



SUMMER (DEC TO FEB) ON KANGAROO ISLAND

Average summer temperatures are 24°C (75°F) maximum and 14°C (57°F) minimum.

Summer is the time to explore an astonishing variety of beaches on Kangaroo Island. From wild, crashing waves and beach fishing on the south and west coasts to tranquil bays in the east, like Antechamber Bay, and perfect family swimming spots in the north, there's a beach for everyone's tastes and every occasion. There are even beaches with dual personalities, like Stokes Bay, where moderate waves welcome boogie-boarders next to a sheltered rock pool teeming with marine life, to wade and explore.

Wildlife

During the island's warmest months, nature is an agreeable companion to a relaxing Kangaroo Island holiday.

Summer is Koala mating time, where you may hear a ruckus from the treetops as Koalas call out to each other. While young are born five weeks later, it's not for another seven months that you might catch a glimpse of a baby Koala safely perched on its mother's back where they start to spend increasing amounts of time out of the pouch.

Echidna young are being weaned at seven months old when they are already covered in spines and half-size miniatures of their mother.

Platypus are highly elusive and rarely spotted, the best chance of a fleeting glance is late Summer when water levels in creeks and pools are low.

Bottlenose Dolphins may breed year-round but usually give birth to their calves near the end of summer. With calves suckling for up to 18 months, there is every chance you will see younger dolphins amongst a pod in the bays and coves around the island year-round. Join a local tour to experience these inquisitive and playful creatures ducking and diving amongst the white water of waves, their speed and agility under the water is astounding.

Summer is breeding time for both Australian and Long-Nosed Fur Seals. At the season peak in January fierce territorial battles are common – get a close-up view from the safety of the boardwalk at Admiral's Arch to hear the roar and watch the chest clashing action!

Birds

Bird life remains plentiful in the bush during Kangaroo Island's mild summers. Migratory birds continue to fuel up at rich feeding grounds for the return to northern hemisphere breeding grounds.

Summer is prime nesting time for many of our small coastal birds. Please keep a close look out for these well camouflaged masters of disguise. Particularly above the high tide line on our beaches, amongst the modest protection of seaweed washed high up in small scrapings in the softer sand. Keep a respectful distance, and dogs on a lead and if driving on our beaches travel below the high tide line to help these tiny warriors have the best chance of a successful family.

In summer, with the inevitable arrival of hot northerly winds look skyward for Pacific Swifts who arrive with the summer storm fronts from the mainland. In flocks of hundreds, their quick flickering wings beat as they expertly manoeuvre the skies feeding on flying insects.

Immature Elegant Parrots are regular visitors to the island, and while uncommon the best chances of observing this occasional visitor will be along roadsides in Summer on the western end or grassy woodlands on the northern side of Murray Lagoon.

As winter and spring freshwater wetland habitats retreat with the warmth of summer, large numbers of Black Swans congregate in Shoal Bay, Pelican Lagoon and along the American River shore and tidal marshes of the eastern end of the island. Watch from the camouflage of a bird hide in these areas to increase your chances of spotting an unusual species.

Wildflowers

The local hop bushes, of which there are three varieties, come into their own as the weather warms, displaying coppery to purple fruits that cover the small shrubs.

Bronzed flower tassels hang heavily on male she-oak trees and flowering mallees will be simpler to find amidst a chorus of feeding parrots and honeyeaters.

Many pea flowers, mostly yellow and red, but also pinks and purples, last well into summer growing low to the ground. The endemic Green Correa is flowering, and the velvet bushes continue their elegant show, as does the island's only native bottlebrush, Scarlet Bottlebrush.

The samphire meadows along Chapman River glow red against the grey soil and shedding trunks of the melaleuca paperbarks, who put on a white-cream flower show from late spring through summer.

Bushwalking

In summer, temperatures are usually milder than the nearby mainland but they can occasionally be extreme, and it is bushfire season. Plan shorter walks in summer; traverse beaches early or late in the day for the most comfortable conditions.

The Kingscote Scenic Walking Trail follows the coastline through to Brownlow, and the mouth of the Cygnet River. An easy walking trail suited to a range of abilities that also allows for cycling.

For waterbird lovers, the 11 kilometre Curley Creek Hike in Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park provides picturesque views of the island's largest inland waterbody, Murray Lagoon. A delight when filled with migratory waders, the best views are from Bald Hill.

From American River, try the Cannery Walk for a slice of history and the Investigator Trail, which skirts the Pelican Lagoon sanctuary zone, a tranquil area for spotting birds.

Food and Wine

Summer is the season for the sun-ripening of many varieties of delicious fruit transformed by islanders into utterly unique products, such as native fruit jams, spirits and liqueurs.

Make a summer feast of local seafood. Southern Rock Lobster or Southern Garfish are here to be enjoyed on a beach with a bottle of crisp cool-climate island wine. Savour marron at its plumppest and sweetest, perfect for a hot summer's day. Enjoy fresh oysters with a local gin and tonic.

Delight in the cool and creamy flavour of lavender ice cream on a hot summer's day while you listen for the buzz of bees taking nectar from flowering gums – soon to be honey.

At one of the first boutique distilleries in South Australia, you'll taste carefully selected fresh botanicals (many locally foraged) with select batches, such as the seasonal and highly sought after mulberry gin.

The farmers' markets bustle in summer, with locals and visitors easily mingling amongst artisan producers, growers and makers. Eager to share their story while you sample wares steeped in nearby habitats, climates and soils. Have a coffee and take your time. It's Kangaroo Island: the pace is languid and the atmosphere social.

Call into a farm gate, open year-round or by appointment - honey outlets, lavender farm, eucalyptus distillery, fresh seafood outlets, winery cellar doors, microbreweries and the distillery. Find unique ways that local produce is incorporated into food, try a lavender scone or honey ice cream, locally smoked oysters and fish - there are options for an assortment of taste buds.

Agriculture

Farmers understand the increasing global demand for pure, clean, traceable goods. Kangaroo Island's 'stress-free' produce, in tune with nature, is here to deliver.

Fragrant fresh figs are found at the Farmers' Market. Eucalyptus oil is distilled from harvested leaves of narrow-leaf mallee trees. Freshly pressed olive oil appears on shelves and at markets.

Marron farmers pluck the plump crustaceans from dams for the perfect summer meal.

Native fruits ripen and add a distinctive Island flavour to chutneys and jams.

During summer harvesters ply the fields reaping cereals and canola. Huge centre pivots water seedling potatoes in the warm ground.

The next cycle of life begins with rams joining flocks in paddocks and lines of sheep follow feed carts through the paddocks.

In any season, farm gate outlets and cellar doors are ready to welcome you. Share in their stories and sample produce such as honey, marron, wine, beer, fresh seafood and poultry products.

The Coast

If sailing is your way to escape the madding crowd, then Kangaroo Island is a dream destination. Sailing the north coast you'll enjoy spotting the village settlements, often on white sandy bays interspersed with rolling hills, coastal cliffs, rocky shorelines and devine coves. The sealife is abundant, you will be sure to spot a pod of dolphins cruising past on the north eastern coast and birdlife abounds. Sheltered year-round cruising for day sailing is perfect in Nepean Bay and along the north coast many spectacular anchorages are hard to resist for a longer stay.

The coastline transitions from cove to beach to cliff sometimes gently, and at the eastern and western most ends dramatically, with cliffs at the opposing Cape Borda and Cape Willoughby soaring over 150 metres above sea level.

For surfing novices and boogie boarders try Stokes Bay and Vivonne Bay, remembering to always assess the conditions and be mindful of rips and under-currents. More experienced surfers will head to Pennington and D'estrees Bay, a casual chat with a local will often reveal a good spot to try for the coming days.

Swimming, snorkelling and kayaking suit the summer mood and the benefit of being an island is that locations are abundant. Beaches are popular in summer, along the north coast for generally safer swimming and the south coast for the more experienced and adventurous, but no matter where, the azure blue ocean will delight those that venture in or choose to admire from the safety of the crisp white sand.

Fishing and boating

With such an array of locations for fishing it's any wonder it is such a popular past-time for locals and visitors alike. Whether you dangle a line from a jetty, cast off from a beach, hire a dinghy, leap into your kayak, or charter a deep-sea boat you are sure to enjoy.

When the water is warm in summer, the garfish come alive in sheltered bays. Try your hand at dab-net fishing for these tasty streaks.

Squid, snook, Red Mullet and crabs are also more abundant and widespread in the warmth. And Tommy Ruff numbers expand in the sheltered parts of the north coast.

Trevally are plentiful on the north coast. Silver Drummer is also widespread in rocky inshore coasts but is difficult to catch. Sand crabs are common in warmer months around American River.

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. 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: Coppery to purple fruits on hop bushes, pea pods on wattles, and woody nuts on gums, hakeas and banksias make a uniquely Australian display through summer. Parrots and honeyeaters devour flowering mallees.

Try the public bird hides at American River, Reeves Point and Duck Lagoon for capturing waders. These shady spots provide a cool respite from the summer sun.

The waters of Emu Bay dazzle with their shades of azure and turquoise, contrasting sharply with the gleaming white sands, enticing you in for a swim. Flotsam and jetsam make for interesting photographic studies in the sharp light of summer.

Take a shaded walk to the Cannery at American River and wander amongst the historic ruins and rocky shores.