



MUM ON THE MOVE

guide to

Margaret River with Kids

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Margaret River with Kids

The Margaret River wine region of Western Australia is one of our favourite holiday destinations. Margaret River is a three-hour drive south of Perth and is just perfect for a family vacation. From child-friendly wineries, to incredible beaches, caves to explore and seriously good ice creameries, below are five reasons why you should consider the Margaret River for your next family holiday.



Things to Do in Margaret River with Kids

Wineries

You can't go to Margaret River and ignore the wineries; it's pretty much the point of the place. Luckily having kids in tow doesn't mean you have to skip the joys of wine tasting, as so many of the Margaret River wineries have child-friendly facilities. From kids menus in the restaurants, to toy boxes in the tasting rooms, to large grassy lawns with garden games, and even playgrounds, the Margaret River wine region is paradise for oenophiles with children.

I have to confess – we visited 19 wineries in a week, but far from complaining, our kids rushed into each one excited to find what 'games' they had. Some of our favourite wineries to visit with kids include Aravina, Laurance, Swings & Roundabouts and Will's Domain. Read our Child-Friendly Wine Tasting in the Margaret River article below for more recommendations.



Beaches

Despite my confession above, it's not all about wine tasting in the Margaret River – the region boasts some of the world's most stunning beaches along its wild, rugged coastline too. Running over 120km from Cape Naturaliste in the North to Cape Leeuwin in the South, the Western border of the Margaret River region is where the raw natural beauty of the area is at its most evident.

Long stretches of pure white sand run alongside rugged rocks and dunes, while the beautifully clear water is impossible to resist. Pack your boogie boards,

snorkels and buckets and spades and head West to the coast, and you are bound to find an incredible beach to spend a few hours on. Some of our favourites include Smiths Beach, Eagle Bay and Gnarabup Beach. Read more below.

Animals

If you have city-kids like me, then they will love the opportunity to visit the petting farms and see all the animals up-close. At the Wonky Windmill Farm, kids get to feed sheep, goats, kangaroos, pigs, ducks, emus, kangaroos and even llamas and alpacas. Also on the agenda, is bottle-feeding milk to the little lambs and calves and cuddling a rabbit or guinea pig.

Sunflowers Animal Farm offers more of the same, with the option of a farmstay where the kids can enjoy pony and tractor rides and help collect the eggs in the morning. Another highlight for many kids is the Yallingup Shearing Shed, with its fun and lively sheep shearing and sheepdog demonstrations.



Caves

If your kids fancy themselves as adventurers, then head for the caves. While most people associate the Caves Road with the many wineries dotted along it, it is actually named after the complex of more than 150 underground caves that run the length of Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge.

Two of the most famous show caves – Jewel and Lake – can be visited via guided tour, where you descend into the depths of the Earth to marvel at the beautifully lit stalactites, stalagmites and other natural calcium sculptures. There are a lot of

steps, but we managed Lake Cave with two 4-year olds with no (okay, maybe just a little) whinging.

If you prefer to wander at your leisure, then visitors to Mammoth Cave can stroll the boardwalks of the caves crystal chambers guided by an MP3 audio tour. Families with older children (aged 10 and above) can take the caving experience to the next level with a visit to Moondyne Cave, where you don overalls, gloves and helmets to explore the tunnels and caverns via torchlight. Cool!

Ice Cream

What's a family holiday without ice cream? Luckily for the kids (and maybe Mum too), Margaret River also excels in this domain. Our favourite stop-off for afternoon treats is Simmo's, just outside Dunsborough. This ice creamery dishes up 60 flavours of seriously amazing ice cream, and also has a playground, a large shady lawn, mini golf and an ice cream-eating emu named Edward to entertain the kids. If you find yourself with sweet cravings further south, then head to Millers Ice Cream, located on the family farm just outside Cowaramup. Millers fabulous ice cream is made using milk from their own cows, and the farm café has an excellent adventure playground for the kids too.



Best Beaches in Margaret River

Most people associate the Margaret River region of Western Australia with wine. After all, over 20% of Australia's premium wine comes out of the 200+ wineries here. But there is far more to the Margaret River than just wine. We already covered all the fun things there are to do in Margaret River with kids, but here we are going to concentrate on the beaches.

Because the Margaret River region really does have some of the most fabulous beaches you will find anywhere in the world. Really. Here we round up what we think are the best beaches in the Margaret River.



Smiths Beach

Smiths Beach is one of our all-time favourite beaches anywhere in the world. The wild ruggedness of the dunes that line the sand give a natural beauty to the beach, which is so long and wide that you can't imagine it ever feeling that crowded, no matter how many people were to turn up. Last time we were there, we even spotted a pod of dolphins off the shore - amazing!

The beach is popular with surfers, and older kids will enjoy boogie boarding here, but the Southern end of the beach is calmer and is also shallow enough to take your smaller kids in for a paddle or swim too.

The luxurious Smiths Beach Resort is just across the road, if you want to stay close to the beach, and it also has a deli for stocking up on picnic supplies. The beach has a small car park (we have never had a problem parking), which has an outdoor shower for cleaning off the sand before you jump back in your car.



Bunker Bay

Another ruggedly beautiful beach is Bunker Bay. Bunker Bay is situated on the Cape Naturaliste headland, facing north on Geographe Bay, making it more sheltered than the other Western facing beaches. It has a long stretch of fine white sand and a gentle shelving shoreline, perfect for swimming with the kids.

The Pullman Bunker Bay Resort, which offers bungalow-style accommodation perfect for families, is located a short walk from the beach. Bunkers Beach Café is also set just back from the beach and is a great spot for breakfast or lunch pre- or post-beach, and there is a large car park here.

Just be sure to avoid Bunker Bay in November/December time, as the flies here are terrible. Usually by mid-January things are back to normal again, but they will certainly drive you crazy if you come during fly season!



Eagle Bay

Eagle Bay is another stunning beach offering a great expanse of white sand and turquoise waters. This is a great option for a beach-house holiday, as there are several holiday houses overlooking the beach here. The best way to reach Eagle Bay, is to follow the coastal road from Meelup to enjoy stunning views out to sea and to pass by several secluded coves.

The nearby Eagle Bay Brewery is a good choice for a relaxed post-beach lunch, offering wood-fired pizzas and gastro-pub classics, homebrew craft beer and a children's playground. Wine lovers should check out Wise Wine on the main road down to Eagle Bay, which has a fabulous restaurant with outdoor verandah looking out over the bay.



Yallingup Beach

Yallingup Beach is not the most picturesque beach in the area – although don't get me wrong; it is still beautiful. But it is a great option for families. It is close to Dunsborough and Yallingup, so one of the easiest beaches to get to. It is popular with surfers, but has a large shallow area perfect for the little ones, it has a large carpark, a shop selling ice cream and best of all – a great kids playground and grassy area right next to the beach.

Gnarabup Beach

Close to Margaret River town, Gnarabup Beach is a popular beach with families, as the reef here keeps the water calm. But the highlight for many here is the White Elephant Café, a casual beach café serving fresh juices, good coffee and great breakfasts (lunches too), with fabulous views over the beach.

Gnarabup Beach is a good option to call into if you are visiting the show caves in the area – Lake Cave and Mammoth Cave are just a short drive away. It is also close by to three of Margaret River’s most famous wineries – Leeuwin Estate, Voyager Estate and Cape Mentelle.



Hamelin Bay

Further South, almost at Augusta, you will find Hamelin Bay. It is a bit of a trek if you are staying in the Dunsborough or Yallingup areas, but could easily be tagged on to a visit to the show caves – particularly if you are visiting Jewel Cave or Moondyne Cave.

It might take a while to get here, but it will be worth it. Not only is it a stunningly beautiful beach with soft white sand and crystal clear water – but Hamelin Bay offers something very special that you will rarely find at any other beach in the world – stingrays! Big, beautiful sting rays that come right into the beach and swim around your feet! The kids will LOVE it!

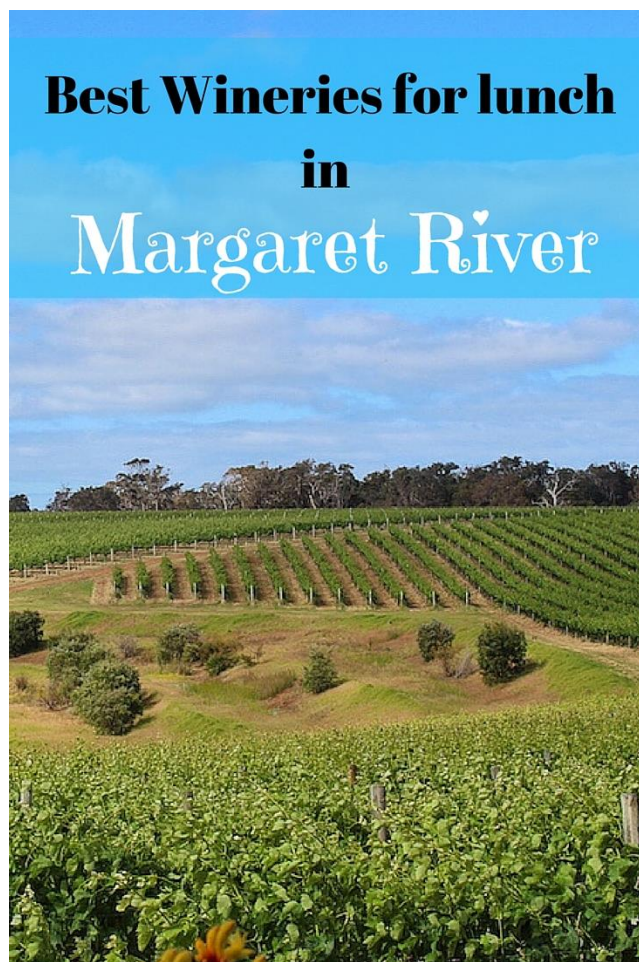
Best Wineries for lunch in Margaret River

There are so many things to do in Margaret River with kids, but the main appeal of coming to Western Australia's wine region, of course, is to visit the Margaret River wineries and taste the wine. There are so many fabulous wineries in Margaret River. In fact the 200+ Margaret River wineries are responsible for 20% of Australia's premium wine, so you know you are in for a treat.

But it's not just the wine that the Margaret River wineries excel at – they also dish up fabulous cuisine, boasting some of the best restaurants in the Margaret River region. We have spent a lot of time in the Margaret River over the last few years, and have checked out most of the best Margaret River wineries for lunch over this time.

Note that most cellar door restaurants in Margaret River are only open for lunch and so we usually indulge in a fabulous lunch, then barbecue at home in the evening. If you are looking for places to eat in Margaret River in the evening, you can check out restaurants in Margaret River town and Dunsborough.

So if you are trying to decide where to eat in the Margaret River, here we give you our pick of the best Margaret River wineries for lunch. And the best news for those visiting Margaret River with kids? They are all child-friendly too!



Will's Domain

Located overlooking the Gunyulgup Valley this Margaret River winery has it all: fabulous views over the vineyards, award-winning wine, delicious cuisine, and a playground to keep the kids busy while the grown ups enjoy a leisurely lunch. Renowned as being one of the best restaurants in Margaret River, Will's Domain is setting the standards for Mod Oz cuisine in the region.



The a la carte menu is littered with interesting concoctions such as Grilled Marron with preserved onion congee and kombu, or Wagin Duck with kohlrabi, quince and Japanese mustard, or opt for the 5- or 7-course degustation menu, served with matching wines, of course.

[Visit the Will's Domain website here](#)

Leeuwin Estate

One of the most famous wineries in Margaret River, Leeuwin Estate is renowned for its stunning Margaret River wines, most notably its Arts Series Chardonnay and Arts Series Cabernet Sauvignon. But Leeuwin Estate is also famous for having one of the best Margaret River restaurants.

Utilising a “paddock to plate” philosophy, the Leeuwin Estate restaurant focuses on regional produce, and working with local suppliers to create seasonal menus, creating inventive dishes such as South West yabbies’, papaya salad and gochujang and ‘Big Red’ Pork rack with jamon, persimmon and hazelnuts.

The setting is stunning, with sweeping verandahs overlooking a large meadow (perfect for the kids to run freely) surrounded by a forest of karri trees.



A special tip for my Hong Kong and Singapore readers: Leeuwin Estate does an AMAZING deal on wines bought at their cellar door and shipped to your home address in Singapore or Hong Kong. Worth checking out.

[Visit the Leeuwin Estate website here](#)

Knee Deep

This light, bright and airy Margaret River winery restaurant looks directly into the vineyards, and boasts a menu of contemporary Australian cuisine with Asian influences. Knee Deep focus on using local artisanal organic produce, that is ethically harvested and chemical free, so you can happily tuck into your lunch with a clear conscience.



Dishes such as Venus Bay king prawns & chorizo taco with garlic aioli and salsa, and Marion Bay King George whiting with crispy leek and tarragon hollandaise are presented so beautifully, you may not want to eat them. But trust me – one taste, and it won't last long on your plate. If you can't decide what to order, you can put yourself in the hands of the chef with the "Trust the Chef" option.

There's a large lawn with outdoor games such as cricket and croquet where you can run off your lunch and entertain the kids afterwards.

[Visit the Knee Deep website here](#)

Cullen

Cullen Wines was the first winery in Margaret River to offer a cellar door restaurant and continues to enjoy a reputation as having one of the best restaurants in Margaret River. The focus is on local and organic at Cullen, with many of the ingredients coming from the winery's own biodynamic gardens.

Executive Chef Colin Anderson has upped Cullen's culinary offerings to new heights since he joined the Margaret River winery in December 2015. Experience various taste sensations through a range of exciting dishes demonstrating skills learned under famous chefs such as Gordon Ramsay, Jason Atherton and Peter Gilmore.



But my favourite dish is a nod to Anderson's Scottish roots, with his very own version of Haggis, Neeps & Tatties: Haggis wrapped in crispy potato, pickled swede, Cullen "HP sauce", whisky reduction and quail's egg.

What I really love about Cullen is its large garden, surrounded by vineyards with beanbags to kick back on and enjoy the Australian sunshine. Be sure to taste the latest vintage of Diana Madeline, Cullen Wine's most famous red wine, before you leave!

[Visit the Cullen Wines website here](#)

Xanadu

Xanadu is a beautiful and modern Margaret River winery, which has enjoyed a growing reputation for its wines over recent years, with the 2011 Xanadu Stevens Road Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon being named James Halliday's Wine of the Year in 2015, with a staggering 99 points.

In addition to award-winning wines, Xanadu is also renowned for having one of the best restaurants in Margaret River. The restaurant with its high vaulted ceiling, and layers of wood and natural stone makes a stylish yet comfortable setting for a long lazy lunch, with the grassy lawn strewn with beanbags inviting you to laze around afterwards. There's even a playground to keep the kids happy.



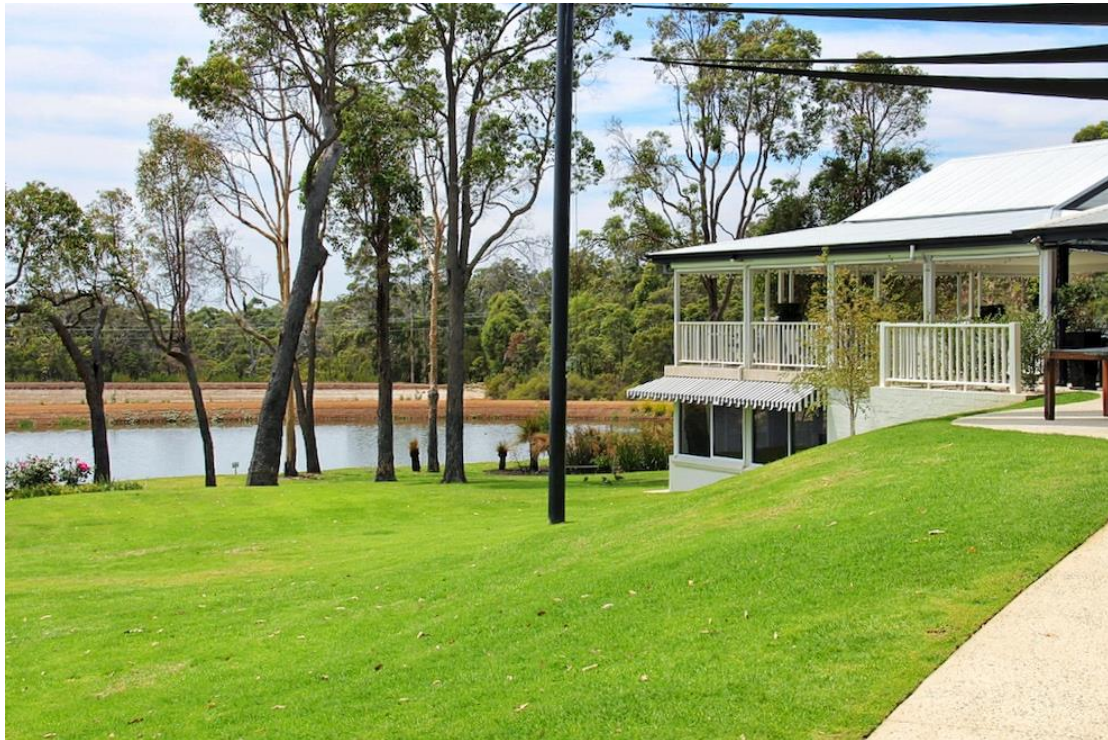
The menu encourages you to eat tapas-style with a selection of small sharing plates featuring king prawns, kangaroo, beef cheek, pork cheek, falafel and house smoked salmon, or choose to go large with lamb shank, pork belly and seasonal fish. All food is exquisitely prepared under the guidance of Head Chef Melissa Kokoti.

[Visit the Xanadu website here](#)

Aravina Estate

Executive Chef Ben Day and Sous Chef Tom Spencer, formerly of Knee Deep (see above) are responsible for recently stepping up the food a notch at this Margaret River winery, creating exciting and innovative seasonal menus.

With a focus on locally sourced organic and sustainable ingredients, the menu presents a range of light and healthy dishes, including Barramundi with Geographe Bay squid, butternut, seaweed butter and bottarga; and the sweet and savoury Crispy Lamb Pastilla with charred eggplant salad, date & rose puree and nettle yoghurt. And of course each dish has a suggested Aravina Estate wine to wash it down with.



Another reason this is one of the best wineries in Margaret River for lunch, particularly if you are visiting with kids – is the grounds. Beautiful gardens are ablaze with colourful hydrangeas, there are lawns to run around on, a brilliant gated playground – and even a showroom filled with vintage sports cars to admire.

[Visit the Aravina Estate website here](#)

Watershed

Watershed boasts one of the best settings of all the Margaret River restaurants, with stunning views across the vineyard and dam from its beautiful wooden deck. Chef Dan Gadge, former Sous Chef to Rick Stein, oversees the kitchen of this Margaret River winery, conjuring up delicious dishes such as Local Lamb Rump with brinjal pickle, fried chickpeas, hung yoghurt and vadouvan; and Charred Busselton Octopus with pickled spring vegetables, smoked potato puree and capers.



If you're visiting with small kids, you might prefer the café to the restaurant, which features an enclosed playground and offers up colouring packs for the kids. The food is more relaxed – soups, steak sandwiches, fish and chips – but equally as delicious.

[Visit the Watershed website here](#)

Laurance

It's hard not to be wowed by Laurance. This beautiful lakeside Margaret River winery is set in amongst beautifully landscaped gardens, including 1,000 rose bushes and many artworks and sculptures from around Australia. Lunch is a relaxed affair at Laurance. Take an outdoor table overlooking the manicured lawns, where the kids can run freely, or play on the onsite playground.

Burgers, Lamb hotpot and Mushroom Orrechiette are all on the menu, but most popular are the tasting platters – a delectable selection of cheeses, cold cuts, seafood, olives and woodfired sourdough, perfect for sharing with friends over a glass of Margaret River wine.

[Visit the Laurance website here](#)



Swings & Roundabouts

When you've overindulged in all that fine-dining in the fabulous Margaret River wineries, sometimes all you want is a pizza and a nice glass of rose. And that's exactly what Swings & Roundabouts is for.



One of the best wineries in Margaret River for a lazy afternoon in the sunshine, Swings & Roundabouts boasts a vast lawn with oversized beanbags and picnic tables, garden games such as swingball and cricket, a traditional Italian wood-fired pizza oven and a serious coffee machine. Perfect!

[Visit the Swings & Roundabouts website here](#)

Best Accommodation in Margaret River

The Margaret River has become a hugely popular family holiday destination over the past few years. For me, it has some of the best beaches in the world, there is plenty to do with the kids in Margaret River, the food is fabulous... Ok, who am I kidding? I come here for the wine – the Margaret River region provides 25% of Australia's premium wine. So yes, I come here for the wine.

It seems year on year Margaret River gets more and more busy with holidaymakers, so if you are visiting during a popular holiday period (Christmas & New Year, Chinese New Year, Australia Day, Easter) then you will need to plan ahead and book your accommodation well in advance.

We have stayed at several different accommodation options in the Margaret River, and have also checked many others over the years. Below you will find what we think to be the best accommodation for families in the Margaret River.



Best Accommodation Margaret River, Australia



Pullman Bunker Bay Resort

The Pullman Bunker Bay Resort is the most renowned hotel in the area, and is a great choice for families. The one and two bungalow-style villas include kitchens and laundry facilities, and accommodation is free for 2 children under 12 years sharing their parents' room. It's just a few steps from the fabulous Bunker Bay beach and also features a stunning outdoor heated infinity pool. A Kids Club is also available for children aged 5-11, and they offer a babysitting service. Perfect!

[Click here to check latest prices for the Pullman Bunker Bay Resort](#)



Smiths Beach Resort

Dream of waking up to stunning ocean views every morning? Smiths Beach Resort sits on one of the most spectacular beaches in the region. The self-catering accommodation at this stylish resort ranges from 1-bedroom apartments to 4-bedroom beach houses, with all rooms featuring private living areas with full kitchen, outdoor barbecues and private parking spaces. There is also an excellent onsite restaurant, Lamont's, as well as a gourmet deli and bottleshop, plus swimming pool and tennis court make this an excellent option for a relaxing holiday.

[Click here to check latest prices for Smiths Beach Resort](#)

Sunflowers Animal Farm

If you're raising city kids like me, then you could cause some major excitement by staying on a farm for your holiday. Sunflower Animals Farm provides farmstay accommodation in four separate cottages. The accommodation itself is distinctly no-frills in design, but guests staying here get unlimited access to the farm, including free buckets of animal food, as well as the opportunity to get involved in the farm activities, such as pony rides, tractor rides and collecting eggs.



Regency Beach Club

Handily located just a short walk from the centre of Dunsborough (where you will find a supermarket, shops and several restaurants), Regency Beach Club offers a range of 1- to 5-bedroom houses, all facing out to sea. All houses are individually designed and priced, but all come with gardens and balconies or patios with barbecues. There's also an outdoor swimming pool, gym and tennis court on site.

If you don't have any luck with Regency Beach Club, check out Halcyon Bay next door – it offers more of the same.

[Click here to check latest prices for Regency Beach Club](#)

Private House Hire

Hiring a private house is a great option for families – and especially if you are more than one family. There are loads of large properties available for hire, which give you all the space you need for the kids to run around and entertain themselves, and come with laundry, barbecue and kitchen facilities to help make life easier. We have used [Private Properties](#) several times when visiting the Margaret River. They have a fabulous selection of high-end houses to choose from– and they can work out to be fantastic value when split between families.

