



AUTUMN (MARCH TO MAY) ON KANGAROO ISLAND

Autumn (March to May) on Kangaroo Island

Average autumn temperatures are 20°C (68°F) maximum and 13°C (55°F) minimum.

Autumn invites nature lovers to Kangaroo Island and asks them to explore. The wind is low, the days are bright and clear, and winter rain has not yet set in.

The soft light and warm days of autumn are among the best to experience the real essence of Kangaroo Island. For photographers and walkers, March to May are the ideal months.

Warm days suffused with sunlight set the backdrop for a relaxing post-summer getaway.

It's warm enough to enjoy a day outdoors then cool enough at night to open a bottle of Kangaroo Island's finest red wine over dinner.

Wildlife

Many animals are taking the chance to soak up the sun, especially the island's reptiles. One of the most spectacular is the Rosenberg's Goanna which can grow to 1.5 metres long! These large lizards are commonly spotted crossing our road network, or feeding on carrion along roadsides, so please drive carefully.

Along with 15 species of small lizards, keep an eye out for Tiger Snakes and, more rarely, Pygmy Copperheads on sunny days; both are venomous, so make sure you give them respect and space!

Cape Barren Geese prepare to nest in Native Iris tussocks or build a stick saucer nest on the ground in open grassy flats at Flinders Chase and nearby lagoons, and on the north coast near the Wisanger salt pans.

Birds

Just as Double-banded Plovers arrive from New Zealand to settle in the tidal flats and brackish lagoon waters, Cape Barren Geese, Glossy Black-cockatoos and Little Penguins settle into nesting.

Several species of small plovers (or Dotterels), including Hooded and Red Capped scamper to and fro across island beaches. Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos form into feeding flocks of up to 200 to feed on native hakea and banksia and introduced pine trees.

Immature Rock Parrots occupy roadside strips, and feed on coastal plants such as samphire and sea rocket, through until July. The handful of sightings of the Rufous Whistler in late summer-autumn could be repeated with grit and dedication, try your luck searching in the Rocky Point area of Dudley Peninsula. Please report any sightings to the Kangaroo Island Landscapes Board in Kingscote.

Wildflowers

From late summer into autumn, the bush produces iconic and distinctly Australian seed pods - woody nuts of hakea, cones of banksias, pea pods and gum nuts. The Autumn tones of the Silver and Desert Banksia are a delight and extend year-round.

Some of the gum trees and mallees are flowering in cream and pink, such as the Kangaroo Island Narrow-leaf Mallee, widespread across the east. The Flame Heath begins its bright red flower display on small bushes, alongside the Common Heath with flowers showing bright red through to fuschia, pink or white.

Vineyards dotted around the island bring a traditional warmth as leaves change from bright green to autumn hues.

Bushwalking

The mild temperatures and dry conditions of autumn are made for bushwalking.

A modified version of the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will be accessible for day walkers who book with one of the licenced tour operators. This opportunity provides a unique experience for visitors to connect with the post-bushfire landscape and see the regeneration of the Flinders Chase National Park, Kelly Hill Conservation Park and the Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area.

The 2-day, Cape Gantheaume Coastal Trek revels in a thumping Southern Ocean and the contrast of delicate flowers of low 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. The Cape Gantheaume Coastal Trek is closed annually from 1 May until 31 December.

If you have a few hours, explore the Valley of the Cassowaries named after the now extinct dwarf emu, on the Ravine Hike. Take a shaded walk into the valley, then follow the river to a remote sandy beach.

From Penneshaw, the Ironstone Hike is steeped in local history and commands an eye-catching mainland view.

Take a short stroll to the delightful Tadpole Cove walk at D'Estrees Bay to see an historic threshing floor, weird geology and possibly an Osprey soaring along the shoreline.

Food and Wine

The legacy of ingenuity and seclusion of island life has influenced food producers who deliver quality and flavour – whether they are fourth generation islanders or newly arrived and inspired.

Autumn is the time of year to pick up just-bottled jams, chutneys and sauces at the farmers' markets directly from the producers. You can try your hand at 'squidding' (fishing for Southern Calamari) from a local jetty and celebrate the cool nights with a leisurely feast and a bottle of local wine. Call into a pop-up food van for island-style 'fast food' or book in for a cooking lesson with locally sourced produce.

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.

Agriculture

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

In Autumn, early rains fill dams and renew pastures. The break of the season allows seeding of winter crops to commence with tractor lights guiding farmers working through the night to seed canola and cereal crops.

Grape harvest is in full swing and wineries crush grapes to begin wine-making. At the same time the harvesting of seed potato crops begins.

As you travel across the island's rural landscapes you are likely to encounter a local farmer moving machinery or stock. There is a long and intriguing farming history here, and autumn is the perfect time to explore the Parndana Museum, featuring the Soldier Settler Scheme.

In any season, farm gate outlets, farmers markets and cellar doors are ready to welcome you. Listen to stories, ask for a locals perspective on their favourite autumn activity and sample produce such as honey, marron, wine, beer, fresh seafood and poultry products.

The Coast

The calm weather and many rocky coves along the Kangaroo Island coast make autumn a wonderful time for snorkelling and exploring the underwater worlds. With an assortment of fish from wrasse to whiting and Porcupine Fish, delve into the rocky and weedy habitats to discover coastal treasure troves. If you're new to snorkelling and keen to give it a go, hire a local guide to take you on a coastal snorkelling tour, they'll provide all the gear and the local knowledge, and you can enjoy a window into this exciting new world!

From the ocean to the river or even a lagoon, kayaking is the ultimate cruise to see what's happening on and around the water – quietly spot dolphins, sea eagles, pelicans, swans or fish. Explore historical settlements from the sea in American River. Hire a kayak or book a kayak tour at various spots around the island.

Autumn brings cooler days and often light winds, prepare for a range of weather conditions and you can get out and about to enjoy the coast in any weather! The coast can be quietly calming, with gentle waves lapping at the shore on a cool autumn evening walking the beach at Emu Bay. Head to one of the south coast beaches, like Vivonne Bay on a windy day to feel invigorated and marvel at nature as waves pound the coast and fresh seas spray is blown across the shore.

Fishing and boating

The mild, calm weather of autumn makes fishing all the more relaxed and comfortable.

King George Whiting are biting, squid are widespread, particularly over seagrass meadows, Tommy Ruff and Snapper are waiting in sheltered waters off the north coast and flathead lie mainly in sheltered shallow sandy beaches. Gummy Shark can be found off sandy beaches around the island, and in sheltered north coast bays.

Trevally are also widespread along the north and south coasts, Red Mullet schools arrive at Wreckers Beach. Yellowtail Kingfish can be found at a few locations – try Cape Willoughby and around artificial structures in Nepean Bay.

Tuna are active off the north coast, west of Snellings Beach, off the south coast, and around the Pages Islands. Take your family along to the annual American River Fishing Spectacular competition on the Easter weekend, and compare your fishing prowess with the locals.

Boat launching is available 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. Kayak fishing is an attractive alternative to fishing from a jetty, beach or boat. You can access places on a kayak that you cannot get to on foot or with a boat.

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: The autumn tones of the mallee trunks and many-shaped woody fruits are pictures waiting to be taken.

The weather is also picture perfect, with wind at a seasonal low, the last rays of summer sun there is a chance to revel in days that are bright, clear and warm, with the comfort of cool nights. The samphire meadows glow red and set off the grey trunks of the paperbarks in many of the coastal lagoon fringes, such as Antechamber Bay and Chapman River.

The still waters of Pelican Lagoon provide a mirror-like surface reflecting clouds and shorelines.

The resident Freckled Ducks and Black Swans glide on calm coastal waters. Some of the larger birds take to nesting and should not be disturbed but Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos form into feeding flocks that are probably heard before they are seen. Hooded Plovers (also known as Hooded Dotterels) scamper up and down empty beaches in pursuit of food.

The mighty Rosenberg's Goanna takes in the last rays before winter. Kangaroo and Tammar wallaby young bulge in their mothers' pouches. Long-nosed fur seals rest on rocks and Australian Sea Lions on beaches.