

Title:

The Flinders Ranges - An Accessible Australian Outback Destination

Word Count:

806

Summary:

The Flinders Ranges are one of South Australia's most popular outback tour destinations, and are world-renowned for their rugged mountain landscapes, spectacular gorges, sheltered sandy creeks lined with majestic River Red Gums, and their abundant flora and fauna. An authentic Australia outback destination, the Flinders Ranges are nevertheless easily accessible from the South Australian capital of Adelaide.

Keywords:

flinders, ranges, outback, south, australia, tour, travel, holiday, vacation

Article Body:

The Flinders Ranges are one of South Australia's most popular outback tour destinations, and are world-renowned for their rugged mountain landscapes, spectacular gorges, sheltered sandy creeks lined with majestic River Red Gums, and their abundant flora and fauna. An authentic Australia outback destination, the Flinders Ranges are nevertheless easily accessible from the South Australian capital of Adelaide.

The Flinders Ranges are a perfect location in which to witness and marvel at nature on a grand scale. Home to magnificent, rugged and uncompromising landscapes, they are truly a destination where you can get away from it all. Though they seem a million miles from the hustle and bustle of city life, the southern areas of the Flinders Ranges begin only 220 kilometres from Adelaide. Wilpena Pound is around 450 kilometres (five hours drive) from Adelaide. Many different routes are available to explore the Flinders ranges, and all offer excellent scenery. To fully appreciate the area, a few days at least are necessary. For those without transport there are several Flinders Ranges tours operating from Adelaide.

The Flinders Ranges National Park is situated in the Flinders Ranges between the outback South Australian towns of Hawker and Blinman. Covering over 950 square kilometres, the park is about 450 kilometres north of Adelaide and offers a broad range of outdoor activities for all ages and tastes including camping, bushwalking, scenic touring, photography, birdwatching and Aboriginal and

European tour activities exploring the history and cultures of the region.

The Flinders Ranges join the Gulf of St Vincent to the South Australian outback. The landscape of the region is truly spectacular, particularly in spring when wildflowers are blooming and carpet the countryside. Bush walking is a popular and rewarding activity in the ranges, including walks around the Arkaroola Mt Painter Wildlife Sanctuary, the Heysen Trail, Mt Remarkable National Park and Wilpena Pound.

The indigenous Adnyamathanha people have lived in the northern Flinders Ranges for many tens of thousands of years, and the ranges remain of enormous cultural significance to them. Adnyamathanha (hills or rock people) is a term now used to describe the Pangkala, Pilatapa, Yadliaura, Kuyani and Wailpi peoples, the traditional indigenous owners of the Flinders Ranges. These groups share a common identity based on the Yura Muda, the culture and language of their ancestors. While European geologists explain the formation of the Flinders Ranges in scientific terms, the Adnyamathanha understand the landscape through the Yura Muda dreamtime stories, which invest the physical landscape with spiritual significance.

The Flinders Ranges appear are mentioned in the journals and diaries of many Australian explorers. Matthew Flinders explored the upper reaches of Spencer Gulf in 1802. Sturt and Eyre traversed the area during their journeys north in search of an inland sea. Pastoral runs were established at Arkaba, Wilpena, Aroona and Oraparinna from 1851. By 1863, European settlement extended far beyond the ranges, and copper mining was booming in the region. No rain fell in the Flinders Ranges area from 1864 to 1866, when the saltbush plains were stripped bare and huge losses among both stock and native fauna occurred. Many pastoral runs were deserted and mining virtually ceased. The deserted runs were gradually reoccupied and stocking rates reduced. Today, the pastoral industry remains viable with greatly improved practices and sustainable stocking rates.

An intriguing combination of both moisture-dependant and arid-adapted plants co-exist in the Flinders Ranges. The specialised habitats of local indigenous plants are bound to the geology of the region, and are shaped by landform, climate, soil and fire. A majority of the plants found in the Flinders Ranges National Park are arid-adapted. Cypress Pines are found across much of the park, while Porcupine Grass is found on stony hills. Black Oak and Mallee trees are found on the deeper soils in the north-east of the park, and Pearl Bluebush, Broom Emubush and Red Mallee are found on alkaline soils. Fringing the moister quartzite slopes of Wilpena Pound, Guinea Flowers, Grevilleas, Bush Peas, Shrub Violets, Native Cranberries and Fringe Myrtles are common.

Nocturnal animals such as dunnarts and planigales are rarely seen as they are

mainly active at night and are generally quite small. Bats represent one-third of the native mammal fauna of Flinders Ranges National Park. Their high pitched sounds can frequently be heard as they hunt insects attracted to the light of camp fires at night. Echidnas (native Australian porcupines) are common within the park in early spring (Sep-Oct). Over 100 native bird species are found in the Flinders Ranges National Park, including colourful Australian Ringneck Parrots, Pink and Grey galahs, the migratory Rainbow Bee-eater, the small Elegant Parrots and the Red-capped Robin. Tree-lined creeks and springs provide an ideal habitat for a large variety of reptiles, including skinks, geckoes, legless lizards, lizards, goannas and snakes. Now rare, the large Carpet Python can be found in tree hollows, on rock ledges, and moving on the ground to hunt at night.