



Winter (June to August) on Kangaroo Island

Average winter temperatures are 15°C (59°F) maximum and 8°C (47°F) minimum

Waterfalls, lush pastures and bushland, teeming birdlife out in full dams and creeks, dramatic seascapes; winter is a special treat on Kangaroo Island. As someone once said: "There's no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing". Winter is the best time for seeking out wildlife encounters, the best time for bushwalking and, of course, a welcoming open fire or bonfire on a beach.

Wildlife

Winter is the season for a rare and memorable adventure within the island's natural environment.

Southern Right Whales visit each year between May and September before returning to Antarctic waters in October. Look for them close to the shore along the north and south coasts. Mothers may rest with young in more sheltered bays. And you might see other whale species, such as Blue Whales and Humpbacks cruising past. Orcas, or Killer Whales, can occasionally be spotted looking for a seal meal.

Land-based animals can be seen all year round but most are nocturnal so they come out to feed and play at night. Animals are easiest to find in Winter, as they seek the sun's rays and enjoy the bounty of a green island.



Koala young perch on their mother's back as she feeds in Eucalyptus trees. Koalas live in trees along river systems. They are active mostly at night but the sharp-eyed can spot them sleeping during the day. Some good viewing spots are near the Flinders Chase National Park Visitor Centre and at Duck Lagoon on Cygnet River.

Kangaroo joeys (young) are emerging from their mother's pouches and starting to explore. Tammar wallabies, with joeys peeping out from pouches, move to the edge of scrub around dusk to feed in open areas.

Adult Rosenberg's Goannas may bask near burrows on warm winter days. Winter is Echidna mating season, with animals more active during the day. Echidna trains can form with one female followed by up to 10 males. When it's cold and wet they hunker down and hide away. All native animals are genuinely wild, and protected. Please keep your distance and use binoculars or a telephoto lens to view them; and park in safe areas, well off the road.

Australian Sea Lions' 18-month breeding cycle means small pups may be present at different times each year but females suckle young for 16 months, until just before the next pup is born, basking on sand between fishing trips to the continental shelf. Two species of fur seal are also common around the island.

Out in the water, Bottle-nosed Dolphins are common all year. A pod cruises back and forth around Penneshaw and others patrol waters around the island.





Birds

There is abundant birdlife on Kangaroo Island, so along any walking trail, by any lagoon or coastal flat, on any beach or headland, keep your eyes and ears open and your binoculars handy – the birds are all around.

Resident bush birds, raptors, parrots, waterfowl and shorebirds go about their business in conservation parks, and lagoon and coastal inlets. Strong southerlies driven by low pressure systems in the Southern Ocean often bring Albatross and other pelagic species within sight from land. Cape du Couedic is a favourite location for local birders.

The endangered Glossy Black-cockatoo appears to be recovering with help from a local management program and is often encountered in feeding areas near Penneshaw, American River and Stokes Bay. Please avoid nesting areas in sugar gum forests as human presence often disturbs nesting pairs. You might also spot the Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos which are less rare.

Cuckoos can start calling late July or early August in low open scrub and mallee, and from the occasional fencepost, and continue through to summer.

Of the 266 bird species known from Kangaroo Island, several are secure on Kangaroo Island but are no longer on the mainland; Southern Emu-wren, Shy Heathwren, Beautiful Firetail and Western Whipbird. Golden Whistlers call in mallee/broombush in Lashmar, Beyeria and Latham conservation parks; and Scarlet Robin song fills open woodland and mallee parks on the Dudley Peninsula, and at Duck Lagoon, Hanson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and Flinders Chase National Park.

All year Australian Pelicans abound, Wedge-tailed Eagles soar, the Eastern Osprey nest at D'Estrees Bay is in full view, and Black Swans, and Freckled, Blue-billed and Musk ducks, are just a few of the resident waterfowl found on lagoons, sheltered bays and tidal flats.

Pelicans glide into the Bay of Shoals or American River and have their feed on tap at 5pm each evening at Kingscote jetty. And in the air, Wedge-tailed Eagles are a common sight across the island scanning the ground for a feed. Not nearly so often – but you can be lucky – a White-bellied Sea-eagle glides past near the coast.

Across the island, 15 species of honeyeater – Purple-gaped, Tawny-crowned and Crescent - crowd the bush in conservation areas and along vegetated roadsides, where you can also view wrens, firetails, pardalotes and thornbills.

At night listen for the mopoke call of the widespread Southern Boobook Owl, yapping Little Penguins in coastal areas, and wailing Bush Stone-curlews in areas of bush and open pasture. Nankeen Night Herons emerge from roosts along the American River foreshore.



Cape Barren Geese graze cleared areas, particularly visible near Flinders Chase Visitor Centre; Brush Bronzews occupy wattle bushland along the south coast.

The endemic Kangaroo Island Crimson Rosella is readily seen along roadsides and in forested areas across the island – the picnic area near Kelly Hill Caves is particularly rewarding. Black-faced, and other, Cormorants gather on coastal roosts, marked by copious guano, particularly in sheltered areas.

Bushwalking

Remote coastlines, vast national parks, seasonal waterfalls, and fresh, fresh air beckon the bushwalker to Kangaroo Island during winter months. The fit and adventurous or a young family out for a short stroll can all discover the natural world.

Imagine a train of echidnas passing by, a whale sheltering with its calf below a cliff, a sea-eagle catching a fish. Imagine not seeing another person for the whole day, the reward of an azure sea view, a picnic on an empty beach.

A trek along exposed locations such as Cape Willoughby or Cape du Couedic where bracing winds drive in from the Southern Ocean is an elemental immersion you'll never forget. The very next day walkers might enjoy a serene cliff-top or beach walk in sunny, calm conditions. Even the strongest wind drops to a breeze once you enter the dense coastal mallee trees or forested valleys along most trails.

Most of the 32 walking trails are in conservation parks where habitat is set aside for nature and the trails allow you to share space with wildlife.

The 2-day, Cape Gantheaume Coastal Trek contrasts a thumping Southern Ocean with delicate, flowering, low-growing coastal heath; bird song from resident Western Whipbirds and the plaintive call of Southern Emu-wrens. The trek has no facilities and is recommended only for fit and experienced hikers.

Western River's Waterfall Creek hike packs a lot into 5km, passing through sugar gum forest and she-oak woodlands to a spectacular waterfall view framed by tall grass-trees. Look for orchids, early boronias, fungi varieties and rare Glossy Black-cockatoos.

The brand new KI Wilderness Trail (from the Flinders Chase Visitor Centre to Kelly Hill Visitor Centre) is a 5-day, 63km trail which connects existing paths with 40km of new trail.

Kangaroo Island Walking Club takes a walk each month to places you might not otherwise be able to access and grades its walks A (hard) to C (easy). The club welcomes visitors to its walks and as an opportunity to showcase the island. You'll find the club's schedule in The Islander newspaper's 'What's On' column.



Food and Wine

Winter is the season for staying cosy by an indoor fire safe from the storm, with an island speciality to drink – how about a nocino walnut liqueur; try your hand at reeling in some of the island's most prized fish - King George Whiting - for a family feast; visit a cellar door for a leisurely tasting of local wines; enjoy a special celebration catered for by a local chef.

The island's remoteness and untamed natural world has always demanded a self-sufficient lifestyle. The early mixed farms of cattle, sheep and grain, plus kitchen garden, have diversified into succulent offerings of marron, free-range eggs, heritage free-range pork, figs, lentils, sheep's milk yoghurt and cheese, freshwater barramundi, olive oil, condiments, and much more.

Each cellar door is a 'one-off' and many offer regional food to complement wine tastings and sales. Restaurants and cafés proudly list Kangaroo Island wine.

The island is home to one of the first boutique distilleries in South Australia where fresh botanicals (many locally foraged) enhance handcrafted gin, vodka and liqueurs. Check opening hours for cellar door and farmgate experiences.

Eateries dot the island from Cape Willoughby to Rocky River, Kingscote to Snellings Beach. Call ahead if you're planning to eat out of town.

Visit the Kangaroo Island Food and Wine Association at www.eatdrinkki.com.au to see what events and seasonal offerings are available during your visit, including Farmers' Markets at Penneshaw and Kingscote **or contact Kangaroo Island Trails who offer Food & Wine Trail Tours at www.kangarooislandtrails.com.au**

Agriculture

The family farm is the heart and strength of Kangaroo Island agriculture.

Cool wet winters are ideal for crops and livestock and the island's southern latitude and moderating ocean currents create a temperate, frost-free climate where flavour and character can develop in their own good time.

At this time of year, crops break the top-soil reaching towards the sun. Rains transform dry paddocks into lush, green blankets of crops and pastures; farm dams fill and overflow; olive pickers strip the black fruit from trees in orchards as well as from wild olive trees; new-born lambs stay close to their mothers.

Protected wilderness stands side by side with productive farms. Farmers manage and protect creek-line vegetation to keep the water clean and the paddocks sheltered.

Patches of bush mingle with fields of grain; fenced paddocks hold sheep and cattle while they graze on grassy shoots; free-range chooks are protected by Maremma dogs from aerial predators or stray dogs (the island has no feral foxes or rabbits).

The mainstay of island agriculture is sheep and in winter they fatten in lush, green pastures. Two-thirds of island farmers produce wool in a clean environment made for fine wool production. More than half a million sheep are bred on the island for their wool or as tender lamb for the table. A sheep dairy makes sheep's milk yoghurt and cheese.

The island's farming history is showcased at the Parndana Museum, which features the Soldier Settler Scheme, and at the Hope Cottage National Trust and Penneshaw Maritime and Folk museums.





Photography and wildflowers

The island is a goldmine for the nature photographer: the glassy surface of Pelican Lagoon on a still winter's morning; a Scarlet Robin flitting in a tree; the tiny flowers of low coastal heath in spring; a glossy yellow fungus in a damp dark forest; a narrow leaf arbour glowing in the autumn sunset; a lichen-covered rock formation beside a pounding sea.

In every patch of scrub and expanse of national park, along roadsides and tracks, colour starts to peek through in winter months.

The orchid show begins and once you've discovered one, you'll see them everywhere.

In the park areas of the west, up to 450 species of fungi, many rare, make themselves visible when it's wet – classic mushrooms, bracket fungi, ground cups, puff balls, and glow in the dark fungi.

Black Swans are nesting in wetlands and along rivers, cuckoos are calling and bush birds wake up early and let you know they are there.

Joeys venture from kangaroo and wallaby pouches to explore a new world.

This season offers a rare chance to maybe capture Remarkable Rocks free of people and with storm clouds and stormy seas as a backdrop. Spray can drift inland for hundreds of metres from hammering seas on the south and west coasts.



Fishing

While wintry seas are pounding the open shoreline, sheltered spots such as Eastern Cove, Smith Bay and Boxing Bay are brimming with King George Whiting. School Mulloway are pouring into Snellings Beach. It's Snapper time at Smith Bay and other north coast locations.

The broken bottom areas near American River in particular make for good Snapper yields.

The prospects are good for large Salmon Trout off exposed south coast beaches like Hanson Bay. In D'Estrees Bay, large Snook are plentiful.

Sweep are widespread around rocky reefs and other artificial structures, and Nannygai are offshore of north and south coast rocky reefs.

Try D'Estrees Bay, Cape Dutton and Stokes Bay for large Snook.

And there's always Southern Calamari (squid) over seagrass meadows, Tommy Ruff in sheltered parts of the north coast and Flathead at sheltered shallow sandy beaches.

If storm watching is your thing, take a trip to the top of Cape Willoughby or Cape Borda lighthouse, or hold on to any vantage point in between.

Kangaroo Island fish, and their habitat and breeding grounds, are protected by Marine Parks and Marine Park Sanctuary Zones. See www.marineparks.sa.gov.au and download the app with offline maps, or check the signs at launch points across the island. Recreational fishing is allowed everywhere except Sanctuary Zones and Restricted Access Areas.

That leaves jetties plus most bays, beaches, rocks and waters around Kangaroo Island free for your fishing pleasure.

Launch your boat from Kangaroo Island Council ramps at American River, Bay of Shoals (Kingscote), Christmas Cove (Penneshaw) for a fee, or from Baudin Beach or Emu Bay for free.

See www.kangarooisland.sa.gov.au/boating for more information and beach launching locations. Kangaroo Island's mostly moderate weather allows recreational fishing all-year round.

Check limits on size, bag, boat and possession for all fish and shellfish, and season closures, for example for Rock Lobster and Snapper, on the fishing regulations app (www.pir.sa.gov.au).

