



ANDREW HARPER'S
Hideaway Report[®]
online
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**NEW HIDEAWAYS
IN IRRESISTIBLE
Australia**

{ CANDID REVIEWS BY A WRITER WHO TRAVELS INCOGNITO AND ALWAYS PAYS HIS OWN WAY }



NEW HIDEAWAYS
IN

IRRESISTIBLE
AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN HIDEAWAYS

continued

property, ideal for an overnight stay and very good value for money.

MEDINA GRAND ADELAIDE TREASURY 89 One-bedroom Premier Grand Apartment, \$290. 2 Flinders Street, Adelaide. Tel. (61) 8-8112-0000. www.medina.com.au

A 40-minute flight from Adelaide brought us to Kangaroo Island. More than 90 miles long, but with just 4,300 inhabitants, this is a wild and magnificent place. Owing to its dramatic scenery and teeming wildlife — including sea lions, koalas and kangaroos — the island is often referred to as “Australia’s Galapagos.” On arrival, we were greeted at the tiny Kingscote airport by Andrew,

a friendly Tasmanian. The ensuing one-hour drive through a landscape of moors and lamb-dotted pastures reminded us consecutively of Big Sur, Nantucket and the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland.

It has been some time since we’ve been as impressed by a new hotel as we were by **Southern Ocean Lodge**, which opened in March 2008. At the end of a long, bumpy road, iron gates swung aside, and shortly thereafter, we caught our first glimpse of the property, perched high above Kangaroo Island’s spectacular southern coast. There, dramatic wind- and sea-gouged cliffs are

SEA LIONS ON KANGAROO ISLAND
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scoured by white-crested breakers and punctuated by glorious white-sand beaches.

Check-in and orientation were exceptionally gracious and charming. Stylishly dressed in a linen tunic and loose white trousers, our receptionist Heather outlined the itinerary that had been planned for us and suggested a light lunch followed by a four-hour tour of the island. Initially, however, we relaxed in the magnificent Great Room, a huge pavilion with floor-to-ceiling windows and a wall of golden limestone. The space is compartmentalized by the exquisite furniture of Adelaide-based, Malaysian-born furniture designer **Khai Liew**. Liew's pieces are inspired by '60s Scandinavian

burning steel fireplace and tables piled with magazines and books.

The 21 suites all come with hypnotic views of the Southern Ocean, which extends as far as Antarctica, and are situated on a sloping hallway that runs along a cliff top. Our room, #2, required a long walk, but the compensations were privacy and magnificent views over a sandy cove. A paved limestone entrance gave way to floors made from recycled timber. In front of the window, an inviting sofa was dotted with oatmeal canvas bolsters, kangaroo-print cushions and a soft brown wool throw. Bedside switches operated blackout shades on the ocean-facing wall. There was no television, which would

be superfluous in such a gloriously remote location, but we found a Bose CD

player with an iPod dock on a long, built-in oak desk. (Three suites have TVs, and can be specifically requested.) The bath

KANGAROO ISLAND IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS “**AUSTRALIA'S GALAPAGOS.**”

and traditional Chinese designs, and many are crafted in pale American oak. The décor is augmented by a suspended wood-



SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE
PHOTO GALLERY

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



AUSTRALIAN HIDEAWAYS

continued

was faced with toast-colored limestone, equipped with underfloor heating and a stall shower, and provided locally made lavender-scented toiletries. Suites #6 and #8 have soaking tubs and Jacuzzis. An outdoor terrace came with a built-in couch. All told, our suite was one of the most delightful places we've had the pleasure of occupying in a very long time.

The resort's cleverly designed dining room has tables set in intimate niches in

grilled locally caught snapper in a lime and ginger sauce.

Southern Ocean Lodge is owned by Hayley and James Baillie, both of whom are committed environmentalists. (Their first project was the Harper-recommended **Capella Lodge** on pristine Lord Howe Island in the South Pacific.) As a result, solar panels are scattered around the grounds, the lodge has only a small plunge pool, and water is drawn from an

SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE HIGHLIGHT OF OUR TRIP TO AUSTRALIA.

underground well and has to be desalinated. Nonetheless,

the limestone wall, as well as others by windows overlooking the ocean. Given the constraints of a remote location, the food is excellent, with a daily market menu augmented by one of appealing comfort food. Among the dishes we especially enjoyed were grilled squid with a chili dipping sauce, smoked abalone with soba noodles and shaved pickled ginger, and

facilities include a terrific spa with idyllic treatment rooms overlooking the Southern Ocean.

On a memorable four-hour excursion to **Flinders Chase National Park**, we saw dozens of Australian sea lions and New Zealand fur seals, volcanic blowholes, several historic lighthouses and numerous kangaroos, wallabies and koalas. Southern

Ocean Lodge was undoubtedly the highlight of our trip to Australia.

SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE 98 Flinders Suite, \$990 per person, including all meals, drinks, excursions and airport transfers; Remarkable Suite, \$1,500. Hanson Bay, Kangaroo Island. Tel. (61) 8-8559-7347. www.southernoceanlodge.com.au

The Barossa Valley

FOLLOWING OUR WEEKEND ON KANGAROO Island, we drove north for two hours from Adelaide to the **Barossa Valley**. Australia's most famous wine region is just 20 miles long, an enchanting place with a landscape of rolling hills and neat vineyards. Its small but sophisticated towns such as Tanunda and Lyndoch display a Teutonic tidiness, which, along with excellent charcuteries and Lutheran churches, provides evidence of the German immigrants who joined the original British settlers. Barossa should be toured at a gentle pace, stopping for a wine-tasting (see "**Barossa Valley Favorites**"), a really excellent meal or a walk down an old-fashioned main street lined with bakeries, bookstores and colorful boutiques.

After an excellent lunch at the **1918 Bistro & Grill** in Tanunda, we headed north to **The Louise**, an elegant 15-suite contemporary country house hotel at the northern end of the valley. The hotel was purchased by Jim Carreker, an American who had previously worked in the San Francisco high-tech world. A decade ago, he and his wife opted to start a new life, and after several years of travel, they decided to open a hotel. "We took notes," Carreker told us during a chat before dinner. "Our goal was to create a hotel that was almost perfect."

Ideally situated for touring the Barossa vineyards, The Louise stands amid beautifully landscaped grounds that overlook neat rows of vines. A bank of lavender and a long rectangular pool line a stoned-paved path that leads up to the main building. This houses reception, the hotel's acclaimed *Appellation* restaurant, a sauna and a swimming pool.

Our suite was both luxurious and exceptionally well-conceived. Opening a

- 1** Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa
- 2** Medina Grand Adelaide Treasury
- 3** Southern Ocean Lodge
- 4** The Louise
Abbotsford Country House
- 5** Qualia

Times shown are by air.



Last Look

KANGAROO ISLAND, AUSTRALIA

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