Adelaide & South Australia

Includes ➡

Off The Beaten Track

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➡ Melrose (p132)

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Best Places to Stay

➡ Port Elliot Beach House YHA (p88)

➡ Stirling Hotel (p81)

➡ Wilpena Pound Resort (p136)

➡ Marion Bay Motel (p123)

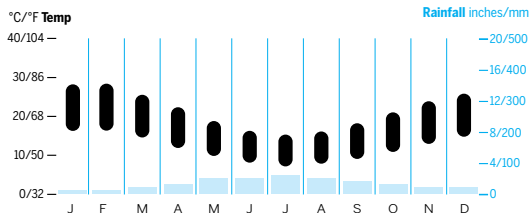➡ Largs Pier Hotel (p65)

Why Go?

Escape the east-coast frenzy in relaxed South Australia (SA). The driest state on the driest continent, SA beats the heat by celebrating life's finer things: fine landscapes, fine festivals, fine food and (...OK, forget the other three) fine wine.

Adelaide is a chilled-out, gracious city offering world-class festivals, restaurants, pubs and a hedonistic arts scene. A day trip away, McLaren Vale and the Barossa and Clare Valleys are long-established wine regions. Further afield are the watery wilds of the Limestone Coast, and the Murray River, curling Mississippi-like towards the sea. Kangaroo Island's wildlife, forests and seafood await just offshore.

To the west, Yorke Peninsula and Eyre Peninsula are off the beaten track: both beachy, slow-paced detours. Wheeling into the Flinders Ranges, wheat fields give way to arid cattle stations beneath ochre-coloured peaks. Further north, eccentric outback towns such as Woomera and Coober Pedy emerge from the dead-flat desert haze.

When to Go

Adelaide

Feb–Mar Adelaide's festival season hits its straps: Fringe and WOMADelaide are highlights.

Apr–May Low autumn sunsets and russet-red grapevines: harvest is in the air.

Sep Football finals time: yell yourself silly in the stands, beer and pie in hand(s).

History

South Australia was declared a province on 28 December 1836, when the first British colonists landed at Holdfast Bay (current-day Glenelg). The first governor, Captain John Hindmarsh, named the state capital Adelaide, after the wife of the British monarch, William IV. While the eastern states struggled with the stigma of convict society, SA's colonists were free citizens – a fact to which many South Australians will happily draw your attention.

The founders based the colony on a utopian 19th-century ideal of social engineering. Land was sold at set prices by the British government to help establish mainly young, skilled married couples; the concept was that equal numbers of men and women, free from religious and political persecution, would create an egalitarian new order.

Between 1838 and 1841, 800 German farmers and artisans (many persecuted Lutherans from Prussia) arrived and settled Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills – now the best preserved German village in the state. Many more followed over the next decade, bringing vine cuttings with them – SA's famous vineyards began to take root.

The young colony's early progress was slow – only British government funds saved it from bankruptcy – but it became self-supporting by the mid-1840s and self-governing by 1856. Following the successful crossing of the continent by local explorers, SA won the contract to lay the Overland Telegraph from Port Augusta to Darwin, connecting Australia to the world by telegram (1872) and, later, telephone. Following a long recession in the late 19th century, the government became the first to introduce income tax – a fact to which South Australians are hesitant to draw your attention…

SA has maintained its socially progressive creed: trade unions were legalised in 1876; women were permitted to stand for parliament in 1894; and the state was one of the first places in the world to give women the vote, and the first state in Australia to outlaw racial and gender discrimination, legalise abortion and decriminalise gay sex.

Indigenous Adelaide & South Australia

SA offers up some great opportunities to learn about Aboriginal cultures and beliefs. Some of the best include the indigenous-run Bookabee Tours (p53) of Adelaide and the Flinders Ranges, Yorke Peninsula cultural tours run by Adjahdura Land (p120), and Adelaide's Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (p57). Also in Adelaide is the Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery in the South Australian Museum (p55).

SA's best-known Aboriginal language is Pitjantjatjara (also known as Pitjantjara), which is spoken throughout the Anangu-Pitjantjarjara Aboriginal Lands of northern SA, down almost to the Great Australian Bight. The traditional language of the Adelaide area is Kaurna. Many Kaurna-derived place names have survived around the city: Aldinga comes from *Ngultingga,* Onkaparinga from *Ngangkiparringga,* and Noarlunga from *Nurlungga.* The Adelaide Hills region is Peramangk country.

The Coorong, in Ngarrindjeri country, is a complex series of dunes and salt pans separated from the sea by the long, thin Younghusband Peninsula. It takes its name from the Ngarrindjeri word *kurangh,* meaning 'long neck'. According to the Ngarrindjeri, their Dreaming ancestor, Ngurundjeri, created the Coorong and the Murray River.

The iconic Ikara (Wilpena Pound), a natural basin in Flinders Ranges National Park, is sacred to the Adnyamathanha people, who have lived in the area for more than 15,000 years. Dreaming stories tell of two *akurra* (giant snakes) who coiled around Ikara during an initiation ceremony, creating a whirlwind and devouring the participants. The snakes were so full after their feast they couldn't move, and willed themselves to die, thus creating the landmark.

In 1966, SA became the first state to grant Aboriginal people title to their land. In the early 1980s most of the land west of the Stuart Hwy and north of the railway to Perth was transferred to Aboriginal ownership. Cultural clashes still sometimes occur, however, exemplified by the politically and culturally divisive Hindmarsh Bridge controversy in the 1990s, which pitted Aboriginal beliefs against development.

National Parks

Around 22% of SA's land area is under some form of official conservation management, including national parks, recreation parks, conservation parks and wildlife reserves. The **Department of Environment, Water & Natural Resources** (DEWNR; www.environ ment.sa.gov.au) manages the state's conservation areas and sells park passes and camping