



Southern Ocean Lodge. Opposite (clockwise from top left): our locavore Nick Hannaford; Cape Willoughby lighthouse; Restaurant Bella's flourless chocolate cake; Seal Bay; Fish of Penneshaw; eggs at Will's Rare Breeds Farm.



Kangaroo Island LOCAVORE

Floating off the coast of South Australia, Kangaroo Island offers a wealth of stunning scenery and world-class produce, says local Nick Hannaford of Lifetime Private Retreats.





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1. Chef David Mitchell from Restaurant Bella. 2. Hike to the 500 million-year-old Remarkable Rocks in Flinders Chase National Park. 3. Esther Stephens serves Mexican fare at Yellow Ash 'n' Chili. 4. Get up close to sea lions at Seal Bay. 5. Pelicans in Kingscote.



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With 540km of coastline, Kangaroo Island (or 'KI' to locals) is Australia's third largest island. Off the coast of South Australia, it's a photographer's dream – the jaw-dropping scenery changing from rugged cliffs and gently curving coves to a yellow inland sea of canola. To the west are untouched expanses of national park; further east, the towns of Kingscote and Penneshaw; and in between is a network of unsealed roads twisting through the bushland. The island's isolation has made it one of the country's last remaining sanctuaries for an incredible variety of native flora and fauna, as well as the world's only pure Ligurian bee colonies producing highly prized honey.

Another drawcard is the colourful, welcoming characters who live on the island. This month's locavore, Nick Hannaford of [Lifetime Private Retreats](#) (see Where to Stay), grew up on KI. "School holidays were spent swimming at the beach during the day and hanging out on the sand dunes at night," he says. "Now the island is a place that resets my spirit. I think people who visit connect to this same feeling in their own way."

The 4600-strong population will swell with visitors over summer, but as the tourist season drops off, many places close up shop for winter, so Kangaroo Island isn't a place known for

its restaurant scene. Instead, you'll find producers whose unique wares are in high demand, plus a burgeoning wine industry producing well-priced, table-friendly drops. "In my opinion, we're at the base camp to a mountain of potential," says Nick, who is also the driving force behind [Feastival](#) (April 25-30, 2013; [tourkangarooisland.com.au/kifeastival](#)), which showcases the island's food through a series of masterclasses and pop-up events, such as a Roman banquet with Maggie Beer.

Nick's advice for visitors to the island is not to plan too much. "Slow down to the pace of the island and take a few days to explore, stopping off at wineries, art galleries and farm gates as you take in the fantastic views and wilderness."

WHERE TO EAT

Restaurant Bella (54 Dauncey St, Kingscote, (08) 8553 0400) is an island stalwart. "If you've had a mad day shopping in Kingscote or circumnavigating the island with visitors, Bella's pizza is always a great way to refuel," says Nick. Island newcomers David and Chi Mitchell took over a year ago, with Chi running the daytime cafe and pizza takeaway business and David in the kitchen of the more formal mod-Oz restaurant.

NATURAL BEAUTIES

Native wildlife thrive on this isolated piece of land, so if your eyes are sharp, you might see echidnas meandering along the road or pelicans fishing by the wharf, and, of course, plenty of kangaroos.

✦ With the [Kangaroo Island Penguin Centre](#) ([kipenguincentre.com.au](#)) in Kingscote, you can take a night tour to see Little Penguins – the best time to seek them out is from March to November. ✦ Or head south to [Seal Bay Conservation Park](#) ([sealbay.sa.gov.au](#)), one of the few places in the world you can get up close to a wild sea lion population. ✦ The west side of the island is dominated by the [Flinders Chase National Park](#). Hike to the naturally sculpted Admirals Arch – a favourite spot for frolicking fur seals – and the distinctive 500 million-year-old granite boulders called the Remarkable Rocks.



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1. Head to Fish of Penneshaw for beer-battered flathead and salt-and-pepper prawns. 2. & 4. Enjoy Sugar Rush truffles and a latte at Choccol' Art & Coffee. 3. An isolated location has been key to making Kangaroo Island a sanctuary for native wildlife.



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They've stayed true to the principles of serving excellent produce-driven fare – the beef tenderloin with porcini risotto and Island Pure feta is particularly popular – accompanied by local wines, with David adding some fine flourishes, perhaps a dessert special of Quay-inspired eight-texture chocolate cake.

Mexican joint **Yellow Ash 'n' Chili** (59 Dauncey St, Kingscote, (08) 8553 0330) offers a change of pace from the usual KI fare. "I think the whole island rejoiced when this place opened a couple of years ago," says Nick. San Pedro native Esther Stephens injects plenty of California-Mex colour into her restaurant, from the brightly painted walls to the street-food menu of enchiladas and tostadas. Make it a party with a jug of margaritas or finish on a different note with Mahalia Coffee from South Australia's Limestone Coast.

Satisfy your sweet cravings at new cafe **Chocol' Art & Coffee** (70b Dauncey St, Kingscote) with homemade muffins, a slice of cake, or truffles from local producer Sugar Rush. The committed chocoholic can skip coffee for a thick Italian-style hot chocolate or pick up a packet of chocolate pasta to take home. Owners Lisa Collins and Pete Nash have even developed sugar-free chocolates if you prefer your cocoa without the sweetness.

Over in Penneshaw, good dining options are scarcer on the ground, so if you really want to treat yourself, opt for some gourmet catering. Kate Sumner of [Kangaroo Island Source](#) ([kangarooislandsource.com.au](#)) will create anything from an intimate dinner for two to a picnic lunch for a group. "Kate is passionate about Kangaroo Island and the story behind food," says Nick. Expect dishes such as local Southrock Lamb on a bed of KI lentils or marron poached in a lemon sauce.

Alternatively, try **2 Birds & A Squid** ([2birds1squid.com](#)). "Sue Pearson saw the potential of the island many years ago," says Nick. "She was one of the first to start a catering business here – a hard gig when the population was used to meat and three veg and tourism hadn't kicked in yet." From October to April, Sue cooks restaurant-style meals – think grilled scallops on cauliflower puree or wild fennel risotto – to be delivered to your accommodation. For a more casual meal, head to Sue's chipper **Fish of Penneshaw** (43 North Tce, Penneshaw) for salt-and-pepper prawns with her 19-ingredient Thai dipping sauce.

The Rockpool Cafe (North Coast Rd, Stokes Bay; [the-rockpool-cafe.com.au](#)) is the kind of place "you want to keep as a secret so you can surprise your friends with it,"



1. The town of Penneshaw sits on the Dudley Peninsula to the east of the island. **2. & 4.** At Andermel Marron Farm, you can pick a live marron from the tank to take home, or have one cooked for you in the cafe. **3.** Ferguson Australia specialises in lobster, as well as a range of sustainable seafood.



THINGS TO DO

✦ At **Will's Rare Breeds Farm** (4714 North Coast Rd, West of Stokes Bay; rarebreedsfarm.com.au), adults will enjoy learning about Will Marshall's crusade to save around 25 rare and unusual breeds of farm animal, while children will love the chance to pet calves, lambs and bleating kids. ✦ With its pristine shores and tranquil bushland, the island is a haven for artists. Peruse their works at **Fine Art Kangaroo Island** (80 & 91 Dauncey St, Kingscote; fineartkangarooisland.com.au). ✦ The effervescent Kate Sumner of **Kangaroo Island Source** (see Where to Eat) will show you how to get the best from KI produce in a hands-on cooking class. "Her casual style immediately puts people at ease," says Nick. "You don't even need wine!"

says Nick. Another seasonal opener, Rockpool is a fantastic spot for a casual beachside lunch, followed by a walk through the caves to a secluded natural pool for a swim.

If you're touring the south-west of the island, Nick suggests a pit-stop at **Rustic Blue** (South Coast Rd, rusticblue.com.au), a quaint little cafe and gallery with outdoor dining in a relaxed bush setting.

PRODUCE TRAIL

Peek in the fridge of any KI resident and they're bound to have at least one cheese or yoghurt from **Island Pure Sheep Dairy** (127 Gum Creek Rd, Cygnet River; islandpure.com.au). Co-owner Justin Harman, a former chef, and cheesemaker Sally George have recently relaunched their range, focusing on traditional Mediterranean-style cheeses that naturally lend themselves to sheep's milk, such as Le Casuarinas (feta) and Cassini (manchego). "Personally, I love the ricotta," says Nick. "Sweet and fluffy, it's perfect with

"I love Island Pure ricotta – sweet and fluffy, it's perfect with figs and honey."

our homegrown figs and a drizzle of honey." Stop in around 3pm for a tour of the dairy and watch the sheep being milked.

To try some of the island's famous Ligurian honey, there are two options. The first is **Island Beehive** (59 Playford Hwy, Kingscote; island-behive.com.au), where Peter Davis has been beekeeping since he took over his father's 12 hives in 1963. Now he oversees around 1400 organic hives, making five types of honey. Sample them all at the tasting bar in the visitor centre, which is also a great place to find loads of local products, including Dirty Lentils from *The Cook and the Chef's* Simon Bryant, or pick up a gift on the way back to the airport. "I have a friend in Victoria who makes me bring her the 5kg tub of creamed honey whenever

I visit," says Nick. The second option is the smaller **Clifford's Honey Farm** (1157 Elsegood Rd, Haines; cliffordshoney.com.au). The smooth stringybark is a favourite, but the must-try is Jenny Clifford's famous honey ice cream.



1. Island Pure Sheep Dairy is KI's only dairy. **2. & 3.** Peter Davis of Island Beehive has around 1400 organic hives of Ligurian bees. **4.** Our locavore, Nick Hannaford, cooking for the Kangaroo Island Festival. **5.** The island's farms are the ideal holiday scenery.



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Nick's cousin and third-generation lamb farmer Andy Gilfillan runs **Southrock Lamb** (southrocklamb.com.au) with his wife, Kate. They don't have a shopfront, but you'll find their products at cafes and shops around the island, or if you're out on the eastern tip at Antechamber Bay, call ahead to pick up direct from the source. Nick recommends their lamb chorizo, while the 'l'hamb' – smoked lamb leg – makes a killer jaffle filler.

Unsurprisingly, the seafood on the island is stellar, with marron and abalone local delicacies. "I love the tiny 'abalini' [baby abalone]," says Nick. "I cook them for one minute each side on a barbecue, then drizzle with a lime, palm sugar and chilli dressing." Buy some from **Ferguson Australia** (48 Koohinoor Rd, Kingscote; fergusonaustralia.com). As well as offering a variety of sustainable Aussie seafood, this three-generation family-run business specialises in lobster (they've even supplied to Alain Ducasse!). Try their award-winning lobster medallions, the more unusual lobster sashimi, or pick a live one from the tank and they'll cook it for you. "After a one-hour drive to Kingscote for groceries, we like

to treat ourselves to a quick picnic of their half-crayfish plates piled with extra prawns," says Nick.

If you've a little less change in your pocket, Nick suggests **Kangaroo Island Fresh Seafoods** (26 Telegraph Rd, Kingscote). Adjoining a petrol station, it may not be an obvious place for seafood, but Nick reckons they do the best old-school fish and chips around. "All that's missing is the newspaper wrapping."

Andermel Marron Farm (804 Harriet Rd, Heartland; andermel.com.au) is Heartland's 'triple threat' – a marron farm gate, cafe and cellar door all in one. "When friends visit, a trip here is a must," says Nick. "I love the look on their faces when they see the huge live marrons in the tanks," says Nick. The farm was also the site of a CSIRO trial to grow native plants, so you can now sample some bush tucker sauces, or just drop in for a marron lunch with a glass of their **Two Wheeler Creek** sauvignon blanc, followed by a nip of lemon myrtle liqueur.

"The Kangaroo Island oyster industry is soaring ahead in leaps and bounds," claims Nick. He loves the sheoak-smoked Pacific oysters from **The Oyster Farm Shop** (486 Tangara Dr,

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American River; facebook.com/OysterFarmShop) with their burst of saltwater. “They may be small, but they pack the sweetest, smoky punch.” Stop here for abalone and marron, too.

Time your visit for the first Sunday of the month and you’ll find many of these producers at the [Kangaroo Island Farmers’ Market](#) (Lloyd Collins Reserve, Penneshaw) alongside stalls touting homemade chutneys, chocolates and cordials.

WINE TRAIL

Visits to [The Islander Estate Vineyards](#) (639 Bark Hut Rd, Cassini; iev.com.au) are by appointment only, but you’ll be rewarded for the effort. Owner Jacques Lurton comes from a Bordeaux winemaking family, so there’s a traditional philosophy to the process, from the hand-picking and sorting of grapes to maturation in French oak barrels – you won’t find big sugar fruit bombs here. “Jacques’ wines have European complexity and delicacy,” says Nick. “It’s a refreshing contrast to the big and bold reds us Aussies are used to.” Manager Yale Norris will be happy to take you on a vineyard tour so you can experience this refined expression for yourself – the beautifully restrained Majestic Plough Malbec 2006 is a prime example.

Family-run [Dudley Wines](#) (1153 Willoughby Rd, Penneshaw; dudleywines.com.au) is hard to beat for location. From the verandah of the cliff-top cellar door you can see all the way to the mainland and, when the season is right, you might be lucky enough to spot a whale or two. Their Dudley Bubbly – with its tropical fruit aromas and cider characteristics – is often poured during February’s Kangaroo Island Cup horseracing carnival.

Further down the unsealed road, you’ll find [Chapman River Wines](#) (off Willoughby Rd, Antechamber Bay; facebook.com/chapmanriverwines), a cellar door with the unusual distinction of once being an aircraft hanger. Today, the cavernous tin shed is charmingly decked out in mismatched furniture, a chandelier and owner Diana Keir’s vibrant artworks. Diana and husband Bruce followed the hippie trail in 1972 from the UK, finally settling in Adelaide before making the sea-change (like so many others) to Kangaroo Island. Bruce is always happy to regale with tales of their adventures, so settle in at the bar for a chat and a tasting – the Happiness Viognier 2009 is perfect for those who don’t like their dessert wines too sweet.

Just five minutes out of Kingscote town centre, [Bay of Shoals](#) (Cordes Rd, Kingscote; bayofshoalswines.com.au) brings its

stunning ocean vistas inside with a cute nautical theme, right down to the pelican labels. Many of their 17 wines are crisp, clean on the palate and around \$20, making them great by-the-sea quaffers, but for something a little more intense, try the tawny-style Vintage Fortified with its lush long finish.

So it’s not exactly wine, but Nick often stops in at [Kangaroo Island Spirits](#) (856 Playford Hwy, Cygnet River; kispirits.com.au) on his way home from Kingscote, “I like to pick up a bottle of gin for a cheeky G&T on the verandah,” he admits. Jon and Sarah Lark use native ingredients – such as wild juniper, Ligurian honey and wild fennel – to flavour their award-winning spirits. The new SLAP (samphire, lime and pepper) vodka alone is worth a visit to this boutique distillery, “and it’s the only place you can find a decent cocktail around here,” adds Nick.

WHERE TO STAY

Kangaroo Island arguably does luxury accommodation better than anywhere else in Australia. Nick Hannaford’s [Lifetime Private Retreats](#) (life-time.com.au; from \$410 per double) offers a style of escape that’s akin to staying at the holiday home of a wealthy friend – with a few lavish touches, of course. The retreat comprises of three villas along the northern coastline – heritage Stone House, honeymoon hideaway Sky House, and

“Kangaroo Island does luxury accommodation better than anywhere else in Australia.”

Cliff House, with its magnificent views of Snelling Beach and smooth curved walls that mimic the ocean waves. “We try to create a tailor-made getaway to suit our guests’ interests,” says Nick, whether it’s the full service, complete with concierge and private chef, or the accommodation-only option for those who prefer complete seclusion. It’s the small things that make a stay here special, right down to your customised CD compilation.

At the other end of the island, [Southern Ocean Lodge](#) (Hanson Bay; southernoceanlodge.com.au; from \$1980 per double – minimum two-night stay) is a destination in itself. It’s an all-inclusive package, from activities and drinks to executive chef Tim Bourke’s wonderful Euro-style cuisine. Each of the 21 suites take in sweeping views of the sea, best enjoyed with a top-shelf tipple from the complimentary in-room bar.

A popular (and more affordable) option is self-contained accommodation. There are plenty to choose from, but one that stands out is [Antechamber Bay Retreats](#) (Antechamber Bay; kicc.com.au; from \$220 per double) from Southrock Lamb’s Kate and Andy Gilfillan (see Produce Trail). Stay in either Kona or Nat’s – the latter is a historic homestead that’s the oldest house in South Australia. Both are beautifully appointed, have access to a private beach and can sleep up to eight. Each also has a fully stocked ‘baaa’ fridge full of lamb to buy, ready for the barbie. **d.**

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