

Ningaloo Reef Base Camp Escape

Paddling and Snorkel Adventure
Six day trip



Australia: Ningaloo Reef Base Camp Escape



Six day trip-five days kayaking

The Ningaloo Marine Park is located on the north west coastline of Western Australia and designated a World Heritage-listed site due to its incredible biodiversity. Ningaloo is the southern hemisphere's largest fringing reef and many parts can be accessed by a short swim from the beach or by slipping from a kayak into the azure seas inhabited by colourful fish, turtles and incredible coral. On this trip we spend five nights in our comfortable base camp located within Cape Range National Park. With vehicle support, we set off each day to paddle a different section of stunning coastline and reef, returning each evening to the base camp. On short bush walks we'll explore the stunning gorges of Cape Range National Park. This trip is suitable for beginner to experienced paddlers who are keen for a fantastic adventure with the comfort of a base camp.

A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

Day 1: In Exmouth. Drive to Cape Range National Park. Base Camp. D

Days 2-5: Kayaking and snorkelling Ningaloo Reef. Base Camp. B • L • D

Day 6: Last kayak day. Transfer to Exmouth. End of trip arrangements. B • L

How to Get There

Learmonth Airport is located 36km from Exmouth town. Qantas is the only commercial airline flying between Perth and Learmonth with a flight time of two hours. Flights can be booked direct with Qantas or through a travel agent. For those that have more time to explore, the driving distance between Perth and Exmouth is around 1200kms.

Meeting Place and Time

Your guide will meet day one arrivals from the Qantas flight landing into Learmonth Airport at 2.35pm. For those who have arrived prior to day one, you'll be picked up from your Exmouth accommodation at around 3.15pm.

Sea Kayaking

Sea kayaking is an activity that any reasonably fit person can participate in and could be compared to brisk walking or cycling. The daily itinerary is designed so that we travel with the prevailing breeze, paddling anywhere between five and 14 kms over the day. By using vehicle shuttles, we never paddle the same section of lagoon twice. The paddling distance will depend on other activities planned, how the group is travelling and prevailing weather conditions. We aim for at least two snorkels at different locations throughout the day and along with stops on the beach for morning tea and lunch, the paddling is broken up into manageable sections with usually no more than one hour spent in the kayak at any one time. The sea kayaking takes place inside the fringing reef, where the lagoon is rarely more than three metres deep, perfect for spotting sea life. There is always a possibility of choppy conditions, however the kayaks handle these conditions very well.

The kayaks used are double sit-in Barracuda Duo with rudder. The kayaks are stable, easy to paddle and control and suit beginners to experts. On day two you will be given a thorough briefing on all aspects of sea kayaking techniques with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks. We generally limit our group size to a maximum of 12 clients, plus guides.

Paddles used are Sea to Summit, a plastic blade with a fibreglass shaft. You're welcome to bring your own split paddle if you prefer.

In general, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling. It's a good idea to begin some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming well before the trip. If you have not paddled a sit in kayak, we recommend some tuition before your trip and may be able to suggest a local operator near your home. We ask that all participants feel confident in swimming.

Proposed Itinerary

The following itinerary and paddling distances should be seen as an approximate guide only. Please note that weather conditions can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary.

Day 1: Our local representative will meet arrivals from the Qantas flight landing into Learmonth Airport at 2.35pm. For those that have arrived into Exmouth prior to Day 1, you'll be picked up from your Exmouth accommodation at around 3.15pm. The group will transfer to the local base for gear fit out and to size snorkelling and kayaking equipment. We'll then grab any last minute supplies in Exmouth town before the one hour drive to the base camp in Cape Range National Park. After settling into the base camp and a hearty dinner, the guides will present a trip briefing and outline the plan for the next five days of kayaking.

All luggage may be taken with you as there is storage at the base camp, with access to two lockable rooms.

D / BASE CAMP

Day 2: After a 7am breakfast, the group travels five kms by vehicle to Yardie Creek, the starting point for our first day of kayaking. After a paddle talk and safety briefing we launch the kayaks and head north, kayaking with the prevailing breeze. Depending on conditions, we may take the opportunity to snorkel from our kayaks at one of a number of sites along the way, including the

kayak-only snorkel moorings just south of Osprey Bay. Expect to see hundreds of colourful fish at this thriving coral reef location.

Snorkelling offshore involves anchoring the kayaks in the sand below the shallow lagoon (an average depth of three metres) and sliding over the side to explore the amazing reef. Your guides will show you how to get back into the kayak, not always elegant but do-able!

Our end point today is the camp site at Osprey Bay, a distance of 11 kms from our start point at Yardie Creek. We leave the kayaks chained together above the high tide mark and return to our base camp by vehicle.

B • L • D / BASE CAMP

Day 3: After breakfast, we return by vehicle to the kayaks at Osprey Bay. Our destination today is South Mandu, a distance of 9.5 kms. Highlights include paddling across the stunning turquoise lagoon and crystal clear waters of Sandy Bay and spotting turtles and rays on the way to Pilgramunna. Just south of our end point, we may stop at a beautiful sandy point to swim off the beach and snorkel among the coral and colourful fish life at Pilgramunna bombies. Upon arrival at South Mandu, we leave the kayaks on the beach and return by vehicle to the base camp.

B • L • D / BASE CAMP

Day 4: This morning we return by bus to South Mandu to collect and launch the kayaks. We head north to Tulki, a seven km paddle, stopping along the way for some great shore-based snorkels - the South Mandu drift, Oyster Stacks drift and/or Turquoise Bay. Oyster Stacks and Turquoise Bay are the most popular 'shore-based' snorkel sites in the area, and for good reason, as you'll discover an amazing array of corals and fish at these sites, mere metres from the beach. It's a big day of snorkel opportunities today, but with every site offering something different, it's always exciting to get into the water and discover something new! We leave the kayaks at Tulki and return by vehicle to the comfort of our base camp.

This afternoon, we may take the opportunity to travel back to Yardie Gorge to enjoy a sunset walk along the edge of this beautiful water-filled gorge, the only permanent water source in Cape Range National Park. Keep an eye out for black-flanked rock wallabies as they leave the safety of the gorge to feed at dusk and the massive Osprey nest tucked into the gorge wall.

B • L • D / BASE CAMP

Day 5: Today we break things up a little. After the option of a full cooked breakfast this morning, we don our bushwalking clothes and enjoy a guided walk at Mandu Mandu Gorge. A spectacular dry gorge, it supports a population of black-flanked rock wallabies, who live among the rocky outcrops and ledges of the sheer gorge walls. Look for fossilised corals among the rock and enjoy sweeping views over the fringing reef system of Ningaloo from the top of the gorge.

We then visit the Milyering Visitor Centre, home to interpretive displays where you can learn more about the flora, fauna, geology and history of this World Heritage area encompassing Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park. There is a small store and gift shop within the Visitor Centre. We'll enjoy a picnic lunch at the Centre, before we swap our bushwalking clothes for paddling attire and return to Tulki to take the four km paddle through beautiful turquoise lagoons to Lakeside. We stop 800m shy of our end point for the day, to enjoy a snorkel in the Lakeside Sanctuary zone – a site that never disappoints!

The kayaks spend the night at Lakeside tonight and we return by vehicle to our base camp.

B • L • D / BASE CAMP

Day 6: Today is the last day of our paddle and snorkel trip. After packing up our belongings and saying goodbye to the base camp, we pack the bus and travel back to Lakeside to continue our sea kayaking journey. Today our destination, (tide dependent), is a special place called Mangrove Bay, eight km to the north. Mangrove Bay supports a small, remnant patch of mangroves that hug the coastline and act as a nursery area for the entire reef ecosystem. Look out for juvenile green turtles, rays and baby reef sharks in this wildlife hotspot. Visiting Mangrove Bay is tide dependent and we require a high tide to land. If this is not possible, we will finish three kilometres to the south at Ned's Camp. Upon arriving at our final destination, we unpack the kayaks and load them onto the trailer and make our way back to Exmouth town, a journey of approximately 40 minutes. The trip ends at approximately 4pm with a drop off at your Exmouth accommodation and a fond farewell from your guides and fellow paddlers.

B • L / ACCOMMODATION NOT INCLUDED

This is a sample itinerary only. It may be altered at any time at the discretion of your guide, depending on prevailing wind, swell, tide or other weather conditions and how the group is travelling.

End of Trip

We finish the trip with a transfer to your Exmouth accommodation on the afternoon of day six. Accommodation on this night needs to be booked by you and is not included in the trip cost.

We recommend staying an extra day or two in Exmouth for further exploration pre or post kayak trip. Some suggestions of where to stay and what to do are listed at the end of these notes.

For an airport shuttle service, please contact Exmouth Bus Charter.

<http://exmouthbuscharter.com.au>

The Base Camp

Spending five nights at the same campsite ensures a perfect combination of an active holiday with a little bit of comfort. At the end of each day we drive back to the base camp, enjoy a fresh water wash and enjoy the sunset over a few drinks and nibbles. Each night we retire to our spacious, stand-up tents with roll-up windows for star-gazing. We have the comforts of our vehicle and well-stocked camper trailer at base camp, so camping and cooking is easy. The camp is equipped with picnic tables and camp chairs, gas cookers, fridges, shade and wind shelter, drop toilet and solar showers: all the gear we need for comfortable camping. Tents are set up prior to guests arriving and fitted out with high-density foam mattresses, sleeping bags and sheets, as well as pillows.

At the base camp, guests have access to two lockable storage rooms, where valuables can be stored while away from camp during the day.

All of the fresh water that we use at camp for drinking, cooking and washing is carried in by hand, so fresh water for showering is limited. While solar showers are provided for guests, they are designed as a 'quick rinse' option rather than a 'full service' shower.

Ningaloo-some background

Ningaloo Marine Park encompasses the southern hemisphere's largest fringing coral reef, a total of 260 kms, from Bundegi Reef near the town of Exmouth to Amherst Point near Coral Point in the south. Within the Ningaloo Marine Park, 36% of the total area are sanctuary zones. Ningaloo Reef boasts an incredible diversity of marine life, from the seasonal visit of Whale sharks and Humpback whales, three species of turtles (Green, Loggerhead and Hawksbill), Dugong (shy but sometimes spotted in the winter months), dolphins, over 300 species of coral and 500 species of fish.

Cape Range National Park borders the northern section of Ningaloo Reef and is jointly managed by the traditional owners, the Jinigudera people, part of the West Thalanyji tribe and the Department of Parks and Wildlife. The word Ningaloo is a Jinigudera word meaning deep water or promontory. Today, Ningaloo is used to refer to the broad area encompassing Ningaloo Reef and the areas adjacent to it.

The Jinigudera are a coastal, or saltwater people, part of an incredibly complex culture which is inextricably tied to place. Materials uncovered from an archaeological dig in a rock shelter in Cape Range National Park indicate that Aboriginal people have been living along the coast for at least 35,000 years, possibly much longer. Southern Sea Ventures and its local operator, Exmouth Adventure Co, recognises the fact that the tour operates on Jinigudera land and asks all visitors to respect the amazing natural environment, culture and history of Ningaloo.

Climate

Exmouth is situated in the semi-arid climate zone, experiencing mild winters and hot summers. With an average annual rainfall of only 270mm, there is no wet season and an average of 320 days of sunshine each year. Late autumn, through winter and early spring is the peak tourist season. The average high temperature in late April/May is 31 degrees C with the average low of 18 degrees C. In June and July, the average high temperature is 25 degrees C with an average low of 12 degrees C. Temperatures increase in Aug/Sep with an average high of 28 degrees C and a low of 13 degrees C. Summer can be hot and windy, with temperatures often in the high 30s to mid 40s. Cyclones are also a possibility in the summer months. The water temperature ranges from 20-28 degrees C, with an average of 25 degrees C in Apr/May and 22 degrees C in Jul/Aug.

A typical day

The day begins with breakfast served at 7am. There's time to get ready with the van departing around 8am to drive to the kayaks. You only need to bring what you need for the day: water bottle, sunscreen, hat and sun glasses, rash vest, towel, camera etc, as we'll be returning to the comfort of our base camp by van at the end of the day. Upon leaving camp, we drive to the kayaks, which are on the beach, chained together above the high tide mark where we left them the day before. The drive can be anywhere from five minutes to 25 minutes, depending on where we are along the coastline. Along the way, we might spot some local wildlife: bustard, dingo, emu or maybe a wedge tail eagle. Upon arriving at the kayaks, your guides will leave you there to organise your kayak while they shuttle the van to the end point for that day's paddle, a distance of

four to 12 kms. Upon returning in a second vehicle and making sure everyone is ready and organised, your guides will help you launch your kayak for the day's exploration.

The kayaking is broken up into manageable sections, usually not more than one hour at a time is spent in the kayaks. Days are spent paddling, snorkelling and enjoying morning tea and lunch on picturesque beaches.

After lunch there may be another snorkel opportunity, before we pull into the beach where the kayaks will spend the night. Your guides will show you the best place to leave the kayaks safely and after you unpack the things that you would like to take back to camp, everyone pitches in to move the kayaks up above the high tide mark to make sure they are safely stowed for the night. You walk to the van and take the drive back to base camp; we aim to arrive back at camp by 4pm to allow ample time to get cleaned up and enjoy a west coast sunset.

A fresh water wash under a solar shower does wonders and there's an impressive cheese board waiting for you to nibble on while enjoying the sunset.

A healthy and delicious dinner rounds out the day. Help with dinner preparation is always appreciated by your guides and with a glass of wine, beer (BYO) or soft drink, it's a great time to recap the events of the day. Dinner is ready by 6.30pm. Over dessert your guides will brief you on the plans for the following day and then you may wish to sit in the communal area and chat with the other guests, enjoy some star gazing under the incredible night sky or perhaps get an early night in preparation for the next day's adventure.

Snorkelling

Each day provides fantastic snorkelling opportunities. At some sites we land the kayaks on the beach and swim a short distance from the shore. At other sites we anchor or moor the kayaks and slip over the side. Expect to discover some unnamed snorkel spots that are accessible only by kayak. Snorkelling gear is provided or bring your own for a good fit.

Bushwalking

The camp is close to some great bushwalking locations. We usually visit Yardie Creek gorge for a sunset experience and Mandu Mandu Gorge for a 3km loop walk that offers fantastic views as well as the opportunity to stretch the legs! Both walks are undertaken at a relaxed pace with ample rest stops. There are some steep sections that require some scrambling but the pace of the walks and experience of our guides make them achievable for most people.

Expedition Staff

The guides' role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters and administer the medical kit if required. The guides carry a satellite phone for emergencies. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

Travel Arrangements

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures and local partner, Exmouth



Adventure Co are not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and your guides will do their best to rectify the situation. Please understand that delays and waiting can occur and although we do our best to keep to schedule, it is not always possible.

Travel Insurance

It is highly recommended to purchase a personal comprehensive travel insurance policy. Please make sure your insurance policy covers lost monies in the event that you need to cancel your trip.

Australian residents should note: Under the Federal Government Medicare Act it is prohibited for any domestic travel insurance product to provide any financial reimbursement with regards to ambulance or air ambulance services. We advise clients to take specific cover for ambulance services through the respective State Ambulance Service providers or through your own private health insurance.

Time & Communication

Perth and Exmouth are on Australian Western Standard Time (AWST).

There is very little mobile phone reception in the trip area and no electricity for charging devices. We recommend you join the trip with your devices fully charged, carry spare batteries where applicable and bring along a power bank or compact solar charger if you have one. Once the group leaves Exmouth town, mobiles can be turned off or switched to 'flight mode' so they can still be used to take photos, without running the device battery down due to it constantly searching for a signal.

As there is no phone reception at the base camp, guides will have a satellite phone on them at all times. This is reserved for emergencies (to save battery life), and generally not switched on to receive incoming calls.

Meals

Meals are freshly prepared by the guides who are all great camp cooks. Breakfasts usually consist of fruit salad, a selection of cereals and muesli, milk and yogurt, toast and condiments, tea and coffee. Lunches are picnic-style, with a selection of wraps, crackers, cheese, cold meat, salad, condiments, tea and coffee. Dinners are prepared with fresh ingredients and varied daily and may be

a pasta dish, a curry, chicken/tofu stir fries or Mexican style. There's usually a sweet treat to finish the meal. Snacks are also supplied and fresh fruit, biscuits, corn chips with dip, nuts and dried fruit will be enjoyed for morning tea. Once at camp a cheese platter is shared to watch the sun set. If you'd like a sundowner, then you are welcome to BYO alcohol.

We are happy to cater for vegetarians and other special dietary requirements. Please write your dietary requirements on your medical form.

In Exmouth town there are a number of cafes, food trucks and restaurants including two micro-breweries, a sushi bar and a dedicated vegetarian/vegan café. For a remote town of only 2200 in the NW of Australia, the variety and quality of culinary offerings is impressive.

Conservation

It has always been our motto that "we take only photographs and leave only footprints". We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc.

Money Matters

Your tour cost includes:

- Return transport between Exmouth town and Cape Range National Park.
- National Park entry and camping fees.
- Double expedition kayaks, paddles, life jackets and spray decks.
- Stand up tents, high density foam mattresses, sleeping bags and liners, pillows.
- Camp chairs and shade shelter.
- Dry bag for carrying your day's equipment in the kayak.
- Professional guide/s.
- Gloves (fingerless paddling gloves, great for sun protection and blister prevention).
- All meals and snacks from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 6.
- Water and non-alcoholic drinks.
- Snorkelling gear-snorkel, mask and fins.
- Long sleeve sun shirts and broad brim hats with a chin strap and neck flap.
- Group first aid kit.

Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Accommodation and meals in Exmouth.
- Alcoholic beverages (BYO welcome).
- Travel insurance.
- Flights.

Medical Matters

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs or foods to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.

Medical Supplies

Your guide carries a comprehensive medical kit and is trained in wilderness first aid. It is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. Guides do not carry Epipens due to the warm climate and consequent reduced shelf life. If you are anaphylactic, you will need to supply and carry two Epipens as we are often two hours from medical care.

In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SP30). Please consider using reef friendly sunscreens.
- Lip protectant (high sun protection).
- Band-aid strips.
- Insect repellent.
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- A mild antiseptic soap/liquid hand wash.

Equipment & Clothing: What You Need to Bring

All your luggage can be taken with you to the base camp. If you are travelling with a hard suitcase, we recommend you bring along a soft bag which you can use for all your camp clothes and toiletries. Suitcases can be locked up in the storage facility.

The list below should be used as a guide when packing. Contact us if you have any questions.

Gear List

Essential Items:

- A broad brimmed hat is supplied, however, if you prefer to bring your own, a wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Polarised are great for seeing into the water from your kayak.
- Two long sleeve lightweight shirts. A synthetic shirt is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling and a separate camp shirt for the evening, which can also be worn for bushwalking (one sun shirt is provided for snorkelling).
- Two t-shirts.
- One to two pairs of full length trousers to wear for bushwalking and in camp for warmth and mosquito protection.
- A pair of shorts.
- Swimwear-bathers, board shorts (two pairs are handy), surf tights for sun protection.
- Towel. A sarong is also handy for draping over your legs for sun protection.
- Pack a warm jacket, a thermal layer and a beanie as nights can get cold.
- Enclosed footwear for bushwalking (hiking shoes/boots) and socks.

- Reef shoes or a good fitting pair of sandals/crocs that attach solidly for paddling.
- Toiletries (bring biodegradable soap and shampoo for a quick rinse). Also see list above under the heading medical supplies.
- Rain jacket/wet weather gear. Not often required but if you don't bring, you know what will happen!
- A headlamp or small torch with batteries.
- Water bottle, at least one litre capacity—the type used by cyclists is fine.
- Daypack for carrying water and camera for hikes.
- Snorkelling gear is provided or you can bring your own for a good fit. Snorkelling fins are the recommended fin. Free diving fins are not suitable as they are too long to store in the kayaks and can damage the reef. Bodyboarding fins/swim training fins (short style) are also not recommended due to their minimal thrust in the water (some snorkel sites are subject to currents).

Optional items:

- Camera with waterproof container, (if the camera is not waterproof), batteries and charger.
- Book.
- Binoculars.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Ear plugs—in case of snorers!!
- BYO drinks for sunset happy hour.
- You can bring fishing gear, however this is not a focus of the trip (please use lures rather than bait). Our base camp is situated within a sanctuary zone, so any fishing will take place during the day while paddling (in between sanctuary zones).

Travel Information

Exmouth has a population of approximately 2,200 residents, this number more than quadruples in the peak season (April and July school holidays). The town is well serviced for its size, with a good hospital, school, police station, pharmacy, post office, Westpac bank, two IGA supermarkets and numerous other shops and eateries.

With the influx of tourists and travellers during peak periods, accommodation and tours can be in high demand and are often fully booked; booking well in advance is strongly recommended.

Accommodation is not included in Exmouth and is your responsibility to pre-book. Exmouth has a range of accommodation options to suit every budget. Our local operators suggest the following:

Mantarays Ningaloo Resort- waterfront location on Exmouth Gulf, on-site restaurant and bar. Depending on group configuration, room options range from standard rooms, which are a comfortable twin-share option, to one bedroom and two bedroom apartments. Breakfast is available for an extra cost in the in-house restaurant.

<https://mantaraysningalooresort.com.au>

Exmouth Escape Resort is also a good alternative with one bedroom, two bedroom and family chalets on offer. Whalers Restaurant, open for dinner only, is located within the grounds of Exmouth Escape Resort. Breakfast is not available, however chalets have kitchenettes, so self-catering is an option.

<https://exmouthescaperesort.com.au>

For a comprehensive accommodation and tour guide, take a look at the following website:

<https://www.waholidayguide.com.au/western-australia-accommodation/western-australia-locations-to-stay/coral-coast-accommodation/exmouth-accommodation>

The magnificent Whale sharks arrive in numbers on the Ningaloo coast after the coral spawn in March and spend the next four to five months feeding in the abundant waters of the Indian Ocean, adjacent to Ningaloo Reef.

Our local operator, Exmouth Adventure Co, have built relationships with two Whale shark tour operators. Ocean Eco Adventures and Kings Ningaloo Reef Tours are two of the operators that they trust and recommend. Humpback whale snorkelling tours are also available between August and October. See their websites for more information and booking details:

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

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

Delays or Problems

In case of last minute delays or problems, either contact Southern Sea Ventures or the Exmouth phone number noted on your final itinerary.

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