

Western capital offers plenty

By ALANA SCOTT

ONE of the most isolated cities in the world and situated on the refreshingly blue Swan River, Perth abounds with entertaining activities for tourists.

This visitor's days were spent exploring the city, Fremantle and the Swan Valley, combined with a memorable adventure to Rottnest Island.

Located some 25 minutes from the city centre and home to many artists and musicians, Fremantle serves up trendy cafes and shops amid architecture reminiscent of Europe.

The Fremantle markets – where a young John Butler, of John Butler Trio fame, used to busk – provide a big drawcard for both locals and visitors, with fresh produce, condiments, jewellery and offbeat fashion.

Becoming largely popular as a destination after it was renovated for the 1987 America's Cup, Fremantle offers spectacular views from the Roundhouse, a former site for convict punishment.

A trip to Western Australia would not have been complete without tasting some of the fine wines from the grapes of the Swan Valley vineyards.

I was not disappointed, after enjoying a delectable meal at the Sandalford wineries and sipping a sauvignon blanc that went down easily.



■ Picturesque vista ... Perth skyline from Kings Park.

The lush green scenery would have been enough to cap off a perfect day. That was until my eyes diverted to the Margaret River Chocolate Factory.

Putting Augustus Gloop to shame, I bought a selection of chocolates for myself and friends while contemplating whether those gifts would actually make it back to the East Coast or be devoured by me, a shameless chocoholic.

A 30-minute ferry trip from Perth lies the former convict settlement Rottnest (Rats' Nest) Island named in 1696 by Dutch explorer William de Vlamingh.

On boarding the ferry, I envisaged a smooth ride similar to a Brisbane City Cat. This ferry trip, however, proved not for the faint-hearted, with the tumultuous waves of the Indian Ocean crashing down around us, sending the vessel airborne and many

passengers running for the top deck to relieve their seasickness.

More than happy to be aground again, we hired bicycles and proceeded to take in the isolated beauty of the island.

No contestants for the Tour de France, we leisurely made our way through trees and waters to the Rottnest lighthouse before riding back to find one of the island's famous quokkas – a type of wallaby thought to be a rat by



PIC NUMBER

■ Perth beaches.



PIC NUMBER

■ Rottnest Island.

the land's first European explorers.

During summer, Rottnest Island is packed with tourists, with visitors taking advantage of the excellent accommodation, boating docks, cafes and car-free lifestyle.

Back in the capital, King's Park offers the best view of Perth city.

The western capital provides plenty of shopping, while the Western Australian Art Gallery and Museum is well worth seeing. Visitors can also soak up the sunshine at some of Australia's best beaches, located just 15 minutes' drive away.