Country Western Australia encompasses one-third of Australia’s land area. Its half million people represent only 2.7% of Australia’s and 27% of the State’s population. Basically, country WA is very vast, with a very dispersed and unique population.

COUNTRY REGIONS

Country Western Australia is used to describe nine regions: Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Midwest, Wheatbelt, Goldfields, Great Southern, Peel and SouthWest. There is great diversity between the nine regions, with variety between their individual economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities - no two regions are the same.

WA Country Health Service incorporates 8 of the nine country regions of Western Australia: Kimberley; Pilbara Gascoyne; Midwest Murchison; Goldfields South East; Wheatbelt; SouthWest, and Great Southern.

Kimberley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Centres</th>
<th>Resident Population</th>
<th>Distance From Perth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broome</td>
<td>15,242</td>
<td>2230km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kununurra</td>
<td>5,220</td>
<td>3206km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>3,661</td>
<td>2383km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halls Creek</td>
<td>1,266</td>
<td>2846km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whyndam</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>3216km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy Crossing</td>
<td>1,448</td>
<td>2558km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pilbara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Centres</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distance From Perth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karratha</td>
<td>10,730</td>
<td>1537km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Hedland</td>
<td>12,697</td>
<td>1638km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Newman 3515 1186km
Tom Price 3,094 1458km

Midwest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Centres</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distance From Perth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geraldton</td>
<td>25,324</td>
<td>427km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongara</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>362km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalbarri</td>
<td>2,123</td>
<td>592km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morawa</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>373km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meekathara</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>765km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullewa</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>452km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td>7,189</td>
<td>904km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exmouth</td>
<td>3,027</td>
<td>1263km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goldfields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Centres</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distance From Perth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>28,196</td>
<td>595km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonora</td>
<td>1,072</td>
<td>830km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laverton</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>954km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norseman</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>721km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperance</td>
<td>9,365</td>
<td>730km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravensthorpe</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>540km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wheatbelt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Centres</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distance From Perth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>6,137</td>
<td>97km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moora</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>174km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merredin</td>
<td>2,803</td>
<td>259km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrogin</td>
<td>4,424</td>
<td>192km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cross</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>369km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>96km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Great Southern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Centres</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distance From Perth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>22,256</td>
<td>540km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katanning</td>
<td>3,676</td>
<td>297km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2,433</td>
<td>414km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Barker</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>359km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kojonup</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>256km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnowangerup</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>356km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Populations describe number of residents in the town (rather than the shire). Figures based on 2001 Census.**

CLIMATE

The climate of country WA is varied, ranging from chilly winters in Albany to balmy summer nights on Cable Beach in Broome. The below table provides a summary of the average temperatures across country WA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Winter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilbara</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gascoyne</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldfields</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheatbelt</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Southern</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ECONOMY

One impressive measure of the importance of the country regions to the state of WA is its significant contribution to exports; collectively the country contribute 22% of the nation’s and 82% of the states exports.

Our major industries include: pastoralism, agriculture (crop, wool, livestock) mining (minerals, gas and petroleum), horticulture, aquaculture, and fishing. The tourism industry has also grown rapidly and is no one of the largest contributors to regional economy.

REGION & TOWN INFORMATION

The World Wide Web is a wonderful source of information about areas within country WA. Two very useful resources are the Country Development Commission’s websites and local shire/council websites.

MAPS & STREET DIRECTORIES

Detailed maps of WA can be found on the Department of Local Government and Regional Development website. It is recommended that before you visit a new community that you access a copy street directory and map of the community to give you a better perspective of the town’s location. A range of maps are available for sale or downloadable from the Internet.

PEOPLE & POPULATION

Country WA has a population of over 500,000 people. It includes both regional centres and smaller towns, offering dynamic multicultural communities with a relaxed, friendly lifestyle. Country WA is sparsely populated. Outside of the
metropolitan area, the largest towns are just over 30,000 people in size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2003 Resident Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Kimberley</td>
<td>35,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Pilbara</td>
<td>39,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Midwest</td>
<td>50,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Gascoyne</td>
<td>9,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Goldfields</td>
<td>53,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Great Southern</td>
<td>53,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Wheatbelt</td>
<td>70,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*South West</td>
<td>140,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel</td>
<td>91,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>545,185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes areas within WACHS catchment.

Approximately 82% of country people live in a town, with just 9% on a rural property, and 9% in some other situation (e.g. mine site). Most country people are not born in their current locality. They are from other country areas, the city or from overseas. The regional Western Australian population is highly mobile. This can offer benefits in that you will find many people in the community just like you - new to a town and looking for friends and activities. It is quite amazing how quickly you can make friends (for life) in the country.

GETTING THERE

Train & Bus
TransWA is the primary rail and bus network.
Greyhound offers further bus services. Bus services are available between Perth and most country towns. Rail services are available between Perth and Kalgoorlie (The Prospector)

Car
Cars are the primary mode of travel within country WA. Main Roads (WA) provide excellent resources to assist you in planning travel via car, including the Online Distance Book (maps, routes and recommended stops) on the Department of Main Roads website.

Driving in the country is quite different from metropolitan driving. You need to consider factors such as hazards (weather, wildlife), fatigue and road conditions (typically single lane gravel roads).

Air
Air travel is offered by a number of providers including:

- Qantas: Offers flights from Perth to Newman, Paraburdoo, Port Hedland, Karratha, Broome, Kununurra and Kalgoorlie.
- SkyWest: Offers flights from Perth to Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Albany, Geraldton, Kalbarri, Monkey Mia, Carnarvon, Exmouth, Port Hedland, Kununurra and Broome.
- Virgin: Offers flights from Perth to Broome.

Regional airlines include Skippers (www.skippers.com.au) and NorthWest Regional Airlines (www.northwestregional.com.au)
GETTING AROUND
Most larger communities have taxi and bus services (although bus time tables tend to be quite infrequent). Small communities can be without public transport facilities or taxi services. If you are not taking your own transport, this can make getting around the community a little more difficult. Before you go out to a community, look in to:

- The distance of your accommodation from your work site and other facilities, such as supermarkets.
- Local transport facilities, such as buses and taxis.
- Alternative transport, such as bike hire, which is often a cheap option worth thinking about.

POST & COMMUNICATION
Australia Post

Most country communities have a local post office. Australia post provides comprehensive information about postal rates, postcodes and delivery times. A range of services is available at the local post offices including bill pay, car license renewal. Postage between the metropolitan and the country areas typically takes two days. For more remote sites, delivery time is longer. Always check the mail delivery times before sending mail.

Telephones & Mobiles
All country communities have access to land or satellite phones. Mobile phone coverage will be specific to your local carrier, with some carriers not having reception in all countries communities. It is recommended you check mobile phone coverage for service before moving to a new community.

Internet Access
In recent years there has been significant improvement in Internet access. The roll out of broadband to country WA means people now have faster and more reliable access to the Internet. Many towns also have public access through Internet Cafes, local libraries or through local Telecentre.

Newspapers & Magazines
The West Australian newspaper is the main daily newspaper in WA, printed from Monday to Saturday. The Sunday Times is the main Sunday paper. Both papers are available in most country towns. Delivery times vary between towns (depending on the distance from Perth). Most country communities also have a local newspaper (see www.nla.gov.au/npapers)
Radio and TV
Four television stations operate in country WA: GWN, WIN, ABC and SBS. Most communities have access to local AM and FM stations. Triple J (JJJ) is available in many country towns.

EDUCATION

Child Care
Child care facilities are available in most larger country towns. For child care services visit the Yellow Pages (www.yellowpages.com.au) under ‘Child Care’. Care for Kids (www.careforkids.com.au) also provides a listing of childcare facilities in country WA.

Primary and Secondary Schools
Primary and high schools are located across country WA. The Department of Education and Training provides a comprehensive profile of all public primary and secondary schools. Private primary and high schools are also available.

TAFE
TAFE Colleges are based across a number of country communities.

University
WA has four principal universities, some with country campus: Curtin University of Technology (Perth, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Karratha); University of Western Australia (Perth); Murdoch University (Perth); Edith Cowan University (Perth); and Notre Dame University (Perth, Broome).

LIFESTYLE

People in country WA feel safe, have a strong affinity with their location and are generally happy with community facilities (particularly sports). Country people are perceived as very friendly and thrive on community spirit.

THINGS TO DO

Public and School Holidays
There are 10 public holidays in Western Australia; New Years Day, Australia Day, Labour Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day, Foundation Day, Queens Birthday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Some country towns also celebrate the Queens Birthday on alternative dates, to coincide with local events of significance.
Field Days, Shows and Fairs

Local community shows or fairs are events not to be missed event. In fact many of these events have become iconic of the Australian culture (e.g. Dowerin Field Day, Ord Valley Muster etc.). Local shire websites usually include a calendar of community events. A small snapshot of the diversity of country fairs include:

---

Kimberley
- Derby Rodeo: August
- Boab Festival: July
- Halls Creek Agricultural Show: July
- The Ord Valley Muster: May
- Top of the West Festival: September
- Stair Case to the Moon: August

Pilbara Gascoyne
- Karratha Festival: June
- Dampier Fishing Classic: August
- Cossack Fair and Regatta: June
- Port Headland Festival: January
- Tropical Festival (Carnarvon): May
- Fremantle to Carnarvon Yachting Classic: May

Midwest Murchison
- Batavia Coast Fishing Classic: April
- Festival of Geraldton (Sunshine Festival): October
- Morawa Music Spectacular: October
- Perenjori Agricultural Show: September
- Minganew Expo: September
- Northampton Airing of the Quits: October
- Qfest (Cue): October

Goldfields South East
- Kalgoorlie - Boulder Community Fair: March
- Diggers and Dealers Forum: July
- World 2 Up Championship: September
- Goldfields Mining Expo: November
- Coolgardie Day: September
- Agricultural Show with Esperance Shears: October
- Sailboard Classic (Esperance): December

Wheatbelt
- Pingelly Art and Tulip Festival: August
- Eisteddfod Music Festival (Narrogin): July
- Across the Lake Regatta: January
- Kellerberrin Agricultural Show: September
- Vintage Fair and Country Festival (Merredin): Sept-Oct
- Central Wheatbelt Games: May
- Moondyne Colonial & Convict Festival: August
- Avon Descent Festival: April
- Camel Races (Northam): November
- Country Music Festival

Great Southern
- Great Southern Wine Festival: February
- Winter Festival: August
- Mount Barker Mardi Gras: January
- Wildflower Festival: September

SouthWest
- Vintage Blues Festival: January
- Leeuwin Concert: February
- Margaret River Pro (Surfing): March
- Quit Forrest Rally: May

Visit the Calendar of Events at www.westernaustralia.com for a full list of events.
THINGS TO SEE

Living in a country community puts you that one step closer to some of the amazing travel opportunities in country WA. You can dive with the whale sharks, walk amongst the tree tops of ancient trees, sleep under canopy of stars in the desert, explore the gorges and wilderness areas, or live it up in a seaside resort. Living in country WA can be a truly amazing Australian outback experience.

Kimberley
- Cable Beach
- Dampier Peninsula
- Beagle Bay
- Buccaneer Archipelago
- Bungle Bungle Range
- Horizontal Waterfalls
- Bell Gorge
- Geikie Gorge National Park
- Lake Argyle
- Mitchell Plateau

Pilbara
- Karujini National Park
- Ophthalmia Range
- Historic Cossack
- Millstream-Chichester & Cape Range National Park
- Mount Augustus National Park

Gascoyne
- Ningaloo Reef
- Monkey Mia, Sharks Bay & Coral Bay
- Dampier Archipelago

Midwest
- Badgingarra National Park
- Kalbarri National Park (Nature’s Window, Hawk’s Head, Loop & Z-Bend)
- Geraldton Maritime Museum
- Murchison River Gorge
- Wildflower Way
- Batavia Coast

Goldfields
- Lake Ballard
- Broad Arrow, Kookynie, Ora Banda & Gwalia
- Two Up School & Super Pit
- Hannans Tourist Mine
- Recherche Archipelago
- Great Ocean Drive
- Cape Le Grand & Frenchman’s Peak
- Windarra Heritage Trail

Wheatbelt
- Historic town of York
- Pinnacles Desert
- New Norcia
- Wildflower Way
- Nambung National Park
- Wave Rock
- Hippo’s Yawn Cave
- Yanchep National Park

Great Southern
- Valley of the Giants
- Porongurup & Stirling Ranges
- Frenchman’s Bay
- Castle Rock & Bluff Knoll
- Green’s Pool & Elephant Rocks
- Whale World

SouthWest
- Cape Naturalist & Cape Leeuwin
- Blackwood River
- Lake & Mammoth Cave
- Surfers Point Lookout
- Gloucester Tree
- Coomoona Bay
- Wine Tasting in Margaret River
- Busselton Jetty

Entertainment, Culture and Special Events

Country towns are never short of entertainment, including touring bands, cinema and a range of cultural events. You will also find yourself engaged in entertainment unique to community (e.g. festivals, race days, fairs etc). Entertainment is not less in the country - but it is different.

Sport and Activities

Sport is the lifeblood of rural communities and is often the key to socialising. Most rural communities, even the smallest ones, will offer a range of sporting options from football, netball, swimming, soccer, golf, lawn bowls, hockey and tennis, to the more adventurous windsurfing, ballooning, skydiving and scuba diving.

Pubs and Clubs

The Aussie pub is the cornerstone of any country WA community. No matter how small, all country towns will have a have a pub or sports club (or two). Nightclubs are not so common, mostly only available in the bigger country centres.
Clubs & Organisations
Clubs such as Rotary and Lions are a major part of rural community life, so are volunteer organisations such as Volunteer Fire Brigade, St Johns Ambulance and State Emergency Service (SES). They can be a great way to not only get involved in the community, but also meet new people.

Eating Out
The number and type of restaurants depend on the size of the town. Most towns will have a roadhouse or a local pub. Larger towns will have a range of restaurants and cafes. Fast food outlets vary also. MacDonald's/Hungry Jacks are only found in the larger regional centres. Chicken Treat, Red Rooster and KFC are available in a great range of medium to large communities.

FACILITIES AND AMMENITIES
Costs of Living
The cost of living varies depending on location. For example in the Pilbara and Kimberley the cost of household amenities are the same as in Perth, but up to 30-40% higher for accommodation. Food prices, especially fruit and vegetables vary significant, and increase the more remote your location. The price of petrol also rises the further you are from Perth. It is recommended you research cost of living variances by talking to a local community member before arrival.

Banks & Money
Most country towns have access to at least one bank branch and an ATM. Before arriving in your new community it is recommended you check access to branches and ATMs with your bank. The most common banks in country WA are Bankwest, ANZ, Westpac, Commonwealth, and National.

Shopping
Most country towns have at least one supermarket in the community. Target is located in Bunbury, Broome, Kununurra, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Merredin, Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Katanning, Northam, and Narrogin. Kmart is located in Albany, Kalgoorlie, and South Hedland.

Country towns don’t usually have access to large department stores such as Myer, David Jones or many of the specialty clothes boutiques. However, mail order and Internet based shopping is becoming...
a lot more popular – with your all your favourite brands just the Internet and post away.

Recreation
Swimming pools (especially if you live inland) and recreation facilities are available in most towns. Refer to the local council websites to view amenities available in a community.

Accommodation
Rental rates and property prices in country communities vary significantly. For general guidance regarding prices visit www.reiwa.com.au

FLORA & FAUNA
WA is renowned for its diversity of plants and animals. Magnificent wildflowers begin blooming in mid-winter in the north and sweep south to end the season in mid to late summer along the cooler south coast. Country WA also harbours a range of wildlife, although care and distance does need to be exercised to protect both them and yourself. Living side by side with our wonderful fauna does come with some responsibility:

- Be alert for kangaroos and emus when driving in country areas, as they do tend to cross the road unexpectedly, especially at dusk and dawn.
- Watch out for stray sheep or cattle that may wander on the road.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance - please don’t feed them, and avoid chasing them (or letting your pets chase them).
- The North West waterways are home to the saltwater and freshwater crocodile. They are natural predators and considered very dangerous to humans. Always observe warning signs and if in doubt DO NOT swim, canoe or use small boats in estuaries, tidal rivers and deep pools.

For further information visit the Nature Base website developed the Department of Environment and Conservation (www.calm.wa.gov.au).

SETTLING INTO A COUNTRY COMMUNITY

Country WA represents a significant diversity of communities. As you can see facilities, activities, and people are unique for each town. Moving to the country is a big decision. It often involves leaving family, friends and established social networks. Not only are you starting a new job, but also you starting a new life. Before moving to the country you need to decide what country town is for you.

Research
Investigate the type of community you would like to live in. Remember you are moving to the community not only to work, but also to live in. It has to suit you in and outside of work. Ask yourself what are you basic community requirements (e.g. can you live without the beach, or access to a gym). You also need to think about how far away from your friends and family you would like to be. Do you want to go back to the city frequently? Do you need to be in driving distance from a bigger community with greater services/facilities? Spend some time researching the community.

Talk
Talk to people who live in the community. Find out first hand what it is like to be a ‘local’. The local tourism centre can be extremely helpful, as can other local health professionals.

Visit
If possible try and visit the town before deciding to move. There is no better way to appreciate a community than to physically see and explore it. The cost of visiting the town is a small price to pay to ensure that the town if suitable for you.
SETTLING IN

People jokingly say that you have to born in a town to be a local. Despite this, all rural communities are very welcoming of new people to town. Some sure fire ways to help you transition include:

1. Visit the local library and tourist centre. These centers distribute maps, newspapers, community calendars, brochures and much more.
2. Invite a close relative or friend to stay with you right after the move. The two of you can explore unfamiliar territory together, and you'll have an extra pair of hands to help unpack.
3. Remember the rule about six degrees of separation. Contact friends and relatives about their ties to your new town. Someone always will know someone who lives or who has lived in your new community. Give them a call or take them to coffee/the pub and ask them to tell you about the town.
4. Buy a map and start exploring. Seeing your new town is fun and right away gives you something in common with other people. And you'll start developing your favourite haunts—a true sign of home!
5. Join a local sports team (even if you have never played that sports before - have a go!). Many health professionals have suddenly become tennis players or soccer plays on arrival to a new town.
6. Say YES to everything. As the new person in town and at work you will be invited to attend a host of activities, parties and gatherings. Even though it is uncomfortable to begin with (unless you are the extrovert social butterfly) go along and make the effort - it will be worth it in the long run.
7. Look for things in the new community that you enjoyed in your old one. If you enjoy golf, find out about your local golf facilities. If you were part of a support group, see if there is a similar group in town.
8. Go to all the local community events (even then ones you would never have considered going to before moving). Local events are an important part of the country life.
9. Buy to local newspaper. This is an easy and enjoyable way to get acquainted with a new community and to get a taste of what life is like there.
10. Become a volunteer. Community service and volunteerism may be one of the best ways to create meaningful new ties. Find opportunities through local community centers or library, your job, churches, or schools, or online. Join a club! Salsa dancing, rock climbing, chess?
11. Latch on to other newbies. Seek out other families/people who have moved recently. Chances are they will be in the same stage of getting settled, so their calendars will have as much white space as yours.