

THE WORLD'S BEST
BEACHES

Stefanie Waldek



CORAL BAY

Western Australia

AUSTRALIA



At Coral Bay in Western Australia, it's actually less about the beach and more about what's just off it. Put on your snorkel mask, step into the warm water, and put your face down—you're looking at the UNESCO-designated Ningaloo Reef, a fringing reef that's exceptionally close to the shore. It is an overwhelming explosion of color down there in the coral gardens, which are absolutely teeming with life. This region is also known for whale sharks, manta rays, sea turtles, and even dugongs. After a few hours of snorkeling through this marine wonderland, haul yourself out onto the beach for a well-deserved nap under an umbrella.



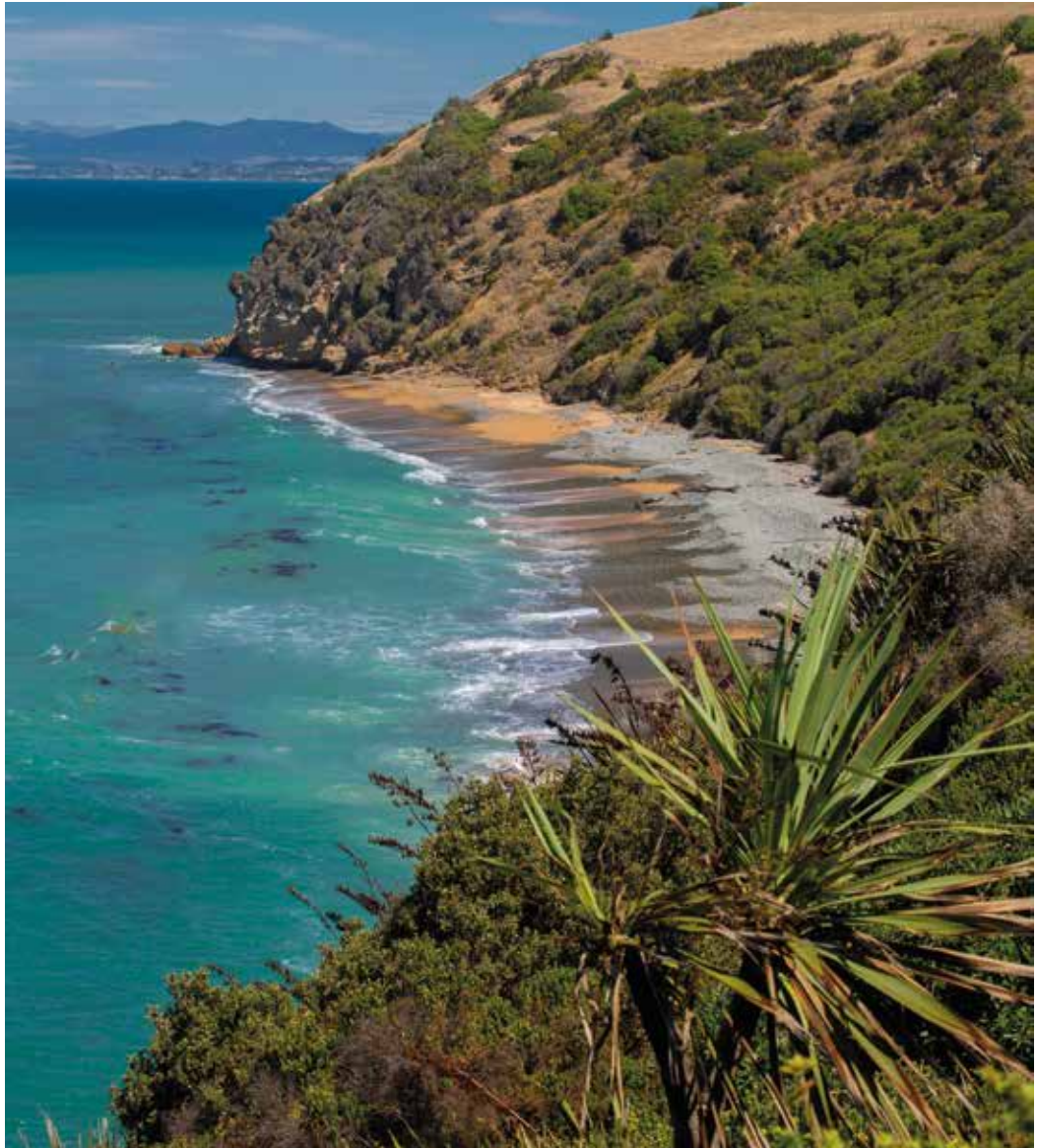
**NATADOLA
BEACH**

Viti Levu

FIJI



Fiji's main island of Viti Levu is home to one of the island nation's best beaches: Natadola Beach. The soft sand meanders along for a mile and a half, making for a lovely, leisurely stroll—take a dip in the aquamarine sea when you need a break from the sun. For more active pursuits, try your hand at surfing, or go horseback riding—locals bring their horses here for visitors to ride along the shore. While the beach is open to the public, it's also home to a luxury resort, if you're interested in making this your home base in Fiji.



BUSHY BEACH

Oamaru

NEW ZEALAND

At Bushy Beach, near Oamaru on New Zealand's South Island, it's all about the penguins. This is one of the few places you can see the rare, endangered yellow-eyed penguin, or *hoiho*, in the wild. It's estimated that there are fewer than 150 breeding pairs on the South Island, a few of which make their nest here—as the evening approaches,

you might spot a few returning to the beach from a day hunting at sea. Because the penguins are protected, you'll have to stay at the top of the cliffs to see them. Camp out at one of the overlooks during sunset and bring a pair of binoculars to get a good look at these rare penguins.









MAYA BAY

Hat Noppharat Thara-Mu
Ko Phi Phi National Park

THAILAND



Maya Bay in Thailand's Hat Noppharat Thara-Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park is just so dazzling that it was scouted by Hollywood, becoming something of a celebrity in its own right thanks to its role in the 2000 film *The Beach* starring Leonardo DiCaprio. The bay is surrounded by towering limestone cliffs, creating a stunning natural amphitheater with soft white sand and clear turquoise waters—it's not hard to see why this location was chosen for the film. Unfortunately, its fame became too much. Overtourism damaged the ecosystem, but fortunately not permanently. The Thai government closed the spot for years, allowing nature to heal, before letting visitors back in smaller numbers.

ASIA

Towering palm trees, powdery white sand, calm waters—this is Sao Beach on Vietnam’s Phú Quốc island. Sao Beach is less developed than other beaches on the island, offering a more peaceful and serene atmosphere. But there are a handful of beachside restaurants and bars that provide fresh seafood and drinks, as well as a few watersports rental companies, so there’s still plenty to do throughout the day. Sao Beach is a popular spot for day-trippers coming from the port city of An Thới, located just about three miles away, but there are some accommodations here if you’d like to prolong your visit.



SAO BEACH

Phú Quốc

VIETNAM





**PRAIA DE
BENAGIL**

Algarve

PORTUGAL



It's less about the beach at Praia de Benagil and more about what's just beyond it: the Benagil Cave. This monumental sea cave has a dome-like shape with a round "skylight" at the top, plus several arches that are open to the ocean. Consider it one of the best natural works of architecture in the world! The Benagil Cave is accessible only by boat, although you can paddle there from the beach if the sea is calm. As you might expect, it can get crowded both in the cave and on the beach.



**PLATJA GRAN DE
TOSSA DE MAR**

Costa Brava

SPAIN



Tossa de Mar is a charming beach town located on the Costa Brava in Catalonia, Spain, and it's known for its golden Platja Gran beach, set beneath a fortified hilltop village that overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. Visitors can enjoy swimming, sunbathing, or strolling along the promenade lined with restaurants and shops. While the Platja Gran is a picturesque spot for a beach day, it does tend to get quite crowded during the summer. Fortunately, it's not the only beach in town: Cala Pola and Cala Giverola are nearby coves worthy of a visit.



GLASS BEACH

Fort Bragg, California

**UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA**

Glass Beach in Fort Bragg, California, is just one of three such “glass beaches” in the area. The name comes from the thousands of pieces of sea glass that have washed ashore here, creating a bejeweled beach. The result might be beautiful, but the origin story isn’t so nice—the reason so much sea glass accumulated in this area is that locals used to dump their garbage, including glass, into the

ocean. Though that practice is now banned, Mother Nature has brought back some of that garbage in the form of smooth sea glass. Before expecting to see an entire beach made of sea glass during your visit, be aware that decades of people collecting the sea glass have greatly diminished the quantity on the beach. Still, it’s fun to poke around the beach to spot some of the beauties.





**ANSE SOURCE
D'ARGENT**

La Digue

SEYCHELLES



The island of La Digue is one of the Seychelles' inner granitic islands, and when you visit its most popular beach, Anse Source d'Argent, you'll really come to understand the term "granitic." The pink-sand beach is lined with giant granite boulders, well worn by the ocean over many years. While the beach is open to the public, you'll enter it through L'Union Estate, a former coconut and vanilla plantation, which has an entry fee that goes toward protecting the area. While facilities are limited on the beach itself, there are often fruit vendors peddling rejuvenating treats to beachgoers.