



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.

Wildlife

Nature may be 'acting out' but for those with even the tiniest sense of adventure, winter is when Kangaroo Island comes into its own as a force-of-nature destination. Someone once said "There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad planning" – so rug up and head out to get amongst a winter adventure.

Kangaroo joeys are emerging from their mothers' 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. Koala young are perched on their mother's back while she feeds on the tender tips of Eucalyptus trees.

Winter is Echidna mating season, with animals more active during the day. The intrepid might find an Echidna train, with one female being closely pursued by up to 10 males, but when it is cold and wet, they can hunker down and hide away. Adult Rosenberg's Goannas may bask near burrows on warm winter days and Pygmy Possums head into torpor where they lower their own metabolic rate to conserve energy over the winter period. Snakes and lizards are also less active during the winter months, only emerging to catch glimpses of warming sunshine.

Winter is whale time, particularly Southern Right Whales which visit each year. Look for them close inshore along the north and south coasts where mothers may rest with young in more sheltered bays. For the devoted, other less common whale species, such as Humpbacks, Orcas, or Killer Whales, are occasionally spotted cruising the coast looking for a meal.

Young Glossy Black-cockatoos perch at the entrance to their nest hollow for some days before taking their first and final flight from the nest, heading off fully-fledged in search of sheoak (*Casuarina*) cones along the northern coastal areas.

Birds

Birds continue to abound in winter and can be seen and heard in many sheltered locations as the weather turns to mid-teen temperatures and winds increase bringing a wild liveliness to coastal areas.

Resident bushbirds, raptors, parrots, waterfowl and shorebirds go about their business in conservation parks, lagoon habitats 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 and visiting birders in the know.

Endangered Glossy Black-cockatoo are often encountered in their feeding areas near Penneshaw, American River and occasionally in the fire affected areas of Stokes Bay, as are Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Please avoid nesting areas in sugar gum forests as human presence often disturbs nesting pairs.

Cuckoos can start calling late July or early August in low open scrub and mallee, and continue through to summer, often seen perched in open areas on a fence post, atop a power line or within the treetops. Conspicuous in the coastal mallee settlement areas of Western Cove, Emu Bay, Island Beach and Vivonne Bay.

Wildflowers

Winter on Kangaroo Island brings a surprising plethora of colour as native plants begin to burst into flower. In every patch of scrub and expanse of national park, along roadsides and tracks, colour peeks through.

The scarlet-flowered Running Postman is in bloom and the distinctive Native Lilac climbs over fences and trees. Tubular Correa flowers are displaying colours from green to red to salmon pink across the island.

Wattle flowers gild shrubs and trees. The fruits of the native currant, which is locally made into jam, are ready to pick on sandy soils.

In Flinders Chase National Park and Kelly Hill Conservation Park up to 450 species of fungi, many of them rare, make themselves visible when it's wet, and for some, who are reliant on fire, it is the first time they have emerged for decades.

The classic mushroom shape, bracket fungi, ground cups, puff balls, glow-in-the-dark fungi, and truffles that feed our Southern Brown Bandicoot – they're all there to discover.

Bushwalking

Winter bushwalking has it all on Kangaroo Island. Invigorating treks in bracing winds straight off the Southern Ocean one day; serene cliff-top or beach walks in sunny and calm conditions the next. Even the strongest wind drops to a breeze once you enter the dense coastal mallee or forested valleys of most trails. But the stormiest days are memory making – you won't forget an elemental immersion at exposed locations like Cape Willoughby or Cape du Couedic.

The self-guided walk at Cape Willoughby Lightstation will take you into the sheltered bay of the 1853 settlement of early lighthouse keepers, and provide some insight into the construction of the lighthouse, their routine and isolation.

Western River's Waterfall Creek hike packs a lot into its five kilometres, passing through Sugar Gum forest and sheoak woodlands to a spectacular waterfall view framed by tall grasstrees.

Look for orchids, early boronias, plenty of fungi and Glossy-black Cockatoos.

Food and Wine

Kangaroo Island offers food as it was meant to taste. And it is at its freshest and most authentic at source, where producers grow, forage, make and package – with an eye for quality and sustainability.

Island settlers learnt about the seasons, making the most of each one, surviving year round. This legacy of ingenuity and seclusion has influenced island food producers to deliver quality and flavour – whether they are fourth generation islanders or newly arrived and inspired.

Winter is the season for staying cosy by an indoor fire safe from the storm, with a glass of wine and sticky figs. Start your day with a warm bowl of Kangaroo Island Oats topped with local honey.

Catching some King George Whiting for the barbecue is definitely an option during the winter months and a visit to the farmers' market for some sweet treats is a must. Kangaroo Island Farmers' Market on the first Sunday at Penneshaw and Kingscote Farmers' Market on the second and fourth Sundays. Here, growers and producers are eager to tell their story while you sample wares steeped in nearby habitats, climates and soils. Have a coffee and take your time.

When the wind is gusting, enjoy a leisurely tasting at a winery cellar door. Kangaroo Island wines, spirits, ciders and ales have a purity and restraint that perfectly matches the region's artisan food. Each cellar door is a 'one-off' and many offer regional food to complement wine tastings and sales, with restaurants and cafés proudly listing Kangaroo Island wine and produce. 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.

Open for visiting year-round - some by appointment – are honey outlets, several fresh seafood outlets, winery cellar doors, microbreweries and the distillery. The dining is fine, casual or pop-up. Eateries dot the island from Cape Willoughby to Vivonne Bay, Kingscote to Snellings Beach.

Agriculture

The island's Mediterranean climate, with warm dry summers and cool wet winters, is ideal for crops and livestock. Its southern latitude and moderating ocean currents make for a temperate, generally frost-free climate where flavour and character can develop in their own good time.

Crops break through the soil and begin their climb towards the sun during winter. Watch the rains transform dry paddocks into lush green blankets of crops and pastures. Farmers rejoice as farm dams fill and overflow. New-born lambs stay close to their mothers.

Olive pickers strip the black fruit from trees in orchards and growing wild. The beginnings of the locally produced olive oil.

Kangaroo Island oysters are at their plump and succulent best.

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

The Coast

Cape du Couedic is “God’s industrial washing machine. Complete with God’s industrial dryer ... The wind blows straight through your head, [in] teeth aching, eardrum shattering magnificence” (www.inkandcleaver.com, 7 August 2014).

The exposed south and west Kangaroo Island coasts can be storm central, especially in winter. 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. You will never feel more alive after standing atop a lighthouse in 40 knot winds! Don’t forget to imagine what life was like for our lighthouse keepers when these places were only accessible by a four-day horse ride.

Calmer beaches on the north coast offer sheltered stretches to enjoy brisk afternoons strolls in gentle winter sun, with salt in the air and treasures to spy. Keep your eyes peeled for small coastal birds hunkering down in winter seaweed washed up on the beaches.

Southern Right Whales are the most frequent of large marine mammal visitors to Kangaroo Island waters. Often travelling past between May and September before returning to Antarctic waters in October. Look for them close inshore right around the coast or in sheltered bays where mothers may rest with young. Less commonly Blue and Humpback Whales also visit, and an occasional Killer Whales (Orcas) sometimes drop by for a seal meal.

Fishing and boating

Fishing is a daily ritual for many Kangaroo Islanders, and if anyone knows, a local does. So, dangle a line from a jetty, cast off from a beach, hire a dinghy, leap into your kayak, or charter a deep-sea boat – and enjoy.

Winter seas can be pounding on Kangaroo Island, which can add to the fishing excitement – and the rewards are plenty. Always take care when fishing off rocks and heed any warning signs.

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 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 squid over seagrass meadows, Tommy Ruff in sheltered parts of the north coast and flathead at sheltered shallow sandy beaches.

Launch your boat from Kangaroo Island Council ramps at American River, Bay of Shoals (Kingscote), and Christmas Cove (Penneshaw) for a fee, or from Baudin Beach or Emu Bay for free. Be sure to check limits on size, bag, boat and possession for all fish and shellfish, and season closures, for example for Rock Lobster and Snapper.

Photography

The island is a goldmine for nature photographers: spring begins in winter on Kangaroo Island. Across crops of native vegetation, in conservation and national parks, along tree-lined roadsides, colour is everywhere. The orchid show begins – once you’ve found 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’re there. Joeys venture from kangaroo and wallaby pouches to explore a new world. Short-beaked Echidna mating trains can be seen occasionally across the Island with one female doggedly pursued by several males.

The big ticket attractions have fewer visitors at this time. It’s a rare chance to capture Remarkable Rocks people-free, and often 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.

Point Ellen provides a splendid vista of Vivonne Bay as the Southern Ocean crashes ashore.