



WHAT IS GEOHERITAGE?

Geoheritage is the **recognition and management** of geological sites of **local, state, national or international significance**. As well as **scientifically, culturally or aesthetically important localities**, geoheritage aims to identify and preserve sites that are **representative of important geological processes** within a region. By **educating** people about geoheritage, it allows them to appreciate the value of individual sites, their geological history, and their relationship to surrounding landscapes.

Why would you want to protect a rock?

Contrary to popular thought, **rocks, outcrops and landscapes change constantly**. Like flora, fauna and cultural sites, landforms can be adversely affected by **human activities** – including overgrazing, land clearing, weeds, improper irrigation, mining, illegal fossicking, construction and overtourism. Vulnerable sites must be carefully managed to ensure they are **preserved for everyone, both now and far into the future**.

Geoheritage, meet geotourism!

The significant nature and exceptional beauty of geoheritage sites makes them **attractive to tourists and travellers**. However, not all geoheritage sites are suitable for tourism, as the passage of many people over long periods of time can put undue pressure on particularly unstable or delicate locations.

Western Australia is recognized for our **precious and rare plants and animals**, and **rich human history**, including the world's oldest living culture.

But less widely recognized is the fact that the State's **unique rocks and landscapes** underpin both our biological diversity and cultural significance. Our **geological history, landforms and soils** create an environment that has encouraged both biological and cultural adaptation.

Western Australia is also home to unique and iconic geological sites, including **some of the oldest rocks on the Australian continent**, evidence of the **world's oldest minerals and fossils**, and a vast array of **rock types, landforms, soils and environments** – all of which allow us to better understand and appreciate our origins and place in the world.

Geoheritage is the way we recognize the State's most important geological sites and protect them for future generations.

ABOUT GSWA

The **Geological Survey of Western Australia (GSWA)** is responsible for the management and delivery of geological knowledge for Western Australia. We have experts covering a **range of geoscience fields**, and have **over 130 years of geological research** to draw upon. We are strongly committed to promoting and encouraging the best use of the State's abundant geological resources, whether through mining, energy exploration, land use, tourism or heritage.

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A traveller's guide to

GEOHERITAGE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



SITES AND RESERVES

Western Australia has two levels of recognition for sites of geological significance – **Geoheritage Reserves** and **Geoheritage Sites**. Both are listed on the **State Geoheritage Register**, and are managed by GSWA.

Geoheritage Reserves have legal status as State C Class Reserves. They are managed by the Executive Director of GSWA on behalf of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. Geoheritage Reserves are only created for sites of **exceptional international significance** that are vulnerable to damage or destruction through foot traffic and sampling. For each site, a **management plan** outlines what activities can or cannot be undertaken. For most Geoheritage Reserves, **it is illegal to enter the reserve without prior approval**. Activities such as camping, driving over outcrops, prospecting and fossicking are prohibited in all Geoheritage Reserves, and scientific research and sampling are strictly controlled and require prior approval.

Geoheritage Sites do not have legal status, but access restrictions may apply. Sites within unallocated Crown land (UCL), national parks, nature or other reserves are managed by other State or Federal departments and permission must be sought from the relevant agency prior to entry. Those on private land cannot be visited without written permission of the landowner. Written permission must also be obtained from lease holders when crossing pastoral leases, same as the requirements placed on prospectors or fossickers (www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/minerals/). For some areas, permissions from Native Title holders may also be required. Although there are no specific restrictions linked to Geoheritage Sites compared to Geoheritage Reserves, the Sites are still geologically special places and care should be taken not to damage outcrops, litter, camp, drive through or collect rocks from those locations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO *to protect our State Geoheritage*



1

Before travelling through an area, check if you will be passing through any Geoheritage Sites or Reserves. You can do this using GSWA's interactive geological map system, GeoVIEW.WA (www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/geoview). In the left-hand margin, go to Special Category Lands > Geoheritage sites.

2

Passing through a Geoheritage Reserve? Complete the Access application form, accessible through the Geoheritage page on the DMIRS website (www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/geoheritage). Don't forget to obtain all other land-access permissions relevant to the area surrounding the Reserve as well.

3

Passing through a Geoheritage Site? Check the land ownership and management status using the 'Cadastral' layer on GeoVIEW.WA, and obtain written permission from all relevant parties (land owners, pastoralists, Traditional Owners, mining tenement holders, and/or other Reserve managers).

4

Do some research to appreciate the importance of the landscapes in which you are travelling. Apps, books and pamphlets can help you understand the State's geology and its importance. See GSWA's Geotourism page (www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/geotourism) for Virtual Tours and free PDF flyers and booklets.

5

6

Report any damage or wrongdoing. If you see any damage to sites you visit, or you see people disrespecting our State geoheritage, please send a report to the Geoheritage team (geoheritage@dmirs.wa.gov.au). Photos of the damage are also helpful, if available. This will help us investigate any wrongdoing and keep track of potential issues at individual sites.

7

Educate others! Let other people know about geoheritage and the ways we can work together to protect our geological heritage.

Don't collect rocks, damage outcrops, or camp in Geoheritage Sites or Reserves. These sites are important to our State, and in some cases, are critical in understanding the history of our continent and our planet. Respect the sites as you would any other cultural icon or sacred place.

For questions on geoheritage, including specific Sites or Reserves, contact geoheritage@dmirs.wa.gov.au.

GSWA supports responsible geotourism within the State, and promotes it with different types of publications and products.

New Geoheritage Sites can be nominated by anyone. Proposals are assessed based on the type and level of **scientific significance** (whether international, national, state, regional or local), **representability** (compared to other features of the same type), **vulnerability**, and **utility** to education and other purposes