

Wave Rock

In this chapter:

- Wave Rock is located in Western Australia
- Wave Rock is an ancient granite formation that has been exposed to the weathering processes for over 60 million years
- The shape of Wave Rock is the result of wind and water erosion
- The Acacia plant is the most popular plant in the area
- The Aboriginal people were the first humans who lived in the area

Geographical position

Wave Rock is also known as Hyden Rock. It is named after the town of Hyden which is about 340 km north of Perth in Western Australia. This unusually-shaped rock was called Wave Rock because it looks like a gigantic surf wave. The rock is located about 4 km east of Hyden, in a 160-hectare nature reserve - Hyden Wildlife Park.

In 1967, Wave Rock became an overnight attraction following an article published in the *National Geographic*.

See image 1

Geology

Wave Rock was formed before the age of dinosaurs, which was about 2.7 billion years ago. It is one of the oldest rocks in the world. Wave Rock is an ancient granite formation that has been exposed to weathering processes for over 60 million years. It is about 15 metres high and about 110 metres long. It has been smoothed by weathering and water erosion. Its wave shape is the result of wind and water erosion over thousands of years which have cut the base and left the overhang, making it look like a giant wave.

During the wet season, water from springs constantly runs down the cliff. It dissolves and brings in different chemicals, leaving red, brown, yellow and grey stains on the rock. The vertical black lines of the rock are caused by an algae and water pouring down the cliff after the heavy rains during the wet season.

Climate

The Hyden and Wave Rock area has a Mediterranean-type of climate. Temperatures are mostly mild all year round, with hot summers and mild winters. The average rainfall for the year is approximately 450 mm with average temperatures ranging

from around 16 degrees Celsius during the coldest months to an average high of 34-36 degrees Celsius in summer.

Flora and fauna

The Hyden district has many of Western Australia's best wildflowers and other plant species. The spring displays of natural wildflowers in this area are described as spectacular. Plants like flame grevillea, a few types of acacias and orchids grow well in Hyden's mild climate. Acacia is the most popular plant in the area. It has been declared the area's floral emblem. Western Australian wildflowers are protected by law and may not be picked.

Different types of birds and animals can be spotted in Hyden Wildlife Park. Animals like kangaroos, emus, wallabies, wombats, koalas, lizards and different kinds of bush birds are very common in the area.

The birds of the Hyden area are very colourful and noisy. The smallest are the wrens and the largest are the emus and wedgetail eagles. Different kinds of parrots are also very common in the Hyden area.

See image 2

The history and heritage

Aboriginal people were the first humans who lived in the area. Many stones used by these Indigenous Australians have been found on their campsites throughout the area. Painted hand marks can still be seen on rocks at the Humps and Wave Rock. The 19th century sandalwood cutters were the first white settlers in the area.

Legend of Mulka's Cave (Bates Cave)

Mulka's cave is located 18 kilometres north of Wave Rock. Inside this cave, well-preserved examples of Aboriginal art can still be seen. According to Aboriginal legend, Mulka was the illegal son of a woman who fell in love with a man with whom marriage was forbidden according to tribal law.

Mulka grew up to be big and strong but could not hunt with a spear because of his poor vision. So Mulka began to hunt and eat children. For that he was punished and thrown out of his tribe. He hid in a cave, which is now called the Mulka cave. Today, handprints can be found on the Mulka cave walls. It is believed that they belong to Mulka the Terrible. The story is said to be a warning to anyone who chooses to break tribal laws.

It is thought that Aboriginal people declared the whole area taboo (a forbidden area)

after these events. That probably explains why the early settlers saw no evidence of Aboriginal tribes in the area when they first arrived.

In 1951, a retaining wall was built by the Western Australian Water Authority. It collects rainwater which falls upon the rock.