

# Geotourism

A Principal Driver of Western Australia  
Tourism



# Foreword

Geotourism is emerging as a new global phenomenon, which aspires to foster sustainable tourism. Its attractions are now being developed around the world primarily as a sustainable development tool for the enhancement of local and regional communities.



Essential to the development of geotourism is the understanding of the identity or character of a region or territory, that is, its 'sense of place'. To achieve this geotourism is viewed as being based on the idea that the environment is made up of **A**biotic, **B**iotic and **C**ultural components. This '**ABC**' approach comprises the *Abiotic* elements of geology and climate, the *Biotic* elements of animals (fauna) and plants (flora), and *Cultural* or human components, both past and present. Geotourism argues that to fully understand and appreciate the environment we must know about the Abiotic elements of geology and climate first, as these determine the Biotic elements of animals and plants which live there. By extension, the combination of the Abiotic and Biotic components of the environment, determine the Cultural Landscape of how people have lived in the area in the past, as well as how they live there today.

This is the essence and promise of geotourism, which starts with the understanding of geology interpreted through its components of **Form** (landforms and landscape), **Process** (how the landforms originated) and **Time** (when and how long these processes occurred). This forms the basis of a more holistic understanding of the environment and its component parts and thus provides the resident or tourist with a greater connection to the environment in which they live or are visiting.

In Australia geotourism is being advanced through a number of professional organisations. These include the Geological Society of Australia's (<http://gsa.org.au>) Geotourism Standing Committee as well as through Ecotourism Australia's ([www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)) Geotourism Forum. In Western Australia FACET is the lead advocate for advancing geotourism.

As Western Australia's tourism product is largely built around its outstanding natural environment, it is essential that communities embrace geotourism with its complete approach to product interpretation, thus making it a foundational component of sustainable tourism development with economic, community and conservation benefits.

Professor Ross K. Dowling OAM PhD GAICD

Foundation Professor of Tourism

Edith Cowan University

Member, Geotourism Forum, Ecotourism Australia

Member, Geotourism Standing Committee, Geological Society of Australia

Member, Asia Pacific Geoparks Network Advisory Committee

Advisor, UNESCO Global Network of National Geoparks

Member, World Commission on Protected Areas





## You've got geotourism potential!

*Geotourism is tourism which focuses on geology and landscape as a basis for providing visitor engagement, learning and enjoyment*

Geotourism works hand in hand with Eco and Cultural Tourism and will serve to enrich your unique tourism potential. The three developed together provide an interesting and attractive multi-layered and engaging tourism offering.

Geotourism is the new buzz in tourism and is spreading around the globe with Geoparks and Geotourism initiatives attracting tourists to the far-flung corners of the earth.

Good News! Western Australia is a 4 billion year old landscape with geological features and points of interest from most geological ages.

You don't need to have the Bungle Bungles or Wave Rock in your back yard, although you're lucky if you do. Just with a Western Australian postcode you are very likely to have something of amazing geological interest that you didn't even know about, which could be developed into a fascinating and attractive tourism highlight.

This 10-point checklist was developed as part of FACET's 2015 Conference, GEOTOURISM – Tourism Down Under. The aim is to help communities get started on discovering, developing, nurturing, promoting and sustainably managing their unique geological tourism draw card.





### Multi-layered tourism

**Geotourism forms the basis of the 'ABC' approach to holistic sustainable tourism development**

**Abiotic = Geotourism** – what lies underneath and above – our foundation.

**Biotic = Ecotourism** – what lives within and above – our life.

**Cultural = Cultural & Heritage Tourism** – what this means to us – our interpretation, interaction, relationships and stories.

*Geotourism is our foundation - grounding and connecting us to our country and community.*

### Why take this journey of discovery in your community?

- It's a great incentive to get your community together, to explore, share stories, collaborate, innovate and learn more about your unique piece of earth.
- Geotourism has the potential to invigorate your community's economic wellbeing by attracting tourism, inspiring new ideas, products and services, creating jobs and development.
- It can also broaden your tourism appeal by attracting a new type of tourist to your region.
- Increased tourism will also serve to inspire your community to improve your existing products and services.
- Geotourism can create a sustainable value stream for your community for generations.
- It can shine a light on your community, creating a sense of pride, a stronger sense of place and belonging.
- Because you can! Your community could become famous! If Icelandic farmers can set up a Geotourism business on their farm with an interpretation centre in their tractor shed – imagine what your community could do!

### What about funding?

You need loads of money or grants upfront. All you need is a collaborative group of passionate people. Just ask Curtin University Professor Steven Tingay, Director of the Murchison Wide Field Array (MWA) project. He helped to develop an initiative with local Indigenous artists to interpret the night sky. The *Ilgarijiri – things belonging to the sky* exhibition organically grew from one exhibition to multiple sold-out showings in Australia to multiple international shows and success. <http://astronomy.curtin.edu.au/ilgarijiri/>

- <http://astronomy.curtin.edu.au/>

# Next Steps

These are the steps. Please see the Resources section below for more information, help and clarification.



1. Who's responsible? **Identify** your Geotourism champion. Who will be enthusiastic and able to rally a group of volunteers to explore Geotourism's potential in your community and/or region? Who can effectively consult with and endear the support of your community throughout this process?



2. **Explore** and document what geological assets you may have. Ask locals; research the geology of your area, ask the experts.
  - Find out who may be a 'geo-expert' – who can help with the knowledge.
  - Integrate the geological stories with flora and fauna and human historical developments



- 3 **Investigate** the potential of your geological assets. Is your site(s) accessible? Who owns the land and do you have, or can you get, permission to access? What type of access do you have? How can you develop this as a tourism site? What is the visitation capacity? What management will be required to protect and preserve your asset?



4. **Uncover** the stories around your asset. What does this asset mean to your community? How has your community interacted with its piece of the earth? Discover present day, historic and ancient stories. Uncover the scientific geological, ecological and cultural (including anthropological) stories of significance. These can be developed – three ways, into stories for the science enthusiasts, the general public and children. Your unique stories can guide your community in how you uniquely interpret, develop and share your tourism site.

*“On Earth there is no heaven, but there are pieces of it.*

Jules Renard



**5. Brainstorm** how you can share your geological asset. How can visitors experience your site?

- Self-guided walk trails / audio tours / self-guided drive trails/podcasts/ radio trails.
- Guided tours.
- Brochures available from local Shire Offices, Visitor Centres, Community Resource Centres, or downloadable pdfs from websites related to these offices.
- Site plaques, displays, and interpretive panels – use QR codes for additional information.
- Interpretation at local establishments – Cafes – food (Geotourism themed menu), accommodation (Geotourism themed rooms or campsites), souvenir shops – Geotourism souvenirs, information centres (your stories showcased).
- Development of products around your Geotourism feature.
- Branding of town, communities and businesses around your Geotourism feature- i.e. Castle Rock Wines.
- Static events – Concerts, theatre, art exhibitions, race days, field days, community events/family focused/themed events.
- Moving events – i.e. Gibb River Mountain Bike Challenge.
- Partner with current and potential tourism operators to incorporate your Geotourism information in their tours. Also to encourage operators to stop into your community.
- Join other communities close by for a collaborative approach. Develop a timeline trail of geology.
- Public art/art trail interpreting geological stories.
- Theme playgrounds.
- Geo-caching, Earth caching trails, Downloadable Apps, Augmented Reality (AR) Sites/Apps.

# “Every piece of Earth means something”

Mike Freeman, Geological Society of Australia



**6. Develop a plan** to turn this potential into a reality. What is your Vision? What will you need to do to turn this into a reality? This could take the form of a checklist and a 'to do' list, or a comprehensive business plan. You may decide to:

- Start from the ground up, get your community involved, explore your land, share your stories, uncover what these stories mean to you, decide how you will uniquely interpret these and see what Geotourism initiatives organically develop from there, (as per the *Ilgarijri – things belonging to the sky* exhibition above).
- Engage with a suitable knowledgeable person to check accuracy and correctness of the science behind the stories.
- Develop an idea and rally local support and sponsorship to get your initiative off the ground.
- Be inspired by a bigger vision and develop a comprehensive business plan (master plan/interpretation) to attract government grants including Royalty for Regions and Tourism Western Australia support.
- You may also like to look up UNESCO's Geopark guidelines and work towards having your Geotourism site awarded Geopark status in the future.



**7. Determine how you can market** your unique Geotourism initiative and create a buzz that will attract sustained tourism? Some ideas to consider:

- Brand your initiative and determine your unique positioning statement.
- Incorporate your information on your tourism website and continue to populate this information – including 'live' information through development of a social media campaign.
- Develop key partnerships for cross promotion – leverage your reach by aligning yourself with like-minded partners/sponsors, so their marketing is your marketing.
- Develop unique promotions that can attract tourism, partnerships and publicity i.e. Family Geo-Challenge Rottneest 2014 – [www.natureplaywa.org.au](http://www.natureplaywa.org.au)
- Encourage PR with relevant journalists, freelance writers and bloggers. Share your stories.
- Advertise in traditional and non-traditional media – including signage, billboards, relevant magazines and publications, websites, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram – the list is endless. Social media offering low cost options.
- Invite tourism operators and relevant tourism influencers to famils.
- Take your Geotourism initiative to the people – i.e. showcases and expos.



***“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.”***

*John Muir*



**8. Launch** your Geotourism product

- Celebrate – host a party, special event, ribbon cutting ceremony, stunt or just create a flurry of excitement around your Geotourism initiative, show off!
- Educate – target school groups and link to curriculum
- Promote – before, during and after. Including PR.
- Endear and engage all those you have collaborated with and desire support from.



**9. Operate** – open your Geotourism initiative for business!

- Manage
- Monitor
- High five!



**10. Review, evaluate, continually tweak and improve, innovate, refresh, reinvest, sustain.**

- Don't forget; whilst geology does not change, human's interpretations and understandings do, as with all science, so keep in contact with any willing professionals to keep building the stories.



# Resources

We have developed a list of resources to help you every step of the way!

## Step 1 – Who is responsible, identify your Geotourism champions

Who can help?

- Local Government
- Local Historical Societies

## Step 2 – Explore and document what geological assets you may have.

Who can help?

- **Universities**
  - Edith Cowan University – Professor Ross Dowling OAM ([r.dowling@ecu.edu.au](mailto:r.dowling@ecu.edu.au))
  - Murdoch University – A/Professor David Newsome ([D.Newsome@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:D.Newsome@murdoch.edu.au))
  - Curtin University – A/Professor Christof Pforr ([c.pforr@curtin.edu.au](mailto:c.pforr@curtin.edu.au))
- **Books**
  - Dowling, R.K. & Newsome, D. eds. (2010) *Global Geotourism Perspectives*. Goodfellow Publishers, Oxford, UK.
  - Newsome, D. & Dowling, R.K. eds. (2010) *Geotourism: The Tourism of Geology and Landscape*. Goodfellow Publishers, Oxford, UK.
  - Geological Survey WA <http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/803.aspx>,  
<http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/7818.aspx>
- **Geological Survey of Western Australia (GSWA)**

GSWA is part of the State Government Department of Mines and Petroleum <http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/371.aspx>. They have been in existence for more than 130 years and have an extraordinary depth and breadth of geological information (including historical geological information from the beginnings of mineral discoveries in the State), data, maps and PEOPLE!

Their geologists, librarians, editors and cartographers can all assist you in obtaining up-to-date information on sites in your region. They should be your first port of call for geological information covering the whole of WA. Contact: [publications@dmp.wa.gov.au](mailto:publications@dmp.wa.gov.au) or call 08 9222 3333.
- **Geological Society of Australia (GSA) – WA Division** [www.gsa.org.au](http://www.gsa.org.au)

The GSA offers geotourism information, geologists who could provide local information, and they have also published field guides on their website. There is also a Geotourism Standing Committee of the GSA that offers additional geotourism insights ([angus@leisuresolutions.com.au](mailto:angus@leisuresolutions.com.au))
- **Department of Parks and Wildlife** [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au)

- **Consultants** - Iain Copp of Good Earth Consulting – [www.goodearthconsulting.com.au](http://www.goodearthconsulting.com.au)
- **Friendly local geologists.** Retired geologists still have the knowledge. They now have the time as well to read your submissions and site descriptions and comment or assist. Contact them via Geological Society of Australia (WA Division) or via Australian Institute of Geoscientists ([www.aig.org.au](http://www.aig.org.au))
- **University of Western Australia** has an excellent geological museum with specimens on display, local geological information around the whole State, as well as the Eocene and Jurassic Gardens nearby. <http://www.earthmuseum.see.uwa.edu.au/>
- **Western Australian Museum** holds UWA's mineral, rock, fossil and meteorite collections as well as the State collections. [www.museum.wa.gov.au](http://www.museum.wa.gov.au)
- **Landgate** is the Western Australian Government land tenure organisation for land title information, aerial photos, topographic maps, imagery and much more [www.landgate.wa.gov.au](http://www.landgate.wa.gov.au)

### Step 3 – Investigate the potential of your geological assets.

Who can help?

- Access to land is a critical criterion in investigating the potential of your geological assets.
- Consult with Local Government Authorities for access to Shire land, parking and other local government infrastructure and facilities.
- Geological Survey WA to obtain access to potential geo-heritage sites and management issues. <http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/7818.aspx>.
- [Department of Parks and Wildlife](#) for sites within national parks and reserves.
- [Department of Mines and Petroleum](#): has information on mining tenements, who owns them, and how to contact the owners. They also hold information on all prospecting in WA.
- [Landgate](#) holds additional information regarding access to land situations.

### Step 4 - Uncover the stories around your asset.

Who can help?

- Consultants - Iain Copp of Good Earth Consulting – [www.goodearthconsulting.com.au](http://www.goodearthconsulting.com.au)
- Local Indigenous groups .
- Science communication specialists to help write stories for appropriate media.
- Department of Parks and Wildlife (ecological information and stories).
- Local historical societies.
- Battye Library in Perth for oral and visual history documents /photos /video /newspapers /diaries etc.  
[http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa\\_information/find\\_wa\\_indexes\\_and\\_catalogues](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa_information/find_wa_indexes_and_catalogues)
- National library of Australia's [Trove](#) website which contains digital resources from all of the major libraries in Australia.

- Don't forget the old timers in your community. Some have lived very interesting (and unusual) lives and have great stories to share. It may take patience (and lots of muffins!) to extract their experiences
- Department of Mines and Petroleum has an excellent library with historical, geological and mining information about the whole State. The photograph collections enable priceless journeys into our mining history.

## Step 5 - Brainstorm how you can share your geological asset.

Who can help?

- Tourism WA - Australian Tourism Data Warehouse – [atdw@westernaustralia.com](mailto:atdw@westernaustralia.com)
- Consultants - Iain Copp of Good Earth Consulting – [iain@goodearthconsulting.com.au](mailto:iain@goodearthconsulting.com.au)
- DPaW (Visitor Services division can help with advice and resources about guided experiences, interp plans etc.)
- [Join LinkedIn's 'Australian Geotourism Development' group to share ideas and ask for advice](#)
- Interpretation Australia
- Geo-caching / Earth-caching (Rottnest Island case study)

### Case Study – Rottnest Island

Geocaching activities get under the surface of Rottnest's complex geological history, allowing visitors to undertake a digital treasure hunt, which unlocks the secrets of the more remote locations of Rottnest. Two types of caches exist on Rottnest being a Traditional cache and an Earth cache.

#### Traditional Geo Cache

This is the original type of geocache and the most straightforward. These geocaches will be a container at the given coordinates. The size may vary, but at minimum, all of these geocaches will have a logbook. Larger containers may hold items for trade and trackables. To learn more about Geocaches visit <https://www.geocaching.com>

#### EarthCache

An EarthCache is a special geological location people can visit to learn about a unique feature of the Earth. EarthCache pages include a set of educational notes along with coordinates. Visitors to EarthCaches can see how our planet has been shaped by geological processes, how we manage its resources and how scientists gather evidence. Typically, to log an EarthCache, you will have to provide answers to questions by observing the geological location. For more information about EarthCaches visit <http://www.earthcache.org>



## Step 6 - Develop a plan

Who can help?

- For more information on Geoparks visit - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_Geoparks\\_Network](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Geoparks_Network)
- LotteryWest for small grants to develop an interpretive plan <http://www.lotterywest.wa.gov.au/grants/grant-types/heritage-and-conservation>
- Apply for a Community Chest small grant from your regional development commission for infrastructure, signage etc.
- National Trust (WA) can help with advice about geoheritage and how to promote it <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wa/Home>

Some other funding options are:

- Royalties for Regions grants
- Local Shires
- Local mining companies
- Wealthy Farmers – similar situation at Wave Rock
- Also consider the use of university students (potentially Edith Cowan) who could provide in-kind support by way of research and studies and projects on relevant geotourism aspects.

## Step 7 - Determine how you can market your unique Geotourism initiative

Who can help?

- Geological Society of Australia (GSA) will help promote it through their networks <http://gsa.org.au/heritage/Geotourism.html>

## Step 8 - Launch your Geotourism product

Who can help?

- Geological Society of Australia (GSA) will help promote it through their networks <http://gsa.org.au/heritage/Geotourism.html>
- Tourism WA
- Local Government Authority

## Step 9 - Operate – open your Geotourism initiative for business!

Who can help?

- Small Business Development Corporation

## Step 10 - Review, evaluate, continually tweak and improve, innovate, refresh, reinvest, sustain.

Who can help?

### Case Studies

- *A Geology Guide to Rottnest Island* published by the Geological Survey of Western Australia.
- Rottnest Geocache family activities.
- An app for a Self-guided Walking Tour through the heart of Brisbane featuring the use of building stones from the early days of European settlement to the modern expansion of Australia's third largest City ([www.qld.gsa.org.au/BBS\\_App.htm](http://www.qld.gsa.org.au/BBS_App.htm)).
- The Penshurst Volcanoes Discovery Centre in Kanawinka Geopark, Victoria  
[www.penshurstvolcano.org.au](http://www.penshurstvolcano.org.au)
- The 'Dig the Tropic' Geotrail across central Queensland from the inland to the reef  
[www.digthetropic.com.au](http://www.digthetropic.com.au)
- The Granite Skywalk - a suspended walkway in Porongurup National Park (<http://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au>).
- [Ilgarijri](#) – things belonging to the sky.
- Burke and Wills trek - <http://www.burkeandwillstrek.com.au/burke-and-wills-trek/index>
- Gibb River Mountain Bike Challenge
- Expansion of Caves in Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association
- Dr Young Ng – Hong Kong Geopark activities to demonstrate international success and tourism potential to WA



We need a comprehensive, collaborative approach, a public program with true education; to enhance knowledge, awareness, understanding and a commitment to the sustainable management of our assets.

Tom Perrigo

## Other Thoughts

- **Start with the stories** – The stories create a sense of belonging, community, and culture. These stories can be activated through interpretation, expression and developing products such as tours, services, souvenirs. Stories have an emotional value, that individuals can share with enthusiasm to attract and engage the wider community, visitors and tourists to their community. In turn this can encourage enthusiastic attraction, connection and appreciation. With this reflection communities are affirmed a sense of purpose and a greater sense of self.
- Focus on the **culture and the history** of the area.
- **Consistent Branding** – It is vital to impress on communities the importance of staying consistent to the brand – for whatever initiatives they are promoting – whether this is Cultural, Eco or Geo Tourism. So everything they do has a consistent tourism brand. For example the *Rottnest Island – A Geology Guide* publication, could have been incorporated within the Rottnest Island Tourism Branding – for greater appeal, take up and consistency of brand and message. Whenever the Government Departments are promoting a Tourism based message – it should fall within the Tourism Branding of the region.
- **Geotourism, Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism.** These three stories are not mutually exclusive. Geotourism is the missing link to connect us to our country, communities, and conservation.
- **Geotourism can connect** our state and invigorate our social and economic well being through - a connecting country and communities initiative. This is circular:



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