The Pinnacles

THOUSANDS OF LIMESTONE PILLARS

The Pinnacles Desert – which features thousands of limestone pillars – is one of Australia’s most intriguing landscapes. The pillars range in height – some are tiny, while others stand four metres tall. Their shape varies, from rounded to sharp-edged, as does their texture. Most are sandy yellow in colour, but some are pinkish or brown. They are particularly spectacular when seen at dawn or dusk. The Pinnacles capture the imagination of visitors, who often describe the landscape as being eerie and from another planet. Some parts have been likened to a cemetery or even city ruins.

THE FORMATION OF THE PINNACLES

Some aspects of the Pinnacles’ formation are unclear, but it is known that the main elements responsible are wind, water and calcium. The sand in the area originated as seashells, which were broken down and carried inland by the wind, making dunes. As vegetation grew among the dunes, a layer of sandy soil, rich in decaying plant matter, developed. When it rained, water seeped through this acidic soil, becoming acidic too. The acidic water dissolved the calcium carbonate in the sand and deposited it in the deeper layers of the soil, binding the particles together and producing limestone. As this process continued, three layers emerged beneath the dunes – vegetation and soil near the surface, a hard cap under that and a soft limestone deep below the surface – and from this the Pinnacles formed. There are differing opinions on exactly how the Pinnacles got their distinctive column shape. Eventually, when the sand dunes shifted, the Pinnacles appeared.

A STUNNING NATIONAL PARK

The Pinnacles are located within Nambung National Park, approximately 245 kilometres north of Perth. While the Pinnacles are by far the main attraction, the national park offers stunning coastal scenery and a magnificent wildflower display in late winter and spring.