

Lake Indoon - Wildflowers - Jurien Bay Sea Lions - Pinnacle Desert – Dolphin swim

We escape strong winds and the relentless coastal sand-blaster by retreating to **Lake Indoon** for a few nights. The gusts are pretty fierce, here too, but at least no sand is coming at us horizontally!



Residents at Lake Indoon include Bobtail Lizards, Black Cockatoos and lots of Black-winged Stilts with their disproportionate spindly legs.



Flock of White-tailed Black Cockatoos at Lake Indoon



Black winged Stilt

We miss October's peak WA wildflower season but even by mid-November we find a floral kaleidoscope of magnificent blooming displays!

Scarlet Featherflower





Pom Pom



Dampiera



Acorn Banksia



Honey Myrtle



Grass Tree



Flame Grevillea



Flame Pea



Sundew



Yellow Starflower

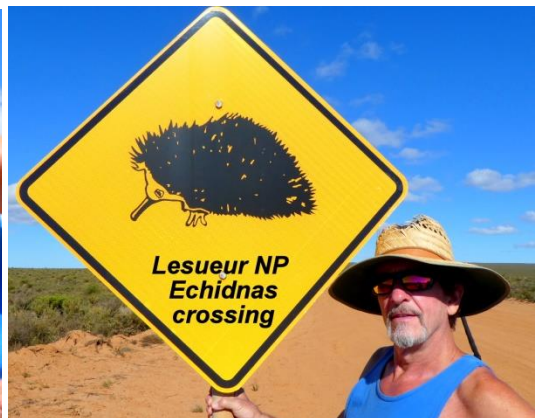


Eutaxia Obovata

West Australian Christmas Trees are doing their best to brighten up the landscape:



WA Christmas Tree



Prickly Moses



Flannel Flower

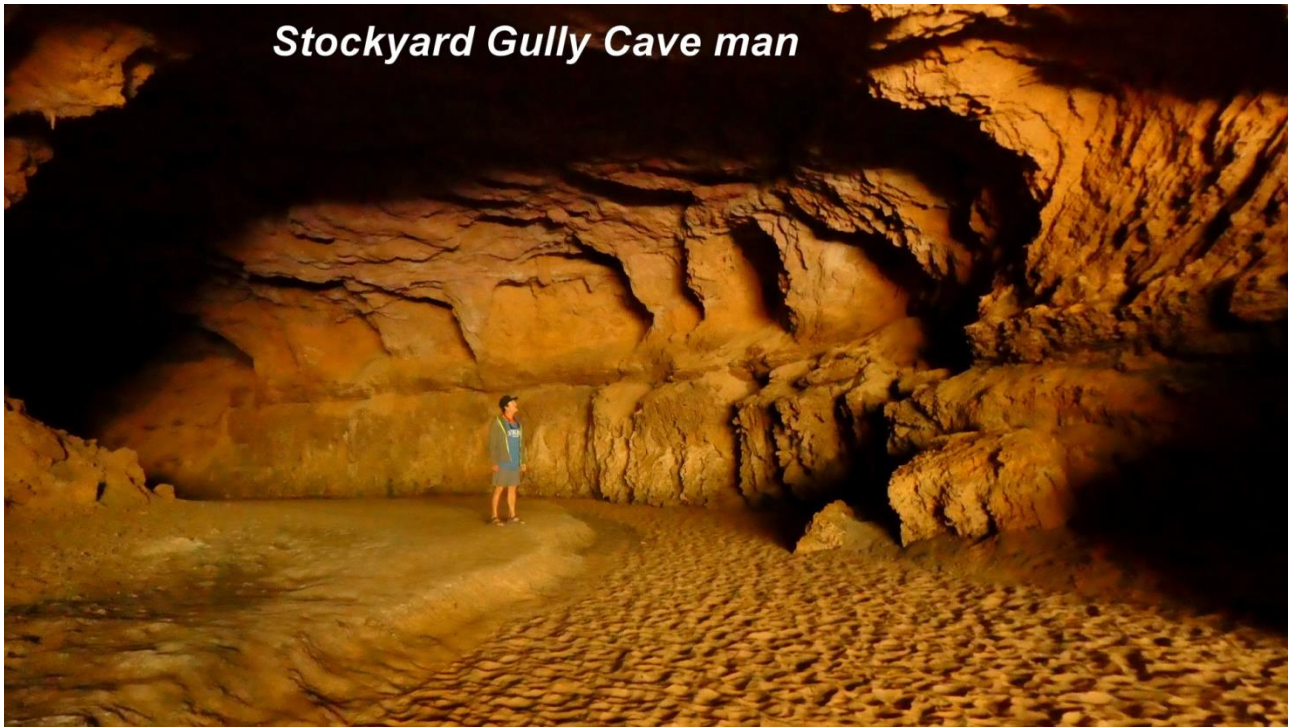
There is a cave to explore near Lesueur National Park...



Stockyard Gully Cave



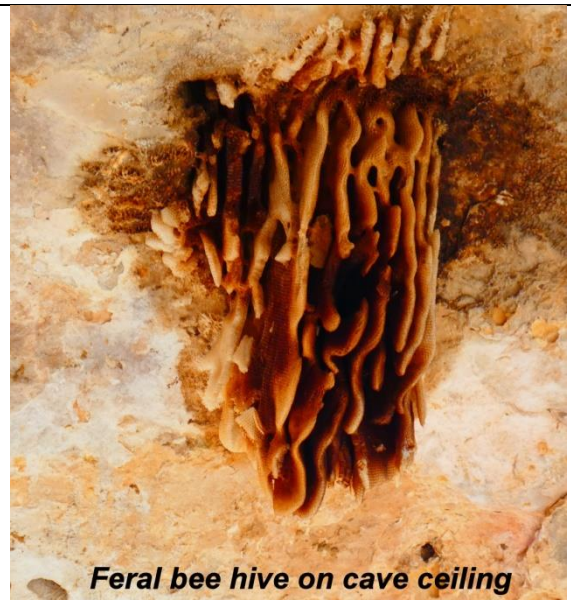
Modern cave woman



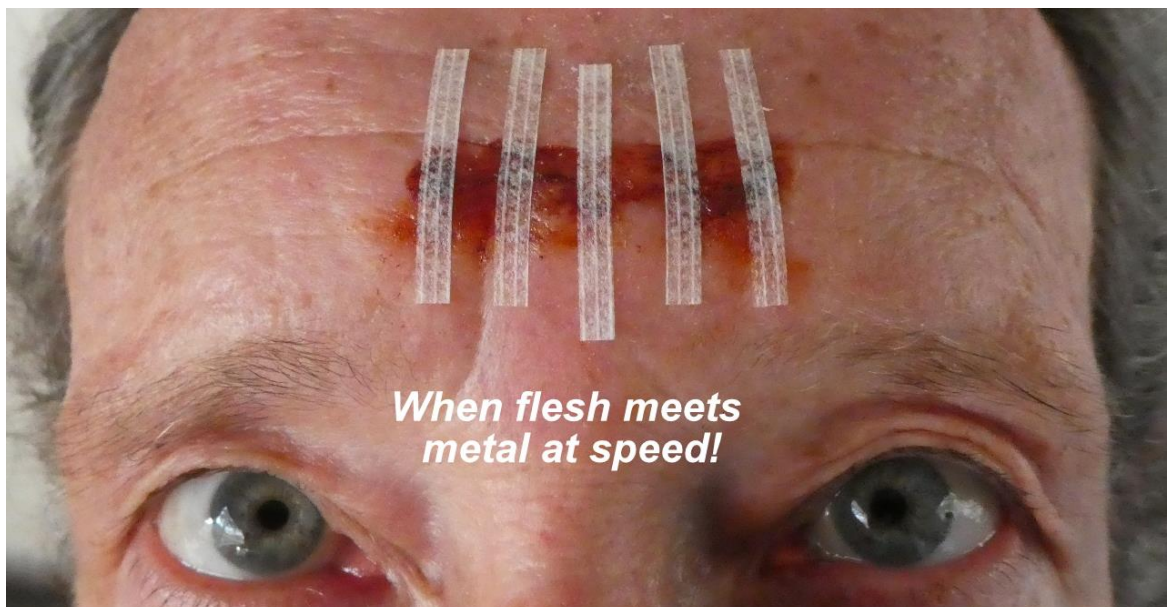
*Cave dweller:
Thick-tailed Gecko*



Carpet Python

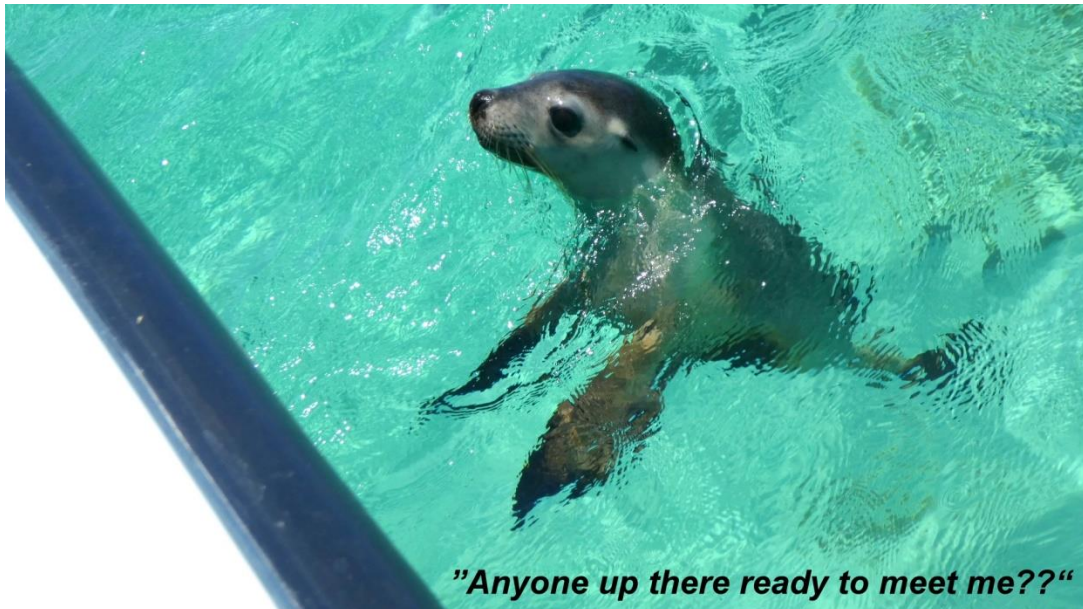


Dangers abound as usual but none greater than our van's awning arm...
...camouflaged by a sinking sun! "Needed this like a hole in the head!":



Flesh wound tended, we explore **Jurien Bay**. One major attraction for us is swimming with the endangered Australian sea lions. This colony hangs out on Essex Rocks, a small island in the turquoise waters of the bay. Australian sea lions are the rarest of their species with only about 10,000 to 12,000 left. One of the smartest and strongest creatures in the ocean, their joy of interacting with humans is infectious. The more you “goof off”, duck-dive – roll and twist – somersault under water or swim in circles the more they get animated to mimic your movements and buzz around you. It must be said these sea lions, although familiar with humans, live entirely wild. They are never fed or rewarded for their antics – the only reason for their interaction is because **THEY WANT** to! **It seems obvious they enjoy the encounter as much as we do...**





"Anyone up there ready to meet me??"

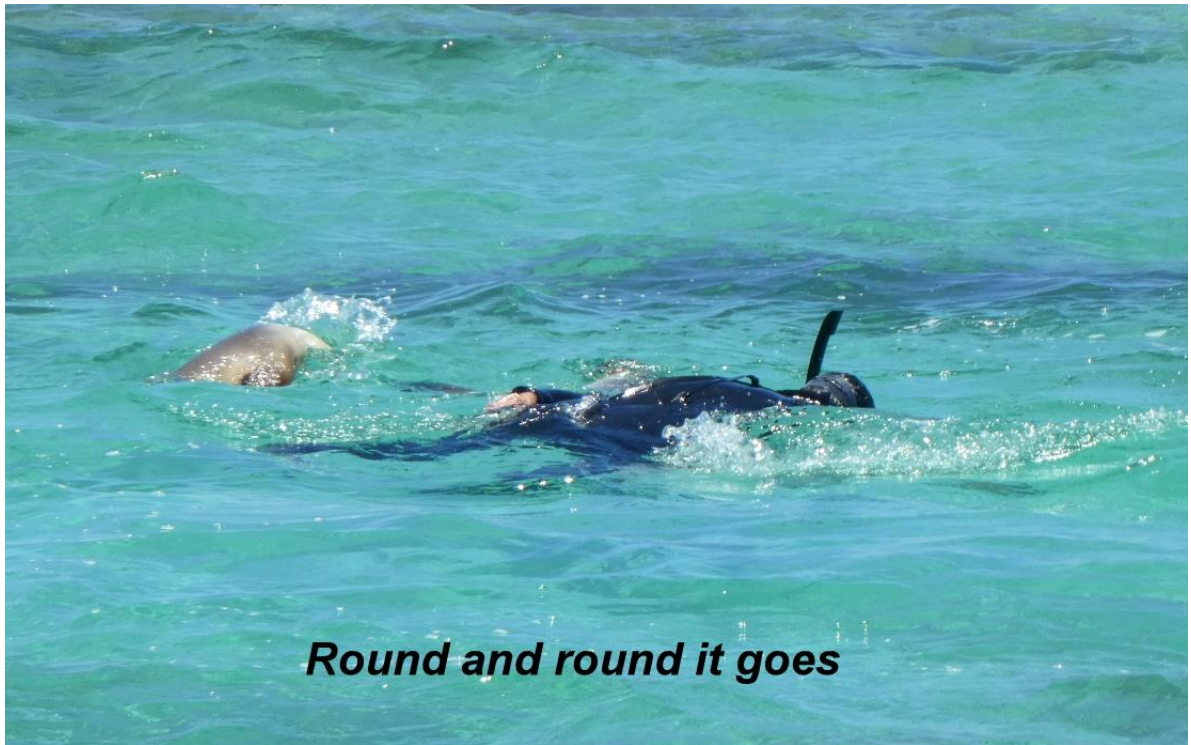


Ocean's "puppy dogs"

Sea lions love interaction



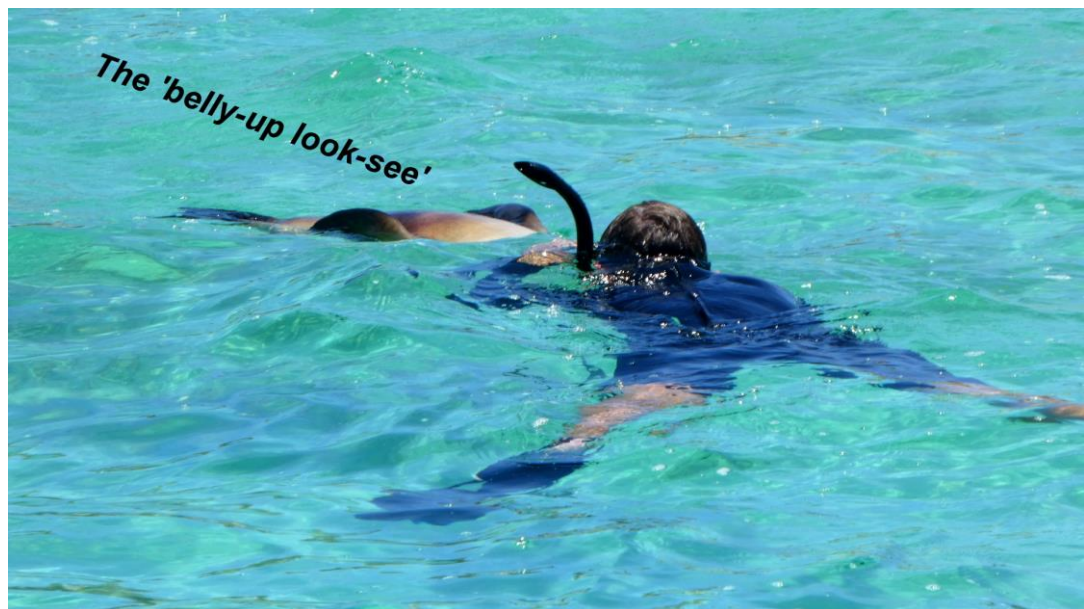
Sea lion's invitation to play



Round and round it goes

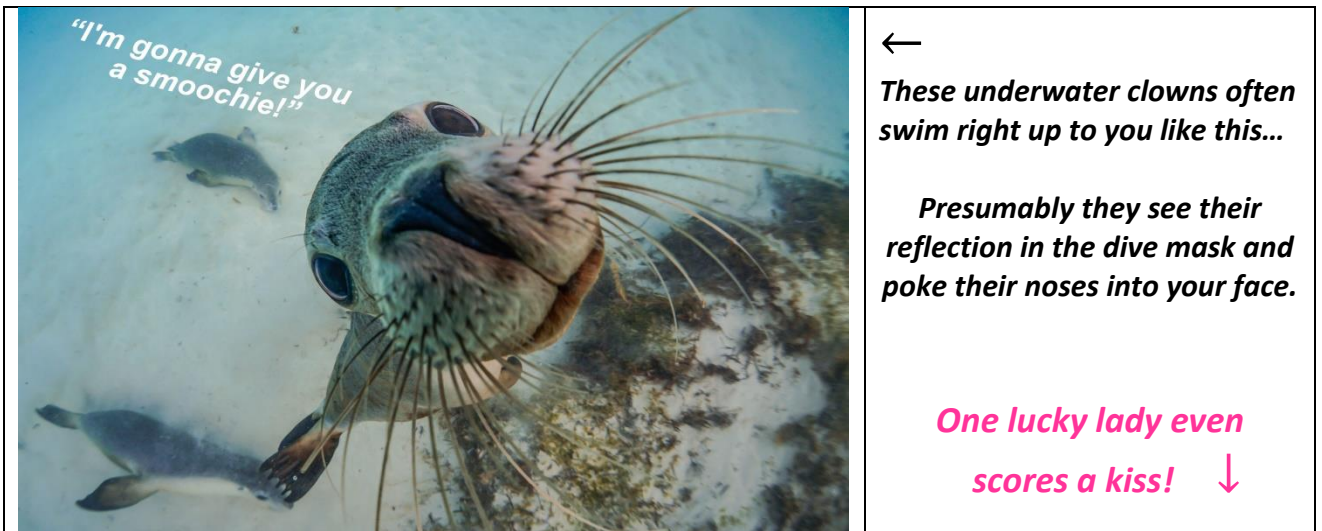


Fins up!

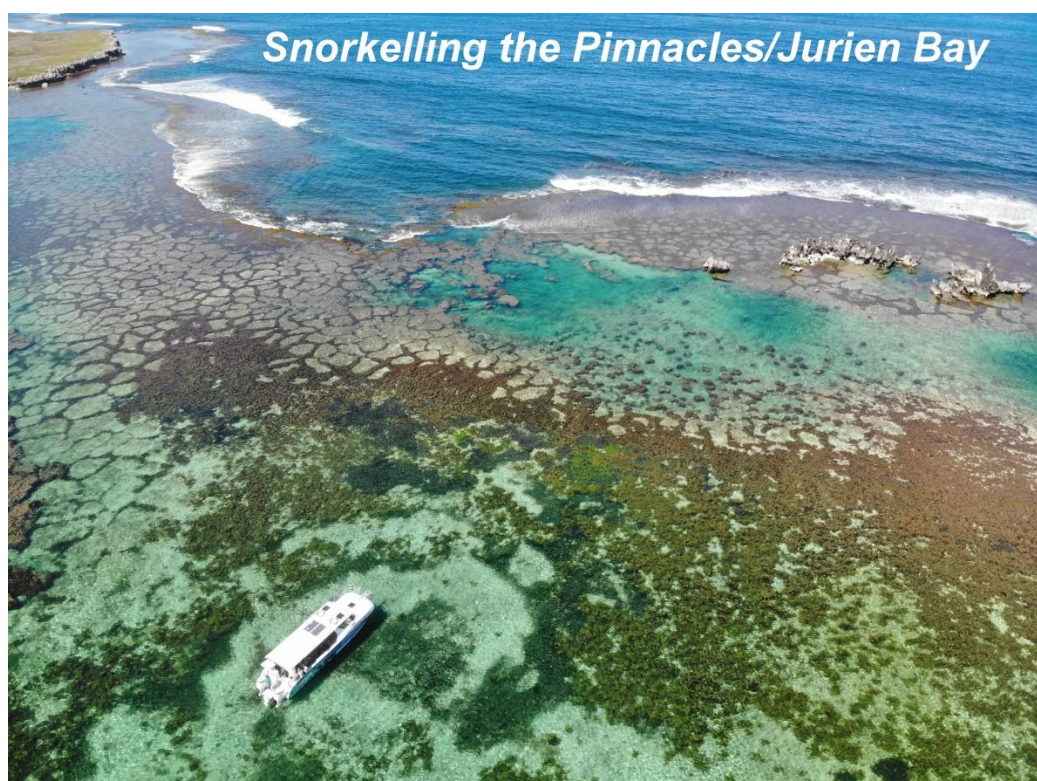


As many of you readers might know, Katherine is usually “*not that great with animals*” but guess who is the last person out of the water!





Debrief after the sea lion encounter: Snorkelling inside the local reef where fish life is plentiful:





Dugong mother with calf

On the way home we get lucky – Skipper Kane spots a dugong mother and calf.

They occasionally shelter in the shallow waters of Jurien Bay Marine Park and are a rare sight indeed.

Apparently even some of the local fishermen have never seen one here!

Before we return from our trip, dynamic duo **Lyndon and Kane** (team father&son) from **Turquoise Safaris** surprise us by lifting an Octopus shelter pot from the deep. In go a few splashes of fresh water from a drink bottle and the unappreciative occupant rushes out to everyone's amusement...



Katherine meets creepy crawly Octopussi



Hello... handsome!



"What a cool dude!"

All 12 guests on the boat get to handle the soft-bodied, eight-limbed mollusc and take turns for a photo opportunity before he is released back to his "Octopus's garden... where he likes to be" 😊😊

These creatures have excellent sight and are remarkably smart. Even scientists now credit them with intelligence, emotions and individual personalities!

'Thumbs-up' from us - We love this tour !



Kane is also said to be an expert fisherman in knowledge of Jurien Bay's best angling spots – unfortunate for us, a temporary demersal fishing ban is in force during our time here because of the spawning season.

After meeting our lovable *Octopussi* eye-to-eye we have second thoughts about eating one and resort to a local specialty instead!

(Fire grilled with garlic butter these crustaceans make a fine feast indeed!)



From Ocean to desert...



Thousands of pinnacles rise from the sandy desert floor of the 400ha **Pinnacle Desert Nat Park**. They are believed to have formed underground possibly up to 500 thousand years ago during the Ice Ages of the Quaternary period. Though evidence suggests the pinnacles were first exposed only 6000 years ago. Ever shifting sand dunes, driven by the prevalent strong winds, keep reburying many and exposing others in an ongoing cycle.



Nearly all geological aspects related to their formation are controversial:

One theory argues, that the pinnacles are eroded remains of a sand dune layer rich with plant roots.

A second theory proposes that the pinnacles are the calcified remains of tree trunks from an ancient petrified forest.

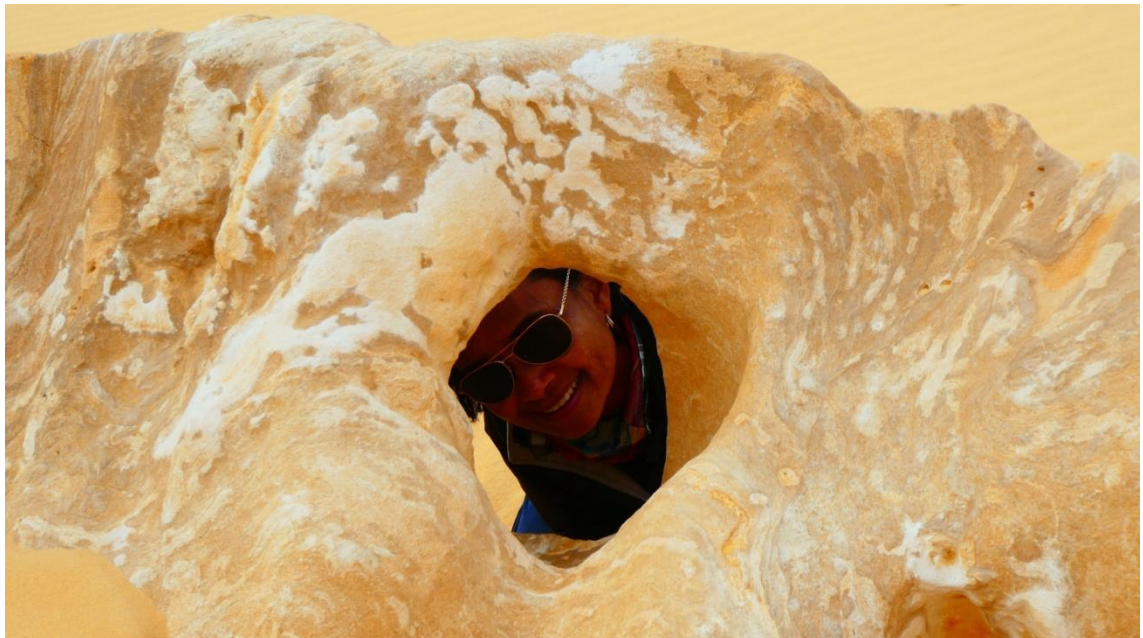
Whichever maybe the case, they are a captivating sight to us ☺



Pinnacles Desert



***Pinnacle hollowed
by sandblasting winds***



We spend one night at **Nambung Farm Stay**. This property backs onto the western border of the Pinnacles Desert which allows us to explore a quite different aspect of the Pinnacles National Park.

Of course, never missing an opportunity to connect with the locals...

Escaping the cold coastal winds remains our focus:

We steer further west to Australia's only monastic town – **New Norcia**, a historical and spiritual treasure in the West Australian Bush.

Many of the town's buildings feature 'Spanish style' architecture. There are boarding schools, an orphanage, a hotel, the Abbey church and the monastery itself.

*St. Joseph's Orphanage
New Norcia*



*St. Ildephonsus
Boy's College
1913 - 1964*



St. Getrude's Girls College



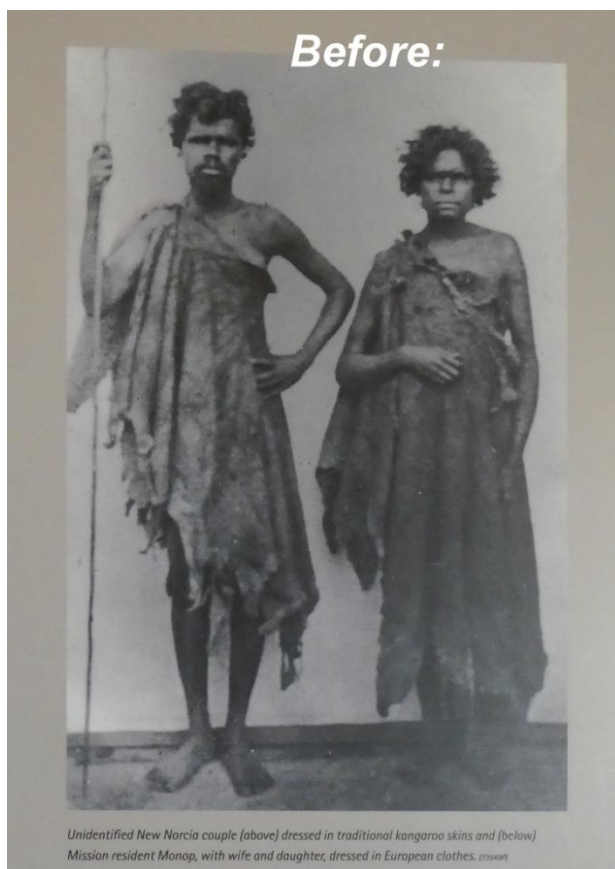
Named after Norcia in Italy, the town was founded in 1814 by Spanish Benedictine Monk 'Dom Rosendo Salvado' who was also an explorer, pastoralist and musician. Salvado's vision was to create, among the indigenous peoples of the Victoria plains, a Christian, largely self-sufficient village based on agriculture. Later the town became a place of practical education for indigenous children from all over the state.



The monastic community, at its height, had seventy monks – most of them Spaniards and lay brothers.



'Civilise and evangelise' according to European ideals of the time was the goal and this was very successfully done with sympathy for the indigenous culture that was rare in Salvado's day. Residents often had opportunities for bush activities such as gathering and hunting.



New Norcia has been baking bread since 1858. The bakery still operates today and our 110 year old wood-fired oven bakes bread seven days a week.

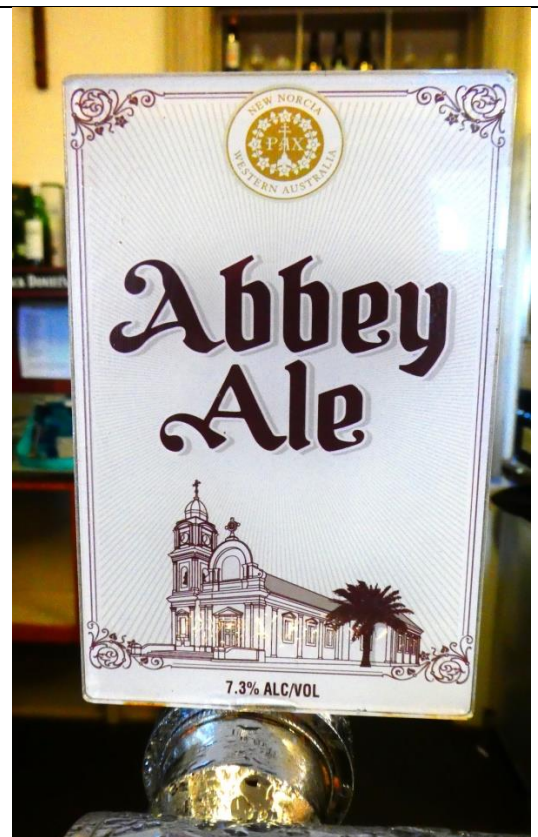
The monks took themselves to farming, raising crops and milling flower.

The bakery produces fresh bread to this day.

New Norcia's bakery and wood-fired oven is pictured below. Dom Paulino Gutierrez, to the left, was the baker for 50 years from when he arrived in New Norcia in 1928. Dom Paulino died in 2010 at the age of 99 after spending 80 years at New Norcia. According to a *Sydney Morning Herald* article of March 13 2010, he attributed his longevity to good bread, good wine, good olive oil and a good conscience. He was Australia's last Spanish monk.



Kitsch found: One little pocket monk



When not knocking on heaven's door seven times a day, the monks took to more earthly tasks i.e. wine making and beer brewing. The original 'Abbey Ale' was 14% proof but on the Abbot's orders eventually got watered down to 7.3%. So concerned was the godly man, he allowed only 250ml of the precious brew to be poured per serve. As suspected, the 'Belgian' style beer is rather palatable which leads us to this conclusion: *"One cannot stand on one leg"*, better bring on a second serve (although *"all good things come in lots of threes"* one might have to be careful not be tempted to a third, lest risk ending up *"legless"*!)





One highlight at New Norcia was meeting indigenous lad **Les Jacobs**. He is the last remaining pupil, abandoned by his parents and orphaned, who was brought up by the monks and later taken in by a Dutch family. A man full of wit and humour, Les is eternally grateful for his education and the grace shown by his adopted family which he still keeps in touch with.

He works as caretaker tending the monastery grounds, earns an honest living, drives a pick-up and holds the last monastic gun licence.



"WE ALL HAVE TROUBLES MORE OR LESS.
STILL! THERE'S WORLDS OF HAPPINESS.
BEHIND THE CLOUDS FOR YOU."



Indigenous dinner guest Les Jacobs at Camp Matrix/New Norcia



Les takes us on a marron (yabbie) catching afternoon which proves fruitful indeed.

In return we invite him to dinner at our camp and he graces us with insightful stories about days of old, his upbringing and views on aboriginal issues.

Top bloke - Les Jacobs



Best cooking method in our humble opinion:

Dispatch - remove heads – separate claws - clean & devein – cut carapaces' top with scissors – slice carapaces into halves – pan fry the lot (incl. claws) in garlic butter ☺☺☺drool

Along the road to Perth:



Haul of two giant loading trays destined for mine-tipper-trucks



Imagine the trucks' sizes these will be fitted to...!



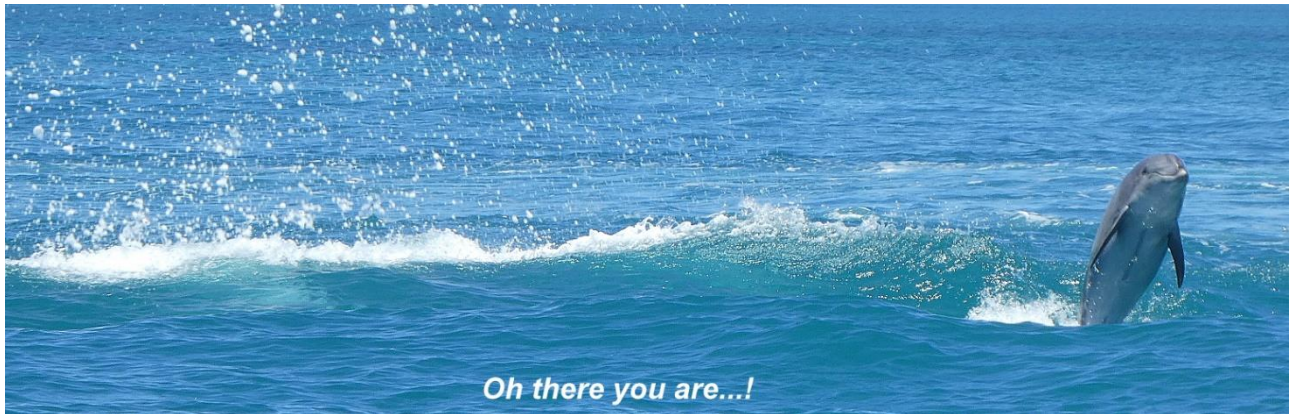
In Perth, Katherine's parents and brother with his wife show in for lunch at Camp Matrix.
All seem sufficiently impressed with our nomadic gypsy lifestyle outfit...



We reconnect with our friends Brian and Mary who live locally and decide on a
Dolphin Swimming Tour with Rockingham Wild Encounters.



It turns out to be a special day with up-close Bottlenose interaction, observing their behaviour from the boat and under water. An experience you'd normally watch on a BBC documentary!



Like the sea lions at Julien Bay, the Rockingham dolphins are neither being fed nor lured near a beach. We meet them out in the Sound where they roam completely free. They really have as much fun as we have with them. Though that requires the guides to first find a pod that is in socializing mood. Obviously, if the dolphins are in hunting, breeding or resting mode they won't pay any attention to us humans. **They only play because THEY CHOOSE to!**

Not before too long a pod suitable for interaction is spotted.





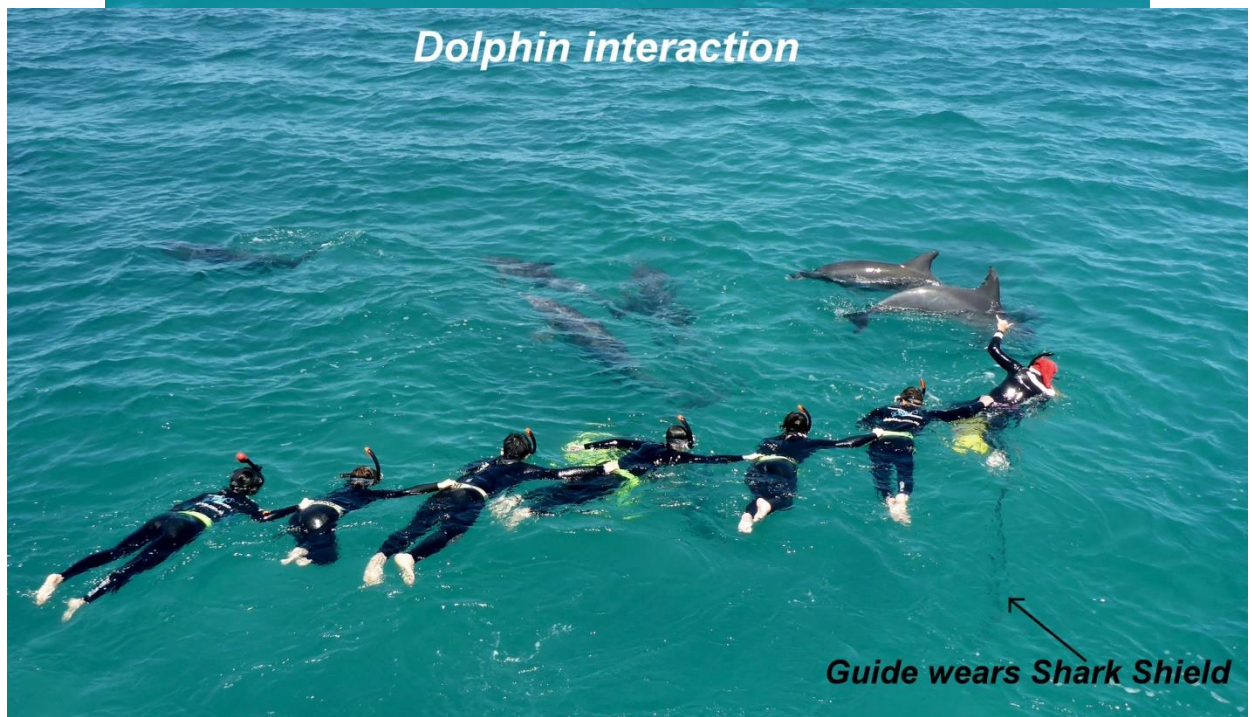
Preparing to enter the water



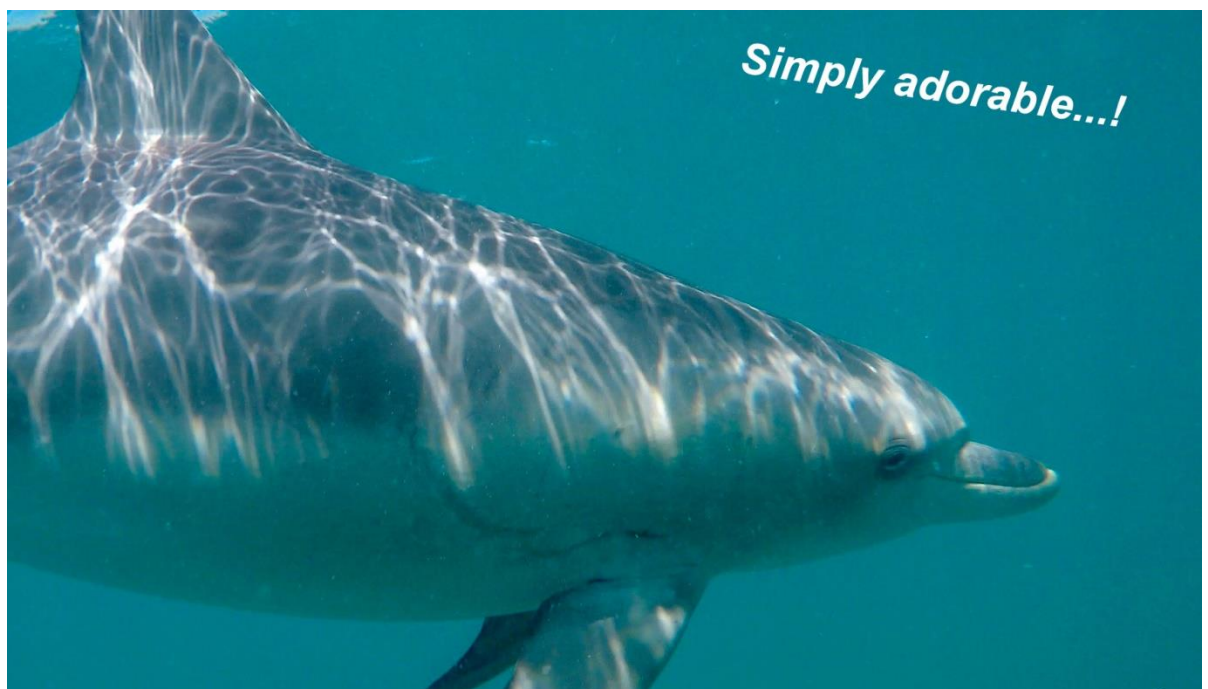
Approach the dolphins in linked groups



The lead guides are armed with underwater scooters so they can swim freely with the dolphins. These dolphins particularly enjoy speedy tight-loop chasing, round and round playing 'cat & mouse' as they follow the guide who brings them as close as possible to the snorkellers.



All guides wear Shark Shields just to make sure none of those other, much less friendly, marine inhabitants get any silly ideas!



Moving on to **Penguin Island**: The place is inhabited by Fairy Penguins who nest there in numbers but are quite elusive. **It seems the pelicans would definitely win by a majority vote here!**





Sooty Tern

"Since we left Queensland's Sunshine Coast on June 2nd we have had an uninterrupted string of 213 sunny days!"



*"So let's say...
no complaints!"*

*"Life's good"
LG*



West Coast Greetings



Bottoms up - Happy New Year!

"We would like to wish all readers a healthy, prosperous 2019 filled with many exciting adventures and precious friendships!"

Next episode: Heading for Margaret River...

***Greetings from
Chris and Katherine***

