

Jane's page

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Who would have thought there was so much interest on a journey across the Nullarbor? From east to west and back again, right across from Port Augusta to Esperance was a fascinating couple of weeks on the road. There were many highlights and plenty of interest horticulturally,

especially for me who loved getting out of the car at every opportunity to see the native vegetation along the way.

I have always had a fascination for Edward John Eyre, the early Australian explorer who walked with a couple of indigenous people and some camels on the sandy dunes following the coastline of the Great Australian Bight. It took him several months and, think about undertaking this incredible journey so long ago in the heat, lack of water and isolation! At least his name is kept on with the official name of the highway named after him. We stayed a couple of nights at the old Eyre telegraph station, now taken over by Birds Australia and known as the Eyre Bird Observatory. It is a marvellous place in the middle of the Nullarbor, near Cocklebiddy, nestled into 30 metre high pure white sand dunes with loads of birds - many of them sea birds because of the position right on The Bight. If you ever want a lovely restful place to go while on this journey keep it in mind. We were treated to a great display by the Major Mitchell cockatoos in all their glory.



Other highlights were the whales that come into the little coves along The Bight between July and September. The Head of Bight Interpretation Centre is one of the locations for the mother whales to have their babies in the waters close by and we saw large numbers of them. It's an incredible sight to see the largest mammals on earth. Close by the amazing Bunda cliffs, over 100 metres high that drop straight down to the Southern Ocean. They are the edge of the huge limestone plateau that makes up most of the Nullarbor Plain.

The vegetation along the highway was constantly changing from low saltbush to mallee gums with odd splashes of yellow cassia (senna). Near Norseman, in WA, one of the most spectacular sights was kilometre after kilometre of the salmon gum, *Eucalyptus salmonophloia*. Their trunks glow orange, pink and salmon colour and when the sun hits them they dazzle. Esperance is a great place to start looking at the WA wildflowers. There is an arboretum nearby with



a fantastic cultivated collection of grevilleas, banksias and hakeas, all in full flower in August. Cape le Grand National Park is well worth exploring for its orchids and low growing heath type plants, along with the most magnificent white sandy beaches and huge granite boulders.

If you are looking for a great holiday, restful as well as interesting, I would highly recommend the Nullarbor Plain and all the things you see along the way. We live in a great country and it is worth exploring.

**Jane is our esteemed Patron.
She supplied the photos.**