

# Wave Rock

## Wave Rock, Western Australia

Wave Rock is on the northern face of [Hyden Rock](#), situated near the town of Hyden, and 335 km east of Perth, Western Australia. It is 11- 12 m high (different heights are stated by different authors) and 110 m long. It is a granite outcrop of the [Yilgarn Craton](#), the oldest of the [cratons](#) that formed the original Australian continent.

Because the rock is granite, it is very hard and erosion-resistant, and because it is part of a craton it is solid, with few weak spots for erosion to work on. The granite of this part of the [craton](#) has been dated to 2.7 billion years, much younger than the oldest parts. Runoff water running down the face of the "wave" has marked the face with vertical streaks of various colours derived from the minerals of the rock. These streaks add to the impression of a breaking wave, which is further enhanced by the rock that slopes away from the base of the wave.

The shape of the "wave" is not caused directly by water erosion, but by scarp foot weathering. The rock was originally buried by soil, and as the soil level was lowered by erosion the top of the granite was exposed. As the granite is impervious, the rainwater ran down the sides and in the moist soil around the rock humic acid dissolved away the rock while it was still buried. The soil has since been eroded down to the rock surface that surrounds Wave Rock.

It is not the only formation of its type in Australia, but it is the biggest and most spectacular. There are many other smaller wave formations in other parts of central and western Australia.

The Aborigines of the area are believed to have avoided the rock. The reason is not certain, some believe it was because of the connections with the stories of the past, others believe it was simply because of the lack of water, or to avoid contact with other nearby tribes. To the north of the rock is an area that was visited by the Aborigines where water was available in flagon-shaped holes in the rock they called gnamma holes. Nearby is Bates Cave, eroded out of a large boulder that has been dislodged from the Humps, a large rock residual. On the walls of this cave are stencilled hand marks that are believed to be about 200 years old.

These paintings are believed to be connected with a story, that may be recent, and not of Dreamtime origin, of a woman who had a child, [Mulka](#), with a man from a forbidden tribe [clan/totem?]. The child was cross-eyed, a sign of evil among his tribe. He was cast out from the tribe because they feared anyone he looked at may be cursed. The stencils on the walls of Bates Cave, where he went to live, were said to be of his hands. According to the story he began to perpetrate brutal murders and

cannibalism. One day his mother argued with him about his behaviour, whereupon he killed her. The tribes of the surrounding districts then hunted him down and killed him, leaving his body to be eaten by the ants.

### Sources & Further reading

1. Hellen Grasswill & Reg Morrison, **Australia, a Timeless Grandeur**, Lansdowne, 1981
2. Twidale, C.R. & Campbell, E.M., 2005, *Australian Landforms: Understanding a Low, Flat, Arid, and Old Landscape*, Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd