

# SLEEP AND EAT IN STYLE

It may be wild and rugged but South Australia offers sophisticated comforts with that easy-going Aussie charm, whether you're out in the bush, among the vines or in the vibrant capital. By Sophia Stevenson

The traditional image of luxury does not sit easily in South Australia. Hotels living on a long-faded glory, hushed restaurants and aloof service simply don't exist. The word "grand" tends to apply to sensational natural surroundings rather than a stuffy atmosphere. Here, luxury is something to be enjoyed, not endured.

Australians have coined the term "barefoot luxury", which doesn't necessarily mean disposing of your shoes but relaxing in a vibrant, easy-going and casually elegant environment.

South Australia has a bounty of sleeping, eating and sightseeing opportunities that will appeal to the discerning traveller who is looking for exceptional experiences rather than names to drop.

Take, for example, the Outback. Once upon a time, spending time in this awesome wilderness meant residing with the creepy-crawlies in a tent or, at best, a rickety shack. Yet out here in the middle of nowhere on the edge of the Flinders Ranges National Park is Arkaba Station. It's still a working sheep station, but Arkaba is also a five-star take on the wild bush. Listed as a heritage homestead, it has just five stylish bedrooms – with the sights and sounds of truly raw Australia all around and expert guides ready to show them to you.

Another sheep station with great rooms is Angorichina Station, an oasis of green lawns and floral hedges that's been in the same family for generations. Guests can help out on the station, then sit down for a home-made dinner with the family.

Also out "in the sticks" is Rawnsley Park Station, which offers top-of-the-range eco villas with views over the Wilpena Pound natural amphitheatre. They have been

cleverly built to use the region's natural heating and cooling effects.

In the few towns in this sparsely populated region, there are several original old frontier-style buildings that have been carefully converted to comfy boutique hotels, with restaurants serving authentic "native" cuisine.

The Outback has a magnetic appeal and if you want to absorb as much as possible in a short time, it's well worth considering a custom-made tour. Outback Encounter, for example, will put together an itinerary that can take you up close and personal with the bush, its wildlife, people and stunning vistas, while staying in first-class lodges and travelling in comfort.

Another company, Banksia Adventures, combines four-wheel-drive vehicles and small aircraft to take guests through the wine country to the bush, highlighting those natural and cultural gems not often featured on the usual tourist routes.

Alternatively, Gawler Ranges Wilderness Safaris offers top-of-the-range safari tents that provide a fabulous bush experience – kangaroos, emus, birds, wild flowers, the lot – without sacrificing any comforts.

South Australia's sensational coast provides a striking contrast to the interior and one of the finest places to stay is Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island (see page 4). There are phenomenal views from the wrap-around windows of this lodge, which has a spa that uses the island's own plants in its treatments.

Another first-class option on Kangaroo Island is the Lifetime Private Retreats. Consisting of just three individual beach villas, this exclusive haven offers guests a customised stay that may include the services of a chef, yoga instruction, cooking lessons, diving and fishing. The state's coastline is vast and varied

## SAMPLE ITINERARY

### THE ULTIMATE INDULGENCE

In the Barossa region, The Louise is an idyllic, vineyard retreat with an acclaimed restaurant, Appellation, serving up premium cuisine and wine. Enjoy the views from your private terrace, by hot-air balloon and helicopter, and visit local wineries. Your next stop is Kangaroo Island, where you'll stay at Southern Ocean Lodge – one of the world's true luxury lodges. Then take a private tour to the bush, coast or vineyards – by plane, boat or luxury minibus.

**More information:**  
[www.southaustralia.com](http://www.southaustralia.com)

**To download South Australia's luxury holiday brochure, Authentic Australia, go to [www.southaustralia.com/uk/brochures.aspx](http://www.southaustralia.com/uk/brochures.aspx)**



**Rooms with views: The Louise, above; South Ocean Lodge, top and top centre; Arkaba Station, centre; Rawnsley Park Station, top right**

and you'd need weeks to fully explore it, but a private flight can show you what may otherwise be missed. Chintia Air Tours can take you to see wildlife – including whales – and scenic splendours in a variety of aircraft, and can combine these flights with first-class accommodation.

Most visitors here will want to visit the Barossa wine country and the stand-out place to stay is The Louise. Understated elegance are the keywords and guests can enjoy private wine tours and tastings. The restaurant, Appellation, offers a signature tasting menu to fully appreciate the exceptional wine list.

If you prefer to self-cater, there's a good choice of high-quality seaside villas and apartments all along the coast that make great bases for families or small groups. Take, for instance, The Shore at Robe on the Limestone Coast. It's a chic, five-bedroom beach house, within this charming town but with the beach outside the door.

If you believe there's far too much to see in this state to stay in one place for long, why not take your accommodation with you? On the Murray River and other waterways, houseboats can be rented and some truly are little floating palaces, sleeping up to 12 people, with gourmet kitchens and whirlpool baths. All ages will love waiting along, watching the scenery change. They are easy to drive and you don't need any special experience.

No holiday in South Australia would be complete without a few days in the sophisticated capital of Adelaide and here there are several notable places to stay.

For a combination of luxury with fun, try Thorngrove Manor. It's designed like a fantasy castle complete with turrets and towers. The interiors are just as exciting, and a special feature is in-room dining from an organic menu. Somewhat more

conventional, the Majestic Roof Garden Hotel is a contemporary, cosmopolitan place that has won multiple awards, while the first-class Stamford Grand Hotel is by the sea in nearby Glenelg, with great views, close to leisure activities including all sorts of water sports. The new Crowne Plaza opens in April as part of a new development close to the city centre.

South Australia isn't short of notable dining venues. Bridgewater Mill, attached to the fine winery of Petaluma in the Adelaide Hills, is set in a historic mill and serves up renowned modern Australian food: you can eat outside in fine weather. A Victorian villa houses Chloe's in Kent Town, which has a 10,000-bottle cellar and imaginative takes on classic dishes, while for meals with a view, the Windy Point Restaurant & Café has panoramic windows to gaze through while enjoying fresh seasonal food.

At Robe on the coast, The Gallerie is a stylish place with a menu that's a dream for lovers of fish and shellfish, with enticing meat plates, too.

For many travellers, a day or two at a spa is an essential part of the holiday and a therapy or two will soon have you as relaxed as your average Aussie. There are at least half-a-dozen day spas in Adelaide, plus wellness retreats dotted around the countryside and coast, often using locally sourced, natural products. Hydrotherapy, detox, aromatherapy and energy balancing are all popular.

South Australia is also home to Jurlique, a globally acclaimed beauty-product company, which uses ingredients from plants grown at its own biodynamic farm.

As you can see, the concept of luxury in South Australia is different to almost anywhere else in the world. Count on it to enrich your soul as much as anything else.