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The Travel Issue

SUP & The Land Down Under - A Love Tribute “The Wild West”

by Gabi Steindl



Photos this page
1. James McCarthy-Price
2. Corey Jones
3. Go-Pro Hero

Paddle-boarding is changing lives all around the world every day, and SUP certainly has changed my life too... needless to mention for the better' ☺

Having been travelling the world as a professional kiter for the past ten years and as a super passionate surfer, I've been hooked on the SUP virus ever since my very first go at it. Paddleboarding has given me the opportunity to see the world through different eyes.

Our pioneering sport is enabling me to enjoy my life-force - the ocean - in additional and different ways and has opened up new possibilities and opportunities for new adventures, new thrills, new playgrounds, new stokes.

I came to experience the energy of our amazing sport for the very first time when a kite-mission with a photographer led me to Western Australia in 2008;... and I fell in love with both: the sport and the country. Today W.A. is my adopted home-base, where I live, train and from where I start my trips I could hardly imagine a day without picking up one of my beloved SUPs to enjoy a session in the waves, a down winder, a meditative cruise up the river or a couple of yoga moves on top of my board.

Western Australia is an amazing piece of paradise and its SUP playgrounds are sheer endless. With a total area of 2.53 million square kilometers it's Australia's largest state and usually simply called 'W.A.'. In W.A. the words 'distance, area, width' gain new dimensions, in order for those of you who have not been there yet to imagine a little better what I am talking about, I must briefly bore you with some figures - yes travelling should educate: W.A. is with an area of 2,529,875 km² about seven times as large as Germany.

In that area live approximately 2,003,800 inhabitants. Three quarters of those 2 million people live in Perth, on an area equal to 0.2% of the national total. So: 75% of the population lives on 0.2% of the land - or vice versa: a quarter of the population (roughly 500,000) make up the population of the remaining 99.8% area. It gets even more lonely when you consider that the remaining approximately 500,000 residents concentrate largely along the coast and predominantly in the southwest corner of the state. Mind you, that is more than understandable, as the southwest grows delicious wine; plus it has some of the best waves and most consistent swell all year, producing some of the largest high performance waves in the world.

From the intense barrelling beach- and reef breaks of the south west, to the long and hollow point breaks of the rather inhospitable north, W.A. offers wave-addicts the ultimate experience.

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The states' characteristics and roughness with all its potential playgrounds is what drew me to establish myself here.

Margaret River in the South West is my home base these days and big waves are nothing unusual here. Being fully exposed to the full force of the Roaring Forties and Southern Ocean swells, makes Margaret River's breaks without a doubt the most consistent performers on this part of the coast, perhaps even the entire West. Swell size here is nearly unrestricted. "Main Break", Margaret River's most (in)famous wave-spot, is known and loved for its steep drops, heavy barrels and long perfect walls. "Mainies" (as the locals call it affectionately) is capable of holding up to 12 metre faces without closing out and is greatly appreciated by surfers, wind and kitesurfers.

Perth, Australia's third largest metropolis is the most isolated large city on earth. The nearest major city is Adelaide, some 2,845 km away. Perth is closer to Jakarta than it is to Sydney and has an average of eight hours of sunshine per day more than any other Australian city. The Aborigines call this place 'Alunga', freely translated as "place with plenty of sun".

The "Wild West" as it is known to many travelling surfers and wave-junkies of all sorts (windsurf, kite, surf, SUP etc.) is home to some of the most powerful waves outside Hawaii. It has established a reputation for its remote Indian Ocean and Southern Ocean swells. W.A.'s pristine coastline, hollow waves and spectacular marine life are simply mind-blowing. There are quite a few 'bigger, not so friendly fish' inhabiting the ocean here as well as rather lethal snakes, spiders and other creatures on the land; but that's quite simply 'part of it' and they were here before we were.

One of surfing's last frontiers, W.A. is the land of heavy waves, red dirt tracks, lots of space, and the long road trip with lots of native animals - driving here, I often feel like I'm on a safari! Kangaroos, emus, porcupines, bungarrows (a large sand goanna)... recently even a thorny devil crossed the dirt track in front of me. This state is a very special piece of paradise in its own right, where the desert meets the ocean. With hundreds of miles of uncrowded beaches, wild tracks, sand dunes and in certain parts amazing lush, giant trees W.A. is the perfect place for four wheel driving and a 'journey on the wild side', needless to mention, getting bogged is part of that ☺ - but regardless of the difficulties any road trip is always rewarding! In fact, the harder a road trip proves to be, the more valuable and unforgettable are the experiences you gain out of it!



- 3 Photos this page
1. CJ Ranga
2. M Grand
3. Go-Pro Hero





Paddleboarding on this wave is a no-go, unless on the very rare days with basically zero swell and no surfers in the water. There are a considerable number of great SUP waves all around the south west and the rest of the state. Further down and around the coast, like for example in the Walpole area and in the mid-west Geraldton area, there's so many sweet SUP waves to be found. Even when one has to head up to 'the big smoke' Perth, it's worth taking the paddleboard along as the reefies and beachies up there can be great joy too!

Whilst I really dig pushing my limits in the surf, I simply also LOVE to go and explore new, uncharted territories with my SUP and W.A. has near endless possibilities to do that.

Recently I landed "the jackpot"!

It was a mission of many days. travelling several thousand kilometres, which incorporated pretty much everything that an explorer trip really should; lots and lots of off-road driving, sleeping in a swag under the stars, having lizards 'knocking' frothing to come for a SUP ☺, meeting amazing people in remote places, climbing cliffs, getting bogged, a couple of flat tires, deep new cuts in my feet and many more challenges along the way but there's absolutely no doubt that all the efforts paid off big time! I will never forget the magic moments discovering beaches with backdrops that made me feel like I was on another planet. I felt like somewhere on the moon, the cliffs and mind-blowing rocks got me dreaming, back to an age where all this would still have been under water, in the deep ocean...

Revelling in the power of nature as I glide over the transparent liquid surface is pure magic... absolutely breathtaking. The experience blows my mind every time, this country is so raw and powerful, and our sport is so incredible. I'm continually finding myself grinning ear to ear, and every SUP and new adventure leaves me stoked for a long, long time! Thanks to Mother Nature, the land "down under" and the evolution of SUP - SUP is taking me on journeys I never thought possible... www.kitegabi.com



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