

THE WANDERER

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RV CLUB MAGAZINE

SIZZLING
SUMMER

BEACH
BREAKS



Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia
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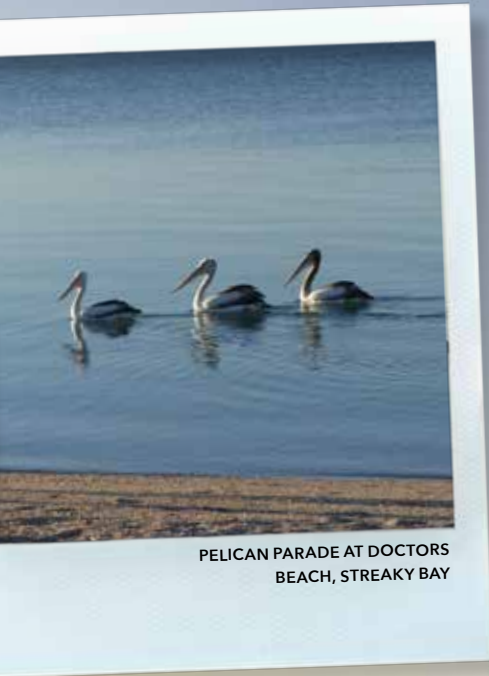
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EYRE PENINSULA | CRESCENT HEAD | ESPERANCE |
OUTBACK QUEENSLAND | BEST SUMMER BEACHES

SUMMER IS *EYRE*

WORDS AND PICS BRIAR JENSEN

SEA, SAND, SEA LIONS AND LASHINGS
OF SEAFOOD MAKE FOR A SENSATIONAL
SUMMER SOJOURN ALONG SOUTH
AUSTRALIA'S EYRE PENINSULA.



PELICAN PARADE AT DOCTORS BEACH, STREAKY BAY

Talk about in your face. These girls have no sense of personal space. But who can resist their soulful eyes, teddy bear noses and whopping whiskers when they're centimetres from your snorkel mask? These adorable Australian sea lions are pregnant, says our Baird Bay Experience guide, and when they're not frolicking with us they're nuzzling each other playfully on the sandy bottom. What an enthralling welcome to the Eyre Peninsula.

Our Star RV motorhome's livery – emblazoned with coastal images – broadcasts our touring intentions (albeit the images are of Victoria's Great Ocean Road). We're tracing South Australia's grand coastal route, the Eyre Peninsula's 'Seafood Frontier', which combines rugged Southern Ocean shores with protected bays and epic beaches, served with a side of seafood.

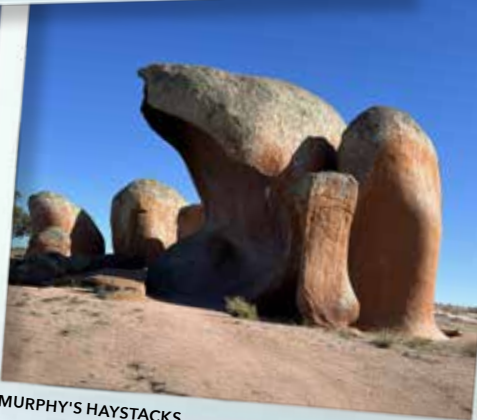
We start at Streaky Bay in the west, follow the coast south-east to Port Lincoln, then head north up the western edge of the Spencer Gulf. Streaky Bay Road delivers us from golden grain country along the inland Eyre Highway to aquatic blues on the coast.



BAIRD BAY SEA LIONS
© DAVID EDGAR



DOCTORS BEACH AT DISCOVERY PARKS STREAKY BAY



MURPHY'S HAYSTACKS

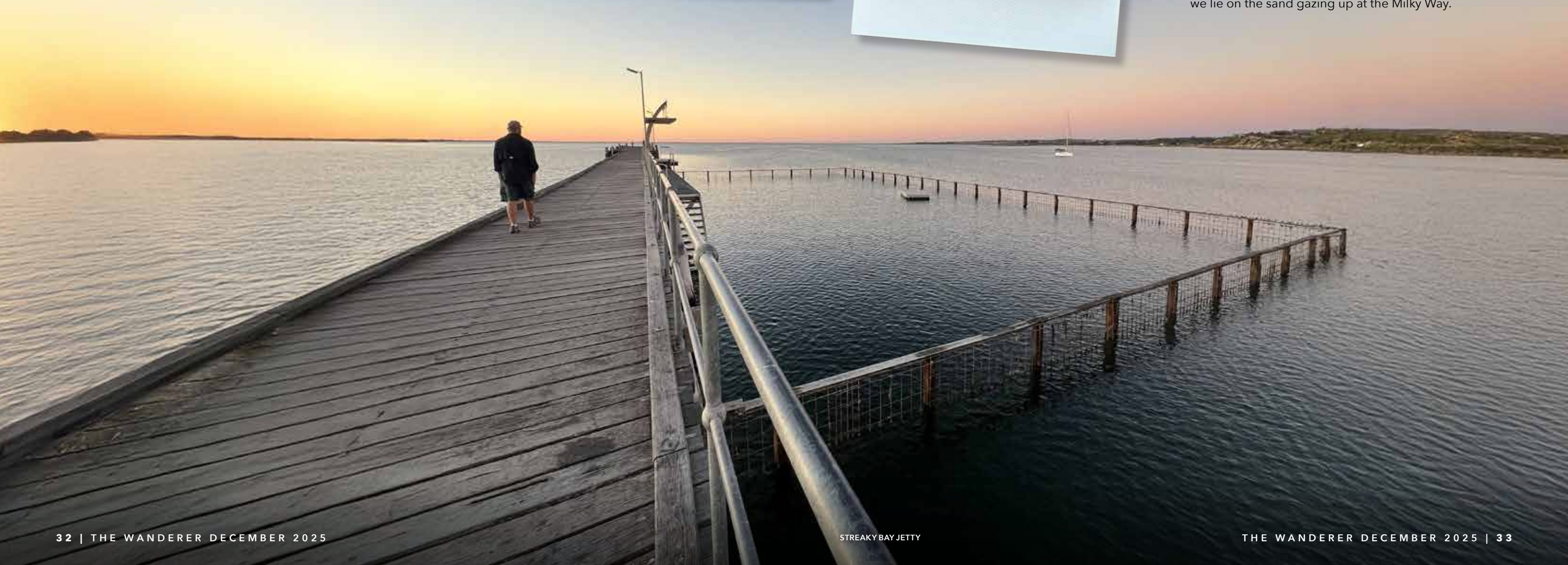
BEACHFRONT *BLISS*

A waterfront site at Discovery Parks Streaky Bay Foreshore puts Doctors Beach on our doorstep. Feet in sand, drinks in hand we watch the wildlife. A lone dolphin lopes across the shallow bay and pelicans drift along the water's edge as a sea eagle swoops to snatch a fish a metre from shore. A family skips stones across the still surface and a fisherman catches and releases a fiddler ray.

It's a great place for kids, with a large playground and easy foreshore walk to the town's 340-metre jetty with a netted swimming enclosure. Dining options include fish and chips, pub fare and Drift restaurant, but we buy fresh oysters and whiting to barbecue by the beach.

We day trip to lagoon-like Baird Bay (taking our home with us like a crab) and swim with sea lions before anchoring in the lee of Jones Island, home to hundreds of pied cormorants, Caspian terns and an osprey nest.

Travelling south-east along the Flinders Highway, we visit 1,500-million-year-old granite boulders known as Murphy's Haystacks before pulling into Egret Nest campsite at Walkers Rock in Lake Newland Conservation Park. Tucked into coastal scrub, the campground provides easy access to tiny Pablo's Beach and expansive Walkers Rock Beach. After a fireside dinner we lie on the sand gazing up at the Milky Way.



STREAKY BAY JETTY

SUCCULENT SEAFOOD

Continuing south, we visit Elliston's magnificent street murals and stop at Cummings Monument Lookout, hanging onto our hats atop colossal cliffs that are pummelled by wind and waves. Further south, Coffin Bay belies its morbid moniker (actually named after Sir Issac Coffin), with its aquamarine hues and sparkling, gin-clear water lapping the foreshore. Here, we stroll along the Oyster Walk, sharing the trail with kangaroos and emus.

We can't get enough of the Pacific oysters grown in these pristine waters and gorge on them on a boat tour with Experience Coffin Bay, at waterside restaurant Oyster HQ, and from the venue's oyster vending machine (yes, they are fresh). The vending machine – the first of its kind in Australia – is conveniently located across the road from our site at Discovery Parks Coffin Bay.

On a Wild Yarnbala Tour with Kane Slater through his family's nature reserve, we learn about vulnerable western pygmy possums, taste quandongs and other native foods, try our hand at water divining, and finish with a Coffin Bay gin around the firepit as Kane plays a lap steel guitar and didgeridoo.

Stopping off to buy more molluscs from the oyster sheds, we head into Coffin Bay National Park. As the ocean churns around Golden Island Lookout and surf pummels the alabaster sweep of Almonta Beach, I can see how Point Avoid got its name. Luckily our campsite is on the other side of the hammerhead-shaped peninsula at sheltered Yangie Bay, a renowned sanctuary for nurseryfish.

Walking the lookout track through flowering shrubs, we have unhindered views of the biodiverse saltmarsh. Kayaking here would be awesome. The water's so clear that later we can see fish and crabs from our beach chairs, as New Holland honeyeaters and willie wagtails flit through the bushes.



AFTERNOON TEA AT OYSTER HQ



VIEW FROM POINT AVOID TO GOLDEN ISLAND



SNORKELLING WITH SEA LIONS AT BAIRD BAY

© JOHN MONTESI/SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOURISM COMMISSION

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BAYSIDE BEACHES

From our campsite at Surfleet Cove in Lincoln National Park, we spend a lazy afternoon on the beach reading; but with no fires allowed, we retreat into the van from the cool night air. Port Lincoln Tourist Park is another family friendly park with a protected beach, playground, swimming pool and jetty. It's hard to pull ourselves away but lunch and more seafood beckon at Line & Label Restaurant at Teakle Wines.

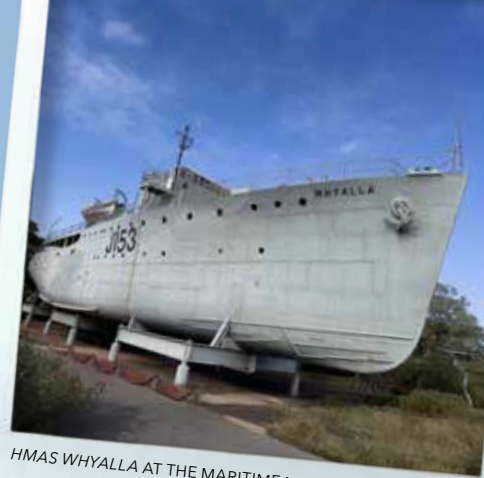
Heading north along Lincoln Highway, we detour to Tumby Bay for its ocean-themed murals and to have lunch at Bluewater Beach Cafe. We burn off the calories on a walk at Arno Bay boardwalk, weaving through a mosaic of sea grass, mangroves, saltmarshes and dunes.

It's a bone-juddering last few kilometres to Point Gibbon Campground, but worth it for the dune-top site we score, set above a crescent beach perfect for long walks and fossicking through flotsam and jetsam. Across the dunes (or around the point where sea lions haul out), is the long curve of Mills Beach.

The redeveloped waterfront at Cowell is worth lingering for, with its new marina, waterpark and boardwalk; but we only have time for lunch and a rummage through Cowell Collectibles before continuing to our last stop, the steel port of Whyalla.

Coastal plants and dried seagrass protect the fragile sand fringe fronting Discovery Holiday Parks Whyalla Foreshore. The sand leads all the way to the town's swanky circular jetty, which includes wheelchair-friendly fishing spots. With its maritime and industrial heritage, Whyalla has loads to see, including Hummock Hill Lookout, the Maritime Museum, the Steelworks (tours available), Mount Laura Homestead Museum and Whyalla Wetlands.

But you'll have to come back to witness the famous mass mating of giant Australian cuttlefish. Coming face to face with these colourful chameleons of the sea is a chilly mid-winter experience.



HMAS WHYALLA AT THE MARITIME MUSEUM



SEAFOOD TASTING PLATE AT
LINE & LABEL RESTAURANT



CIRCULAR JETTY AT WHYALLA



COFFIN BAY NATIONAL PARK

JOURNEY PLANNER

Tour the Eyre Peninsula as a round trip from Adelaide by overnighing at Wallaroo Beachfront Tourist Park on the Yorke Peninsula, catching the ferry to Lucky Bay (near Cowell), then taking the Eyre Highway through Kimba, Kyancutta, Wudinna and Poochera to Streaky Bay.

STAY

discoveryparks.com.au
portlincolntouristpark.com.au
parks.sa.gov.au
elliston.sa.gov.au
franklinharbour.sa.gov.au
wallarobeachfronttouristpark.com.au

TOP TIPS

Prebook campsites, especially national park and council sites, and allow at least two nights in each destination. Buy mallee honey at Murphy's Haystacks and wood-fired bread from Colton Bakehouse stall on Flinders Highway.

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bairdbay.com
experiencecoffinbay.com.au
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yarnbala.com
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