

DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE



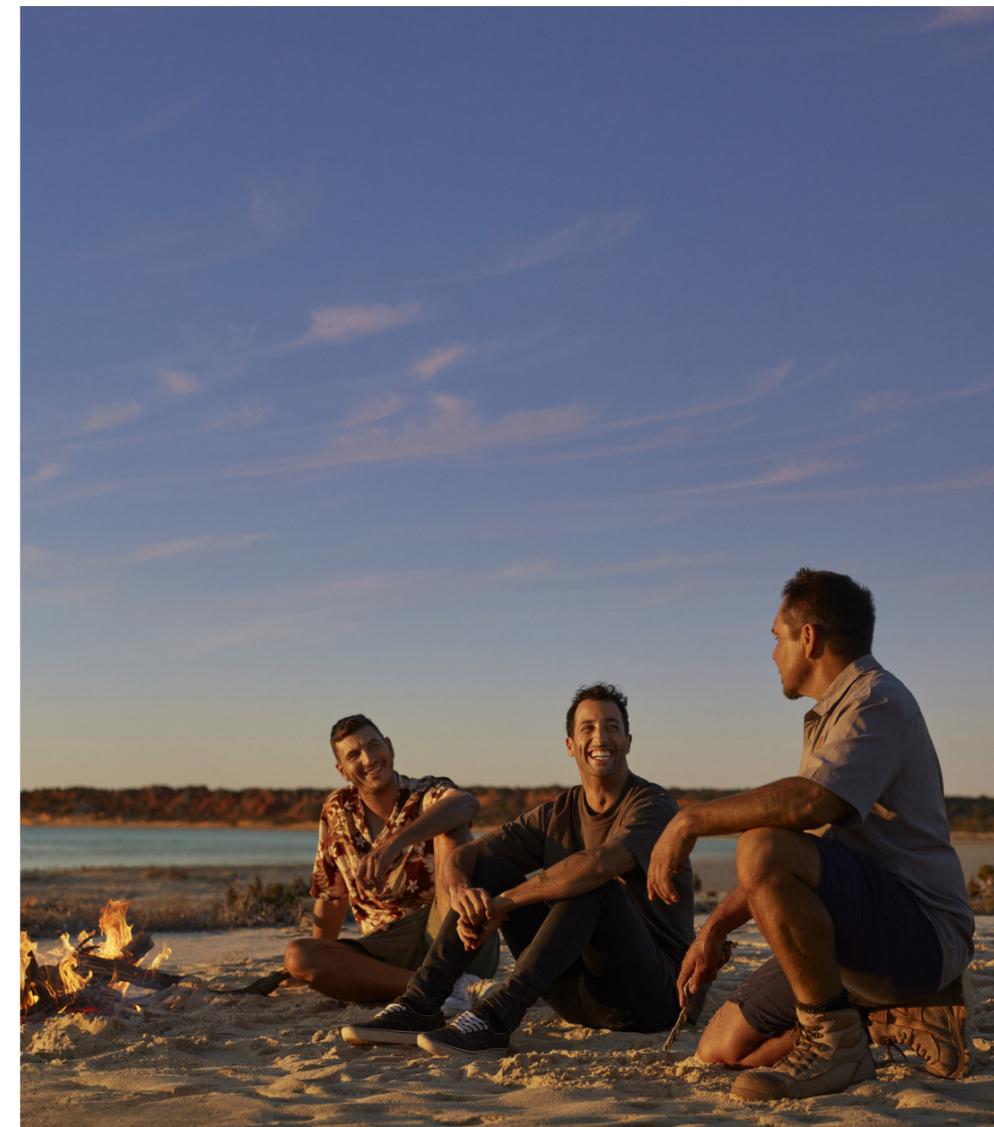
In his free time, Formula One driver **Daniel Ricciardo** doesn't slow down. This year he took on a bucket-list adventure by road-tripping down Western Australia's Coral Coast highway. **Anna Smith** spoke with him in September about life on the road, swimming with whale sharks and the importance of always having your bathers at hand.

Left

Daniel's top WA tip is to never forget your bathers!

Right

Daniel and Blake met with indigenous representative Darren 'Capes' Capewell



In the world of motorsport, Daniel Ricciardo is a bit of a legend. The charmer of the Formula One paddock, he's ruthless on track, and known for a tenacious driving style that gives the best a run for their money.

His job sees him travel the world for eleven months of the year and race the highest tech cars on the planet. When it comes to adventuring in his down-time, you'd think he'd need something pretty unique to stand up to his day-to-day - especially if he once again ends up behind the wheel of a car.

We spoke to Daniel in September to find out what adventure travel looks like to someone who travels and seeks thrills for a living. The Perth native regaled us with the tales of his dream adventure: a Western Australia (WA) road trip.

On the Road Again

Daniel, with best friend Blake, headed north along the Coral Coast Highway from Perth to Exmouth. Journeying straight to the scorched sands of the Nambung National Park and Pinnacles Desert, it would be easy to forget they were in the middle of a buzzing city just hours before. The bizarre, 30,000-year-old limestone formations look like they were dropped off by some alien species - spectacular and wildly unique. There's no wonder why it's been on Daniel's bucket-list for so long;

Wired For Adventure: *What's your favourite adventure destination?*

Daniel Ricciardo: *It has to be Western Australia and I had that outlook even before starting the road trip! I think everyone is probably a little guilty of not fully appreciating what's in their own backyard, but we're definitely spoilt here. If it's beaches or farmland or forests, we just have so many options here to be outside and exploring, I sound like a kid but it's what I love.*

Rookie Errors

Cruising on to Jurien Bay, the stunning white sand beaches that Australia is known for crept into view. As a WA native, Daniel is no stranger to these incomparable views and has some advice for people coming from less coastal climes.

WFA: *What's your top insider tip for people visiting WA for the first time?*

DR: *Oh, there is a lot of pressure for this answer! Okay, my one essential tip might sound simple but trust me on this - have a pair of board shorts or a bikini ready and with you at all times. We came across so many amazing beaches, literally stumbled across them with white sand, clear water and had them all to ourselves - you want to jump in and go for a swim immediately. I learnt my lesson after my board*

shorts were in the bottom of my suitcase jammed in the back of the boot. Rookie error!

With your bathers in hand, this stop on the road trip gives you the chance to meet Australian sea lions, as well as hit the trails on the Three Bays Walkway. This easy hike transports you from one gorgeous bay to the next and is relentlessly beautiful.

Two's Company

The pair spent a few days heading through Greenough, Geraldton and Kalbarri. Along the way they witnessed the bizarre and wonderful of Australia's west coast, including the Greenough leaning trees and the famous pink lake (Hutt Lagoon) near Kalbarri. Equally as impressive is the Kalbarri National Park, with unique rock formations and river gorges that are as spectacular as their surrounds.

WFA: *What makes a good road trip companion?*

DR: *Thankfully I was able to do this road trip with Blake - we've been best friends for twenty plus years so I couldn't really ask for a better companion. I'm really fortunate with him. We've grown up together, raced alongside each other in go-karts and*

still managed to stay close. I think we've had one fight all this time and it was over a PlayStation game or something. As a road trip buddy, he was perfect. We both enjoy an adventure and he's relaxed and always up for a laugh, the only problem is making sure the big guy has leg room!

Stories of the Land

The adventure continues at Shark Bay. From visiting the friendly Monkey Mia bottlenose dolphins to 4-wheel-drive tours, you could spend weeks here and not get bored.

For Daniel however, it was a much more introspective experience. He spent his time with indigenous representative Daren 'Capes' Capewell.

DR: *[Capes] is a descendant of the Nhandu and Malgana people. Firstly, he was just a great bloke - hilarious and an amazing ambassador of Western Australia, but he talked Blake and I through the importance of not only connecting with each other but connecting with the land itself. It's something you take for granted until somebody makes you aware of it and I'm just very thankful that he did. We then shared some fish he had caught, cooked it over a fire on the beach all whilst watching sunset, it really was a cool moment.*



The Nhandu and Malgana people that Capes is a descendent of have subsisted in the area (known as 'gutharraguda' in Malgana) for more than 30000 years. Capes set up Wula Gura Nyinda Cultural Adventures (www.wulagura.com.au) to show visitors the beauty of the land and educate them on Nhandu and Malgana culture and practices.

Swimming with Giants

On the final leg of the trip, Daniel drove up to Ningaloo Reef to face the one adventure that felt too extreme even for him, a professional thrill seeker.

WFA: Given that you do an extreme sport for a living, is there a sport or activity that is too extreme for you?

DR: Before this road trip I would've said swimming with whale sharks, but I've crossed that off the list! When I first got told about heading to Ningaloo Reef, swimming with whale sharks, that definitely sounded extreme but I'm so happy I did it, genuinely unforgettable.

No matter the time of year, you can have an unforgettable mega-fauna experience at Ningaloo Reef, with whale sharks from March to August, humpback whales from July to October, turtle tours from September to March and manta rays all year round.

All Over Again

Driving up to Exmouth, there is the chance to experience the sun rising and setting over the same ocean on the same day at Sunrise Beach. This caps off a truly unique road trip for Daniel and Blake with an equally surreal experience.

I couldn't help but ask what was next for him, having just waved the chequered flag on his bucket list adventure. As it turns out, he would simply do it all over again.

WFA: What's your dream adventure?

DR: Anywhere in Western Australia with my niece and nephew. When I got back from the road trip, they literally couldn't stop asking me questions and their eyes lit up every time I mentioned something. I'm still not sure they believe me about the whale sharks. But just being able to take them on an adventure, show them different landscapes and wildlife would be a dream.

I won't lie, it's pretty hard to match being in an F1 car and racing alongside someone, but I really take a lot from being able to slow down and go on an adventure. I'm traveling for 11 months of the year, back-to-back races across different countries, so whenever I get the opportunity to spend time outdoors, I jump at it. Yes, it might not be an adrenaline-charged thrill all the time, but it's just as important to me. **W**

To watch Daniel live his WA dream, head to Western Australia's YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/westernaustralia

Left

Daniel and Blake stargazing in one of WAs many stunning deserts

Above

Swimming with whale sharks was almost too extreme for Daniel