

★ CHEF CHASE KAJIWA'S MUST-HAVE JAPANESE INGREDIENTS

THE MONTHLY
FOOD MAGAZINE
FROM



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WITH THE BEST
INGREDIENTS



Clockwise from right: executive chef Tim Bourke; one of Kangaroo Island's resident sea lions; the island's dramatic coastline; an aerial view of Southern Ocean Lodge; one of the rooms at the Lodge.



Kangaroo Island

This pristine island looking out to the edge of the world from beyond its dramatic coastline, is blessed with fertile land, unique local produce and a breathtaking resort that ties it all together.

WORDS PHOEBE WOOD



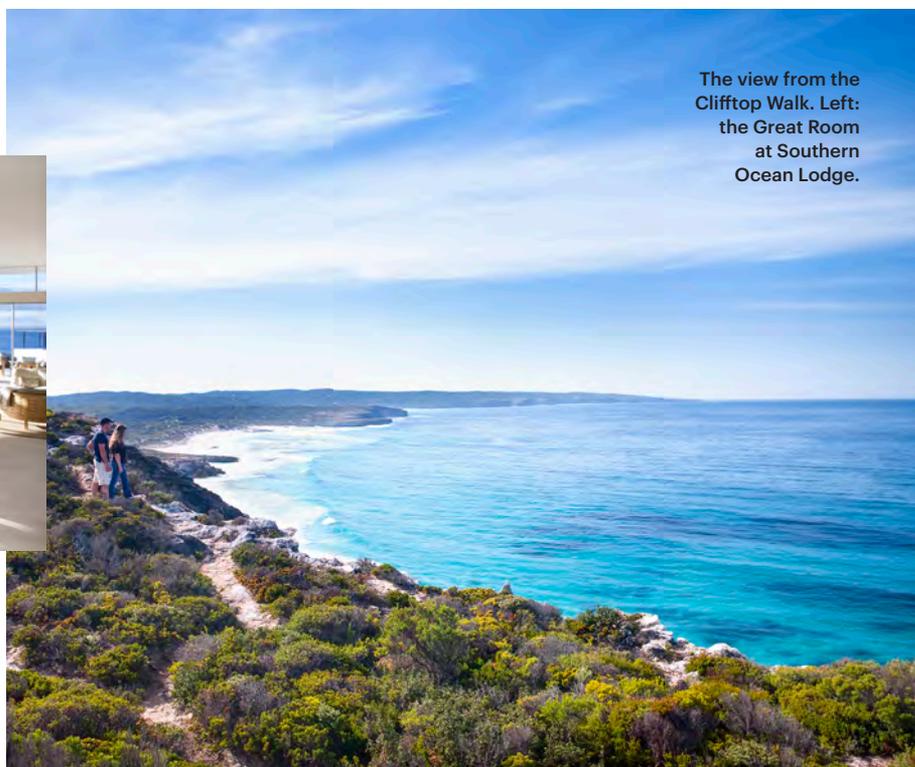
I'll admit that soaring across Kangaroo Island on a 34-seater plane in a gale, followed by a very rocky landing had my legs a little shaky. An hour later, as I walked into the jaw-dropping, glass-fronted Great Room lobby of Southern Ocean Lodge, on the pristine coast of Hanson Bay, I felt my knees weaken yet again. But a soothing glass of vintage Croser thrust into my hands by lodge manager Alison Heath soon restored strength to my limbs. The breathtaking panoramic view from the Southern Ocean Lodge stretches for thousands of kilometres. Taking in the salty spray, drink in hand, you can't help but marvel that there is nothing but the wild expanse of the Southern Ocean between you and Antarctica.

Discreetly nestled among an untouched wilderness of snow-white sand dunes, ragged cliff tops and fragrant eucalypts, the ecologically sustainable lodge, owned by Hayley and James Baillie, sits on the south-west tip of the island, gazing out to sea. It's a captivating sight, seemingly presiding over the endless waves that crash against rocks and pummel the shore, creating a dramatic spray that arches into the sky. The view is matched by the immaculate attention to detail of the lodge itself. Designed by South Australian architect Max Pritchard, the building is sensitively created with the intention of leaving the surrounding wilderness as undisturbed as possible. The rooms, each named after ships that have met their ruin off Kangaroo Island's treacherous coastline, perfectly assimilate into the environment.

And with a welcoming fireplace in some rooms, and a well-stocked fridge of local cheeses, fresh lamingtons, and a selection of Kangaroo Island wines in all, the most difficult experience you'll encounter is mustering the will to leave your room.

But leaving has its own rewards. Showcasing the best of the inspiring producers of Kangaroo Island is chef Tim Bourke, whose impressive resume spans Establishment in Sydney, the Ledbury in London and a stint at Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island, also owned by the Baillies. A devotee to the island life, Tim says despite being born in Sydney, he feels "blessed at the opportunity to live on an island, learn to make do, and enjoy it's abundance of natural resources." This ethos makes it to the plate at Southern Ocean Lodge, and make do he does. My first encounter of Tim's craft comes in the form of an earthy and vinegary beetroot salad, enriched by the tang of a creamy feta smoked over red gum eucalypts, a burst of sugar from blood-red grapes, bitey muntries (local native berries) and lavender. It's a complete and perfect symmetry, delicate yet punchy and full-flavoured.

Tim is undeniably – and unavoidably – a locavore. Inspired daily by the initiative and devotion of producers on the island, he makes the most of what the community has to offer. He takes us to visit the tiny Parndana Area School campus of just 145 students, who, in 2004 with the assistance of their teachers, developed a re-circulating aquaculture system to farm barramundi. The students are engaged in learning



The view from the Clifftop Walk. Left: the Great Room at Southern Ocean Lodge.

about sustainability and aquaculture and they look after the fish themselves.

Back at the Lodge that night, in front of a roaring fire (a wildly fruity glass of Kangaroo Island Rookery chardonnay in hand – co-lodge manager John Hird’s favourite) we try Tim’s offering. A slender and delicate fillet of Parndana barramundi floating on a deep-red sea of bouillabaisse reduction, with a slick of peppery rouille and a sculptural leaf of bright green broccoli. The plate is a message of not just finesse and technical excellence, but also a brilliant example of just how fine the produce is on this remote and wild island.

The next day we hit the road again, this time to Empress Park farm, where we’re greeted by a few hundred happy geese and one beaming farmer, Dave Huxtable. Dave immediately pushes an overflowing ceramic saucer of homemade goose rilette and a few broken crackers at us, exclaiming, “It’s just a little something I had left over.” Dave has been breeding free-range geese on the island for the past six years. When asked how many are in his gaggle, he’s unsure: “I can’t really keep track, I just find them all over the place wandering around.” Tim says Dave’s geese have starred on his menu more than once for their rich yet sweet flavour. He’s shaped and crumbed confit leg into meaty fried croquettes and gently sautéed livers for a silky parfait. For me, the rilette and cracker hits the spot, no adornment or chef’s tricks needed.

Distinctive, sweet scents of coastal flora, sugar gums and stringy barks follow you around the island. And our noses soon lead us to the Island Beehive, where the bees here are described by owner Peter as his “livestock”. His Ligurian bees were selected and brought to the island for their excellent production, high fertility and gentle nature. The honey they produce is clean and raw on the palate, the pungent local flora the dominant flavour in each variety. How does this translate on the plate back at the Lodge? As you run your spoon through a satiny scoop of Ligurian honey ice-cream, crack through crispy, yellow chamomile meringues, and shiver at the gratings of frozen milk and an unexpected crunch of bee pollen, the food of the island speaks louder than words. 77

★ ★ ★ THE HIT LIST ★ ★ ★

DO

Visit during Southern Ocean Lodge’s annual Kangaroo Island Food Safari in August to enjoy a food-driven itinerary led by renowned food personalities. But that’s not all the island has to offer – at any time of the year you can visit sea lions at Seal Bay, enjoy guided cliff-top walks, watch kangaroos with a ‘kanape’ in hand organised by Southern Ocean Lodge at nearby Grassdale, and much more.

EAT

Try feta and haloumi from Island Pure Sheep Dairy, sample coastal flora honey from Island Beehive, taste Kangaroo Island Spirits gin, or ask a guide to pluck some local saltbush on your coastal walk.

STAY

Southern Ocean Lodge
One of Australia’s most extraordinary luxury lodge experiences, Southern Ocean Lodge offers an unforgettable

blend of contemporary luxury and pure nature. Its 21 suites welcome with breathtaking views, while all-inclusive rates, first-name service and a personalised itinerary combine to offer the ultimate Kangaroo Island holiday. **Visit southernoceanlodge.com.au or call (02) 9918 4355 for more information and reservations.**

SEE

South Australian Tourism Commission has a wealth of information on Adelaide, the gateway to Kangaroo Island. Plan a couple of days in the City of Churches en route to the island and check out the emerging restaurant and small bar scene. **southaustralia.com**

GETTING THERE

Regional Express currently offers up to 32 weekly flights between Kingscote (Kangaroo Island) and Adelaide. **Visit rex.com.au**