

## Travel

Edited by Jane Memmler



SEAL BAY was living up to its billing. After walking along the half-mile boardwalk that meanders through limestone cliffs and sand dunes we arrived at a viewing platform where we watched hundreds of sea lions surfing the waves and sunning themselves on the magnificent stretch of beach, doubling as their breeding ground.

It was thrilling to be able to get up so close to these doleful-looking creatures without feeling we were intruding.

I'm on Kangaroo Island (known to locals as KI), off the coast of South Australia, blessed with a ruggedly beautiful 316-mile coastline with soaring cliffs, dense forest, vast sand dunes, wetlands and massive arcs of pristine white beaches. A third of the island is protected, which has helped animals and birds thrive.

Arriving in the north coast resort of Penneshaw, following a 45-minute ferry crossing from Cape Jervis on the mainland, I was met by guide Lyn Bolto whose family have run a sheep farm on the island for more than half a century. Farming is the island's main industry and she took me to watch her husband Trevor shearing some of the farm's flock. It was fascinating to watch him expertly remove the fleece without damaging it or injuring the animal.

A different kind of nature was on show at Admirals Arch, a stunning stone structure carved by the wind and sea in the 182,000-acre Flinders Chase National Park. We walked down a steep cliff staircase to a lookout over the rocks where New Zealand Fur Seals were sunning themselves.

A short drive from the Arch is another natural wonder. Appropriately named Remarkable Rocks, it is a huge cluster of weather-hewn formations precariously balanced atop a granite outcrop that can be safely walked over. Nature has

# Kangaroo Island is one big nature trail



**MARK SHENTON** is wowed by the wondrous sights at a haven for wildlife that is Australia's answer to the Galapagos

TAKE IT EASY: Above, sea lions bask on the beach at Seal Bay and, left, the more active inhabitants of the island

also sculpted the sands of Little Sahara into spectacular sand dunes rising out of the centre of the island. Adventurous tourists take a sand board, climb to the top of those razorback ridges and ride the slopes back down to the bottom.

Kangaroo Island lays claim to having one of the best beaches in the country. Vivonne Bay is a long, curved sandy strand that is superb for picnics, beachcombing, surfing and fishing. Lyn, who is a keen bush walker, led

us over staggeringly high dunes and through secluded coves to reach the expansive golden beach, which was remarkably unoccupied.

The island doesn't have any of the flash restaurants of Adelaide and Melbourne but it has plenty of unpretentious places to eat that make the most of the abundant fresh local produce such as oysters, prawns, Ligurian bee honey, olive oil and

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Travel

# Going wild in quiet Sahara

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sheep milk cheeses and yogurts. One of the nicest meals I had was at one of the three places I stayed, Seascope Lodge, a luxury B&B overlooking Emu Bay.

Owner Mandy cooked up a succulent baked rack of lamb using herbs from her garden, followed by homemade honey ice cream.

Breakfast was just as elaborate with her own organic free-range eggs, homemade bread and island sheep milk yogurt.

The equally welcoming Lookout, a B&B just minutes from the Penneshaw ferry, also provided a delicious three-course dinner as part of the package.

I had been looking forward to seeing the nightly parade of little penguins in Kingscote but sadly their numbers have been depleted in recent years, decimated by the exploding population of fur seals which hunt them. Even in small numbers they are enchanting and

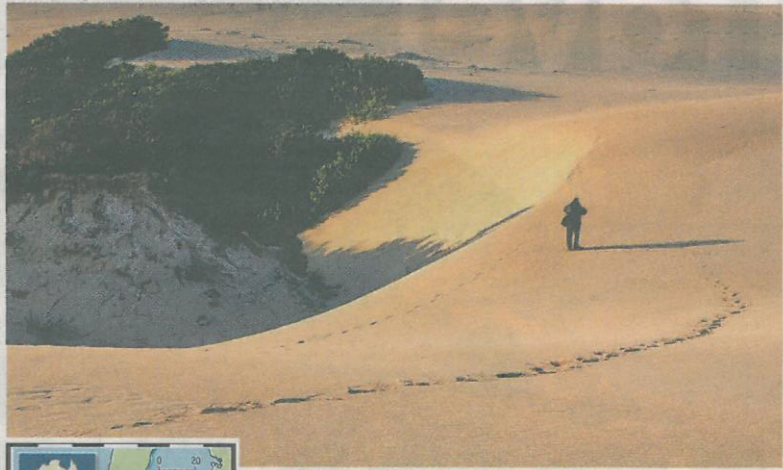
the local guides at the Penguin Centre provided a superb commentary as we watched the birds in their night-time homes. We only saw a dozen or so on our excursion, but it was still worth it.

If penguins are in short supply, you are never far from the kangaroos that give the island its name, as well as wallabies.

Koalas, introduced here in 1923, are also in plentiful supply but as they spend a lot of their time sleeping, often as high up in a eucalyptus tree as they can climb, they are hard to spot. One of the easiest places to see these laid-back marsupials is at the sanctuary at Hanson Bay.

Even rarer, but still possible to see in the wild, are echidnas, a hedgehog-like mammal.

What a privilege to have experienced the wildlife and unspoilt wilderness of Australia's third largest island.



FOOTSTEPS IN THE SAND: A walker takes a trek in Little Sahara on Kangaroo Island



THE KNOWLEDGE

Wexas (0207 589 0555/[www.wexas.com](http://www.wexas.com)) offers a 10-day South Australia and Kangaroo Island tour from £2,933pp (two sharing). Price includes return flights from London to Adelaide with Cathay Pacific, return flight to Kangaroo Island, nine nights accommodation including two nights on Kangaroo Island and a full day Wilderness Tours ([www.wilderness-tours.com.au](http://www.wilderness-tours.com.au)) excursion, car hire and some meals. Book by October 9, 2012. South Australian Tourism Commission; [www.uk.southaustralia.com](http://www.uk.southaustralia.com)