



There are more amazing places in Australia where you can 4WD and camp than you'd ever be able to explore in a year on the road (although we're trying)! Pick up a 4WD book or magazine, and you'll see a lot of places are mentioned repeatedly – but there are plenty that are less well-known, thus less frequently travelled.

One of the most under-rated and stunning regions you can explore with a 4WD is the Pilbara area in Western Australia. In this blog, we share some of our favourites, what you need to take, the best time to visit, and – most importantly – why you should make the effort!



*One of the most stunning regions you can explore with a 4WD is the Pilbara*

## About the Pilbara

For many people, the Pilbara conjures images of mining. The infrastructure and number of workers in the Pilbara at any one time is nothing short of staggering. From Gold to Iron Ore, salt, and plenty more – you'll find the average Pilbara town bustling with high-vis FIFO workers every single day of the week (including weekends)!

However, if you step back to look at the stunning area itself, it's hard not to be blown away. From magical beaches to giant red rocks that appear as though someone's just piled them up, and some of the most remote and stunning gorges and water holes you'll ever see in your life – there's more to see in the Pilbara than many would know. I often consider it to be a little sister of the Kimberley region. It really is that good.



*The Pilbara is a fairly rocky place!*

## Where is the Pilbara?

Technically speaking, the Pilbara starts between Port Hedland and Broome, travels down the coast to just past Onslow, South to Paraburdoo and Newman, and then considerably East. It covers a huge length of coastline and a significant part of the inland region too – totalling some 500,000 square kilometres! Compared to other parts of Australia, the number of people travelling here is significantly less.

## Best Time to Visit the Pilbara?

Being somewhere between Perth and the Kimberley, the Pilbara brings about a combination of both seasons. It receives rainfall almost all year (although rarely between May and September), and the amount of rain is substantially less than what's received in the Kimberley.

This means that between May and September is the perfect time to visit the Pilbara. The weather is cooler, the water holes are full, and the area is glowing with lush, green growth. You can visit outside of this period without any issues – but be aware that it can get incredibly hot in the Pilbara, and it's a gruelling place to be if you aren't careful!



*Between May and September, the weather is cooler, the water holes are full, and the area is lush.*



## Safety in the Pilbara

This region should not be underestimated. Towns are few and far between, and you want to be very well-prepared for something to go wrong. Phone reception is often limited to the major towns and nearby some mine sites, and in the more remote places you may not see a vehicle for days on end.

Taking the right spare parts, a method of communication if something happens (a PLB or satellite phone), and plenty of food and water is a *must*. Plan your route, and let someone know both what you're doing and what to do if you don't make it back within your proposed timeline.

If you do run into trouble, never leave your vehicle. Travel with another vehicle if you can – and if you are going solo, ensure you are well and truly ready and able. It's a beautiful area, but it can be incredibly harsh for the unprepared.

## 4WDing in the Pilbara

If you are heading to the Pilbara, it's most important to have a reliable 4WD, some basic tools, and spare parts to get you out of trouble. This should be the standard kit for someone who heads away camping and 4WDing, but it's especially important should something go wrong in a harsh, remote part of the world.

Beyond that, you need some really good quality tyres, as the tracks and roads here are some of the most taxing on tyres that you'll find in Australia. Road terrain models are unsuitable; anything that isn't light truck is asking for trouble.

Your suspension will cop a fair workout too – but as long as it's not sagged and in need of replacing, it will work. Expect a lot of corrugated roads and plenty of gravel!

There are quite a few kangaroos around too, and cattle are often not fenced in. Whilst a bull bar isn't always going to stop damage, it should at least allow you to limp into town.

You should also be letting your tyres down for the different tracks and roads. Our go-to guide somewhere between 20%-30% reduction on your normal bitumen highway pressures. For example, if you run 40 PSI on the road normally, you'd want to come down about 8-12 PSI which leaves you with 28-32 PSI cold pressures. This allows you some resistance to tread punctures, and improves the ride hugely when the road is rough. It also provides a lot more traction when needed.



*The Pilbara is scribbled with 4WD tracks!*

## Camping in the Pilbara

Being a sparsely consumed land, there are many places in the Pilbara where you can pull up and camp – most of them free, or at low cost. We always refer to Wikicamps given the variety of what's available, then speak to the locals regarding other sites that are less well-known. Firewood is generally easily accessible. If you travel in the right season too, the weather is usually perfect for shorts and t-shirts during the day, before dropping to temperatures cool enough for kicking back around a fire with your mates at night.





*Camping at Glen Herring overnight.*

## Amazing Places to see in the Pilbara

Everyone knows about Karijini. There's a reason several people refer to it as the best National Park in Australia – it really is incredible. Stay for a few days at Dales Camp Ground, and the Eco Retreat if you please (which also allows camping) – it's absolutely worth it.

Millstream National Park is another stunning part of the world. The views over the North section are enough to take your breath away; remote places you can also reach in a 4WD. If you're prepared, head out to the free camp at George River Gorge and soak in the majestic cliffs, amazing water hole, and views that are up there with the best the Pilbara has to offer. Around Newman, you also have Kalgan's Pool: a lovely spot found within a quiet, free camp at the end of a unique 4WD track. You'll need a snorkel, good maps, and a sense of adventure – but drive in, and the end is something else. You seemingly drive through a river for hundreds of metres at a time!

Heading further north, we've totally fallen in love with the area around Marble Bar. There are more 4WD tracks, camping areas, and stunning locations than you can poke a stick at. Skull Springs Road has been a huge highlight for us – Skull Springs is the ultimate kids' playground, and Running Waters one of the best campsites in Australia. Carawine Gorge is beautiful too, as is Meentheena Veterans Retreat.



*Camping at Skull Springs.*



*Cruising along Skull Springs Road.*



*Skull Springs is an adventure!*



*Great scenery in Skull Springs.*



*A budgie at the Meentheena Veterans Retreat.*



*Exploring Meentheena by kayak!*

If you want something closer to Marble Bar, Doleena Gorge or Coongan Pool are both beautiful. You can also head out to Coppins Gap or Glen Herring, which we thoroughly enjoyed. Tiger Eye Pool is a stunning spot near Tom Price – another camp in the Pilbara that is completely free.

The coastline of the Pilbara has some of the best beaches in WA, offering amazing fishing, stunning views, and plenty of variety. If you like mud crabs, try your hand at catching them at numerous points along the coast.

We love the Cleaverville and Cape Keraudren campsites – although make sure you are prepared for sandflies anywhere along the coastline. They can be seriously mean, and quite a shock to the unsuspecting!

Cheela Plains has a huge reputation. We thoroughly enjoyed bush camping and exploring the property that is one of the most beautiful we've ever been to.



*Tiger Eye Pool is nothing short of magic!*





*Tom Price has some great 4WD tracks!*



*Heading into the beautiful Cheela Plains.*



*Amazing views at Cheela Plains!*

## **Make the time to Visit!**

If you've done the Kimberley, or some of the other amazing WA coastal camps, you should seriously consider Pilbara on your list of destinations. It is stunning in so many ways and, if you put some hours in behind the wheel, accessible for a two-week trip.

We love the Kimberley in so many ways – but the Pilbara is incredibly special, and not many people manage to experience the beauty.



*Seriously consider Pilbara on your list of destinations to visit soon!*