

FLINDERS RANGES

Where ancient landscapes reveal the story of life

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

To explore the Flinders Ranges is to experience the essence of Australia.

The story of the Flinders Ranges began 800 million years ago when natural forces stretched and thinned the earth's crust, creating a deep hollow. The sea flooded in, depositing over the next 300 million years huge amounts of rock and debris.

Over time, this ancient seabed was sculpted into a fractured, furrowed landscape, where deep valleys covered with twisted cypress pines drop away into sheltered creeks lined with river red gums.

So unique were the fossils found in this landscape that geologists revised their time-line of the earth's history, identifying a new episode called the Ediacaran period, which is today recognised by the special geology of Brachina Gorge.

The Flinders Ranges are divided into three distinct regions, each with its own special features.

At the southern end of the Flinders Ranges there are gorges to explore, distinctive wildlife to encounter and amazing views from the peak of Mount Remarkable.

The magnificent natural amphitheatre that is Wilpena Pound sits in the heart of the Central Flinders Ranges, its saw-toothed peaks steeped in local legend.

To the north of the Flinders Ranges, the landscape looks and feels like the Outback. Starry skies, bounding kangaroos, and rugged peaks at sunset define this terrain.

The Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, which lives in the Flinders Ranges National Park, was once near extinction because it was exploited for its skin. Thankfully, conservation programs have brought this beautiful creature back from the brink and they are often seen in the Brachina and Wilkawillina gorges.

The Flinders Ranges' Indigenous clans are the Adnyamathanha (meaning hill people). These Aboriginals understand the land through their Yura Muda stories, which give spiritual meaning to the Flinders' physical features.

Yura Muda stories have passed from generation to generation for tens of thousands of years. Mythological tracks and songlines that explain how the land, plants and animals were formed and stories that interpret the numerous cave paintings and sacred sites within the Flinders Ranges are evidence of the rich cultural heritage that exists here.

One Yura Muda story describes the formation of Wilpena Pound. Its shape is formed by the bodies of two giant serpents who could not move after eating the people who had gathered there for a ceremony. St Mary Peak forms the head of the male serpent, while Beatrice Hill forms the head of the female.

According to another legend, an argument between two kangaroos led to the creation of the rocky northern Flinders Ranges, separated from Lake Frome by the sweep of a kangaroo's tail.

The plants of the region have provided food, tools, shelter, medicines, ornaments and ceremonial objects for Indigenous populations for thousands of years. At least 85 plant species in the Flinders Ranges National Park have significant conservation value.

The animals of the Flinders Ranges are well adapted to climatic extremes. The numbers of echidnas and kangaroos have increased dramatically thanks to the creation of permanent waterholes and the removal of dingoes from the National Park.

Bird life is also rich and varied, with more than 100 native bird species recorded.

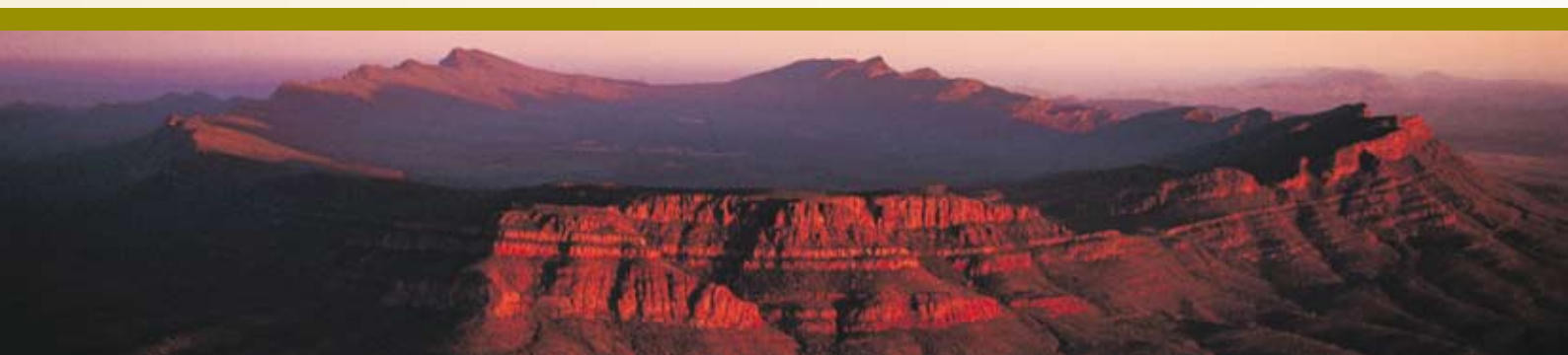
Each season has its own charm. Autumn brings warm, mild days and cool nights. Winter is perfect for wildlife watching, while spring erupts in a carnival of colour, with many flowering plants and birds celebrating the fertile season.

The Flinders Ranges appeared barren to early colonial observers such as the Surveyor General, Colonel Edward Charles Frome, who in the 1840s said: "a more barren sterile country could not be imagined".

However, pastoralists soon discovered the saltbush plains were very useful for fattening stock. Farming continues today, albeit with more sustainable methods.

Standing on a dirt road on the fringe of South Australia's Outback can give first-time visitors the impression that this is a desolate landscape. In truth, this timeless land is very much alive.

Experience nature first-hand on one of the many walking and cycling trails in the Southern Flinders Ranges





Key facts

- The Flinders Ranges National Park covers 95,000 hectares. It is located 450 kilometres north of Adelaide.
- The Oraparinna National Park was dedicated in 1970. In 1972, the park was renamed the Flinders Ranges National Park and its boundaries were extended to include Wilpena Pound.
- The Heysen Trail is one of South Australia's longest walks. It crosses the Flinders Ranges National Park, extending 1,200 kilometres from Cape Jervis in the south to Parachilna in the north.
- More than 100 native bird species live in the Flinders Ranges National Park.
- Wilpena Pound is approximately 17 kilometres long by 8 kilometres wide. It covers an area of more than 100 kilometres.

Things to see and do

- Fly over the Flinders Ranges for the best views of Wilpena Pound.
- Experience nature first-hand on one of the many walking and cycling trails in the Southern Flinders Ranges.
- The Wadlata Outback Interpretive Centre in Port Augusta provides a window onto South Australia's big backyard.
- Stroll through Port Augusta's award-winning Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden.
- Climb to the peak of Mount Remarkable, trek through Wirrabara and Bundaleer forests, or discover the homegrown flavours of the region on the Southern Flinders Flavours Trail.
- Cycle the Mawson Trail. Starting just north of Adelaide and travelling to the Outback town of Blinman in the Flinders Ranges, the Mawson Trail is the ideal option for mountain bikers.
- Discover the history of the region's museums and heritage buildings on the Southern Flinders Ranges Heritage Trail.
- Back a winner at the bush picnic races at Beltana and Blinman in the Central Flinders Ranges.
- Delve into the many caves and gorges throughout the Flinders Ranges and visit the natural amphitheatre that is Wilpena Pound.
- Take a 4WD tour across the rugged peaks of the Northern Flinders Ranges. Witness the unforgettable sight of kangaroos bounding over the red earth.
- Head to Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary and its astronomical observatory to unravel the mysteries of the night sky.
- Drive the Aboriginal Dreaming Trail and learn more about the traditional lore of the Nepabunna and Iga Warta Aboriginal communities.
- Ride the delightful Pichi Richi Railway for a heartwarming journey through the region's charming historical towns.
- Follow the Brachina Gorge Geological Trail and discover 600 million years of history and evolution.
- Visit the Tunnel of Time at the Wadlata Outback Centre in Port Augusta. It provides an opportunity to learn about the Aboriginal heritage, geology, early settlement, and living culture of the region.

Suggested itinerary

The Flinders Ranges stretch from Crystal Brook near Port Pirie in southern South Australia to Arkaroola in the north, a distance of more than 400 kilometres. Port Pirie is just over 200 kilometres from Adelaide.

Visitors can take one of the daily coach services that depart from Adelaide, or fly to Coober Pedy and Whyalla.

A luxurious way to travel through this remote landscape is onboard the legendary Ghan or Indian Pacific trains.

The Indian Pacific departs from Sydney or Perth via Adelaide, and The Ghan leaves from Adelaide and travels through Alice Springs to Australia's top end at Darwin. The Ghan's 2,979-kilometre journey includes opportunities to tour in Port Augusta and Coober Pedy.



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