

Flinders Ranges

DREAM DESTINATIONS

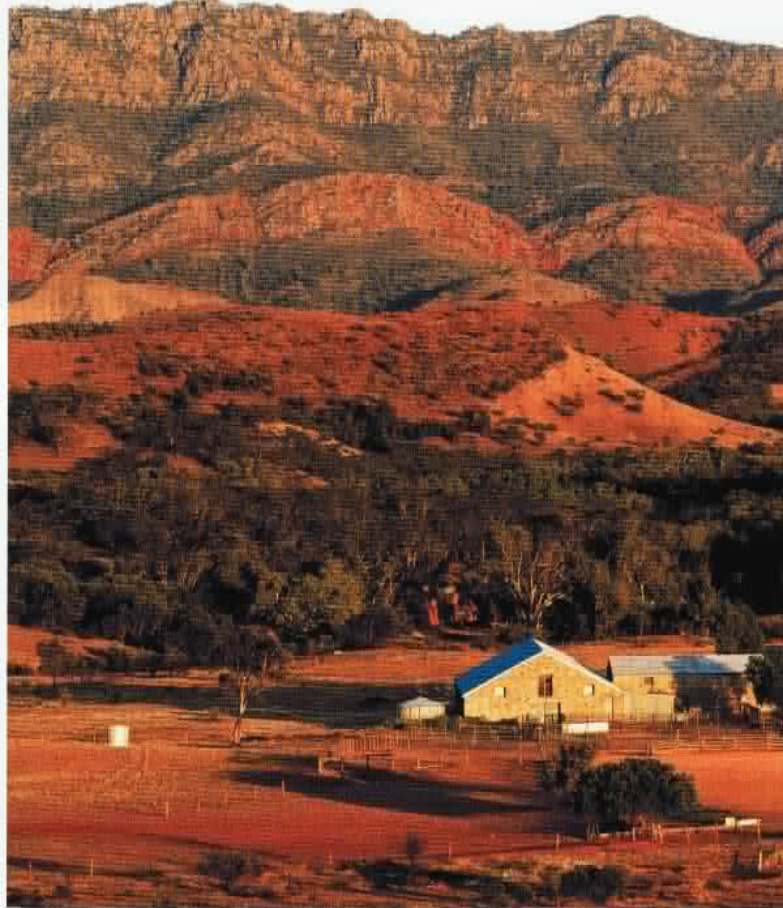
THIS VAST AREA was once a destination more damned than dreamlike, a fearsome interior that tortured Protestant pastoralists with drought, dingoes and isolation.

Today, it's a region of solace and discovery. Ironically, some of the area's most lonesome homesteads, with their country-size sheep runs, have become chic retreats – places to enjoy fine wines while the setting sun splashes colours over the razorbacks.

The horizons are wide, but they're far from empty. This is where you can trace the history of the planet within the exposed sediments of Brachina Gorge, get a taste of outback life in a frontier pub and lose yourself in the expanse of Wilpena Pound, one of Australia's most imposing landforms.

The champions are, of course, the ranges themselves. Scale their flanks, walk in their shadows, stare down at them from a light aircraft – they soon become a healthy obsession.

The region is a five-hour drive from Adelaide.



This page:
(clockwise from
above) Arkaba
Homestead;
Arkaba Station's
woolshed dates
from 1856; the
Prairie Hotel;
a guest room
at Arkaba
Homestead.

LUXURY

For the sybarite

Arkaba Station is "big-country boutique", a place where guests are surrounded by 160 years of pastoral heritage, 24,000 hectares and the ochre slopes of the Elder Range. It's a bit like visiting a well-off friend at their country property; during the day you explore the station, then it's cocktails at sunset before a homestead dinner – Dorper Creek salt-bush lamb followed by sheep's-milk bavaois, perhaps – served on an old wool-classing table under the verandah. If the starlit skies are warm, don't miss sinking into the pool and gazing up at the range. Guest rooms – all different – blend antique and chic.

Arkaba is also the starting point for four-day guided

walking safaris, through Wilpena Pound and across Arkaba's varied landscape. Dedicated campsites have hot showers, composting loos, private sleeping decks and five-star swags with thick mattresses, fluffy doonas and hot-water bottles. It's full immersion in nature but without the rough edges.

Arkaba Station, Wilpena Road, via Hawker; 1300 790 561; arkabastation.com; \$790 per person per night, minimum two-night stay, all inclusive. Walking safaris (four-day/three-night), from \$2000 per person, all inclusive. Ultra-sybarites can fly ex-Adelaide with South Australian Air Charters (saac.net.au; from \$1400 for two passengers); the flight takes less than an hour.

