



THE LOCALS: Quokkas are in abundance on Rottnest Island, but don't feed or handle them.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



ROTTNEST ISLAND FACTS

THERE is a hop on, hop off bus, which does circuits of the island (takes about an hour and costs \$20 for all day) while the bus that runs between the ferry terminal and the main set of shops is free.

The main way to get around is by bicycle, and every day the ferries bring over dozens of bikes, almost all reserved in advance.

In 2016 about 100 people live there permanently but it receives 500,000 visitors a year, sometimes as many as 15,000 in a day.

The wharf on arriving and departure is a scrum as visitors scramble for bikes, get helmets, find lost kids, mount up and head off.

There are no cars allowed, although buses and service vehicles operate. Energy is from wind and solar power. There is no natural water supply, and rubbish is removed each day.

All visitors pay a landing fee of \$38 a day (included in ticket prices for day trippers and the like, and paid separately by those arriving by private yacht).

Seaside fun and history on Rottnest Island



John Bishop discovers Rottnest Island off Perth is a great place for snorkelling, paddle boarding and swimming.

Going out to Rottnest Island is a common day trip for holidaymakers and locals, with ferries leaving from downtown Perth and Fremantle.

It's two hours from central Perth, but only 18kms - 30 minutes - from Fremantle.

Rottnest, Rotto to the locals, is Perth's playground, particularly for yachties, with dozens of boats are parked up there over the summer period.

This is a premium destination for swimming, relaxation, exploring - usually by bicycle hired for the day - and for discovering some history.

In total it has 63 beaches and 20 bays in 19sq kms.

None of them are large or overcrowded. But be careful, there is not much shelter and no fresh water.

Rottnest - Wadjemup to the Noongar people - is a rather special place. Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh named the island in 1696. Looking for fresh water, he saw the quokkas through his telescope and mistook them for rats, and called the place Rottnest, Rotte being Old Dutch for rat.

Explore the historical sites, including an old prison for Aborigines, a salt factory, an army barracks and gun emplacements, and two lighthouses.

The 360 degree view from Wadjemup is spectacular.

And then there are the quokkas, a curious marsupial,

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which looks like a large rat but moves like a kangaroo.

They are found everywhere on the island, often sheltering under trees.

If you can't find any then join a tour run the island's helpful volunteers.

They aren't particularly timid or aggressive, but they are a protected species and are not to be handled or fed.

In World War Two, two gun batteries were installed to defend Fremantle from enemy

warships but was never called upon to do so.

The army barracks and parade ground are still there, well preserved in the dry heat, and now used for short stay accommodation.

A small railway also built for military purposes offers rides for kids of all ages.

It's also been an internment camp for enemy aliens in both wars, a boys' reformatory school and now it's a special reserve with its own governing authority.

There are plenty of places to eat and to stay.

The island also has two lovely little churches, Anglican and Catholic.

The Anglican Church has a stained-glass window, depicting in modern style The Visitation where Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visits her cousin Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist, an encounter often portrayed by Renaissance painters.

John Bishop is a Wellington based travel writer who visited Rottnest Island at his own expense.

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HOLIDAYMAKERS can enjoy the highlife without the high price tag with savings of up to 80% now available at stunning cliff-top property, Semara Luxury Villa Resort Uluwatu.

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COSTS: For couples \$309 room per night, plus 21% tax and service charge for visits until May 31, 2016.

MORE DETAILS: www.semarauluwatu.com

OAKS CABLE BEACH BROOME

COASTAL resort property Oaks Cable Beach Sanctuary, located in WA's unique pearling town of Broome, has unveiled its modern \$2.5m makeover. The transformation

focused on the resort's self-contained accommodation, with all studios, one and two bedroom apartments and three bedroom villas receiving significant upgrades.

COSTS: \$109per night (minimum two night stay).

MORE DETAILS: www.oakshotels.com

