

# GUEST BLOG: MARINE MAGIC IN WA – TAKE THE TREK TO CORAL BAY

SEPTEMBER 25, 2014 TOUR THE WORLD LEAVE A COMMENT



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*Tourism WA*

*At a 12 hour drive north of Perth in Western Australia, you've got to seriously **want** to visit Coral Bay. Even if you fly to Exmouth it's still a good two hour drive. But it seems plenty of people are willing to make the journey, according to our guest blogger **Tania Connolly**. Smack-bang in the heart of the Ningaloo Reef, Coral Bay is obviously something pretty special.*

*After towing a boat all the way from Perth, it's a relief to relax in the tropical oasis of Coral Bay.*

Its appeal lies in its unspoilt surroundings and isolation. There are no high rise hotels, the main road is buried under layers of sand and the only traffic is quad bikes.



We abide by the dress code of thongs and sarongs and wander the entire town on foot. From the first holiday shack built in 1933, Coral Bay now boasts accommodation to suit every budget; including camping grounds, caravan parks, a backpacker lodge, houses, chalets and an air-conditioned resort.

The atmosphere is warm and casual and we notice EVERYONE wears one particular brand of clothing. Soon we meet Grant, aka “The Billabong Man”. Easily recognised by his gravelly voice, mahogany tan and West Coast Eagles scarf, he’s owned ‘Coral Bay Shells’ since January 1989, originally selling only silver jewellery and shells. Billabong have advised Grant that he’s now the largest supplier of their board shorts in WA and he’ll add, ‘the



cheapest’.

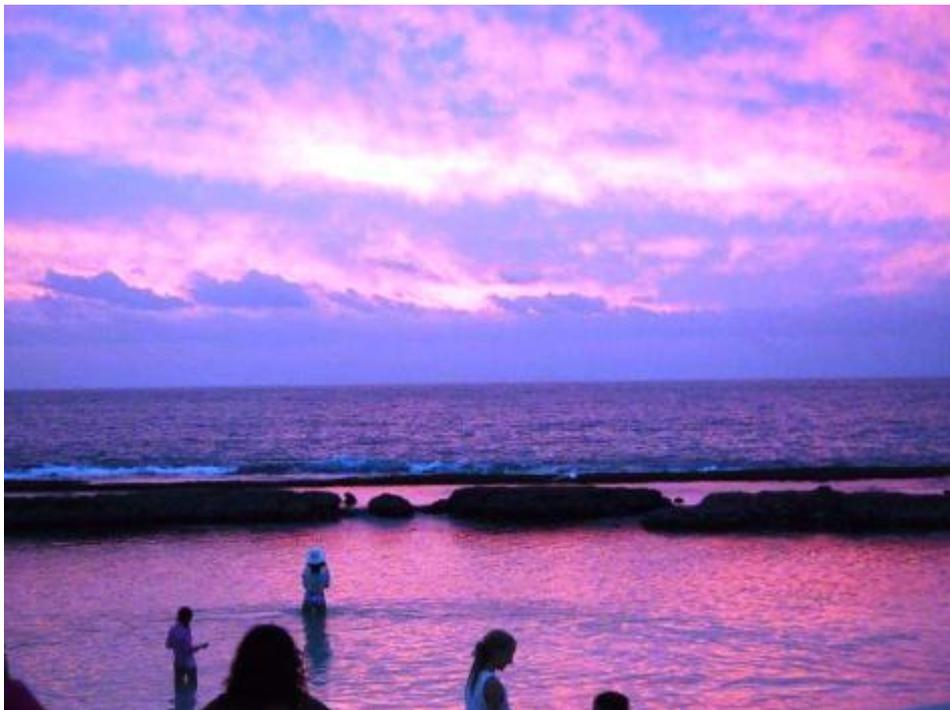
Once our tour of the tiny town is complete, we scramble into swimwear and within 100 paces we're on the beach. High tide in the morning means pop up tents cram the sparse shoreline. Silver snapper weave around our ankles as we wade through the shallows, snorkels and goggles at the ready. Myriad marine life inhabit the Ningaloo Reef – Australia's only fringing reef – where the coral begins at the water's edge. With temperatures soaring to high 30's, the glass-like water remains warm. We drift along with the current, admiring the neon blue fish, squid, cod, seahorses and the occasional 'Nemo' that dart in and out of the 250 different species of coloured coral. Further out, a lone turtle munches on seaweed. I watch, fascinated, as he floats by me, oblivious to my presence.



Deep sea fishing and whale watching tours are available but we cruise inside the reef, in our 17 foot boat, and catch trevally and Spanish mackerel while trawling past Maud's Landing and Oyster Bridge. Our attention is diverted from fishing by about 20 manta rays, foraging for food. They barrel-roll, their white bellies stark against the sapphire sea as they tumble backwards, plunging deeper into the darkness before rising majestically from the depths of the ocean. We remain entranced before heading back, escorted by several dolphins, their skins glistening in the sun.



Low tide occurs early afternoon and at 3.30pm we join the group gathered to watch fish feeding, then set up beach cricket. Dinner is discussed. We could eat fresh seafood from Fin's Café, sandwiches, pies and bread from the bakery or devour fish and chips or a burger at Shades whilst playing pool or watching sport on the large screen. Instead we despatch the kids to buy pizza from the new Ningaloo Reef Café and remain on the beach, with a glass of wine, smiling as our children's antics are silhouetted against a sensational saffron sunset.



*Tania Connolly is a freelance writer. For more of her work visit [www.clippings.me/taniaconnolly](http://www.clippings.me/taniaconnolly).*

