

# Kangaroo Island

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

When the English explorer Matthew Flinders landed on the large, rugged island off the coast of South Australia in the early 1800s, it did not take him long to decide what to call it. The marsupials hopping about were so abundant; the captain christened it Kangaroo Island.

Today, the marsupials on Kangaroo Island (known as KI to locals) still out number the human population of 4,400. Due to its isolation, the Island has not suffered the usual impacts of human settlement and predators, and as a result, animals, birds and plant life have flourished. Many exist nowhere else in Australia.

The Australian Sea-lion, hunted almost to extinction in the 19th century, is one of the rarest species of seal, but there are more than 600 of them at Seal Bay Conservation Park on the Island's south coast.

Some 267 species of birds can be found among the diverse range of habitats, among them black swans, Cape Barren geese and wedge-tailed eagles. Little Penguins are found living and breeding in sheltered burrows around the coastline and the rare and endangered Glossy Black Cockatoo is found only on KI.

Another species exclusive to the Island is the pure-bred Ligurian Bee, which first arrived in 1884 from Italy. Since then, no other breeds have been introduced and the present-day pure-strain bees are unique in the world.

In recognition of the importance of preserving the unique plant and wildlife species that exist here more than a third of the Island has been

declared Conservation or National Park and it has five significant Wilderness Protection Areas.

The Island also has a unique human history. Evidence of stone tools and campsites indicate that Aboriginal people inhabited the Island as early as 16,000 years ago.

The first non-Aboriginal people to live on Kangaroo Island were sealers, escaped convicts and runaway sailors, seeking refuge in the early 1800s, and leading a self-sufficient life trading salt and skins for spirits and tobacco.

A month after Captain Flinders made the first recorded European sighting of the Island, the French ship, *Le Geographe*, under the command of Nicolas Baudin, also arrived. Baudin mapped much of the rugged south and west coastlines and many of the features along this part of the coastline still bear French names.

In 1836 Reeves Point became the first formal settlement in South Australia under an English Act of Parliament. Challenged by a shortage of water and building timber, the settlement lasted less than four years, but some stayed on and formed the basis of a community that prided itself on its strong sense of independence. Historic sites of note include the first European cemetery, site of the first post office, early house sites, original jetty remains, and the mulberry tree that grew from a cutting brought out from England with the first settlers.

Kangaroo Island has long been a shining example of how the







community, tourism and conservation can work together to ensure sustainable tourism. More than a decade ago, as a result of a dramatic rise in visitors, management agencies and the community created a model to keep a watch on the long-term health of the Island.

The Tourism Optimisation Management Model (TOMM) is a partnership between the community, core conservation and tourism agencies responsible for managing Kangaroo Island's resources and ensuring tourism develops in a way that is best for the Island and its residents.

The Kangaroo Island-developed model is so successful it was presented at the International Conference of Sustainable Tourism Management at Heritage Sites organised by the United Nations and the World Tourism Organisation with a view to being adopted by tourism destinations globally.

## Key facts

- Kangaroo Island is Australia's third largest island - after Tasmania and Melville Island. It was separated from mainland Australia by a rise in sea level about 9,000 years ago.
- At its closest point to the mainland, it is 13 kilometres offshore from Cape Jervis, on the tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula, and 112 kilometres southwest of Adelaide.



- The Island is approximately 155 km in length and 57 km at its widest point, covering a total area of 4,405 sq km. More than half is native old-growth vegetation.
- More than one-third of Kangaroo Island is declared Conservation or National Park and it has five significant Wilderness Protection Areas. Flinders Chase National Park is one of Australia's largest, covering 74,000 hectares.
- Cape Willoughby Lighthouse was the first in South Australia, built in 1852 to assist the coastal shipping trade between the eastern colonies and the colony of South Australia.
- Vivonne Bay came top of the list of 10,000 beaches across Australia according to research conducted by Sydney University, based on factors such as clarity of water, privacy and cleanliness.

## Things to see and do

- See for yourself why Kangaroo Island is hailed as the best place in Australia to see wildlife by taking one of the many nocturnal tours on offer around the Island. See kangaroos, wallabies and brush-tailed possums in the wild, doing what they do naturally. Don't miss the opportunity to see the Little Penguins on their nightly parade in either Kingscote or Penneshaw.
- Go on a guided beach walk at Seal Bay Conservation Park, the only place in Australia where you can so closely observe the Australian Sea-lion play. For a different experience, pay a visit to Admirals Arch in Flinders Chase National Park, where over 7,000 New Zealand fur seals call home.
- Stay in a restored lighthouse keeper's cottage at remote Cape Willoughby, Cape Borda or Cape du Couedic.
- Sandboard down Little Sahara's white dunes or take an organized Quad Bike tour along the many purpose-built tracks along the south coast.
- Watch how the light (and weather!) changes at Remarkable Rocks in Flinders Chase National Park.
- Walk the Cape Borda cliff tops and through the Ravine des Casoars wilderness.
- Do the rugged Hanson Bay Hike or go adventure caving in Kelly Hill Conservation Park.
- Trek the bushland of Antechamber Bay and nearby Chapman River. Chances are the only other footsteps around are those of Little Penguins or wallabies.
- Dive with rare leafy sea-dragons, blue devils and harlequins in the clear, temperate waters off the north coast.





- Swim with dolphins and snorkel over cool climate reefs, or one of the 50 plus reported shipwrecks around the Island.
- Fish from any one of the historic jetties across the Island – favorites being Emu Bay, American River or Penneshaw.
- Surf the uncrowded waves at Stokes and Pennington Bays.
- Swim at Snelling Beach on the north coast, find the hidden beach just down the road at Stokes Bay or head east for the sheltered bays at Island Beach, Brown Beach or Hog Bay Beach in Penneshaw.
- Visit one of the Island's intimate cellar doors. Try some of the liqueurs offered just out of Kingscote, made from some of the very best local ingredients.
- Gain an appreciation of the different varieties of honey produced from the Ligurian Bee at the Island Beehive or Clifford's Honey Farm. Watch the sheep being milked at Island Pure Sheep Dairy and then taste some of their cheeses or yoghurts.
- Sample the fabulous fresh local produce; King George Whiting, Kangaroo Island oysters, Ferguson crayfish...couple this with scenic locations, secluded beaches, beautiful accommodation and you can create your own restaurant to rival any big city five-star restaurant in Australia.

## Suggested itinerary

Kangaroo Island is a perfect self-drive destination or alternatively there is a large range of guided 4WD or coach tours that allow you to sit back and let someone else do the driving. But remember, KI is much bigger than most people expect, so give yourself at least three full days to appreciate the major sites of the Island

If arriving on the ferry into Penneshaw, stretch your legs at Pennington Bay (about 20 minutes out of Penneshaw), one of the Island's spectacular beaches. Just past Pennington Bay is Prospect Hill. If you're feeling energetic, climb the 500 plus steps for a view that takes in American River, Pelican Lagoon and the South Coast.

Continue along the road from Pennington Bay until you see the turn off to the South Coast, which takes in Seal Bay, Kelly Hill Caves, Little Sahara and finally Flinders Chase National Park. Alternatively you can follow the road into Kingscote (the main town of KI) where you find some beautiful art galleries, historic Reeves Point, a museum and honey farm.

The South Coast is a treasure trove of wildlife, rugged coastline and KI's most popular tourist attraction, Seal Bay Conservation Park. Here you can join a ranger on a guided beach walk amongst Australian Sea-lions. Whilst on the South Coast of the Island, try sandboarding at

the Little Sahara sand-dunes, see how many different birds you can spot at Murray Lagoon or D'Estress Bay or explore the magical underground world at Kelly Hill Caves.

A whole day could easily be spent exploring Flinders Chase National Park. Visit the interactive Visitor Centre, the justifiably named Remarkable Rocks, the historic awe-inspiring Weirs Cove and stalactite-fringed Admirals Arch with its population of New Zealand fur-seals playing below. It is simply spectacular and not to be missed. Stay an extra day in this area and enjoy one of the walks in Flinders Chase National Park.

Scott Cove lookout is a great reward for the long drive to Cape Borda, with stunning views of the coast and cliffs of the north coast, the tallest in South Australia. Make sure to take a tour of the lighthouse and pack your walking shoes, because the best way to appreciate Cape Borda is to take a clifftop walk.

From Cape Borda, the drive to Western River Cove is beautiful with rolling hills typical of the entire north coast. Take in the view from Constitution Hill at spectacular Snelling Beach. Don't miss the hidden cove at Stokes Bay – it's through the tunnel at the eastern end of the beach – and for something different join a guided tour that takes you swimming with the dolphins out of Emu Bay.

Wherever you end up staying on KI, there are lots of options for nocturnal tours across the Island – the best time to see wildlife. Take a tour inland to spot kangaroos, wallabies and possums, or complete your day with a guided penguin tour in either Penneshaw or Kingscote. SeaLink operates regular 45 minute ferry transfers from Cape Jervis on the mainland (about 1.5 hours drive south of Adelaide) and Penneshaw. Escorted touring from Adelaide is available and there are regular daily flights with Air South or Regional Express to Kingscote

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