

Episode Overview:

From leaving home for the SeaLink dock, to a seafood cone on the Stokes Bay rocks - Lauren and her partner Jesse explored the nooks, crannies, and crevices located thirteen kilometres off the coast of South Australia on the beauty-bountiful Kangaroo Island.

Be it sandboarding the Little Sahara dunes or foraging along the starfish-flecked shores of Bales Beach - in this episode of the Snowys Camping Show, Lauren dives into the hits, misses, and must-sees of Kangaroo Island through a true wildlife lover's lens.

Listen to the full episode here:

Or watch the video version here:

Short Cuts:

00:00 - Intro

00:36 - Kangaroo Island

01:33 - Why Kangaroo Island?

03:06 - Budget

05:48 - Travel and Accommodation

09:29 - Food

11:25 - Lauren's Itinerary

29:29 - 'Hit' and 'Miss' Places

30:08 - Must-See Locations

31:10 - Pleasant Surprises

32:22 - A Take-Home Message

Kangaroo Island

Kangaroo Island is located south of Adelaide, off the coast. Larger than one may initially think, it largely covers the base of the Spencer Gulf. On a clear day, the island is visible from the South Australian shores, particularly from the bottom of both the Yorke and Fleurieu Peninsula. From boarding to disembarking the ferry, travel time from Adelaide takes roughly forty-five minutes, including the process taken to freight and unload vehicles.

Why Kangaroo Island?

Lauren's only visit to Kangaroo Island had been in high school, where she spent only a night before travelling back to Adelaide the following day. Her partner Jesse was born and raised on the island, though left when he was a teenager and hasn't returned since. The timing of certain family endeavours had it convenient for both Lauren and Jesse to travel over for a full week in March. Given how long it had been since the two of them had respectively visited the

island - coupled with the sheer cost of a trip for two - they decided to first experience it kid-free.

Budget

Last Christmas, Lauren's gift was an "overseas holiday"...with SeaLink! As the cost of travel is likely to be a barrier for some, Lauren recommends a SeaLink voucher as a present idea for loved ones looking to visit Kangaroo Island. For both Lauren and Jesse to travel with their camper van in early March, the cost of travelling via the ferry was just over \$450. Any vehicle longer than five metres required a prior booking.

Despite the pricey travel expense, Lauren can confirm that after experiencing an immersion of what the island has to offer, she understands and supports the costs involved. With them came a greater appreciation for what there was to see and do, where more accessibility may have cheapened the experience.

Travelling and Accommodation

Lauren and Jesse left for their holiday on a Thursday night and returned late on the Wednesday of the following week. The ferry was pleasant, though rougher on their return to Adelaide than it was on the way over.

On the island, Lauren and Jesse stayed in their camper van, where booking at the caravan park in advance wasn't necessary given their travels outside of school holiday periods.

Lauren describes many council-based campgrounds with physical meters available as the payment method, while most National Park campgrounds have adequate phone signal and are paid for on their respective website via a QR code, displayed onsite.

While the websites indicate which sites at the campground are available, Lauren describes how common it is to find that most people arrive first before booking and paying online. As a result, these campsites aren't registered on the website as occupied. For this reason, Lauren suggests pre-booking during the busy holiday periods, but not necessarily in the off-season.

Food

For cost efficiency, Lauren and Jesse decided to pre-pack their food. While Jesse grew up on the island, the cost of travelling across as a tourist - let alone living as a resident, with cargo fees and related logistics - meant expenses were higher than what one may pay in an SA town.

All their shopping was done at home in Adelaide, with a final stop in Yankalilla to fill up with fuel. At the eastern end of the island, Penneshaw and other core towns like Parndana and Kingscote have means of both food and fuel, including supermarkets. While travelling back to these towns may steal forty-five minutes to an hour from your day, they provide a safeguard for obtaining any missing or additional items - such a forgotten jumper, or more snack-like foods.

Itinerary

Given their six-day long trip, Lauren and Jesse loosely followed a section in SeaLink's suggested itineraries on Kangaroo Island. The comprehensive guidebook details seven regions across seven days, where the island is categorized into its separate regions.

Lauren outlines where she roamed, starting from where the ferry docks at the east of the island in Penneshaw and the Dudley Peninsula. Home to cellar doors, cafes, and crystal-clear beaches, Lauren didn't favour anywhere here in particular. That said, she describes a nice campground near Antechamber Bay within the Lashmar Conservation Park, while the Cape Willoughby Lighthouse Tours are a perfect option for families with children interested in history.

Spanning across to where the east end of the island meets between Penneshaw and Kingscote, Lauren describes the American River and surrounding areas such as Pelican Lagoon, home to long hikes and coastal walks. Mount Thisby, recently re-named to Prospect Hill, climbs an extensive run of stairs up a large sand dune to the highest point on Kangaroo Island. Here, one end of the island is visible at two kilometres away. Lauren and Jesse explored this region on their final day, first cutting down to the south coast.

Lauren describes the southern areas as rugged but beautiful, spending limited time in Cape Gantheaume but recommending the walking trails and hikes established at the base of the cape. In the south coast, the Murray Lagoon at the end of Winter is thought to be stunning and surreal, especially for bird watchers. Lauren and Jesse camped within the area, and enjoyed both the cooking facilities and walking trails laced throughout.

Given their budget and disinterest in partaking in any tourist-like activities, they avoided Seal Bay - though admitted how ideal this part of the island would be for families with young children. East of Seal Bay is Bales Beach, peppered with what seemed like thousands of starfish, while Vivonne Bay holds crystal clear waters for waist-deep wading, and a large, postcard-perfect rockpool.

It was the sand dunes of Little Sahara that had Lauren caving to their only paid tourist experience - sandboarding! For only a flat entry fee, Lauren describes it as "wicked fun" (despite almost hurtling into a bush as she surfed her way down the sandy slopes)!

At the western end, Lauren and Jesse visited the Flinders Chase National Park and Hanson Bay. They chose to navigate this region last on their trip due to the time of year, when seasons begin to shift and the wind picks up. The south coast tends to experience strong winds, hence their decision to traverse this area first. The western region is also home to the Kelly Hill Conservation Park, exhibiting the impressive Kelly Hill Caves - thought after two and half years since the horrific bushfires, this attraction remains closed. For this reason, and with many access roads still barricaded, Lauren would suggest for those more interested in adventure-based activities (as opposed to the cottage industry attractions, such as Clifford's Honey Farm) to delay a visit to Kangaroo Island for another year. The devastating impacts of the bushfires include a loss of vegetation aiding the maintenance of soil, while heavy rains have subsequently caused erosion.

One morning, Lauren and Jesse woke at 5:30am and made their way into the Flinders Chase National Park, stopping on Bunker Hill Lookout for a steaming hot cup of tea to start the morning. From there, they headed down to Remarkable Rocks just before 7:00am. With not another person in sight, the two of them basked in the magic of the cold, misty morning. The

large number of seals visible from Admirals Arch too meant that Lauren and Jesse were content with having not splashed out at Seal Bay instead (literally)!



With not another person in sight, Lauren basked in the magic of the cold, misty morning from Admirals Arch. Credit: Lauren Westgarth

On the western end of the north coast they visited Cape Borda, navigating the walking trails of the wildlife park. That includes those that were closed off, where Lauren had a terrifying encounter with a snake...even with fly perched on its cold, lifeless eye! Again, Lauren and Jesse avoided the cottage industry-based activities such as horse riding and winery tours, passing down the middle and through Parndana for a fuel stop without lingering for too long in the heartland.

On the north coast, commonly known beaches include Stokes Bay, Emu Bay and Smiths Bay. Most beaches in this area are familiar by their elevated representation on Instagram - though despite what she felt she was encouraged to believe on social media Lauren admits that Stokes Bay wasn't superior to any other beach. That said, the Rockpool Café (closed on Mondays) is home to the most succulent assorted seafood cone she has ever tasted! Snelling Beach was the most picturesque of them all, where Lauren considers the view coming in through Constitution Hill to be unparalleled.

All in all, Lauren and Jesse preferred to take the tracks less travelled. The excessive stylization and geo-tags on social media set an expectation for a tourist prior to visiting, removing an element of anticipation and ability to experience the island first-hand. Lauren comments that in the time she and her partner explored Bales Beach at length, roughly nine variations of groups, families, or partnerships arrived, lingered, and left. What Lauren and Jesse discovered along the shorelines and in amongst rugged beachside nature was missed by those who expected to see more in less time. Ultimately, Lauren suggests to approach the island with a sense of adventure, plenty of time, an abundance of curiosity, and a desire to absorb more of fewer places over simply marking off every location in less detail.

Lastly, Lauren and Jesse stretched back to Penneshaw over the space of a full day. Having not visited the wineries or tourist-based locations, Lauren claims that a full week could be dedicated to exploring the Kingscote and Penneshaw area in its entirety. Places of note included Duck Lagoon on the Cygnet River, Emu Bay in the upper corner, the original Kingscote landing site of the first settlement, and the Oyster Farm Shop on the American River.



A full week could be dedicated to exploring the Kingscote and Penneshaw area in its entirety. Credit: Lauren Westgarth

'Hit' and 'Miss' Places

For Lauren, a blend of both was Stokes Bay. The glorified images on Instagram that she was privy to prior to her trip away meant her expectations of the area were heightened, in comparison to what she witnessed. That said - as long as the Rockpool Café remains, she will return!

Must-See Locations

The beachside home of the best seafood cone - the Rockpool Café in Stokes Bay is on the top of Lauren's list. The view from Prospect Hill was also a magical memory, while the beauty of Bales Beach prevailed over the others. Picturesque, solitary scenes at the base of Flinders Chase and Remarkable Rocks are well worth the early rise too, as visitors began to filter through just as Lauren and Jesse were leaving Admiral Arch.

Pleasant Surprises

Given the activity is typically enjoyed by tourists, Lauren was amused to admit how much she enjoyed the sandboarding at Little Sahara. Since the family's long-loved video of her Dad skidding his way down a dune - his sandboard slipping from beneath him, corkscrewing into the air, and knocking him in the head - Lauren had felt a sense of connection to the activity, compelling her to experience it herself. That said, she didn't expect to enjoy it as much as she did!

A Take-Home Message

Aside from having a stand-off with a dead snake, witnessing Jesse come a cropper sandboarding at Little Sahara, and finding possums perched in their camper van three nights in a row - Lauren can't identify the single-most amusing story of the trip. Overall, it was a successful, sublime time away, where her most pressing suggestion would be to explore every cranny, investigate every nook, and navigate the ups, drops, and bends. If something takes your interest - go beyond the bounds of a pre-planned schedule, trust your intuition, and soak it in.

Thanks for listening, tune in again for next week's episode!

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If you have any questions for Ben and Lauren, make sure you head over to our [Facebook group](#) and let us know as we'd love to hear from you.

Catch you out there!