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Perth: Australia's Economic Hot Spot

Major economic success in Western Australia has enabled the capital city of Perth to experience a cultural and business revitalization



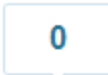
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2 AUG 2011 *Michaela McNamara*



Written by Paul Beeson, CEO, Perth Convention Bureau



Western Australia is the **powerhouse of the resources industry**, not only for Australia but for the entire Asia-Pacific region. Production from more than 250 mines and 35 petroleum operations exceeded US\$25 billion last year – roughly 40 per cent of Australia's total output of minerals and petroleum. It's therefore no surprise that it's home to the headquarters of many industrial, resource and mining companies. Also recognised internationally as a centre of excellence in the areas of health, agriculture and education, Western Australia is a great place to do business and connect with the right people.

Our west coast location situates Perth close to South East Asia and within the same time zone as most of Asia. Perth is also the nearest gateway to Australia from the United Kingdom and Europe. It is our proximity - versus the east coast - to these major business events markets that has enabled us to build upon the successes that come from existing at the corporate heart of the massive resources boom.

Perth is Australia's **sunniest capital city** with an average of nearly eight hours of sunshine a day. The city is a real playground and visitors quickly appreciate our laid-back, sun-drenched West Australian lifestyle and affable attitude. Set on the banks of the spectacular Swan River, Perth is also one of the nation's fastest growing urban centres, offering cultural diversity and sophistication.

Many destinations claim to 'have it all' - Perth simply lives it all. The Sunset Coast is lined with beautiful beaches that are easily accessible. Our sumptuous local produce, burgeoning food and wine industry, clean airspace, lack of traffic and human congestion, and a virtual smorgasbord of fun activities happens year-round. And best of all, everything's within a short drive of Perth's city centre.

A VARIETY OF VENUES

There has been an array of hotel refurbishments within Perth over the last year. Firstly, Burswood Entertainment Complex's three-year, multi-million dollar refurbishment project is well underway. The makeover permeates the entire hotel and has introduced world-class restaurants like Neil Perry's Rockpool and Nobu from Japan. The hotel room redesign project (an impressive \$150,000 spent per room) has half-way completed and is on schedule to finish mid-2012.

Within the CBD, Pan Pacific opened earlier this year to unveil its \$4.5 million Convention Level refurbishment. The first stage of the Hyatt Regency Perth's most significant upgrade in its history is now complete, and the Parmelia Hilton Perth has also revamped rooms, pool/outdoor area and high-traffic public areas. All 306 rooms of the Duxton Hotel Perth have undergone a soft refurbishment, along with the fourteen accommodation floors, plus the Lobby Bar, Club Lounges and Suites. A series of mid-range properties have followed suit, with the Goodearth and Perth Ambassador Hotels upgrading all rooms, as well as the Hotel Ibis Perth, Metro Hotel Perth and Rendezvous Hotel Perth making major improvements. The Richardson Hotel and Spa is one of Perth's top boutique corporate venues and with its ideal location in the heart of the West Perth business district, it's highly sought-after.

With regards to restaurants, Perth's remarkable growth in the last few years is not localised to its sizeable infrastructure and commercial projects. Perth has undergone a cultural renaissance. The city is focused on promoting cultural vibrancy, a sign that Perth has taken stock of its social landscape and is now using its robust economy to full advantage.

In the city a number of new small bars and cafes can be found "off-piste" in laneways and the likes. These eclectic boutique-style venues offer world-class wine, food and cocktails – with a distinctive WA flavour. In fact, a score of new restaurants are taking full advantage of Western Australia's top quality produce and world class wines, offering a **profusion of inspired eateries** skippered by young local talent with a true enterprising and creative spirit.

Top venues to note are renowned Fraser's Restaurant in Kings Park (and the site for the prestigious biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October), Black Tom's in the West Perth business district, Perth's only revolving restaurant, C Restaurant Lounge, sits high above St Georges Terrace. One of Perth's best steakhouses, The Old Brewery Grill, sits mere metres from the Swan River's edge. The newly-opened and heritage listed Lamont's Bishop's House in the CBD is operated by Perth epicurean heavyweight Kate Lamont.

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

The Perth metropolitan area offers a variety of unique locations in addition to its city venues, from coastal and winery venues to quarry, farm or bush retreats.

Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre is Perth's largest conference venue located in the heart of the CBD, metres from the Swan River. Custom designed and built, it can cater for up to 5,000 delegates. Built on three levels, the centre features a 2,500 seat tiered auditorium, grand ballrooms, 19 specialist meeting rooms of varying sizes and six exhibition pavilions.

Swan Valley, Perth's wine region and food growing district, is just 30 minutes from city. A variety of conference, meeting and accommodation venues are peppered along the luscious 'Swan Valley Food and Wine Trail.' One of the highlights is Sandalford Winery with its myriad of meeting rooms, event spaces and expansive rolling lawns for major events.

SYSTEMATIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Perth can be easily accessed via air and the international airport is only a 25-minute taxi ride to the city centre. Sixteen international, five domestic and 11 regional airlines connect Perth with more than 50 international and Australian destinations. The State will invest up to \$500 million over the next three years developing its infrastructure.

Getting around Perth is easy, with meetings infrastructure and hotels located in close proximity to Perth's retail, cultural and entertainment precincts. The city centre itself offers a lack of human congestion and traffic, plus the Free Transit Zone (FTZ) allows free travel on all buses and trains at all times.

Stats:

- Perth boasts an average of nearly 8 hours of sunshine a day
- Perth's international airport is only a 25-minute taxi ride to the city centre
- WA will invest up to \$500 million over the next three years developing its infrastructure
- Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre can cater up to 5,000 delegates
- Burswood Entertainment Complex has spent \$150,000 per hotel room in for a major refurbishment project