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World's biggest fish spotted in Ningaloo

The biggest fish in the world – the gentle whale shark - has once again been spotted at Western Australia's World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Marine Park (Nyinggulu), heralding the [start of season](#).

[Ningaloo Aviation](#) Owner, Tiffany Klein, sighted the whale shark and gets a bird's eye view of these spotty giants nearly every day, offering scenic flights over Ningaloo and Cape Range National Park, as well as working as the spotter plane for several whale shark tour operators.

“We spotted our first whale sharks for the season last week. We have seen three on our last two flights, so that's getting us excited for the season to get going shortly.”

“Although the numbers vary throughout the season, it's common for us to see more than 30 whale sharks in a day. It's amazing to see them from the air, they look quite graceful and relaxed as they cruise up and down the reef,” said Tiffany.

Last year was another record-breaking season, with almost 40,000 visitors travelling to Exmouth and Coral Bay to swim with whale sharks, that migrate to the shores of Western Australia between February and July each year to feed on plankton and krill.

Some lucky swimmers got to experience the first whale shark swim for the 2024 season on Friday, February 16 on a tour with [Ningaloo Discovery](#).

“Swimming with these gentle giants is a bucket list adventure, and what makes it even more special is how mysterious these creatures are. Little is known about the whale shark.

A human has never seen a female whale shark give birth; and where they give birth, as well as where the young pups hang out remains a mystery. Adults are often found feeding at the surface, but they dive to depths of 1,000 metres.”

“What is known is that they regularly congregate at Ningaloo each year, and the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Marine Park is one of the most reliable places on Earth to swim with the giant fish,” said Sarah Ellis from The Ningaloo Discovery Team.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) manages whale shark interactions through a licensing program that protects both the whale sharks and a maximum of 10 swimmers at a time, which ensures it is one of the most environmentally sustainable swimming with whale sharks experience in the world.

Only 11 whale shark tour operator licenses are great and DBCA works to collect data on every whale shark interacted with in the Ningaloo Marine Park, and to date more than 1,770 individual whale sharks have been identified since the whale shark management program was first developed in 1997.

In 2024, whale shark swim tours will officially begin from 28 February, in Exmouth, through to late July. Coral Bay tours start 1 March, through to late June, allowing visitors the opportunity to have a face-to-fin encounter with the friendly giants – which are around four to 11 metres in length. Year round, visitors can swim with manta rays from Coral Bay.

Ningaloo is one of the only places on Earth where visitors can experience swimming with three big marine wonders in the one location - manta rays, humpback whales and whale sharks - on occasions, at the same time when the migration seasons align from August and the world's biggest fish slowly departs Western Australia's waters.

When planning a trip to Ningaloo, why not drive the dream like F1 superstar Daniel Ricciardo and hit the open road along the [Coral Coast Highway](#). One of the greatest road trips on Earth, it traverses 1,200 kilometres of stunning coastline from Perth to Exmouth – taking you to otherworldly landscapes, ocean wonders and World Heritage-listed treasures. From the surreal pinkhues of Hutt Lagoon, to the World Heritage-listed slice of paradise in Shark Bay (Gutharraguda), finishing with the exhilarating marine wonderland of the world's largest fringing coral reef.

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Background

About Tourism Western Australia (Tourism WA)

Tourism Western Australia (Tourism WA) is responsible for promoting Western Australia (WA) as an incredible holiday and events destination. We work with a range of people from the public and private sector to develop and promote WA's iconic tourism experiences, to attract events to the State and help the tourism industry thrive.

Walk on a Dream in Western Australia and explore the awe-inspiring attributes that make the State such a wondrous, dreamlike destination. Tourism WA's new Walking on a Dream campaign is inspired by WA's unique Aboriginal culture and inspires holidaymakers to book their next visit to WA by showcasing the State's dreamlike qualities - jaw-dropping landscapes, supernatural colour contrasts, otherworldly phenomena, immersive connections with authentic characters, and one-of-a-kind experiences that inspire a sense of unparalleled freedom.

Find out more about [Western Australia](#).

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