

SAL SALIS

Business with purpose

A model partnership for sustainable tourism

Camouflaged among the coastal sand dunes between the twin World Heritage Areas of Ningaloo Reef and Cape Range National Park, Sal Salis is one of Australia's most environmentally sound tourism properties.

Established under a lease agreement with Western Australia's Parks and Wildlife Service and developed under guidelines set down by the Western Australia Department of Environment and Conservation, it is a role model for partnerships between private sector tourism and National Parks.

"Beyond our strict operational requirements under our lease, we have a commitment to the highest principles of sustainability and conservation. We believe that tourism should contribute to the conservation of Australia's natural and cultural heritage, particularly through education and example," said Niko Peranovic, General Manager.

"We ensure that we minimise our environmental impact in every aspect of our operation, from power generation and waste disposal to water conservation and even the linen we use."

World class wildlife experiences

Sal Salis is a wilderness camp; the only accommodation in the Cape Range National Park and the closest to Ningaloo Reef - which at 280km, is one of the world's longest fringing reefs, and arguably the best-preserved, with more than 200 species of coral and 500 species of fish. Guests have the opportunity to explore the reef - which lies just metres offshore from the camp - on guided snorkelling and kayaking excursions with Sal Salis' experienced wilderness guides. Close to shore, deep lagoons reveal the life cycle of the reef, and guests may encounter turtles, dugongs and manta rays.

Ningaloo is also recognised as one of the world's best and most reliable places to see - and swim with - the world's largest fish, the endangered whale shark. The spotted behemoths frequent the reef between March and October. Later in the season, between July and October, the reef becomes a megafauna highway as approximately 30,000

humpback whales pass through on their northerly migration from Antarctica. The reef is also visited by dwarf minke, Bryde's, southern right and pygmy blue whales and three species of dolphin.

The Ningaloo whale shark and humpback whale tourism industry is one of the most environmentally friendly and sustainably operated in the world. Swimming with the whale sharks and whales - and learning about their ecology - are among the most popular, and life-changing, activities for Sal Salis' guests.

"The concentration of marine megafauna at Ningaloo is almost unrivalled in the world. While the reef is protected under Marine Park and World Heritage status, its migratory creatures are under threat. Through the wildlife experiences we offer, our guests gain an understanding of the complexity - and the importance - of the conservation issues," explained Mr Peranovic.





Land-based exploring in remote gorges

While marine adventures may be the major attraction, the rugged landscape of the Cape Range National Park is dissected by deep gorges such as Mandu Mandu and Yardie Creek, sheltering rare reptiles, birds and flora, many of which are found nowhere else on earth. The fossil-bearing limestone formations hide evidence of dinosaurs and a 30,000-year history of human habitation.

During walks, the Sal Salis guides unravel a complex ecosystem, explaining the geological formations and telling the life stories of the extraordinary plants and animals that survive and thrive in the arid ranges.

“Our motivation through the experiences we offer is to expose our guests to the beauty, complexity and fragility of the Ningaloo Reef and Cape Range ecosystems, fostering an understanding of our coexistence within the natural landscape, and the need for conservation,” said Mr Peranovic.

The smallest footprint

The 16 eco-luxury safari tents that make up the camp sit as lightly as possible on the landscape; they are set on raised platforms to protect the flora and fauna beneath them, facing the sea (to capture the cooling breezes as well as the views) and their khaki canvas blends with the dunes. Boardwalks around the camp prevent soil erosion, and the entire camp can be entirely dismantled, leaving barely a trace.

Sal Salis encourages all guests to restrict their water usage to 20 litres per person, per day (compared with the industry average usage of 440 litres); all waste is meticulously removed from the site; ensuite bathrooms feature composting toilets and organic toiletries and solar power is also in use.

Cape Range has been designated a Dark Sky area, and Sal Salis takes measures to minimise night-time light pollution as well as noise pollution; there is no air conditioning, tv, internet or mobile phone coverage at the camp.

“The luxury is in the wilderness experience and the opportunity to reconnect with nature,” said Mr Peranovic.

“The unobtrusiveness of the camp means the local fauna feel safe to visit; it’s not uncommon for guests to find a red kangaroo or euro grazing just outside their tent or – during nesting season – see female turtles laying their eggs on the beach. The remoteness and peace allow the beauty of the landscape and ocean - and their inhabitants - to take centre stage.”





Other sustainability initiatives (Our mandatories):

- Wherever possible, Sal Salis supports producers that are local to the Exmouth region and Western Australia. The lodge menu features fresh local fish and seasonal, local produce – with a hint of bush foods – and fine Western Australian wine.
- Guest soaps are produced locally, are chemical free and incorporate native herbs. Sal Salis supplies organic shampoos and conditioners and urges guests to refrain from using non-eco bathroom products during their stay.
- In keeping with best practice eco-sustainability, Department of Parks and Wildlife and Sal Salis' own sustainable policies, each guest is asked to restrict their water usage to as close to 20 litres per day as possible. Restricting fresh water run-off reduces the likelihood of weed growth and protects the Ningaloo Reef since, ultimately, the shower water percolates through the soil, adding fresh water to the shoreline and to the Reef.
- All the waste generated by the camp is transported back to the Exmouth waste depot. Where possible, chemical containers are reused, while used bottles and cans are separated at camp and returned to the Exmouth recycle depot.
- The lodge's linen is organic cotton and chemical free. Their composition means they can hang dry, eliminating the need for ironing. All laundry is done in Exmouth to minimise water usage and run-off.
- In addition to the Park entrance fees paid on behalf of each guest, five per cent of Sal Salis' turnover is donated to WA's Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Parks and Wildlife Service to directly assist their conservation work in the Cape Range National Park.