

TRIP REPORT KANGAROO ISLAND 2014

We spent 8 days on KI, arriving on a late January Sunday and leaving on the following Sunday, and enjoyed superb weather the whole week. Although the days were tending towards being warmish, nights were cool. We were travelling with an offroad camper trailer and a Landcruiser.

Our first port of call was Penneshaw's Caravan park, Kangaroo Island's Shores Caravan Park, just 200 metres from the Sealink Ferry. (<http://www.sealink.com.au/>) By buying a package (which included the caravan park accommodation) we saved quite a bit of money. Having paid for it we felt we should use the facility.



The park was basic but facilities were clean and of a reasonable standard. We asked if we could set up on a powered site so we could enjoy a cement slab for the trailer and this was happily agreed to. Obviously we didn't use, or need, power as we were in a camper trailer and had a solar panel for our car fridge. The park is

located at Lot 50 North Terrace, Penneshaw SA 5222 and their phone is (08) 8553 1075.

Penneshaw is an appealing small town, built on the shores of the bay and on the surrounding hills. There are some lovely views of the town and ocean from the nearby hills. I imagine it could get pretty windy and cold here in Winter....



Early next morning we headed out to the Western reaches of the island. We took our time, calling and looking at Browns Beach camping ground on our way (between Penneshaw and Kingscote, a small beachside Council operated campground. Although it is supposed to have powered sites we saw none. It is a nice little park for camping and relatively close to Penneshaw and the ferry. It was amazingly empty both times we called in there and given the location close to the beach, the great facilities (showers and toilets) and shaded

sites as well, this was puzzling.

A list of all campgrounds on the island is [here](#).

Continuing on, we drove steadily Westward and were aiming for West Bay campground and beach. Part of Flinders Chase National Park, it is more remote than some other spots on the island and far from the madding crowd. Perched at the opposing end to the island's access point from the mainland; it borders an area with the keywords "wilderness protection area"; and is at the edge of the Southern Ocean. We called into the Flinders Chase Information Centre at the entrance to the national park, and bought our entry passes (\$8 each with seniors concession). The Information Centre is also the point at which camping permits are purchased, which are essential. There was no self registration at the campgrounds within the park. So we paid for a site at bay number 5 (chosen from photos and a map of the sites) and continued on. The road was corrugated and narrow in parts but nothing too difficult to cope with. There was a bridge crossing however, which would halt most caravans due to its narrow width. The camper trailer only just fitted through.

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The camping ground had tight circles too and only one or two sites allowed even our trailer to fit into with the canvas folded out. We found we could not manoeuvre into site five and chose site three



instead. The satellite phone was used to notify the Visitor Information Centre of the change and we promptly unpacked. I think it was \$13 per car per night.

The site was devoid of any real shade and was dusty. Serious bushfires had raged through here in 2007 and you can still see the remnants of burnt out trees. They will eventually grow new trees again but for now, most of the sites at West Bay were hot and dusty. There are several shadier sites but they had been booked ahead by others or we could not fit the trailer into them. Those sites are more suited to tents. The only facility here is a drop toilet but it was clean and sited in among nice shady trees.

The beach was beautiful but a significant walk down to reach and in any event there were signs saying no swimming. We were unsure if this is because there is any real danger in swimming or if it is a device used by national parks staff to avoid litigation if someone is hurt while swimming. Just past the toilet and is the path down to the beach. Along the path are some

picnic tables at the edge of the limestone cliffs.



After our stay here we decided to move back East to the Rocky River campground at the entrance to the Flinders Chase National Park. It is a nice, clean and attractive campground with hot showers and toilets. And there is a cafe in the Visitor Information Centre! Luxury. It was far from busy while we were there and we had a peaceful and relaxing time in between day trips to nearby scenic spots and the coast.

Our site was situated on clean gravel and had some shade, albeit limited. But the weather was cool so it was not an issue. All sites are well separated by tall foliage and this gives a feeling of private seclusion. At \$27 a night it was not cheap (unpowered and no water to sites). There were gas barbeques and camp kitchens located a short distance from the camp sites. There was an abundance of wildlife here too, with Tammar wallabies and possums regular visitors to our camp. Food has to be tucked away securely at night or the possums will get into it, and they are adept at managing to scrounge and get into containers. There were so many different birds too, including ravens and families of wrens. Kangaroos seem to thrive in the greenery around camp sites.



While staying here we did a day trip to the Northern coast and visited West Cove and Stokes Bay. The coastal scenery was nothing short of stunning, with rolling hills and steep descents to blue ocean and beaches. Stokes Beach was fairly ordinary although reports had us expecting some idyllic scene of blue pool and beach. Actuality is a small rocky enclosure on the beach which allows for safe swimming, especially for small children. The campground was a dusthole and you would not persuade me to stay there. It is simply a small dusty yard with some straggling trees around the perimeter for limited shade. The camp site does not even have the merit of a good view, being tucked behind some buildings and a toilet block and thus not able to see the beach. In any event the beach is very average. The photo makes it appear

more attractive than it is in reality. But many people swear they love it there. I think they must



either be fisherpeople or parents of small children who covet the shallow beach.

We drove over to West Cove and again found that the camping ground there was fairly small and exposed with no shade whatsoever, but it was perched up on the side of a hill with a reasonably nice view of the estuarine river and nearby beach. The road down into West Cove

is not accessible to caravans or large trailers due to its narrow width and a hairpin bend at the bottom. This is truly not-negotiable. No caravans would fit that road.



Penneshaw

Around every bend was yet another beautiful scene and it would be easy to fill a camera's memory disk. I took a heap of photos.

The Remarkable Rocks and Admirals Arch were located near to Rocky River and we did the obligatory trip there as well as the Cape du Couedic Lighthouse.

The Lighthouse was constructed between 1906-1909 and was the fifteenth to be built on South Australia's coast, including one at Cape Borda nearby . It was also the last lighthouse to be built in South Australia before the Commonwealth Government took over the management and control of Australian lighthouses in 1915. The actual transfer apparently did not occur until 1917. The folk who lived in and operated these lonely outposts were truly heroic. With food drops only every three months you wouldn't want to forget a grocery item.... Shipwrecks were a regular feature of life in and around these shores and so lighthouses assumed a significantly important role.



Cape du Couedic Lighthouse

We tripped over to nearby Remarkable Rocks and I went crazy with the camera again. Even on an overcast day the rocks were magnificent. As we arrived quite early (nine o'clock-ish) we were the first people there and had the area in a quiet and people-free zone to take photos. The overcast conditions meant I had to increase the saturation settings on the camera slightly to capture the colours but at least there were no

harsh shadows in the shots! Photographers love the golden orange lichen covering some of the rocks.

The rocks are still in Flinders Chase National Park but as we were camping in the park we were not required to have a separate entry pass to the one we had purchased nearly a week ago. The rocks themselves are well named, and are impressive, with granite boulders perched above the coastline in a happy jumble. Rain and wind has eroded the rocks into various shapes and forms, including one intriguingly hollow rock (a Hobbit Hole") and a couch which Val obligingly reclined on for the camera.

Remarkable Rocks



We did call into the Chapman River camp sites which are

relatively close to Penneshaw. These are lovely little spots situated along a clean deepish river and with lovely shade. Unfortunately they were hopping with busy campers, as it was a long weekend.

We eventually had to pack up and move onto our last night's camp site, to be closer to Penneshaw and the ferry crossing the following morning. We had chosen the Council run camp site at American River which is located nicely on a beach. Unfortunately the beach is muddy at low tide, but there is still a nice view of the yachts which are moored in the Bay. The camp site has about six or seven sites, all well spaced and most with some shade. The campground is not far from the road which goes to the nearby township of American River, but noise is not an issue, as the township is small and there is limited traffic. The toilet block has hot showers and flushing toilets, as well as a gas barbeque in a shelter adjacent to the toilet block. It was \$15 per car for the night or \$25



American River camp site

for one of the three powered sites.

Our week on KI finished with a smooth ferry crossing back to the mainland and a three hour drive home. Note that as yet there is no real waiting area at the ferry terminal in Penneshaw; there is simply a roofed area with a couple of hard benches to sit on. This is in contrast with the facility back at Cape Jervis with its cafe, toilets, free wifi and booking office. Apparently they are building a new waiting terminal at Penneshaw. It will be an improvement.

My overall impression of KI is that while there is impressive scenery, the campgrounds are mostly not well developed despite there being plenty of space for expansion. National park campgrounds have littered their camp sites with the dreaded bollards! I would probably not want to return to any of the camp sites we saw, with the exception of the Chapman River sites along the river. They were great spots. There is a wealth of attractions to visit but for me the standout was the Remarkable Rocks. We visited a number of places I have not featured in this report for reasons of brevity, but they include the eucalyptus distillery, a honey farm and a lavender farm, and a sheep milk dairy.

Finally, the Penneshaw Hotel does superb pub meals!