



40 THINGS TO DO IN FLINDERS CHASE NATIONAL PARK

Flinders Chase is a must see for any family up for an adventure, as it offers camping, hiking, bird watching, wildlife encounters, evidence of megafauna, historic ruins, lighthouses, and geological formations such as Admirals Arch and Remarkable Rocks.

The Park has one of Australia's greatest walks - the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail – a 61 kilometre five-day trek. The trail weaves through the most botanically unique area in South Australia before traversing along the rugged, remote and spectacular coastline of the Southern Ocean.

From the early 1890s there was a push to protect the native flora and fauna on this part of Kangaroo Island. By 1919 the area now known as Flinders Chase National Park was dedicated as a reserve - one of the first National Parks in Australia and the world.

Flinders Chase was first farmed by the May family in the late 1890's who lived at the original Rocky River homestead now known as May's Homestead and Postman's Cottage (heritage accommodation).

Aboriginal people lived on Kangaroo Island for thousands of years, drawing on deep knowledge and awareness of the land and waters. The cultural knowledge of these first Australians was developed over millennia and continues today through the Aboriginal Nations who retain an ongoing connection to Kangaroo Island.

The Park is home to an array of flora and fauna only found on Kangaroo Island including the KI echidna, KI kangaroo, KI tiger snake, KI spider orchid, KI dunnart, KI conesticks, and home to breeding colonies of long-nosed fur-seals which can be viewed from Cape du Couedic.

You can download a map for Flinders Chase National Park from environment.sa.gov.au/parks

PARK PROFILE

Name: Flinders Chase National Park.

First established: Under the Flora & Fauna Board in 1919 then under the NPW Act in 1972.

Size: 75,600 hectares.

Location: Kangaroo Island, South Australia.

Number of plants and animals: 891 species of plants, 450 species of fungi, 6 species of frogs, 16 species of lizards, 2 species of snakes, 7 species of microbat, 2 species monotremes, and 267 species of birds.

Some endangered or rare species:

Hooded plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*), long-nosed fur-seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*), Rosenberg's goanna (*Varanus rosenbergi*), Kangaroo Island echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*), southern brown bandicoot (*Isoodon obesulus obesulus*), KI dunnart (*Sminthopsis aitkeni*), western whipbird (*Psophodes nigrogularis*), white-bellied sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), and osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).

AUTUMN



Autumn in the Park sees the weather cool down with fungi, moss and lichen appearing after rains.

Platypus are easier to spot with less water flowing in the Rocky River and you may see the beginning of echidna mating trains.

- 1 From the Visitor Centre, visit the Platypus Pools at dusk (4.5km / 2hrs return) as it's the best time of year to spot a platypus. Look for bubbles on the water's surface indicating they maybe close by.
- 2 Stay in the heritage lighthouse keeper cottages under the flashing light of the Cape du Couedic Lighthouse.
- 3 Watch the sunset through Admirals Arch and spend time observing the long-nosed fur-seals.
- 4 Camp at Snake Lagoon Campground. Awake in your tent to hear the many woodland birds such as the fan-tailed cuckoo, spotted pardalote, crescent honeyeater and scarlet robin.
- 5 Spend some time exploring the interactive Visitor Centre and compare your tooth size with the giant Diprotodon teeth on display.
- 6 Along the Black Swamp Hike (9km / 3hrs loop) there are plenty of spots to stop and catch and release tadpoles and water bugs. Listen out for the loud "bonk" call of the eastern banjo frog.
- 7 Search for the life-size iron cut out of the megafauna Thylacoleo along the boardwalk across the Black Swamp behind the Visitor Centre.
- 8 Follow the Heritage Walk (1.5km / 30min) from the Visitor Centre past the historic Mays and Postman's cottages and observe the KI western grey kangaroos grazing in the late afternoon sun.
- 9 Explore the Ravine Hike (7 km / 3hrs return) and search for signs of the endangered Rosenberg's goanna. They leave scratches on trees, diggings in the ground or patched up termite mounds (they lay their eggs in them!). Goanna hatchlings emerge from the mound all by themselves.
- 10 Look to the sky, can you see a bird of prey soaring on the wind currents. The Flinders Chase coastline is home to a number of pairs of the threatened white-bellied sea-eagles.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Winter is the breeding season of the Kangaroo Island echidna. They can form 'trains' where several males follow a female around hoping to mate.

WINTER



Winter in the park sees the rain set in, rivers flow, pounding swells, and storms roll in from the sea.

The whales arrive, echidnas mate, and you may see small chicks of the noisy cape barren geese.

- 1 Venture along the Woodland Walk (1km / 20min loop) and spot the different types of moss & lichen – run your fingers across them and feel their texture.
- 2 Listen for the thundering sounds of the Southern Ocean and the haunting calls of the Bush stone-curlew or southern boobook owl as you camp the night at the Rocky River campground.
- 3 Explore the Platypus Waterholes Walk (4.5km / 2hrs return) and spot the different coloured fungi such as yellow jelly or orange hairy curtain crust that grows like brackets from tree trunks.
- 4 Peer over the lookout at the historic Weirs Cove Ruins Lookout. Weirs Cove is where the lighthouse keepers would winch up supplies from ships to service the lighthouse and families that lived there. You can still see the remains of the original jetty.
- 5 From your campground head to the nearest creekline to listen to the evening frog chorus. You may hear the southern brown tree frog or spotted marsh frog. There are only 6 frog species on Kangaroo Island, how many you can hear?
- 6 On a stormy day watch the waves crash over the Casuarina Islets, the two small islets off Cape du Couedic in the Western KI Marine Park. Take extra care when it's windy.
- 7 In late winter head along Snake Lagoon Hike (4km / 2hrs return) where golden wattles have begun to bloom and you may spot a trail of male KI echidnas following a female, this is known as an 'echidna train'.
- 8 Put on your gumboots and explore the Rocky River from the West Bay road bridge. Look up, you may spot a koala in the tree with a baby koala (known as a joey) on her back. Koalas were introduced to Kangaroo Island in the 1920s as they were becoming extinct on South Australia's mainland.
- 9 Head to Cape Borda (guided tours available). Stay in the lighthouse heritage accommodation and watch the weather roll in. At night see the lighthouse, which still has the original light which projects beams of light across the landscape.
- 10 From the Heritage Walk (1.5km / 30min loop) see how many Cape Barren Geese you can count as they bicker over nesting space. The geese like to nest in the morning flag bush, keep an eye out, you may see one sitting on its nest.

SPRING



Spring in the Park sees hundreds of wildflowers begin to bloom, whilst tadpoles fill the rivers and creeks

Birds begin to nest whilst flowers are pollinated by busy butterflies, beetles, ants, and native bees.

- 1 From Cape du Couedic look for the southern right whale as it blows and exhales air from its blowhole. Its tail or fin can make a big splash as it breaches from the water.
- 2 Head along Black Swamp Hiike (9km / 3hrs return) and spot wildflowers as they bloom including donkey orchids, sun orchids, and robust spider orchids.
- 3 Keep an eye out for fuzzy black and white striped Cape Barren Geese chicks following their mum and dad around the Visitor Centre.
- 4 Follow the Rocky River Hike (9.5km / 3hrs one-way) to the Rocky River mouth. After winter rains the river often gushes out to the mighty Southern Ocean. Watch out for freak waves.
- 5 On a clear night find somewhere around your campsite to watch the night sky for shooting stars and spot constellations such as the Southern Cross, the Saucapan, Orion's Belt or the Milky Way.
- 6 At night use a torch to see what nocturnal wildlife you can spot in the canopies in and around your campsite such as brushtail possums or you might get a glimpse of Gould's wattled bat, or hear the high pitched call of a white-striped freetail bat.
- 7 Along the Platypus Waterholes Walk (4.5km / 2hrs return) you may spot the iridescent green of a green carpenter bee who drills a hole for its home in a yakka spike or dead banksia trunk. Look for a hole as thick as the end of a pencil (you may see a green bee buzzing around its entry point). You may also see the intricate patterns made by burrowing insects in the fallen trees.
- 8 Walk the Weirs Cove Hike (3km / 1hr return) through to Cape du Couedic and enjoy the views of Remarkable Rocks, lighthouse heritage, the Casuarina Islets and the Western KI Marine Park.
- 9 Paddle your feet in the water at West Bay and stroll along the shoreline to see what nature treasure has washed up on the sand (swimming is not recommended as the Southern Ocean can be very unpredictable). Keep an eye out for the threatened hooded plover who make their home on the sand.
- 10 You might spot a kangaroo or wallaby joey as it emerges from its mum's pouch to nibble on some grass.

SUMMER



Summer in the Park sees hot weather, refreshing sea breezes, lightning storms and longer days.

tawny dragons, Rosenberg's goannas, and tiger snakes may be seen basking along the pathways.

- 1 Explore Snake Lagoon Hike (4km / 2hrs return) and keep an eye out for skinks and the tawny dragons basking on the rocks.
- 2 Walk the 500m length of the remote and spectacular Sandy Creek Beach (access from the Sandy Creek Hike 3km / 1.5hrs return) and keep an eye out for threatened hooded plovers nesting on the beach. Keep your distance, as they are easily scared (walk below the high tide mark edge to avoid stepping their eggs). Don't stop to look at them for long as you may scare them away from their nest or chicks.
- 3 Before the sun sets head to Remarkable Rocks and watch the changing colours of the sky and rocks.
- 4 Have a family picnic and cook a BBQ lunch at the Rocky River Picnic Ground.
- 5 Take a drive along the winding scenic Shackle Road following the self-guided drive (look for the totems with a picture of the yakka bush, self-guided booklet available from Visitor Centre). This drive will take you from the FCVC all the way to the historic Cape Borda Light Station. If you make the 12:30pm tour you'll get to see a real canon be fired!
- 6 Head to Admirals Arch and see how many seal pups can you see. You'll need to look closely as they camouflage against the rocks.
- 7 Take a morning walk to the Platypus Waterholes Walk (4.5km / 2hrs return) or a short walk from the Platypus Pools carpark) and climb the winding stairs to the top of the Melaleuca Lookout high above the tea tree swamplands.
- 8 The Heritage Walk (1.5km / 30min loop) and the Woodland Walk (1km / 20min loop) are ideal trails to do when the weather is warm. Shaded by sugar gums, you may spot a kangaroo resting under a bush trying to escape the midday sun.
- 9 Head to Historic Harvey's Return (1.5km / 1hr return), where the supplies for the lighthouse keepers at Cape Borda were winched up using horses. Observe carefully as it's a steep descent. Follow the Return Road Hike (3hrs / 3km return) past the historic Lighthouse Keepers Cemetery and scenic Scotts Cove lookout to Cape Borda Lightstation.
- 10 Take a late afternoon stroll to one of our many beaches and enjoy the cool ocean breezes.

LOOKING AFTER THE PARK

- 1 Keep wildlife wild:** We must never feed wildlife as it can be unhealthy for them and impact their natural behaviour. If you encounter wildlife always keep a safe distance so you don't frighten them.
- 2 Leave things as you found them:** If you discover termite mounds, decaying logs or bark hanging off trees they all provide important habitat and should be left undisturbed. Ruins can be unstable and easily damaged so please don't climb or take any parts of it.
- 3 Leave nothing but footprints:** Always take your rubbish with you or even better pack a litter-free lunch. Stick to designated pathways as many of the plants, rocks and other geological features are fragile and easily damaged.

- 4 Be careful on the Roads:** There is plenty of active wildlife particularly at night so drive slow and carefully.
- 5 Campfire Restrictions:** Restrictions apply throughout the year for wood fires and gas fires, it is important to get up-to-date information online before you go.

This resource is part of the Park of the Month, an initiative run in partnership between Nature Play SA and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. Photos by Jason Tyndall (JT), Colin Wilson (CW), and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

L: Ki Western Grey Kangaroos (DEWNR)
R: Long-nosed fur seal (DEWNR)



L: Echidna (CW)
R: Golden Wattle (JT)



L: Robust Spider Orchid (DEWNR)
R: Cape Barren Geese (CW)



L: Goanna (JT)
R: Hooded plovers (JT)

