

South Australia



Private isle

Bruce Elder discovers a five-star wilderness.

If there is one place in Australia that is both magical and largely undiscovered it is Kangaroo Island. The tendency for holidaymakers from Sydney and Melbourne to look north (whether it be to Noosa, Byron Bay, the Whitsundays, the Great Barrier Reef, Bali or Phuket) has meant that the continent's third-largest island, situated in the Southern Ocean, has been largely overlooked.

Strange, really, because it has some of our most beautiful beaches – a Sydney University survey of 10,000 beaches declared Vivonne Bay, on the south side of the island, to be the best beach in Australia (see story, page 2).

It has vast tracts of unspoilt wilderness protected carefully by South Australian National Parks and Wildlife – national and conservation parks account for more than one-third of the island. It abounds in accessible fauna from, obviously, kangaroos through sea lions to both Australian and New Zealand fur seals.

It has many areas where, largely because of small tourist numbers and dirt roads, the visitor can feel alone and at

peace with nature. It has enough extraordinary natural features – Remarkable Rocks and Admirals Arch in Flinders Chase National Park are the most famous – to leave even the most world-weary traveller gasping in wonder.

It prides itself on its natural produce – particularly delicious marron, excellent local cheeses and high-quality Ligurian honey. And, almost incidentally, it has a diverse coastline that includes white and firm beaches, dauntingly sheer and rugged cliffs, hideaway coves and intimate bays.

In recent times the island's unique qualities have seen the emergence of seriously top-dollar accommodation. Thus a visitor, prepared to spend \$1000 (or more) a person a night, can now start on Lizard Island north of Cairns, stop off at Bedarra in the Whitsundays, make their way across to El Questro in the Kimberley, down to Longitude 131 at Uluru and end up at either Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island's south coast or Lifetime Private Retreats at Snelling Beach on the north coast.

Why does Kangaroo Island now boast two of the

country's best accommodation options? Simply because the island offers a genuine wilderness for that exclusive club of travellers for whom money is no object.

Take, for example, LifeTime Private Retreats at Snelling Beach. If you thought the Greek Islands, the Amalfi Coast in Italy or the Dalmatian Coast in Croatia were idyllic, then you have never stayed at the Cliff House. At \$950 a night a person (it sleeps six but, for comfort, it is ideal for a maximum of four), which drops back to \$900 a night if you stay for more than four nights, it seems like a laughably cheap option. What price do you put on paradise?

Imagine a small beach. It is an arc of pure white sand, totally isolated, peaceful, safe for swimming and edged by honey-coloured cliffs. On one cliff stands a solitary building: the Cliff House. Designed and built by an architect, it has sensuous curving lines, a circular tower (really a kind of folly) that has been converted into a bedroom, a huge sunken pit with cushions and panoramic views over the ocean, **Continued Page 4**

FLINDERS RANGES

Far and away

New digs in an ancient land.

Page 4

ADELAIDE

Chef's special

Dinner with a culinary treasure.

Page 6

GAWLER RANGES

Designer canvas

Glamping in the outback.

Page 8

