

Esperance

Bare Essentials!

We arrived in Esperance for our January visit, just days after the proverbial 100 year storm. I wasn't sure what to expect from the town that proudly proclaims itself as having Australia's best beaches, a quick check confirmed the town beach had been washed out to sea, leaving nothing but a sheer drop of a couple of metres to the water. The information centre was packed with tourists trying to find a way out of town; with the bridge down, road closures and flooded countryside there wasn't a lot of options. Slightly frazzled, the lady working there seemed genuinely refreshed that we were staying in the area and was more than helpful highlighting our map around the road closures to the local nude beach at 10 mile lagoon.

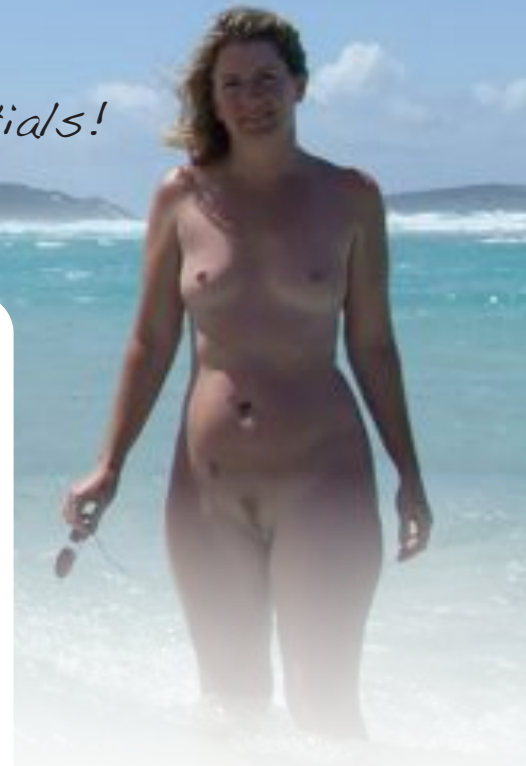
Seventeen kilometres west of Esperance itself, the beach is normally an easy and very scenic drive out of town, but with the roads washed away our highlighted map showed something more like a 50 kilometre detour. So with the words "should be open" ringing in our ears we took to the road. Nothing like a bit of adventure.

We could see the "road closed" sign when we came around the last bend, but fortunately just a few metres closer we could see the turn off for 10 mile lagoon; the beach was open. We pulled into a parking lot with room for perhaps six cars and when we read the sign "Nude bathing permitted at free beach" we knew we were in the right place.

The nude section of the beach is located 100 metres west of the parking lot and while there's a sign explaining this in the car park itself, when we actually made our way down the short and steep track with very cool steps made from old car tyres and walked west along the beach we could find no sign explaining when we actually got there; nothing to say we were now actually free to get our gear off. I guess that whatever sign there was went with the storm, but unlike the town beach this beach was still here and with the most postcard perfect turquoise water and pure snow white sand; maybe the claim to the best beaches in Australia had a bit of merit after all?

The wind had kicked up quite a bit by then and looking over my shoulder I couldn't help thinking that the power generating windmills might not be there just to compliment the scenery. With sand and hair blowing everywhere it sure was windy! The water was beautiful though with the gusts blowing gentle waves ashore. We tried to be brave and went for a dip and surprisingly it wasn't as cold as it looked and we played in the water for a while before the wind got the better of us and we had to rug up in our towels.

There was no one else at the beach that day and to be honest I'm not surprised given the recent storm and the windy conditions. We did see a couple come by and have a look and perhaps if the weather was better they may





have stripped off too. The beach is not particularly secluded, but it is remote enough to be private, I can't imagine that even on the busiest days you get too many people here, so if you're a bit of a discrete skinny dipper then on the right day this might be the place for you.

Esperance definitely does have some beautiful beaches and 10 mile lagoon is certainly one of them. The beauty of the place impressed me greatly but as picturesque as it is I have to say we really didn't enjoy ourselves. It was just too windy and it spoilt our time there. I feel like I might be doing the beach an injustice as it's probably a bit unfair to judge a beach based on just one visit; especially if the weather's less than ideal but without anyone else to talk to it's hard to say what a typical day really is. I've heard that it's less windy in the mornings and I'd like to think that in the right conditions that it's just about perfect; but with a wind farm on the horizon I'm just not too sure how often this happens.

A beautiful beach in a beautiful part of the world, just a shame about the wind.

Getting there....

10 Mile lagoon is located 17 kilometres west of Esperance town centre (as long as you don't have to take a 50 km detour around closed roads and broken bridges!). It's easy to get to, just follow the coastal road slightly past the entrance into the second windmill power generating farm, until you see the sign posted "10 Mile Lagoon" turn off. Access to the beach is via steps down the steep slope.

According to signage in the car park, the clothing optional beach is located a further 100 metres West of the bottom of the stairs and continues along the beach for a further kilometre. Though there were no signs at the beach dictating the start or end of the clothing optional section at the time we visited, this may have been due to the recent storm. At any rate, try to keep your nudity to the described section of beach or you might have some problems with rangers and such.

