following visitor centres:

Bunbury Visitor Centre

[Contact Us - Visit Bunbury Geographe](#)

Dardanup Visitor Centre

[Ferguson Valley Visitor Centre » Shire of Dardanup](#)

Donnybrook Visitor Centre [Donnybrook – Tourism \(donnybrookwa.com.au\)](#)

Balingup Visitor Centre

[Discover the alluring charm of Balingup - Balingup Tourism](#)

Bridgetown Visitor Centre [Visit Bridgetown and Greenbushes » Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes](#)

Southern Forests & Valleys Region

<https://southernforestsandvalleys.com/>

Manjimup Visitors Centre

[Manjimup Visitor Centre | Southern Forests WA \(manjimupwa.com\)](#)

Pemberton and Northcliffe Visitors Centre

[Pemberton Visitor Centre - Home](#)

Nannup Visitors Site

[Experience Nannup » Shire of Nannup](#)



**Balingup Golden Valley Tree Park
Australian Collection**



**Balingup Golden
Valley Tree Park
Australian Collection**

The Golden Valley Tree Park is WA's largest Arboretum and is rated by Qantas in the top five places in Australia to see Autumn colour. Balingup is located on Boodja (country) at the intersection of three Noongar language groups the Wadandi, the Pibulmun and Kaneang peoples.

INTRODUCTION

From an unbroken 47 000 years of First Nations cultural connections to the land (Noongar Boodja) through to the current-day plethora of unique cultural tourism festivals and events along the proposed Blackwood Link rail line, this supplement celebrates the wonderful diversity of choice of cultural experiences that are of great appeal to international and domestic tourists alike.

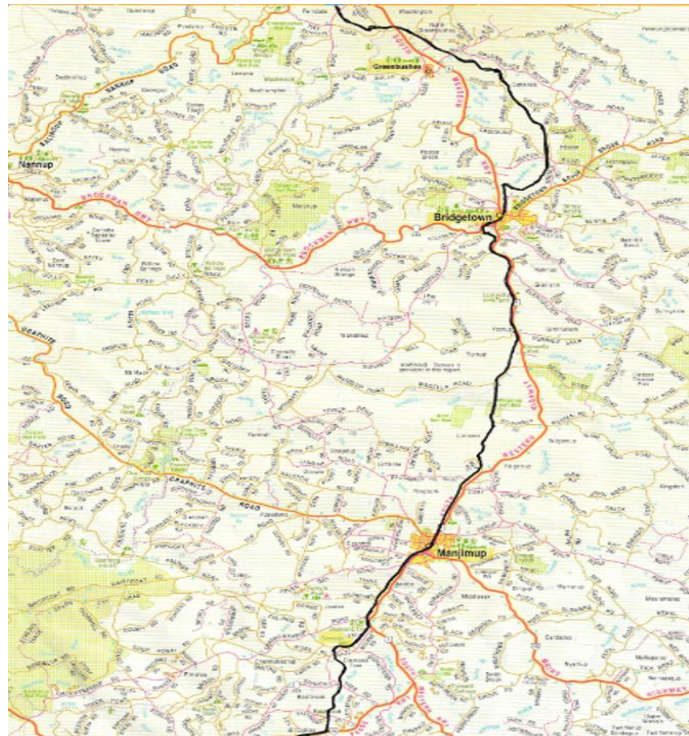
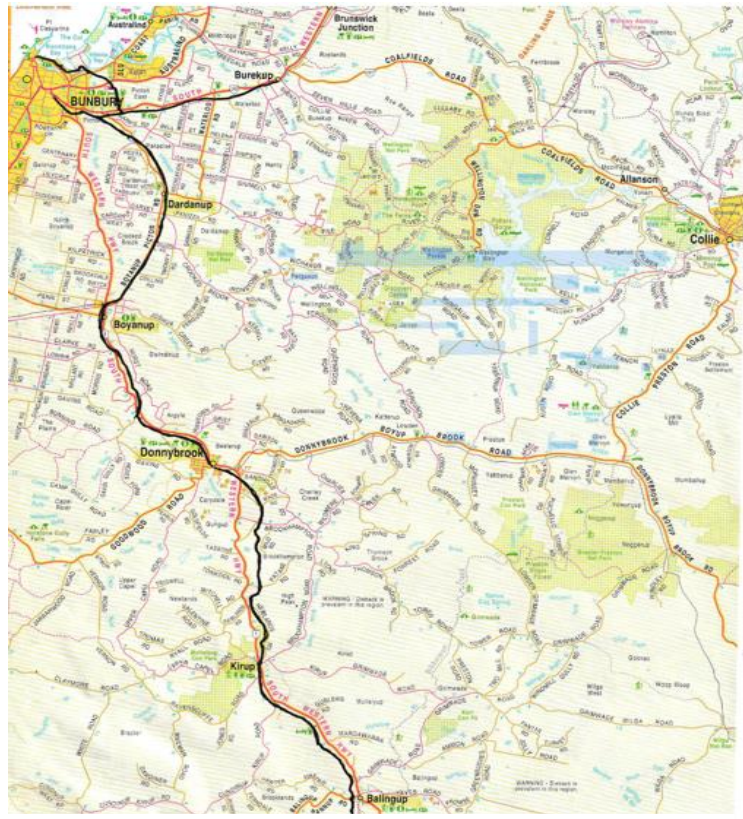
With the WA Government-Talison Lithium freight feasibility study due to report in 2025 and a separate Balingup Rail Group (BRG) tourism and commuter feasibility study that is designed to add to the overall business case for the recommissioning of the South West rail line, this supplement provides an overview of the events along the proposed route of the line.

Taking in the City of Bunbury and the towns of Dardanup, Donnybrook, Kirup, Mullalyup, Balingup, Greenbushes and Bridgetown with road extensions to Manjimup, Pemberton and Northcliffe, this unique collection of closely co-located towns and villages are set in stunning landscapes of rolling hills at the end of the Darling Scarp with an abundance of natural forests as well as agricultural and built environments.

International and domestic tourists can access the region via private vehicle, TransWA links from Perth (currently buses before the new Australind rail car is re-instated in 2025) and via airline hubs out of Sydney and Melbourne direct into the Busselton Margaret River Airport.

The Balingup Rail Group (BRG) pays its respects to the traditional custodians, ancestors and to the continuing cultural, spiritual and religious practices of the Noongar people in the South West of Western Australia.

**Bunbury to Bridgetown
Rail Line – extension to
Manjimup shown**



PICKING UP FROM WHERE WE LEFT OFF: A LEGACY OF SUCCESSFUL TOURIST TRAIN OPERATIONS ON THE PERTH-BUNBURY TO PEMBERTON RAILWAY LINE 1920-1990

The line from Bunbury to Bridgetown, completed in 1898, forms part of the original Bunbury to Northcliffe railway that was finally completed in 1933. Since being built, the line and region has attracted large numbers of tourists due to its natural beauty, unique flora and fauna biodiversity and the concentration of attractive and unique towns and villages along the line.

These include Bunbury, Dardanup, Boyanup, Donnybrook, Kirup, Balingup, Greenbushes and Bridgetown, which are all now established tourist destinations.

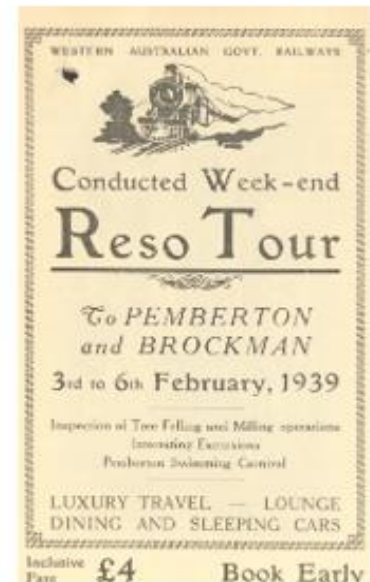
The State Government, seeking to encourage a better understanding of the importance of the regions, instigated 'Reso' (Resource) Trains, in the period before the Great Depression in the 1930s.

The trains did not operate during the Depression, but given their importance, they recommenced in 1939. The trains were specially operated for promotional and social events, primarily aimed at showcasing the State's agricultural and industrial productive capability and the attractiveness of Western Australia's regions.

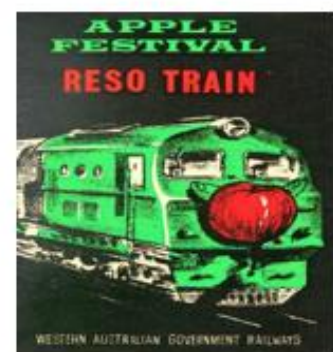
The adjacent posters and image show promotions for Reso trains that operated to Pemberton and Brockman.

The Reso trains departed Perth early evening on a Friday night to enable workers to leave work and join the train at Perth station. They returned to Perth on Monday morning in time for passengers to commence work on Monday morning.

The trains were self-contained and consisted of kitchen and dining cars, sleeping cars, and sitting cars. The majority of the trains operated to the South West of the State. The accompanying feasibility study to this supplement is modelled on tourists leaving the trains for accessing such services, thereby boosting local economies and small businesses.

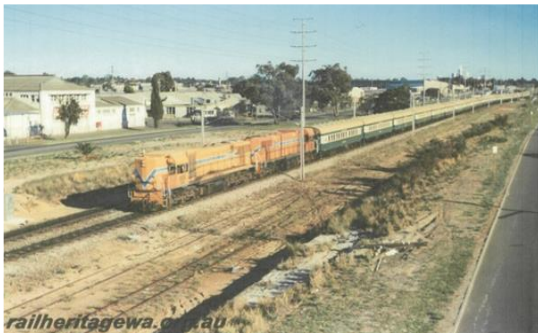


Dining Car Reso Train





Leschenault Lady at Dardanup Station



Hotham Valley Railway Train to Balingup
Small Farn Field Day April 1990

SEP 30, 2024

Wheatlands Escapade Rail Tour

3 DAYS / 2 NIGHTS

SPECIAL FARES: Senior Smarttrider \$1258, Adult full fare \$1290. Single room supplement \$208.

INCLUDES:

- Return travel aboard the MerredinLink train to Toodyles, Northam and Cunderdin
- Two nights accommodation at the historic, Red House, Northam with ensuite facilities
- ALL meals are included (includes one meal with drink and entertainment in "Pipers Star" Jay's Kitchen)
- Lunch in the famous cartoon-inspired (Benger) pub in Cunderdin
- A visit to the York Motor Museum
- Bike/ski/sports and enjoy a CWA Luncheon at the Station Arts Centre
- Portage of your suitcase
- Services of your tour manager, Karel Puckett & Day Chalmers

Coach tours to YORK AND BEVERLEY

SEE OVER FOR OUR DAILY ITINERARY

ALL MEALS ... ALL ACCOMMODATION
ALL TRAIN AND COACH TRAVEL

All aboard this little-known rail line from East Perth to our most heartland. The MerredinLink train is ready to take you on a 3-day journey of history and discovery. Our Wheatlands Escapade tour features a true right away at the popular Northam Red House. There's nothing more Aussie than a characterful pub... (read one and a lot of beer with locals. Aussie have been doing just that for centuries... if only the walls of the Pipers could talk. The hotel started as McCarthy's Hotel, and was the eighth and last hotel opened in Northam in the 1930s. It was known as the rolling western field. The stables behind the hotel were important, as it had to own horse coll which would meet the passenger trains that utilized the original eastern railway line of the old Northam station in the 1850s. The hotel and the stables have been transformed into modern, private tour accommodation.

In addition to the dedicated Reso trains, vintage trains hauled by heritage steam locomotives were also successfully operated. The adjacent photograph shows one of those trains in circa 1970 hauled by the Leschenault Lady at Dardanup Station.

When the Western Australian Government Railways policy changes resulted in discontinuation of Reso Trains in 1972, Hotham Valley Railway, a volunteer-based tourist and heritage railway, commenced successfully operating similar trains.

Such was their success that in April 1990 they operated the longest narrow gauge passenger train to run in Western Australia, which comprised 22 carriages and accommodated 1,228 passengers. The train ran from Perth to Balingup for the inaugural Balingup Small Farm Field Day.

Hotham Valley Railway continued to operate trains on the Bunbury-Pemberton Line until the early 2000s when a strategic change driven by network issues, not a decrease in demand, resulted in the railway focusing operations on their own branch line, separate from the then franchised rail network.

What the above history demonstrates is that the railway line is very attractive as a tourist offering and previous tourist rail operations have been commercially successful. There are major events and attractions in all towns on the line and beyond which attract significant numbers of tourists throughout the year.

Current tourism entrepreneurs operating tourist rail packages based on the PTA services (the Merredin Link, Avon Link, the Prospector and the Australind) would immediately extend like packages to the 'Blackwood Link'.

Bridgetown

Blues at Bridgetown

A major Blues Music festival held annually in November. Established 1993. Attracts 12,000 people.

<https://www.bluesatbridgetown.com.au/>



Blackwood Valley-Southern Forests

Festival of Country Gardens

Autumn and Spring across towns stretching from Kirup to Pemberton. Established 1999. Attracts 10,000 people.



<https://www.australiasouthwest.com/events/festival-of-country-gardens/>

Bridgetown in the Winter: FridgeTown Fest

A winter festival that is typically held annually in July.

Established 2011. Attracts 9,000 people.

<https://fridgetownfest.com.au/>



Blackwood River Arts Trail and Film Festival

Held March-April each year.

[Arts Trail](#) | [Blackwood River Arts Trail](#) | [Western Australia](#)

A major visual arts trail covering the towns of Donnybrook-Balingup, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Boyup Brook and Nannup. Attracts 10 000 people.



Other Festival and Attractions Accessible from Bridgetown: Manjimup, Nannup and Donnelly River Village



**Nannup Garden and Tulip Festival
August**

[Nannup Flower and Garden Festival
\(nannupgardens.org.au\)](http://nannupgardens.org.au)



**Manjimup Truffle Kerfuffle Festival
June**

[Truffle Kerfuffle](#) | [Ultimate Winter Getaway](#)



**Donnelly River Village General Store with
Kangaroos and Emus Dropping By**

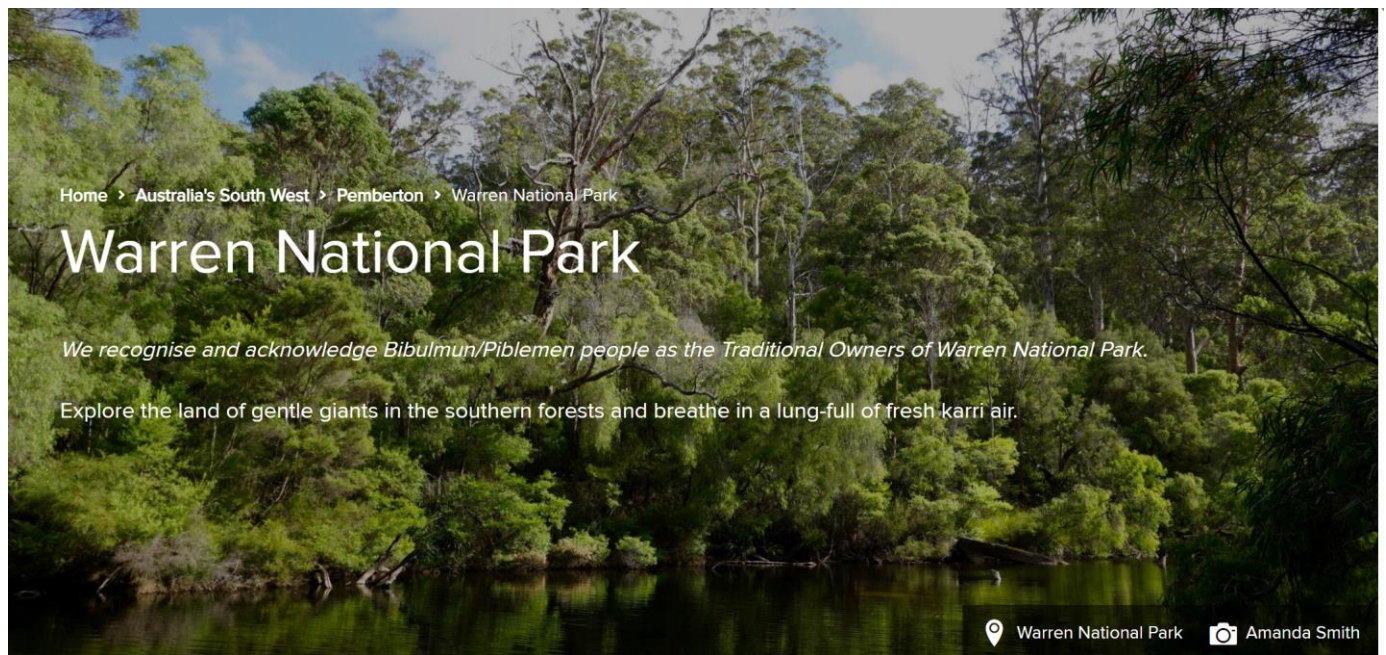
[Donnelly River Village](#) | [A Special Little Place In the Forest](#)



Nannup Music Festival

[Nannup Music Festival](#) | [28 Feb - 3 March](#)

Pemberton



Warren National Park has 3000 hectares of untouched woodland perfect for bushwalking, canoeing, camping and relaxing. The stars of the park are some of the State's most majestic karri trees.

[Warren National Park \(dbca.wa.gov.au\)](http://dbca.wa.gov.au)



[Home | Pemberton Tramway Company \(pemtram.com.au\)](http://pemtram.com.au)



[Whisky | Pemberton | Jaspers Bar](#)

Greenbushes



Eco-Cultural Discovery Centre

The Greenbushes Discovery Centre tells the story of human involvement with the environment. It houses interactive displays and unique games set in various themes namely Mining, Timber Milling, Community and Agriculture, all under the umbrella of 'The Land'.

<https://www.greenbushes.net.au/>



Fun Run and Mountain Bike Event (May)

The town of Greenbushes hosts its annual Greenbushes Pink Fun Run to raise funds for breast cancer. The event includes a 5km walk/run, 10km run, 5km and 15km Mountain Bike Ride

[\(20+\)Greenbushes Fun Run and MTB Event |](#)

[Facebook](#)



World's Largest Lithium Mine Public Lookout Greenbushes WA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qifzhdu2P-s>

Balingup



Small Farm Field Day - held annually in April

Started 1990 (10,000 - 12,000 people)

<https://www.balingupsmallfarmfieldday.com.>



Hotham Valley Railway Train to Balingup Small Farm Field Day April 1990 carrying 1228 passengers in 22 carriages – largest tourist passenger train ever to leave Perth for regional WA

[HVR Home](#) | [Hotham Valley Railway](#)



Balingup Medieval Carnival

Held annually in August

(10,000 people) Started 1995

[Balingup Medieval Carnivale](#) | [Balingup Medieval Carnivale](#)



Telling Tales in Balingup

Childrens Literature Festival

Held annually in July

<https://www.tellingtalesinbalingup.com.au/>

Balingup



The Golden Valley Tree Park is a sixty-hectare landscaped park set in the picturesque hills of Balingup. The heritage listed site has a collection of trees that was begun over one hundred years ago and is now the largest arboretum in WA. With a World and Australian Collection, the Park is rated in the top five places in Australia to see Autumn colour. Free entry open 365 days of the year.

Attracts 85 000 visitations annually.

[Golden Valley Tree Park - Balingup Western Australia](#)



The Bibbulmun Track is one of the world's great long distance walk trails, stretching 1000km from Kalamunda in the Perth Hills, to Albany on the south coast, winding through the heart of the scenic South West of Western Australia.

The track passes through the main street of Balingup and the Golden Valley Tree Park along one of its most scenic, challenging and biodiverse sections.

[Home - Bibbulmun Track Foundation](#)

Cultural Tourism and Festivals Proposed Blackwood Link Rail Line Bridgetown to Bunbury Western Australia

Donnybrook



Donnybrook Apple Festival Harvests and Arts Held annually over Easter

Established in 1954 and attracted 6000 people in its first year. Since 2017, the festival's theme has been "Harvest and Arts," showcasing local produce and vibrant art scenes.

The Donnybrook Apple Festival remains one of the oldest festivals in Western Australia with its history embedded into the community and culture of Donnybrook and indeed the South West. Attracts 15 000 people in its current form.

<https://www.donnybrookapplefestival.com.au/>



Donnybrook Apple Fun Park

The Apple Fun Park in Donnybrook is the largest free-entry Fun Park in Australia.

Children of all ages enjoy the wide range of play equipment that includes rock climbing, ten metre slides, swings, rocking horses and climbing frames.

Attracts 50 000 people annually

[Apple Fun Park - Attraction - Tourism Western Australia](#)



Donnybrook Museum | WAnderland | Western Australian Museum

[Donnybrook Museum | WAnderland | Western Australian Museum \(visitwonderland.com.au\)](#)

Donnybrook Apple Museum

The humble shed which houses this Museum masks the treasures to be found within. Donnybrook has a rich history as a primary producer, including dairy, beef and apples, gold and stone. Along with items which reflect the local industries, the Museum contains fascinating items related to the local community.

Boyanup

Rail Heritage WA South West Rail and Heritage Centre



1898 - Australian built Leschenault Lady is once again operating - from August 2021

Railways were critical in opening up regional areas of Western Australia and when the Bunbury to Boyanup railway was built in 1887 it was the first railway in WA specifically built to serve an agricultural district.

Boyanup became a major railway junction, with lines stretching to Katanning and Flinders Bay, transporting timber, agricultural produce and people to Bunbury.

The South West Rail & Heritage Centre has regular open days, normally on the 4th Sunday of each month, with a special theme each time. Check out upcoming open days and event themes on the [Centre's Facebook](#) page.

On an Open Day there is more than just railway vehicles on display. Also see the South-West Blacksmiths in action, agricultural machinery - operational and static - and the special features showcased that day.

The railway collection (locomotives, carriages and wagons) is owned by Rail Heritage WA. It includes Leschenault Lady, steam locomotive H 18, bought in 1887 for the Bunbury-Boyanup railway, mobile museum van, carriages dating back to the 1890s, former Australind carriages, as well as diesel locomotives from Jardee Mill and Bunbury Power Station.

Steamfests are held twice annually each April and October (1,500 people).

[Rail Heritage WA South-West Rail and Heritage Centre](#)

Dardanup and Ferguson Valley

[Home - Ferguson Valley](#) Attracts 30 000 visitors



The Ferguson Valley is a Garden of Eden, where rolling pastures, forests, spring wildflowers and rivers form a beautiful backdrop to award-winning wineries, boutique breweries, fine restaurants, country retreats and a lively arts and crafts scene.

A popular day trip by road, it lies just 15 minutes from Bunbury and two hours from Perth and offers a choice of nearer-to-nature experiences or wine and dine indulgences.

Hit the bushland walking trails or pretty picnic spots of Wellington Discovery Forest and Crooked Brook Forest and enjoy peace and tranquility among the jarrah, marri and yarri trees. Or take two wheels for a spin on 40 kilometres of beginner and advanced mountain bike trails at Mount Lennard.

Spend the day hopping between the cellar doors of more than 10 local wineries, or head deeper into the Ferguson Valley and find yourself in the fairy tale land of Gnomesville - a free and quirky must-see.



**Gnomesville Wellington National Park
Dardanup**



**Lost and Found Festival
Ferguson Valley**

Held in October, the Lost & Found Festival is an exciting program that explores wine, food, agriculture, music, art and the beautiful surroundings of the South West. All jam packed into four days of adventure throughout Bunbury Geographe Region.

<https://fergusonvalley.net.au/fergusonfound>

Bunbury

Bunbury is a vibrant coastal city in Western Australia, where you can encounter friendly dolphins, explore diverse landscapes, and enjoy a range of cultural and culinary delights. Whether you want to swim with the dolphins at the Dolphin Discovery Centre, visit the Bunbury Wildlife Park, or admire the street art and heritage buildings in the city centre, there is something for everyone in Bunbury.



Troy Bennell

Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tours Bunbury

Troy is an artist, cultural performer, gallery curator and ambassador for tourism in Australia. Proud of his Noongar heritage, his country and the place where he grew up, Troy has combined those passions into Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tours and uses his skills in tourism and storytelling to promote his greatest passion... his homeland and the cultural heritage of his people. <https://www.ngalangwongi.com.au/>



Bunbury Fringe

Launched in 2017, with 24 shows, events and workshops in 5 local venues. In 2018, the Fringe Garden evolved, adding another element to Bunbury Fringe, with a pop-up bar, food all night and DJs to see audiences through to midnight.

2021 saw the Fringe being located at the Stirling Street Arts Centre firmly anchoring the Festival in the cultural program of Bunbury Geopraphe.

<https://www.bunburyfringe.com/>



Dolphin Discovery Centre Bunbury

The Centre provides an immersive experience, with activity centres, interactive displays, feeding sessions that appeal to all age groups. The aquariums tell the story of the local region from freshwater river to offshore reef and feature the marine plants and animals of the local temperate zone. Using embedded technology along with natural displays it creates a memorable experience for visitors that complements the wild dolphin experience of the Beach Interaction Zone and Dolphin Tours.

[Dolphin Discovery Centre – Australia's Premier Wild Dolphin Experience](#)



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https://www.balingup.asn.au/Balingup_Rail_Group/introduction.html

<https://www.balingup.asn.au/balingup-progress-assoc.html>

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