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Introduction To Perth

On January 1, 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was formed, consisting of six states (Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania) and two territories (Northern Territory and the ACT — Australian Capital Territory). Each state and territory has its own capital city. They are:

Western Australia — Perth
New South Wales — Sydney
Queensland — Brisbane
Victoria — Melbourne
South Australia — Adelaide
Tasmania — Hobart
Northern Territory — Darwin
ACT — Canberra (also the capital of the country)

Western Australia is the largest of all the states, occupying approximately one-third of the country. To give you an idea of size, a jumbo jet takes five hours to fly from Perth to Sydney!

To drive from Perth Broome (within WA) would take nearly 24 hours, and takes a commercial passenger plane three and half hours to get there.

Australia, as a whole, has three time zones. Perth is normally two hours behind Sydney, and Sydney is an hour behind Brisbane. Western Australia are currently trialling daylight saving for 3 years.

Despite its size, Western Australia has less than 10% of the country's population (which is approximately 20 million). Around 1.9 million live in the Perth "Metropolitan Area", and some 500,000 people live in WA's rural areas.

Perth has arguably the best climate in Australia, enjoying the second largest number of the sunniest days of any place in the world (the first is Florida). It is also the second windiest city in the world (Chicago is number one!). We haven't put it to the test (yet), but they reckon it is possible to get summer all year round simply by travelling around the coast of WA.

Something many people migrating to Australia don't seem to realise is that due to the fact that the country is in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are "back-to-front", which means this:

September-November (Spring)
December- February (Summer)
March-May (Autumn)
June-August (Winter)

It also gets dark quickly. Once the sun goes down it can be pitch black in 10 minutes! (Obviously the reverse is true at sun-up). In the height of summer, it gets dark at around 8pm. However, it stays warm long after the sun goes sets.

Perth itself is built on the beautiful Swan River. The river joins the Indian Ocean at Fremantle — Perth's port. The CBD (Central Business District) may be a lot smaller than, say, that of Sydney, Brisbane or Melbourne, but it has an equally impressive skyline. Kings Park sits high above the city and the views, especially at night, are quite inspiring.



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Some Statistics

The estimated resident population of Western Australia is around 1.9 million, which is roughly 10% of the total population of Australia. The main contributors to population growth are migrants, and of course natural birth-rate. Interestingly though, of all the UK migrants to Australia, some 30% come to Western Australia — a large increase from the 19% recorded during the late nineties and 2000.

The highest resident population is in the Perth metropolitan area, with approximately 1.4 million people. The rest of WA is broken down into “local areas”, and these areas share the remaining 500,000 residents.

The most populous “local area” outside the Perth metro is Mandurah, with an estimated population of around 52,000. Sandstone, with an estimated population of 140, was the least populous “local area”.

Brief History

The first recorded arrival in Western Australia by Europeans was in 1616 when Dutchman Dirk Hartog landed at Shark Bay. Prior to this, the Aboriginal people occupied Western Australia during what they call “Dreamtime”. In 1826 Major Edmund Lockyer and his troops were sent from Sydney in the ship *Amity* to claim “New Holland” (which was what WA was then called) for Britain. A military outpost was established at “King George Sound” (now known as Albany).

Also in 1826, Captain James Stirling sailed from Britain to an area of land on the Swan River to see if it was suitable for settlement. As a result of Stirling's favourable reports, Captain Fremantle formally established a colony for the British Crown at the mouth of the Swan River on May 2nd 1829.

The Swan River Settlement received so much positive publicity in Britain that many people came to take advantage of the settlement terms, which were one acre of land for one shilling and sixpence.

The first 10 years or so proved difficult. Food and money was short due to the poor quality of the settlers' land. But by 1848, due to the lack of labourers, the British Government agreed to provide assistance in the form of convicts. The first group of convicts landed in Fremantle in 1850. Many were set to work building roads and buildings. Evidence of these buildings include the Fremantle Prison, the road between Perth and Albany, Government House and Perth Town Hall.

WA progressed slowly until the Gold Rush. The first discovery of gold in Western Australia was at Halls Creek in the remote Kimberley Region in 1885. More discoveries followed throughout the state. The major strikes at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in 1892 saw the populations in the Goldfields towns grow to 10,000 over 10 years. It was the Gold Rush that was responsible for bringing wealth and prosperity to Western Australia. And today, gold mining remains one of WA's largest industries.



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A

Accommodation

(a) Short-term

When you arrive in Perth you will obviously need somewhere to stay. In most cases, people arrive by air with a few suitcases and belongings, and their furniture is on a boat, weeks behind them.

Whilst hotels are plentiful, they can be expensive, especially if you have a family and need to stay for 6-8 weeks or so.

There are a few B&B's around - perhaps more suitable for couples without children, but arguably more expensive if you have kids and need more than one room.

Good quality furnished accommodation is quite scarce in Perth. Check out our website at www.pomsinperth.com to see our various properties, but it's always best to check availability BEFORE you book your flights!

(b) Long-term

Once your furniture arrives, you have the choice of buying a property or renting one. Generally, unfurnished rentals are available on a minimum six months lease, but references will be required. The property manager will prepare a "property condition report" which you must sign, and they expect the property to be returned in the same (or better!) condition than when you took possession.

The costs involved in renting can be quite substantial to start with. A "bond" (deposit) is required (normally the equivalent of four weeks rent) and this bond is at stake if you don't return the property in the same condition it was in when you took it. The bond is held in trust by the "Bond Administrator", in an account that bears no interest. Real estate agents often double up as property managers. They will charge you a "letting fee" (normally the equivalent of one week's rent) and government stamp duty is payable. Add to that, two weeks rent in advance and renting a property can cost you the equivalent of over seven weeks rent in "up front" fees.

Accountants

If you intend to become self-employed or start a business, you will need to register with an accountant. There are many to choose from in Perth and many specialise in different areas. Take advice from people already in Perth if you can, rather than just choosing one from the Yellow Pages! The tax-year in Australia is from July 1st to June 30th.

Adapters

Three-pin plugs in Australia differ from those in the UK. The "pins" are flat and angled, with the "earth" pin being slightly longer than the positive and neutral pins. Unlike the UK plugs, there is no fuse inside.

When your electrical goods arrive you will undoubtedly need to replace a number of plugs. A good tip is to bring UK extension leads or power adapters / boards. This is ideal for your TV/Video etc. as you only have to change the plug on one end. Under West Australian law, you are required to engage the services of a professional electrician to change your plugs.

Power Boards are also ideal for hairdryers – so if you can bring some with you, great!



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Alcohol

You must be 18 to purchase alcohol, whether in a pub or a liquor store in WA. A good range of beers and spirits are available, including many English and European beers.

Beer is sold in pints, half-pints (called a “midi”), and some pubs offer a third- size glass called a “schooner” — which is in between a “midi” and a pint.

Alcohol is not sold in supermarkets, but there are off-licenses everywhere, and plenty of “drive-thru’s” too (similar to the drive-thru at McDonalds, except you buy alcohol instead of food – without leaving your car seat!)

Airlines

The following major airlines fly to Perth from the UK

Malaysian
Singapore
British Airways
Qantas
Emirates
Royal Brunei

At the time of writing, Emirates offer the shortest route (via Dubai), and Royal Brunei is the longest, but check prices and “special offers” to make sure you get the best deal.

All airlines increase their prices quite dramatically around the second week in December until the second week in January.

Arrival of your furniture

When working out your “timing”, it is important to know exactly WHEN your shipment of furniture is leaving the UK. On average, it takes four weeks for the ship to get to Fremantle port from most UK ports. Once it has arrived, it takes on average 10-14 days to clear customs and quarantine. Then your removalist has to book in a delivery date.

Don't forget to contact them and give them your phone number/address.

A-Z Road Maps

There are two main A-Z road maps for Perth

1. UBD
2. Streetsmart



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These are essential for driving in Perth! (if you intend hiring a car, a map book is generally provided). Of the two, the preferred choice is the UBD as it is a lot easier to read and the roads appear larger.

Expect to pay around \$30 for an A-Z road map, but shop around for the cheapest.

B

Banks

There are a wide variety of banks available in Australia, and offer similar services to the UK.

Chequebooks, VISA cards and “hole in the wall” cards are available. (Hole in the wall cards are called EFTPOS – Electronic Funds Transfer at Point Of Sale).

BBQs

It may be the old “Aussie Tradition”, but BBQ’s are as necessary for life in Perth as a fridge! Depending on your requirements, expect to pay from \$500 for a basic gas-burner BBQ to \$10,000 for a whopping outdoor kitchen BBQ.

If you aren’t ready to buy one yet, just pop along to your nearest park or beach where you will find “free” BBQs. They are built-in gas hotplates - you just press a button to light them, and throw on your food to cook. However, remember these are public BBQ’s and get heavily used in summer, so as you can imagine, not everyone is in a hurry to clean them after use! So be prepared to clean the BBQ before you cook on it. Alternatively, take some aluminium foil to cover the BBQ, and place your food on that.

Beaches

The coastline of WA stretches for 12,500km and consists of pristine white sands and turquoise waters. Probably the most “famous” of Perth’s metropolitan beaches is **Cottesloe Beach** - famous in 2001 for the first fatal shark attack in over 70 years. Since that fateful day, a shark “spotter” plane patrols the coastline from Mandurah to Quinns Rocks all day long through the summer months, and regular shark sightings are quite normal (usually shown on the evening news that day).

Despite the sharks, Perth beaches are safe to swim in. Sharks generally feed at dawn and dusk, so swimming is not recommended at these times.

Scarborough Beach is Perth’s most visited and busiest beach - it has wide stretches of golden-white sand and some of the best surfing in Perth. Add to that the wide range of bars, nightclubs and restaurants, and of course, “Observation City” — the only high rise hotel on Perth’s coast, with glorious views to Rottnest Island, Fremantle and the City.

Mullaloo Beach is also extremely popular — especially on Christmas Day when hundreds of people flock to enjoy a picnic or BBQ breakfast on the grassed area nearby. Ideal for young families, Mullaloo Beach has won the “Best Beach” award many times and has never been out of the top three! The water is beautiful at Mullaloo – very clear and not so many waves, so is ideal for families.

If you have a dog, then “Dog Beaches” are plentiful too. They are dotted along the coast every 15km or so and have free “Poo Bags” and bins so that you can keep the beach clean after your pooch. Beware though that dogs are NOT



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allowed on all beaches, so look for the DOG BEACH signs along the coast (expect to be fined on the spot by the local ranger if you are caught on a non dog beach).

Bills

Gas, electricity or phone bills generally arrive monthly or bi-monthly. Whatever time they arrive, there always seems to be one in your mailbox! However, all utility bills can be paid at your local post office, via post or via the Internet.

Bingo

Bingo fans won't be disappointed - there are many places where you can go for a game. Whilst the game itself may be basically the same (eg line and a full house), it is certainly different in many ways. Ever heard of a "race track"? That's the top and bottom line, and the end two numbers on the middle line.

It can sometimes get confusing and the prize money is not as good as it is in the UK. In WA, bingo can only be run by charitable organisations, and not for commercial profit, but is still popular.

Booze Buses

There is a strong argument that the UK should take a "leaf out of the Australian book" when it comes to booze buses, but the sight of one can make your heart sink, even if you have had just one drink!

Picture the scene - you are driving home at 11pm along a dual carriageway. Around a blind bend, in-between exits, you see the blue and red flashing lights of the police. The outside lane is cordoned off with cones, and all traffic is filtered into the inside lane. As many as 20 police officers are lined up, all with breathalysers, and each car is stopped and the driver breath-tested. If you are over the limit (0.05), you are asked to pull over and you sit and wait 20 minutes or so before being tested again.

Booze buses have been set up on all major roads (even the freeway!), and there is no way of telling when or where they will appear – and even when you do spot them, there is no way of turning your vehicle around or taking any other exits!

Drinking and driving in WA is classed as virtually "zero tolerance", and should be avoided at all costs.

Bores

This is a term that is often seen in property adverts. "Bore Retic" is the term generally used, and refers to the automatic garden watering system known as "reticulation".

There are two types of "reticulation". One is fed direct from the mains water supply, the other comes from a water bore. Essentially, a "bore" is a deep, narrow hole in the ground that goes as deep as the water table. A pump is installed so that the "bore water" can be extracted through the hole and used to irrigate the garden.

The advantages of water bores can only be seen in Spring, Summer and Autumn when there is little rain – no metering is set on the bores, hence it is free! The government are now clamping down on water use altogether following our changing climate and droughts.



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Broadband Internet

Broadband Internet services are widely available throughout the metro area. Current speed rates are from 256kbps to 1.5mbps for ADSL 1, and then all the way up to around 8000mbps for ADSL 2. Average broadband plans cost around \$50 – this gives you a good speed plan with plenty of download capacity.

There are many Internet Service Providers throughout Australia including Telstra, Optus, AAPT, inet, Westnet to name a few! Shop around as these companies also offer bundle packages with your telephone line and mobile phones.

Telstra are the main carrier in Australia – the equivalent of BT in the UK.

Businesses

Self Employment or owning your own business is commonplace in WA. There are a few things to consider before buying a business in Australia.

Firstly, it goes without saying that you should do your “homework”. Talk to reputable business brokers and check out all the facts. People coming here on a business visa where certain criteria have to be met, are the ones largely at risk. Sellers “in the know” will often offer their business for sale at an inflated price, simply because it “meets the business migrant criteria”.

Be very cautious and take advice wherever necessary. The **Small Business Development Corporation** in Perth is an excellent contact.

Franchises are very popular in WA. Often, high prices are charged for very little service. Conversely, some franchises offer excellent value for money and back-up service.

Like any business, if you like the look of a franchise, do your homework, as relevant information is easy to obtain.

BYO

The letters BYO are often seen in restaurant advertisements or on restaurant windows. It means **Bring Your Own**, and refers to alcohol. Some restaurants will charge corkage, no matter whether you take wine, beer or spirits, but are happy to provide you with glasses etc. They will even put your beer in the fridge for you!

C

Cable TV

The Australian Cable TV Company is called Foxtel (the equivalent of Sky in the UK). Some areas are serviced by cable, others by satellite. Satellite is slightly more expensive than cable, but on average, you should expect to pay around \$50 per month for the basic package. Free channels include all News Channels, a few Sports Channels, UK TV, Lifetime, National Geographic, Discovery Channel and many more. Movies are usually pay-per-view.

It can be a little confusing at times. In fact, the time each program is broadcast is dependent on whether cable or satellite services your area, Satellite programs are advertised in EST (Eastern Standard Time) which is +2 hours in winter and +3 hours in summer.



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Cars (New)

New cars are cheaper (in general) than they are in the UK. For example, most manufacturers have an entry-level model for under AU\$20,000 (e.g. Ford Focus, Mitsubishi Lancer, Hyundai Accent or i30 etc.).

Mostly, cars don't have sunroofs, but air-con is standard on all new cars.

There are a wide range of manufacturers here in Perth – including recently the addition of a few European manufacturers like Citroen, Renault and Fiat. Other popular makes are Ford, Holden (Vauxhall in the UK), VW, Audi, Mitsubishi, Toyota, Hyundai, Nissan, Subaru, Suzuki etc.

On all new cars purchased, beware of additional costs such as stamp duty, dealer delivery, registration etc. that apply prior to signing any contracts. And like all vehicle dealers, expect to be passed from one department to another following the purchase, selling everything from window tinting to tow bars – these can be bought cheaper elsewhere.

Cars (Used)

Want the £500 “bunky”? Forget it! Because of Perth's climate (no snow, so no salted roads), cars do not rust like they do in the UK. Second-hand cars are far more expensive than they are in the UK. Example – that Nissan Pulsar (Almera) that cost you \$19,990 brand new, will fetch \$18,500 on the dealer's forecourt 12 months later!

That is not to say that bargains cannot be found! There are hundreds of second hand car yards all over Perth, so there is plenty of choice. Remember when looking that Australia uses kph not mph, so if you see a car with 100,000kms on the clock, its only 60,000 miles!

Car Purchasing

Whether you intend buying new or used, if you buy through a dealer, a contract is written up by the salesperson. This contract is essentially your OFFER to buy the vehicle. Once the dealer principal has signed this offer (to state that your offer has been ACCEPTED), then that is a legally binding contract.

The contract offers a degree of security for both parties insofar as you, the purchaser, cannot simply “walk away” because you have changed your mind, but equally, the car dealer could not sell that car to the next person to walk into the showroom and offer more money for that car.

Once both parties have signed the contract, the seller is obliged to sell and the purchaser is obliged to buy. Failure to uphold your end of the contract can land you in court.

If you buy a car privately (ie not from a dealer), then it is simply a matter of agreeing a price with the seller and paying them.

Stamp Duty is payable and is calculated on the price of the vehicle. Once you have signed the transfer papers, they will be sent off to the licensing department and you will receive an invoice for approximately 3.5% of the cost of the purchase. Don't forget to budget for this !

Celebrations

Despite it being “odd” that the temperature on Christmas Day is around 40 degrees and the day is often spent on the beach, most celebrations that you are used to in the UK are still held in Perth. Halloween and Easter are celebrated the same as in the UK, but they don't “celebrate” November 5th (bonfire night).



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Father's Day is in September and Mother's Day is in May, so buy your cards here to send back to the UK!

CentreLink

This is where you go for any Social Security issues such as Unemployment Benefits, Child-Care Benefits, Disability Benefits etc. They also have job advertisements. Offices are located in major towns and suburbs throughout Perth

Offices tend to get busy during peak hours, so best to go first thing in the morning if possible. If you qualify for help towards your childcare fees (family allowance), you also need to apply here.

For more information, check out the website at www.centrelink.gov.au or telephone 13 10 21 from WA.

Child Care

There are five types of childcare in Western Australia, all varying in hours, prices, what they offer and monitoring bodies. Which option(s) suit you and your family will depend on hours required, availability and personal choice. The five choices of childcare in Western Australia are childcare centres, family day care, nanny, babysitter or au pair.

What is a Childcare Centre?

These are premises designed specifically to care for a number of children at any one time. They are a business with their own separate identity. Some are government-funded, others are privately operated, although they operate in exactly the same way.

What is Family Day Care?

This is a carer caring for children in her own home, subject to regulations.

What is a Nanny?

This is a carer caring for your children at your house on a part-time or full-time basis. They can be live-in or not.

What is a Babysitter?

This is a carer caring for your children at your house on an occasional or regular basis. Sometimes a babysitter will care for your children at their own house.

What is an Au Pair?

This is a carer living at your home, caring for your children and doing some chores in exchange for board.

Hours

Centres are usually open from 7am to 6pm, 5 days a week. Other facilities are dependent on the individual carer.

Ages of children

Three weeks to 12 years for childcare and family day care. All ages for babysitters, nannies and au pair carers.

Carers

Centres have qualified and non-qualified carers. The other facilities do not require any formal qualifications, although some do.

Number of children

The number of children varies from centre to centre to centre. However, the carer/child ratio remains the same. Family day care has a maximum of eight children, with four being over four years. Babysitting and nannies are not regulated with numbers.



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Availability

Sometimes placements are available immediately. However, many centres and family day carers have waiting lists. It may be advisable to contact a few carers to check availability and perhaps go on a waiting list before arriving in Australia.

Services offered

Childcare centres and family day carers have a daily routine and program for the children in care. They can usually provide before and after-school pick-ups and school programs. Nannies, babysitters and au pair carers usually abide by the family routines.

Monitoring

All child care and family day care centres are licenced by the West Australian Childcare Licensing Board. It has strict criteria regarding the environment and the safety of all equipment and it stipulates the number of beds and the type and number of toys, and that checking policies etc are in place.

Spot-checks by the board and accreditation procedures ensure that the standard of care and hygiene practices are consistently maintained at a high level.

Babysitters, nannies and au pair carers do not have any formal monitoring body. However, agencies can monitor their carers to some degree.

Fees

Full fees vary between centres. Most are between \$40 and \$50 per day for centres, \$30-\$40 for family day care, and \$8-\$15 per hour for nannies and babysitters.

Subsidy

You may be eligible for subsidy on these fees. To qualify, you must be residing in Australia. Thus a working visa, but not a tourist visa, would qualify, you for subsidy.

The amount of subsidy varies according to income. However, it can be quite substantial. Childcare and family day carers offer much more subsidy than the other options which can offer just 16%. Subsidy is claimed by applying to Centrelink.

Finding a carer

Most centres are listed in the Telstra yellow pages, or the local shires know of the centres in their district. For family day carers the National Family Day Care Council can be of assistance. Babysitters, nannies and au pair carers can be found through agencies or through local advertising.

Overall view

Family day care and childcare centres maintain a high level of care. If care is regular and the hours suit, the subsidy offered by the government makes this a cost-effective option.

For casual, or out-of-hours care, babysitters, nannies and au pair carers are the best option. Agencies are a good option as they have conducted a background check of the carers and can offer a carer to suit your individual needs. If you use advertising to find a carer, you must ensure that they come with a police clearance, references, and preferably a first-aid certificate. Most importantly, find a carer you can trust and feel comfortable leaving your children with.

This information was supplied by Suzie Trappitt. Her expertise covers all the above areas first-hand as follows:

- Is a parent of three children ranging from 4 to 13 years, as well as a mum to one four-month-old foster child;
- Qualified childcare worker, working in various centres over the last decade;
- Family day care provider, caring for children in her own home for two years;



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- Babysitter — regularly babysits for many clients on weekends and overnight;
 - Babysitting agency director; established a quality service operating in the Perth metro area, offering personal service; and
 - Has a student living with her family as an au pair, exchanging board for babysitting and some light chores.
- If you have any queries/concerns, or need to voice some opinions, please email Suzie at childcare_assist@msn.com or visit her agency website at www.cherishedcherubs.com.au

Chocolate

All your favourites are available — Mars bars, Cadbury's, Galaxy etc. but it doesn't seem to taste the same, and is more expensive £ for \$. You soon get used to it though, and for those who long for the taste of "proper" UK chocolate, there are a number of UK Food Stores around which import it, but you'll pay extra for it! Sweets are called "lollies"

Christmas

As previously mentioned, it takes a bit of getting used to. Walking round air-conditioned shopping malls listening to "Jingle Bells" when it's 40 degrees outside is a strange feeling. Also having BBQs on the beach on Christmas morning and swimming in the beautifully warm ocean feels a bit odd too! To give Poms the best of both worlds, Christmas is now celebrated twice a year – one in December (summer) and one in July (winter).

Apart from the weather, Christmas is celebrated just as it is in the UK. If you intend to send parcels back to the UK for Christmas, check with your local post office for the latest postage dates.

Cigarettes

Cigarettes and tobacco will not be sold to anyone under the age of 18. Pack sizes are 20, 25, 30 and 50. You will not find the same brands as the UK sold in Australia – common brands are Peter Jackson, Winfield, Dunhill and Marlboro.

All public areas in Perth are no-smoking (including shops, restaurants, pubs etc.). The beaches were made non-smoking in 2007, and there is talk of banning smoking in alfresco areas outside pubs and restaurants in the near future.

Citizenship

All Australian permanent residents are encouraged to take out citizenship once they have lived in Australia for a period of two years. This two-year period is cumulative – which basically means the total time spent in Perth to make up 2 years (so if you leave Australia for a month during the first 2 years, you would have to spend an additional month in Australia before getting your Citizenship).

Citizenship is granted for all members of your immediate family that migrate to Perth with you. We strongly encourage all migrants to stay for two years and get citizenship. If you don't like it in Perth for whatever reason, and decide to go back to the UK, your children may want to come back in years to come. If you have stayed long enough to get citizenship, your children will be citizens too and, as such, they can walk straight into the country in 20, 30, or 40 years time, without having to go through the whole migration process again.

Not taking out citizenship can be costly in years to come. A good example is the couple who came to Perth in the late 1950s. They stayed till 1979 and during that time they had two children.

In 1979 they returned to the UK where they remained for some 20 years. In 2000 (now in their 70s), they came back to Perth to spend their retirement years. The children were allowed in since they were citizens, but their parents had failed to take out citizenship before they left, and were turned away at Perth Airport.



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In January 2004 there was a newspaper article about people who had migrated from the UK with their parents in the 50s and 60s (some as young as 18 months), and who, in later life, had spent time in an Australian prison. The article discussed the possibility of the Government revoking their permanent residency visas and returning them to the UK, despite the fact that they had lived virtually the whole of their lives in Australia and had no knowledge of the UK. Had these people taken out Citizenship, this sort of thing could not happen to them.

Climate

Perth has arguably the best climate in Australia, enjoying the second highest number of sunny days of any place in the world (second only to Florida). It is also the third windiest city in the world (Chicago is number one, and Auckland number two).

In the summer, a cooling sea breeze (known as the Fremantle Doctor) blows for a short while during the mid to late afternoon – called the doctor because of its cooling effect during those hot summer days.

The winters are generally mild, but when it rains – it *rains!* Heavy showers are common in winter and autumn and it is not uncommon for 20mm of rain to fall in less than half an hour. Summers are generally hot, with the hottest months being January and February (where temperatures can soar above 40 celsius. Perth is not generally a humid place, apart from a few days at the peak of summer.

In winter, Perth's metropolitan area (especially the coastal suburbs) never encounter frost, ice or snow. However, it can still get quite cold on a winter's night, with the temperature getting down to as low as 1 degree centigrade. Venture a couple of hundred kilometres inland, and minus 3 degrees C is not uncommon in winter.

Clothes

Due to the warm climate, you will not need most of the clothes you wear during winter in the UK. Although it can be quite nippy at times during winter, days are generally fine and around 18 degrees centigrade.

Flip Flops are called “thongs” and a vest or sleeveless T-shirt is known as a “singlet”.

Trousers are called “pants”, and trainers are “runners”.

Clothes generally reflect the laid-back, casual, beach lifestyle of Perth – don't be surprised when you see people walking around shopping malls bare-footed!

Many from the UK argue that the quality of clothes in Australia is not the same as the UK. Saying that there are quite a few designer clothes shops in and around Perth (Gucci, Diesel, FCUK etc.)

Council Tax

Yep, we have it here too! Known as shire rates! The average rate in Perth is around \$1,000 per household per year.

Credit Unions

Essentially, a Credit Union is owned by its members who are shareholders. They tend to be union-based. They gather funds from members and LEND monies out at favourable rates only to members — NOT TO BUSINESSES. They are subject to Corporation Law enforced by ASIC, the Australian Securities & Investment Commission. Banks, on the other hand, are looked after by APRA. (the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority). They are institutions licensed by the Federal Government, on behalf of their shareholders.



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Profit is the name of their game. They lend depositors money at favourable rates to domestic clients (mortgages etc) and to businesses.

Crime

Perth is not immune to crime. Some areas have higher rates of crime than others, but the comparatively small population makes it appear as though it has less crime than other countries or parts of Australia. It has many of the social problems found in all other major countries throughout the world (drugs, violence, murder, rape, theft etc.) especially among young people – who can seem aggressive at times, especially on the roads.

Customs and Excise

These guys have more power than the police! Not only do they strictly monitor what comes into the country, but also different states have different laws. For example, drive across the Nullarbor Plain from South Australia to Western Australia, and when you cross the border, any fruit you have in your possession will be confiscated (due to fruitfly). Wooden ornaments are generally not allowed (unless they have been treated), so be extra careful if you intend shipping some over. Sniffer dogs will soon show up any food items you may carry, so beware — fines are big!

D

Delicatessen (Deli)

The equivalent to a UK “corner shop”, selling smallgoods, bread, cigarettes, newspapers etc, but not beer, wine or spirits. These are common in newly established suburbs.

Demerit Points

Same as “penalty points” in the UK. Demerit points are accrued on your driving licence for such things as:

- Speeding — between 1 and 3 points depending on excess speed
- Not wearing a seat belt — 3 points
- Not obeying road signs — up to 3 points
- Passing a red traffic light — 1 point

Once 12 demerit points have been accumulated, the driver will lose his/her licence for a period of up to three months. Longer disqualifications can occur depending on the severity of the offence.

Dentists/Doctors

If you can get an appointment, you may visit any doctor or dentist. Be prepared to pay, though! All doctors and dentists charge for their services. Some of this can be claimed back from Medicare. The balance (gap), is either a cost to yourself or your private health insurance company.

Some doctors / dentists “bulk bill” Medicare periodically, which can save you the hassle of paying them direct and then claiming the fee back. ALWAYS take your Medicare card with you. School children get free dental treatment.

Dogs

Dogs have to be licenced and tagged, with the date of expiry visible. The tags are usually made of plastic and colour-coded. Prices vary depending on your dog being sterilised. For a sterilised dog, the cost is \$18 for three years; it's more than triple the cost if not sterilised.



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There are animal exercise beaches where your dog is allowed to be off a lead — a great social event for both dogs and owners. Warning — they can get very busy at the weekends and on Bank Holidays. There are dog washes at most beaches on the weekends, and they charge around \$12 for a shampoo and rinse. You can also get mobile dog washers who come to your house for around the same price.

Doonas

Doona is the word used to describe a continental quilt.

Drinking and Driving

The best and most sensible advice is “Don’t do it!”

However, the “general” rule is two standard drinks in the first hour, then one standard drink per hour afterwards. This should mean you won’t be “over the limit”.

The “limit” is a breath-test reading of 0.05. This is roughly the equivalent of two pints of mid-strength beer (about 3.5% alcohol) for an average sized male, and half that for an average sized female.

A reading of 0.08 means an instant driving ban. In some Eastern States (New South Wales, for instance) the “limit” is a reading of 0.02 which means that even a dose of cough medicine can put you “over the limit”.

Driving

Australia drives on the left side of the road (same as the UK), but there are many differences in driving laws and habits.

Firstly, speed is measured in kilometres per hour (kph) rather than miles per hour (mph).

It is legal to pass another vehicle on the inside lane of a dual carriageway or freeway (i.e. undertake). Speed limits are a lot slower than in the UK, and as such it is not uncommon for a car on your inside or outside to be travelling minutely faster than you, and therefore in your “blind spot” for several seconds/minutes. Wing mirrors should be used at all times (rather than just your rear-view mirror).

The sequence of traffic lights is slightly different too. A red “stop” light will change straight to green (rather than red, red & amber, green), but a green light will change to amber before changing to red. In this event, an amber light will show for several seconds before changing to red, thus giving a driver time to pass through the junction. Several intersections have “red-light cameras”. This means that if your timing is wrong and you pass through the junction as the amber light turns red, the camera will flash and a summons will follow through the post.

The state speed limit is 110kph (70mph) on country roads. The freeway (motorway) limit is 100kph (60mph) and 90kph on some highways. Dual carriageways are restricted to 60, 70 or 80 kph, depending on whether they pass through built-up areas.

When driving on suburban roads (through housing estates, for example) you are restricted to 50kph and in school zones the speed limit is 40kph from 7.30am to 9am and 2.30pm to 4pm. School zones are favourites for police to set up speed traps!



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Driving Licence

Your UK driving licence is valid in Perth. However, you are expected to obtain a WA driving licence within three months of arrival (unless you are on a 12-month working holiday visa, in which case your UK licence is valid for the duration). This can be obtained from any licensing centre and carries a charge. You have a choice of licence period of either one or five years. After that it has to be renewed.

All WA driving licences carry a photograph of the owner and your licence is used as ID. If your UK licence allows you to drive up to three tons, you will automatically be granted a HGV licence for vehicles up to eight tonnes. The type of licence issued depends on the type of UK licence you already have. In other words, if you have a motor cycle licence as well as a car licence, you will be granted the same in Perth (subject to the theory test). If you don't drive and intend to take your test in WA, once you have passed, you have to drive on "P" plates for two years.

Driving Test

Further information about driving tests can be obtained from <http://www.dpi.wa.gov.au/licensing/1210.asp>

DVDs

If you intend bringing your DVD player, make sure it is a multi-regional model. If not, your UK discs will play OK, but any you buy in Perth may not (UK DVD's are region 2 whilst Australia are region 4).

If you choose to buy one in Perth, again make sure you buy a multiregional model, otherwise your UK discs won't play!

E

Education

The school year starts in February and ends in December. The year consists of two semesters, with two terms in each one, making a total of four terms for the year. There is a two-week break between each term and a long break at Christmas (summer).

Be sure to check the catchment area of the schools you feel are appropriate for your children as these areas are strictly enforced for popular schools and house locations are vital to eligibility. State schools have to offer any child living in their catchment area a place, regardless of their current capacity.

Private schools are not as strict on catchment areas but you will be responsible for transportation to and from school. However, they will inform you if there are no available places for that term or semester.

Both state and private schools charge fees. State primary schools charge a small fee to contribute to costs. You will also have to buy your child's stationery equipment each year. Senior schools charge for individual modules, with a flat rate for the core subjects (Maths, English and Science) and higher costs for the more specialist, resource-based modules such as IT, Arts and Sports.

These costs increase the older the student gets and the fees are payable in advance of the school year.

TAFE students generally have to pay fees for courses but state help may be on hand to help cover basic living costs. University fees are paid through student loans with various grants available for different fields of study. Private



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schools do not charge as much as in Europe and the UK but do tend to follow religious- based curricula, depending on their faith.

All schools implement a uniform dress code. However, this varies between state- run and private schools. State schools are not as strict as those in the UK, opting for a more casual uniform with no ties or blazers, whereas private schools enforce a more traditional uniform code requiring these items to be worn at all times. Part of the school uniform includes sun-screen and sun hats in summer. Children can be sent home if the temperature reaches 38 degrees.

Electrical Items

Televisions, DVDs and Video-Cassette Recorders are covered in their own section in this guide, but anything else electrical you choose to bring with you should work fine.

The electricity in Perth is the same as in the UK (240v AC), so a simple matter of changing the mains plug is generally all that is required. However, spare parts for some makes and models sold in the UK may not be available in Perth.

Fridges tend to be larger than their UK counterparts and run much colder. General household electrical items, such as microwave ovens, hair-dryers, shavers, computers and power tools (240v), should all work fine. (UPS's are recommended for computers as power can be irregular in flow and can cause damage to fragile computer components).

Emergency

The emergency number for Emergency Services (Fire, Police or Ambulance etc) in WA is 000.

F

Finance

Some people, when they arrive in Perth, will need to take out a mortgage when they buy a house. The market is full of different types of mortgages and finance options. The list below outlines some of the more common types of finance packages, but as always, take advice from a professional.

1. P&I loan (Principal & Interest). This is the same as a basic mortgage in the UK. You pay off the debt over 25 or 30 years. Each monthly payment consists of a portion of interest as well as a portion of the capital.

2. Interest only. You may remember the “Endowment Mortgage” that was popular in the 1980s and 1990s in the UK. Essentially, you paid the bank/building society monthly interest and a fixed amount into an insurance policy. The idea was that the policy would “mature” in 25 (or 30) years time and there would be enough there to pay back the original loan.

An “Interest Only” mortgage is just the same, except that there is no insurance policy, the idea being that you buy a property for, say, \$300,000 and pay interest only for 25 years. At the end of that period, you still owe the bank \$300,000. However, your house will be worth much more than that. So you can sell it, pay back the loan and buy a cheaper house with the “profit”. Please note that this type of loan is not generally available for your principal place of residence. It is designed more for loans on “investment properties”.

3. Line of Credit/Offset mortgage account.



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Fires

Bush-fires are very common in WA, mainly due to the heat and wind that fuel and spread the fires. Many of the fires are lit by arsonists or careless individuals. If you wish to burn rubbish in your garden between mid-November and late March, a permit is required from your local council.

First Homebuyers Grant

At the time of writing, the Federal Government is providing a grant of AUD\$7000 to first homebuyers. This applies to only Permanent Residents or Australian Citizens and is not available to those on a “temporary” visa (eg Business Class etc).

Food

The food in Perth is basically the same as what you can buy in UK supermarkets. There are “specialist shops” that import some “gourmet” British items (such as Walkers Crisps), but most things are readily available.

For those who enjoy eating out, there’s something for everyone in Perth, from delicious fresh seafood, to Thai or Japanese food. From the famous English grill to the laid-back Aussie barbie.

Football/Soccer

Please see “Sport”.

Furniture

If you have the room, bring all of your furniture with you from the UK. Whilst you can easily purchase all types of furniture in WA, prices and quality can differ greatly from the UK as much of the furniture is made cheaply in places like Asia, Indonesia and China. Nonetheless, you will find a good range of furniture shops in Perth. Popular choices are IKEA and Freedom Furniture.

G

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

This is the equivalent of VAT in the UK, and is currently at 10%. All prices for goods and services are deemed to include GST, unless otherwise stated. GST is not payable on such things as rent payments for domestic properties or house purchases.

Guns

As you would expect, you need a licence to own any type of gun. They are perhaps more common in WA than they are in the UK as many people go off “bush” for a weekend’s shooting. The normal hunting game is wildlife such as kangaroos, donkey, camel, goat, rabbits etc.

The WA police are an armed force, so don’t be surprised to see security guards carrying guns — even the guards patrolling shopping malls!



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H

Highway Code

Basically, it's the same as in the UK. The first thing you might find "odd" is the fact that you can overtake in any lane. Highway Code manuals are available from newsagents and all licensing centres around Perth.

You have to pass your WA driving test within three months of arrival if you intend to live here. The test is only theory, comprising 30 multiple-choice questions and you have to get no more than six wrong.

Hire Cars

Car hire in Perth is relatively inexpensive. A basic saloon car (Ford Focus size) will generally cost less than \$40 per day. However, there are government taxes that will put another \$2 per day or so on the price. Most hire companies offer limited mileage within the price, and this can be as little as 50km per day.

Hospitals/Health Care

West Australians enjoy a high standard of health care. In Perth, there are top research & clinical teams who are world-renowned for their innovations and excellence in health care delivery.

• Government Health Care

Australians are entitled to free or subsidized healthcare under a system called Medicare. This system covers free treatment as a public patient in a public hospital, plus free or subsidised treatment by practitioners such as doctors and some specialists, participating optometrists and dentists (specified services only).

Visitors from countries with reciprocal health care agreements are entitled to limited access to Medicare. These countries are currently: United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Italy and Malta.

For more information on eligibility for Medicare, contact the Health Insurance Commission on 13 20 11. The Australian Government's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) ensures that all Australian residents have access to necessary medicines at an affordable price. There are many medicines available on prescription that are subsidised under PBS. Freecall information line 1800 020 613.

• Private Health Fund

A private health fund allows you a choice of doctor in a public or private hospital and gives rebates on particular health services such as physiotherapy, podiatry & optometry. These services differ with various policies and funds.

All persons who come to Australia on a temporary resident's visa must take out private health insurance as they are not eligible for access to Medicare.

Persons who pay private health fund premiums are eligible for a 30% government rebate. This is only for those people who are eligible for Medicare (permanent residents etc) and some funds are excluded.

• Hospitals

There are three major public hospitals in Perth, plus a major women's & a children's campus. All have emergency departments and many other differing speciality services. There are many other satellite public hospitals throughout the suburbs and a choice of many private hospitals.



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In regional centres, there is a choice between public and private healthcare and GPs, depending on the size of the town.

• **Doctors**

You can visit a GP of your choice in WA. There are many practices to choose from and you are not limited by suburb. There are various methods of payment, but generally you would pay the doctor's consultation fee on the day and then claim a partial rebate from Medicare.

Doctors write prescriptions and they are the primary point for referral to specialists and to other procedures, such as x-rays etc.

• *Useful websites*

Health Insurance Commission www.hic.gov.au

Western Australian Department of Health www.health.gov.au

Houses

Property types and styles vary greatly in Perth. You never see two houses the same, side by side. Never be put off looking at a house just because you don't like the look of it from the outside.

The "common" size property consists of four bedrooms, two bathrooms (including ensuite), formal lounge, dining room, family room, meals room, kitchen, laundry, and possibly games room. Of course there are three bedroom/one bathroom properties but the former is more commonplace.

Very common now also – especially along the coast – are 2, 3 or even 4 storey houses, which would be classed as mansions in the UK.

House Purchases

It's a lot easier (and a lot less hassle) to purchase a property in WA than it is in the UK.

Settlement Agents are used rather than solicitors, and in the case of a cash purchase, it is possible to buy a house in 10 days (see "Offer & Acceptance").

Important Documents

Ensure that you bring with you the original copies of all your essential documents as you may need these in the first few days.

These include:

- Birth certificates
- University and any other educational institution's awards
- Trade qualifications
- An up-to-date health history from your GP
- Work references
- Children's school reports
- Proof of no claims bonus for car insurance
- Dental x-rays



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Importing your Car

This can often be an expensive exercise. Not only are there shipping costs to contend with, but government stamp duty has to be paid when the vehicle arrives in Perth.

Stamp duty is based on the value of the car. The authorities decide the value; what YOU consider it to be worth, or how much you paid for it, is immaterial. The vehicle then has to “go over the pits”, for a thorough inspection before it can be licensed or registered in WA.

This inspection can often be more stringent than an MOT test in the UK. Next, the vehicle has to be “Australian complied”, which means (amongst other things), that the speedo has to be changed from MPH to KPH.

Importing Your Pet

(See Quarantine)

Insects

The best recommendation is to purchase a book on WA insects and educate yourself. The biggest fear is the “unknown”. There are pest control companies that come to your house and spray insecticide. This usually does the job and keeps them on the outside of your house.

As in most hot countries WA gets mosquitoes, especially at dusk, so ensure that you spray yourself with repellent, especially through the summer months, otherwise like most Poms you will end up with some very itchy swollen limbs.

There are also some poisonous spiders that you should look out for – namely the redback and white tip spiders. It is highly recommended that you familiarise yourself with how these spiders look, and what to do should you get bitten by one – just in case!

Investments

In Perth, many people have investment properties, which they rent out over a number of years. The idea is that the property grows in value over time and becomes their “pension” when they retire.

Property investment in WA is big business and there are many businesses that specialise in helping people to buy investment properties. Always take advice from experts before being tempted to invest in property.

Insurances

This is essentially the same as in the UK. Car insurance is comparatively cheaper when directly compared to UK prices. All other types of insurance are available — house, contents, life etc. Make sure you get several quotes as prices can differ greatly.

J

Jobs

The West Australian newspaper has a huge employment section every Wednesday, which is ideal for job-seekers. Alternatively, www.seek.com.au is extremely popular.



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L

Land

Despite the amount of ever-growing residential property construction in Perth, there always appears to be an abundance of land. It is often appealing to new migrants to buy a block of land and build a house on it. This exercise is relatively easy, since once you have chosen your block, you simply visit various builders' display homes and choose one you like.

The builder will be able to make any changes and alterations you decide on before giving you the cost to build the home of your choice. In many cases it may be cheaper to buy a block and build your dream house, than to go out and purchase a ready-made one. Waiting times for the construction of a new house can vary between 6 months and 18 months.

Lifestyle

This is why the majority of people migrate to Perth! It enjoys more sunny days than anywhere in Australia, and has the second largest number of sunny days of anywhere in the world (second only to Florida, which also gets high humidity — something that Perth rarely gets).

They reckon that WA stands for "wait awhile", which can be very true since many residents have such a laid-back lifestyle. Most homes are within 20 minutes of the river and the ocean, thus giving everyone access to the water. There are more boats per head of population than anywhere else in the world. Perth residents are quite smug about the lifestyle they live!

Liquor Stores

There are two types in Perth:

1. Drive-Thru
2. Liquor stores (shop)

If you know what you want to buy (rather than browse around), a drive-thru liquor store can save you heaps of time. You simply drive in, place your order (which is then passed to you through the car window), and off you go! Drive-thru liquor stores are usually attached to pubs and are generally open until 10pm (9pm on Sundays). In contrast, liquor stores (shops) are not open on Sundays. They are often slightly cheaper but tend to close much earlier than drive-throughs.

Unlike in the UK, liquor is not sold in supermarkets or "corner shops" (delis).

Loans/Finance

There are many mortgage/finance brokers in Perth. All maintain they can offer you the "best deal". It is worth remembering, though, that finance brokers are paid by the banks for your business. Check with your bank first and see what interest rates they are offering before contacting a broker. Vehicle finance can be expensive (15% per annum), as can interest on store purchases. Also, beware "interest-free credit". It's fine providing you make the regular payments, but slip up and you can be hit for interest as high as 27%.



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M

Medicals

Applicants for all types of Australian visas need to meet the necessary health requirements before a visa is granted. Everyone applying for a permanent resident's visa will be required to undergo a full medical examination, including, chest x-ray and urine specimen, as well as tests for HIV/AIDS.

When you are called for your medical, you will be sent a list of "panel doctors" in your area and you choose the closest one to you. Some applicants for temporary stay visas may need to undergo a medical examination or provide a "fitness to travel" letter from their GP.

All children/dependents included in the application aged 11+ must undertake full medicals and an x-ray examination. All persons included in the application, as well as all dependents (even if they are not included in the application) must undertake a medical examination and must "pass". If one fails, all fail and the visa will be refused. If the visa is refused on medical grounds, all the application costs are lost. If you have a genuine medical concern it may be an idea to lodge a visitor's visa application (low cost) and do a full permanent residence medical as part of that application, then request for that medical to be assessed (for permanent residence) by the Department of Immigration, together with the visitor's visa application. This is the most cost-effective way of determining whether you meet the medical criteria or not.

Medicare

Medicare is a scheme whereby the Australian Government provides help with medical expenses.

Health care services and programs provided by Medicare include:

- Free treatment as a public (Medicare) patient in a public hospital
- Free emergency treatment
- Subsidised treatment by GPs, specialists, dentists (for certain services only) and participating optometrists
- Subsidised medicines in certain cases

People who reside in Australia, excluding Norfolk Island, are eligible if they meet any of the following four criteria:

- They hold Australian citizenship
- They have been issued with a permanent visa
- They hold New Zealand citizenship, or
- They have applied for a permanent visa; restrictions apply to persons who have applied for a parent visa (other requirements apply).

Application forms can be requested by calling 13 20 11 (in Australia) or in person at a Medicare office.

When enrolling, applicants will need to show documentary proof they are eligible (eg a birth certificate or passport).

Mobile Phones

One of the last things you think of when you are in the middle of emigrating is a mobile phone, but a little bit of planning can save you a lot of money.

Firstly, remember to give your current UK service provider notice (at least a month) but give them a date around seven days after you arrive. This not only gives you an emergency contact number, but you can also text (SMS) people in the UK, normally at your standard rate.

Remember, though, if people call you on that number you will be charged for the international portion of the call. Do not forget to request international roaming before you leave.

When you get here, you have a couple of things to consider:



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- **Coverage** - none of the networks have anywhere near the level of coverage you get in the UK, bearing in mind that they normally quote population coverage and not geographic coverage. Two percent of the land is populated and the networks cover at least 92% of that.

This sounds terrible, but unless you are going into country areas or the outback, you will rarely notice (and even then you can get satellite and CDMA phones). It is best to hire these for a specific trip rather than use them all the time due to the exorbitant cost of actually using them!

- **Cost** - just as in the UK, ALL the network providers use “highline” rates to get you onto a plan. Remember, they all make money and nothing is ever FREE, despite what the adverts might suggest!

The plans and charging schemes are constantly becoming more competitive. None of the networks subsidise phones to anything like the level they used to, so if you do not need the latest, greatest gadget phone, then bring yours from the UK.

It may need to be unlocked once you get here, but that will be significantly cheaper than buying a new phone. PAYG (pay as you go) from all the networks will be a very expensive way to acquire a new mobile in terms of the operating costs, so avoid them if you can.

You will need a “credit score” of 100 points to get onto the networks. Passport with visa, credit card, Australian driving licence, utility bill or rental agreement and a bank account will be the minimum required.

Money

Notes are in denominations of \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 and coins in 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, \$1, and \$2. You will notice that there are no 2c and 1c coins, which means that all shops will round up/down to the nearest 5c.

If you purchase something at, say, 99c, you will pay \$1. On the other hand, if you purchase something at, say, 92c, you will hand over only 90c.

Mortgages

(See “Finance”)

Moving

Once your furniture arrives and is delivered to your chosen property, it is possible you will be moving again in 6-12 months (depending if you decide to rent initially). Local movers charge by the hour, so if and when you move again, try to get as much as you can boxed and packed yourself. The easier you make it for the removalists, the less time it will take them and the less you will pay.

N

Newspapers

The West Australian is the only local daily newspaper in Perth. The Australian is a countrywide newspaper, but not as popular as The West. Employment, cars and real estate all have their own separate pull-out sections. There is a popular UK paper called the International Express which comes out every Wednesday, so it's easy to keep up-to-date with what's happening back in the UK.

For soccer fans, a weekly publication called British Soccer Weekly is a must read. Free regional newspapers and real estate papers are delivered to every home each week.

O



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Offer and Acceptance

Western Australia has its own special system in regard to purchasing a property. This is known as “Offer and Acceptance”

Essentially, the Offer and Acceptance is a legal document that is usually filled in by your Real Estate Agent and yourself. It comprises your name, address (even your temporary one) and details of the property you wish to purchase, along with the price you are prepared to pay (your OFFER).

On the back of the form there is space for you or your agent to list certain “conditions” you may wish to include in your offer. For example, you may wish to make sure the pool equipment is working correctly, in which case you might write “This offer is subject to all pool equipment being in satisfactory working order”.

The same could apply for a satisfactory building survey (at your own expense), or even subject to you obtaining finance to purchase the property.

The offer is then presented to the vendor (seller of the property) by the agent. Once the seller has signed the form stating that they are prepared to ACCEPT your offer, essentially it’s a “done deal”!

There can be no “changing your mind” and no simply “walking away”. It is a LEGALLY BINDING CONTRACT. You are now obliged to BUY the property for the agreed price, and the seller is obligated to SELL you the property for the agreed price. This means that in the event of another person coming along and offering more for the property than you have, the vendor cannot accept that higher offer, as they are obligated to you — in other words, NO GAZUMPING!

If you need finance (a mortgage) in order to purchase the property, there is a space on the front of the form where you are required to state the amount of finance you require and who your chosen lender is going to be (this can be the name of the bank or mortgage broker).

This is a “condition” of your OFFER and you must stipulate by 4pm on what date finance is to be approved by. (You cannot expect the seller to wait forever for your finance approval to come through). If your circumstances change during the finance approval period (generally 14 days), then a letter is required from your bank or mortgage broker named on the contract, stating that you have been refused finance. Only then will your offer become null and void.

P

Parking

One thing the police are very hot on in Perth is parking. Firstly, when parking on a street, always make sure you park your car facing the direction of flow of traffic. If you are driving along a road and you see a parking space on the opposite side, you cannot just “nip in” — you must turn round first!

You will also see signs, for example 1P – 2P – 4P or ¼P etc.

1P means one-hour parking. 4P means four-hour parking. ¼P means 15 minutes parking etc. Don’t be tempted to park in a Loading Zone either, as a ticket is sure to follow and \$100 fines are not uncommon.

Passports



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When you enter Australia on a resident's visa, providing you have been present in Australia for a (cumulative) total of two years in the previous five years, including 12 months in the past two years, you become eligible to apply for Australian Citizenship.

Citizenship gives you more rights, more say in how the country is run and the option to apply for an Australian passport. Having an Australian passport enables you to enter and leave the country at your leisure; no visas required! You do not have to give up your British passport in exchange for an Australian one — you may keep both valid and enjoy dual nationality.

Pensions (Superannuation)

Superannuation is forced savings for one's old age and was started in 1992.

As an employee, to be eligible to receive superannuation, you must be 18 years of age, working more than 30 hours per week or earning more than \$450 per month.

If you satisfy any the above criteria, your employer, by law, must add 9% on top of a person's gross wage and put it into an employee's nominated super fund. (The employer receives a tax deduction for the contributions).

The employer can only put money into your nominated fund monthly or quarterly. (Failure to do so will result in severe penalties for the employer).

If you are self-employed, you cannot be forced to put money into any super fund, but if you do, then any amount from \$1000 to \$5000 is 100% tax-deductible. The older a person is the more they can contribute to their fund. The maximum you can contribute, if aged 50 or over, is \$119,865pa.

Conditions of release:

- You have reached the age of 65
- You have died
- You have suffered financial hardship, as deemed by the Australian Tax Office.

All contributions from whatever source are subject to federal taxes.

Plugs

Although of a three-pin type, they are considerably different to UK plugs. Firstly they have three thin "blades", and secondly they contain no fuse. The colour-coding of the wires is basically the same (blue/black - neutral, red - live, and green/yellow — earth).

It is illegal in WA to fit a plug to an electrical appliance unless you are a qualified electrician. Therefore, you may need to employ one to change your plugs for you. Plugs cost anything from \$1 to \$3.

Post

Post is delivered every weekday and can come at any time of the day. There are no postal deliveries on Saturdays, but there are postbox collections.

Private Health Care



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Private health cover is recommended to pay “the gap” between what Medicare pay (Medicare is like the NHS) and what you pay. There are different packages and fees to suit you and your family. HBF and Medibank Private are a couple of the main private health providers (see Health Care).

Police Clearance Certificates

When you apply for your visa, you are required to provide a Police Report. This is simply a copy of your criminal conviction report and details any offences you may have committed during your lifetime. For some occupations in WA (for example, cleaning, nursing, working with the public), you may be required to provide a “Police Clearance Certificate”. Conversely, when employing a tradesperson to work in your home, you may see the words “Police Cleared” in their advertisement. This simply means they have a copy of their “police record” to show you if you require them to

Pop into your local police station, pay \$25 (at the time of writing) and they will check their records to see if you have broken the law since arriving in WA. If you haven’t broken the law, been arrested or cautioned, you will be “Police Cleared” and a certificate will be issued

Police

Same as in the UK, but these guys carry guns!

Public Holidays

There are 10 a year — New Year’s Day, Australia Day (January 26), Labour Day (usually first Monday in March), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day (April 25), Foundation Day (usually first Monday in June), Queen’s Birthday (usually last Monday in September or first Monday in October), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Pubs

Perth has plenty, but nothing like those in the UK! Generally, it is a case of one pub in each suburb, rather than one on every street corner. Some are obviously better than others, but most offer live entertainment on weekends and some provide superb family meals.

It’s hard to go on a pub-crawl, unless you are in the city or Fremantle, but most pubs offer a friendly, family atmosphere and children are welcome till around 9pm

Q

Qualifications

There’s a silly old saying in WA that once you have 10 certificates, you get a certificate! This may sound daft, but they are very big on bits of paper

For many trades people, their qualifications are good enough to get them a visa, but not good enough to get them a job! A nurse might be a nurse, but a plumber ain’t a plumber and a sparky ain’t a sparky until they have undergone training to get that all-important Australian Qualification.

Depending on your line of work, it’s always best to find out whether or not your qualifications are good enough for you to find employment, so you know just what to expect when you arrive. Some of the most popular places to check this out are Internet Discussion Boards (like the one on the Poms in Perth website).



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Quarantine

Australia is a rabies-free country. Therefore, the quarantine requirements for the import of dogs and cats from the UK is 30 days. All animals entering Australia require an import permit. Whoever you use to transport your pet will give you information on how to obtain this.

Byford Quarantine Station is the station used by migrants to Perth. It is located some 37 kilometres south of Perth on Nettleton Rd, Byford, WA 6122.

Postal address: PO Box 61, Byford, WA 6122.

Contact details: Phone 00 618 9525 1763. E-mail byfordq@aqis.gov.au

Office hours

The administration office is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 4.30pm. This office is closed on public holidays.

Animal arrivals

Please note that animals cannot be collected from the airport between midnight and 6am daily.

Animal accommodation

Dogs: Kennels are constructed of brick and mesh with galvanised mesh enclosures. Each kennel is 6m long by 2.3m wide with enclosed sleeping quarters, which are 2m by 2.3m. Bedding consists of jute sacking on raised boards. A sprinkler system provides evaporative cooling during the summer months.

Cats: Each pen is 1.2m wide by 1.8m long and 2.3m high. They are a modern design, vertically oriented with an individual "lookout" on the roof of the cattery. All sleeping boxes can be heated, if required.

Visiting hours

Monday-Friday between 2pm and 4pm.

Animal departures

The quarantine station releases animals from quarantine every day of the year. On weekdays you may pick up your animal between 9.30am and 12 noon, and 1pm and 4pm. On weekends and public holidays animals are released between 8am and 12 midnight.

An AQIS quarantine veterinary officer performs a thorough clinical examination of your animal within three days of arriving at the station. Quarantine veterinary officers only investigate exotic disease symptoms. A private veterinarian must provide any other veterinary attention, should it be required.

If your pet should become unwell, every effort will be made to contact you. If this is not possible, a vet will be called.

R

Real Estate Agents



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Real Estate Agents in WA have access to information on all the properties that are “listed” on the market at any given time. Therefore, it would benefit you, as a new migrant, to find a reputable agent to help you find a suitable house for you and your family, as opposed to dealing with lots of agents, for lots of different properties. A good agent will help you find the right property, listen to your requirements and deal with other agents (conjunctions) on your behalf. The vendor (seller) pays the agent a commission, and the agent you choose to work with will share the eventual commission.

Reticulation

(See “Bore”)

Retiring

Western Australia must be one of the best places in the world for Poms to retire. Perth is very British in atmosphere, which will make Brits feel very much at home from the start. The surrounding areas offer a huge range of outdoor activities, such as golf, fishing, sailing, walking etc. Shops are plentiful and well-stocked, and there is a great variety of housing available along the coastal strip, at prices far below the UK average. (See www.realestate.com.au for a full, up-to-date list of every house available for sale in Australia!)

In later years, there are also retirement villages which offer a secure environment with shared facilities, usually including swimming pool, restaurant, bowling club, and in some cases on-site nursing facilities. The lifestyle is readily available, but it is essential to do the homework in the UK first, before making any financial commitment. At present, the only form of retirement visa available is sub-class 410, which allows temporary residence for four years. This is then renewable in Australia for further periods of two years. As a temporary resident, you are not entitled to any form of state assistance whatsoever. So it is most important to have the financial security in order to be completely self-sufficient — in financial terms, once you’re here, you’re on your own. You can work for up to 20 hours a week, but once you get here you probably won’t want to!

There are also certain restrictions on temporary residents. For example, there is the requirement for Foreign Investment Review Board approval before buying a house, and the need to have a year left on the visa at the time. It is also impossible to own a second home in Australia for investment purposes.

The criteria for getting a visa change periodically, but at the time of writing you need \$650,000 (something over £320,000) in cash, or \$200,000 plus an income of \$45,000 per annum — slightly less if you have children permanently resident in Australia.

You also require a satisfactory police check, and must pass a medical. Finally, you must have comprehensive medical insurance arranged in Australia with an Australian provider. (Beware — most of the policies on offer are simply top-ups to take account of shortfalls in Medicare cover. You must make it clear when inquiring that you need full cover).

Although the 410 visa is the simplest of all the residential visas, it is still well worthwhile to employ a migration agent to assist and advise. Once the all-important visa is issued, the next step is to arrange accommodation ready for your arrival — which is, of course, where Poms in Perth come in!

S



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Schools

(See Education)

Seasons

Summer (December, January, February)

Autumn (March, April, May)

Winter (June, July, August)

Spring (September, October, November)

Social Security

(See Centrelink)

Speeding/Speed Limits

In WA, the state speed limit is 110km per hour (kph), but this generally only applies on country roads outside the metropolitan area. The freeway speed limit is 100kph, with suburban roads having a limit of 50kph. Also watch out for “School Zones” where the limit drops to 40kph between the hours of 7.30am and 9am and 2.30pm and 4pm. Speed traps are common (especially around school zones during restricted hours). There are no “fixed” speed cameras at the time of writing, with most traps being either “multanova” cameras (portable) or hand-held speed guns. Fines for speeding can be heavy, ranging from \$50 to \$150 with three “demerit points” for offenders travelling above 20kph over the limit.

Spiders

One of the first questions asked by people arriving in Perth for the first time concerns spiders. Australia is known for some of the deadliest in the world, but many species prefer to “dwell” in the eastern states.

Probably the most “famous” WA spider is the redback. Its body is no bigger than a 5p coin, but the female has a distinctive red stripe on her back (the male is black all over).

Redbacks tend to live in dark, damp surroundings, such as sheds and garages, under fence panels and scattered bricks. If annoyed, the redback will give a nasty bite (likened to a wasp sting but more painful). A pregnant female bite can be excruciating!

According to our sources, the last fatality arising from a redback bite was in 1953; antidotes are readily available from pharmacies.

The second famous spider in WA is the white-tail. Again, a small spider, but this one has a cigar-shaped body with a white tip. These spiders will occasionally venture indoors (whereas a redback generally will not).

They give a very painful bite and their venom can actually rot your flesh. Elderly people and babies are more susceptible to the nasty effects of a white-tail bite. Generally speaking, leave them alone and they will leave you alone!

Wolf spiders and Huntsman spiders are good to have around in the garden since they prey on redbacks and other annoying insects. The Huntsman can be quite a frightening sight as they can grow to the size of a small child’s hand, but they are, in the main, quite harmless.



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Interestingly, the most poisonous spider in WA is the Daddy Long-Legs. It looks similar to the UK version, but has no wings. An indoor spider, the Daddy Long-Legs lives on cornices and covings and other less conspicuous places. Despite its venomous potential, its fangs are not strong enough to pierce human skin, and as such, it is totally harmless to humans.

Sport

Subiaco Oval is Perth's largest football stadium. It has a capacity of 43,500 and is the home of Aussie Rules football. (English football is known as "Soccer"). Two teams play at the Oval — West Coast Eagles and the Fremantle Dockers. The Aussies go wild over the game, which isn't unlike Gaelic Football, but played on an oval-shaped pitch.

Soccer is played at the Perth Oval (home to Perth Glory) which has recently been renovated and has a capacity of over 20,000. The Glory usually win the Australian soccer league - undoubtedly helped by all the singing and chanting that goes on in the terrace (called "The Shed").

Perth Glory is one of the best supported soccer teams in Australia, with over 12,000 spectators enjoying home games. Compared with other capital cities in Australia, many of which only get 2000 spectators at home games, 12,000 is a lot of people.

This means that Perth Glory can afford to pay their players better salaries and hence get a better team. A Grand Final is played at the end of each season when the Glory move to Subiaco Oval since the capacity is more than doubled and is generally sold out in a matter of days.

Cricket ... and The WACA is home to the Western Warriors, a team that boasts such household names as Adam Gilchrist, Justin Langer and Damian Martin (at the time of writing). They are WA's most successful sporting team. The WACA has also undergone a facelift, with new stands and grass banks. Test Matches are played there every year and in 2003 England's "Barmy Army" were here. Whether you love or loathe cricket, a day at the WACA is a great experience (www.waca.com.au).

If you like golf, then you won't be disappointed either. Perth has numerous golf courses with over 40 public courses and many private ones. Non-members may play on private courses on certain days, but the dress code is very strict. The finest resort course is The Vines - a 36-hole challenge that has been voted Australia's number 1 resort course.

"Stop" Signs

If you see a "STOP" sign, then do just that! Even on the quietest roads in the middle of the night, with no traffic around, you can bet your bottom dollar that there will be a copper just round the corner waiting for you to treat it as a "Give Way" sign. The penalty for not stopping at a "STOP" sign is a \$150 fine and three "demerit points".

Stamp Duty

Stamp duty is a tax payable on anything that requires a "title transfer" following purchase. This includes houses, businesses, cars, boats, trailers etc where the new owner's name has to appear on the title document. As a very rough guide, budget around 3.5% of the purchase price and you'll be in the "ball park".

As well as purchases such as these, stamp duty is also payable on loans/mortgages, security bonds (such as, when renting a property etc), but the rate is much lower (less than 1%).

Sun Cream



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Sun cream is part of everyday life in Perth. Ensure you apply it prior to leaving home, especially in the summer months. You have to be very conscious of the power of the sun, especially with the hole in the ozone layer directly over WA. You only have to be in the sun for 15 minutes to see a colour change.

Gone are the days of Spanish and Greek type holidays lying in the sun for eight hours by the pool. Definitely no oils or low factor creams (Factor 30 recommended, even if you are dark-skinned)!

The adverts on television remind you to “slip slop slap” and with numerous reports of skin cancer, you will soon get the message that they are trying to portray. It is also advisable – if you spend a lot of time outdoors, to have a mole scan EVERY year.

T

Tafe (Tertiary and Further Education)

This is the name given to the UK equivalent of a Technical College (or TEC). Generally, TAFEs will offer a range of courses, both part-time and full-time. Trade apprentices attend TAFE.

Tax

Apart from stamp duty, there are other types of tax you will find part of everyday life

1. Income Tax
2. Business/Company Tax

A limited company (or PTY LTD) pays tax at a flat rate of 30%. This applies no matter how much profit the company makes.

3. GST (Goods and Services Tax)

This is the equivalent to VAT and the current rate is 10%. It was introduced in July 2000 and many businesses are still getting used to it. It applies to most purchases but certain things are exempt. For example:

- Residential rent payments
- Residential property purchases
- Food (unless prepared)

Televisions

We have been asked many times if UK televisions will work in Australia. There is no short answer to this question, as many factors need to be considered.

1. Terrestrial TV channels in WA are broadcast on VHF and UHF frequencies. There are six channels — 2, 7, 9, 10 (all broadcast on VHF) and 28 & 31 which are broadcast on UHF. Since there has been no VHF broadcast in the UK for over 20 years, UK-made TVs are not capable of receiving VHF transmissions. This means your UK TV cannot receive four of the six channels.

2. Add to that the fact that in Australia, audio is transmitted on a different frequency to that in the UK (in other words, the sound won't work!).



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3. Whilst an audio modification is relatively simple and inexpensive, your TV will only work correctly whilst tuned to channels 28 and 31.

4. If your TV is NICAM digital stereo, then a sound modification is not financially viable.

So in short, the cheapest, easiest and most cost-effective way of using your UK TV in Perth is to buy an Aussie VCR, connect it to the scart socket on the back of your TV (or phono sockets — called RCA sockets in WA), then watch TV through the video tuner / channel.

However, some TVs (especially portables) do not have scart or phono sockets on the back. If this is the case with yours, give it away or sell it in the UK before you leave. New TV's are very reasonably priced in Australia, whatever your choice may be.

Termites

The most common termite in WA is the white ant. These little creatures die when exposed to direct sunlight and are a real delicacy for the more common (black) ant. White ants eat dead wood from the inside (old trees, railway sleepers, untreated pine etc), but cannot eat their way through hardwood such as jarrah. When you buy a house in WA it is advisable to make sure that there is no termite infestation.

To do this, you engage a termite inspector who will check the property for evidence of infestation. If found, it has to be treated immediately to eradicate the pests. Wood that has been eaten by white ants will appear totally “normal” to the untrained eye, but step on it and it will crumble like balsa wood.

Toilets

Whilst the last thing we would want to do is to frighten you, you must beware of redbacks in public toilets (see “Spiders”), especially those on beaches and in parks. Always check underneath the toilet seat to make certain there isn't a redback lurking there. Generally speaking, all public toilets in Perth and on beaches and parks are cleaned and serviced regularly to a high standard.

Tourist Attractions

There are numerous attractions in Perth. Kings Park is number one on the list, with over 100 acres of native bushland close to and overlooking the CBD. Kings Park has splendid picnic areas and houses WA's botanical gardens. In the summer months there are new movies screened at sunset, where you can take your picnic basket and your beanbag or rug and watch a great film under a star-lit sky.

Fremantle, the port city of WA, merges the old with the new. Fremantle or “Freo”, has a prison (built by convicts) which you can visit day or night. The night- time tour is a bit spooky if you like that sort of thing! The port has lots of trendy restaurants with the daily catch available and food from a variety of different countries and cultures. The vibe on the famous Cappuccino Strip will leave you wandering which country you really are in!

The coastline is nestled on the Indian Ocean with an abundance of beaches, trendy bars and cafes, with great views. You will see surfers and wind-surfers all along the coast, and if you're lucky you might spot dolphins and even whales in winter!

Looking out over the ocean you will see Rottnest Island – home to unique marsupials called quokkas. These were mistaken for rats when the Dutch first landed in the 1600s. They named it Rottnest, meaning “rat's nest”. Only essential transport is allowed on the Island (i.e. no cars or 4x4's), there is a bus service and bikes can be hired.



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The coastline is dotted with sandy bays which provide superb sunbathing, swimming, surfing and snorkelling (there is a great underwater trail you can follow if you enjoy snorkelling). Access to the island is by air or fast ferry from Fremantle, Hillarys or Barrack Street Jetty in the city, and is a highly recommended day out.

Trains

Perth has an excellent transport system – in particular the railway system, with four main lines running from Perth City to Mandurah (south), Clarkson (north), Fremantle (west) and Midland (east). All trains stop at the main station on Wellington Street, and at each station along the journey (which is more or less every suburb or so)

Ticket prices are determined by how far you wish to travel, and must be bought from vending machines which are available at all stations. Tickets are valid throughout the public transport system. A good option is the “DayRider” ticket, which costs \$7.50 (at the time of writing) and is valid from 9.30am to midnight on all buses and trains. A family “DayRider” (which covers two adults and two children) can also be bought for \$7.50 and can be used in the same way as the single DayRider, but is valid only on weekends, and school and public holidays.

The rail system is an excellent way of getting around Perth, buses and trains are clean and what’s more, it’s free to park your car at the train stations!

The northern line (Perth-CClarkson) and the southern line to Mandurah actually run along the central reservation of the Mitchell Freeway. There is a no smoking or drinking policy on all public transport. For further info contact Transperth at www.transperth.wa.gov.au

Transferring Money

Once you have established an Australian bank account, transferring your money is easy. The only thing to look out for is the exchange rate. You can check with www.rationalfx.com for the best rates.

Travel Insurance

Unless you have to make an unscheduled stop in a country en-route to Perth (due to illness), there really isn’t any need to buy travel insurance for anything other than your luggage.

Even if you haven’t had time to register with Medicare, Australia has a “reciprocal arrangement” with the UK when it comes to medical emergencies.

Useful Contacts

Health

<http://www.health.gov.au> Australian Government Health Information <http://www.medibank.com.au> Private Health Company

<http://www.sgio.com.au> Private Health Company

Weather

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate> Bureau of Meteorology

<http://www.australia.org.uk/welcome/html/> Australian Government & VISA Information Australian Government’s UK Site

<http://www.wa.gov.au> West Australian Government

<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au> West Australian Education Department <http://www.customs.gov.au> Australian Customs Service

<http://www.thewest.com.au> The West Australian Newspaper

<http://www.news.com.au> The Sunday Times Newspaper

<http://www.quokka.com.au> The Quokka is Perth’s “Loot”



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Employment

<http://www.seek.com.au> Online recruitment agency

Banks

<http://www.hsbc.com.au> Hong Kong Shanghai Bank Australian Site <http://www.anz.com.au> The Australian & New Zealand Bank <http://www.commbank.com.au> Commonwealth Bank of Australia <http://www.national.com.au> The National Bank of Australia

<http://www.westpac.com.au> Westpac Bank of Australia

Airlines into Australia

<http://www.qantas.com.au> Flights from Europe, Asia, New Zealand & USA <http://www.britishairways.com> Flights from Europe, Asia & USA <http://www.emirates.com> Flights from Europe & Middle East <http://www.singaporeair.com> Flights from Europe & Asia

<http://www.thaiairways.com> Flights from Europe & Asia

<http://www.cathaypacific.com> Flights from Europe & Asia

<http://www.klm.com> Flights from Europe & Asia

<http://www.virginblue.com.au> Internal Australian airline from Richard Branson *Airports*

<http://www.perthairport.com> Perth Airport Australia

Railways & Buses in Perth

<http://www.transperth.wa.gov.au> Perth Bus & Train Company

<http://www.gsr.com.au> Perth to Adelaide Train Excursion International

Car Hire

<http://www.drivewest.com.au>

<http://www.rac.com.au> RAC Australia

Utilities

<http://www.westernpower.com.au> Electricity supply company for Perth <http://www.AlintaGas.com.au> Gas supply company for Perth

<http://www.aapt.com.au> Telephone supply company

<http://www.telstra.com> Telephone supply company <http://www.watercorporation.com.au> Water supply company for WA Real Estate <http://www.peakperformanceproperty.com.au> Property investment information

<http://www.firb.gov.au> Foreign Investment Review Board

<http://www.whereis.com.au> Maps online

<http://www.reiwa.com> The Western Australian Property Finder

Telephone Directories

<http://www.whitepages.com.au> Dialing guide & telephone numbers. Telephone Prepay Telstra PhoneAway card must have 1 800 dial out number – NOT 1 300 !!

Mobile Networks

<http://www.telstra.com.au/mobilenet> Telstra Mobile Network Australia <http://www.optus.com.au> Optus Mobile Network Australia

<http://www.orange.net.au> Orange Mobile Network Australia <http://www.vodafone.com.au> Vodafone Mobile Network Australia Internet *Providers*

<http://www.optusnet.com.au> Optus Internet Service Provider

<http://www.aol.com.au> AOL Australia Internet Service Provider <http://www.bigpond.com.au> Telstra's Internet Service Provider <http://www.pomsinperth.com> Worldwide Expat forum

V



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VCRs

Australian VCRs will play your UK tapes OK. On the other hand, your UK VCR (if connected to your UK TV) will play Australian tapes OK. The only time it gets confusing is if you are connecting your UK VCR to an Australian TV, or attempting to record a TV program on your UK VCR.

In both cases you will have no (or muffled) sound. A modification is possible but is not really cost-effective given the price of new VCRs in Perth.

Visas and Visa Validation

Once your visa has been issued, there is often a time-frame during which your visa must be validated. This can often mean there is not enough time within that frame to sell your house and get everything in order so that you are ready to move to Perth. This means you will have to make a trip to Australia to “validate” your visa(s).

If you are intending to live in Perth, you don't have to go there in order to validate your visa — you just need to come to AUSTRALIA! Once you have entered the country and passed through Immigration, your visa has been validated. In the case of most permanent residency visas, you have up to five years in which to get all your affairs in order and make the move to Oz. Failure to do so within five years can mean that your visa expires.

Once you have lived in Australia for two years, you are eligible to apply for Australian Citizenship (see Citizenship). If you leave the country after five years (in other words, after your existing permanent residency visa has expired), and you have not applied for and received citizenship, you will need to apply for a Residents Return Visa (RRV), otherwise you may not be allowed back into the country.

W

Water

Bottled water is readily and cheaply available from supermarkets, delis, petrol stations etc. It is not advisable to drink tap-water in Perth due to the chemicals in the water, but this is widely debated amongst its critics.

They ask us to be “Water-Wise” in WA and not to waste it. Reticulation is restricted to two days per week if you have mains reticulation, and 3 days if you have a bore. We are required to use reticulation either early in the morning or in the evening to minimise water wastage through evaporation.

Weather

(See Climate)

What to Bring

In short – EVERYTHING YOU CAN! If you find that you don't need it when you get here, sell it! Most items of electrical equipment will work OK, but fridges tend to run colder in WA. UK Videos will work fine on as Australian VCR. If you have DVDs, they will work on the DVD player that you bring with you, but if you buy an Aussie DVD player, then providing you buy a multiregional model, they will work on that too.

White Ants



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(See Termites)

Wildlife

Kangaroos are the most popular. You can see them at dusk in their natural habitat in such places as golf courses, cemeteries etc, but Neil Hawkins Park in Joondalup is probably the best spot to see them. You can also see parrots there in the afternoons and entice them with sunflower seeds to come down from the trees and eat from your hands.

Z

Zoo

Perth Zoo is situated across the Swan River in South Perth. It has more than 1800 animals displayed in lush, naturalistic enclosures. The Zoo offers walks through the African Savannah, the Asian Rainforest and Australian Walkabout. The Zoo is open every day 9am-5pm. Concerts in the Zoo in summer months are highly recommended in tranquil surroundings.

GLOSSARY



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Western Australia is the largest of the eight states and territories that make up the continent of Australia. It takes up one third of the continent!

Each state has a capital city - Perth being Western Australia's.

Despite many people believing that Sydney is the capital of Australia (yes, even some Australians do, too!), it is in fact, Canberra. Popular belief is that there could not be an agreement between the two largest capital cities — Melbourne and Sydney - as to which should be the capital of the country, so a "new" city was built in between Melbourne and Sydney – it was named Canberra.

As Melbourne and Sydney were already state capitals in their own right, a new "state" had to be formed. This was called a "territory" and named ACT (Australian Capital Territory).

There are a total of eight States and Territories, namely:

WA (Western Australia — Capital, Perth)
Vic (Victoria — Capital, Melbourne)
SA (South Australia — Capital, Adelaide)
NT (Northern Territory — Capital, Darwin)
QLD (Queensland — Capital, Brisbane)
ACT (Australian Capital Territory — Capital, Canberra)
Tas (Tasmania — Capital, Hobart)
NSW (New South Wales — Capital, Sydney)

Because of its vast size, WA is a land of enormous contrasts — from the temperate south with its surf, vineyards, forests, and caves, the Goldfields in the centre, to the tropical north, with its world-famous Ningaloo Reef, Broome and The Kimberley.

Not only is it big, it's old — Australia is perhaps the oldest land on earth. Isolation from the rest of the world has left WA with unique plants and animals, some species surviving from prehistoric times. There are more species of wildflowers than you will find anywhere else in the world.

Animals range from cuddly koalas and giant man-eating crocodiles to kangaroos and emus.

Perth straddles the Swan River, just a few kilometres from the Indian Ocean with its glorious beaches. With no heavy industry, it is virtually pollution-free and enjoys an idyllic Mediterranean-style climate, with over 300 sunny days a year. With the right planning, it is possible to travel round the whole state throughout the year, and experience sunny days all year round!

Perth is the major commercial centre for the region and has a colourful nightlife, an abundance of first-class restaurants (in Northbridge, Subiaco and Fremantle) a variety of theatres and concert halls, a world-class casino/hotel complex (Burswood) and an entertainment centre.

It is the natural centre for tourism in WA, with excellent public transport, frequent air links to domestic and international destinations, numerous international hotels and a "Satellite Port" (Fremantle), situated at the mouth of the Swan River.

Perth is a modern but relaxed city with a population of 1.4 million living in a metropolitan area which spreads wider than greater London. The total population of WA is just over two million!

Perth has retained most of its historic buildings, some of great beauty, and because of the compact nature of the city these can be explored on foot.



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There is an excellent free bus service provided within the city area and the train service goes north to south and east to west, making the city easy to get around.

Kings Park set on high ground just minutes from the city centre, covers over 400 hectares, of which two thirds is natural bushland. It enjoys sweeping views of the central city, the south bank of the river and the Darling Ranges to the east.

Kings Park's 17-hectare botanical garden presents a year-round display of Western Australia's unique flora, with the entire park in total colour all year round.

An evening's visit to Kings Park is not to be missed, as the city lights are a sight to behold. In the summer months, picnics and the free BBQ facilities are extremely popular with locals and tourists alike. They even have open air cinemas.

Whatever your choice of lifestyle, Perth has something to offer everyone.