

MENDING MANHATTAN

A revitalised city stands tall

KANGAROO ISLAND BOUNTY

Hopping on the foodie bandwagon

SO KEEN ON KYOTO

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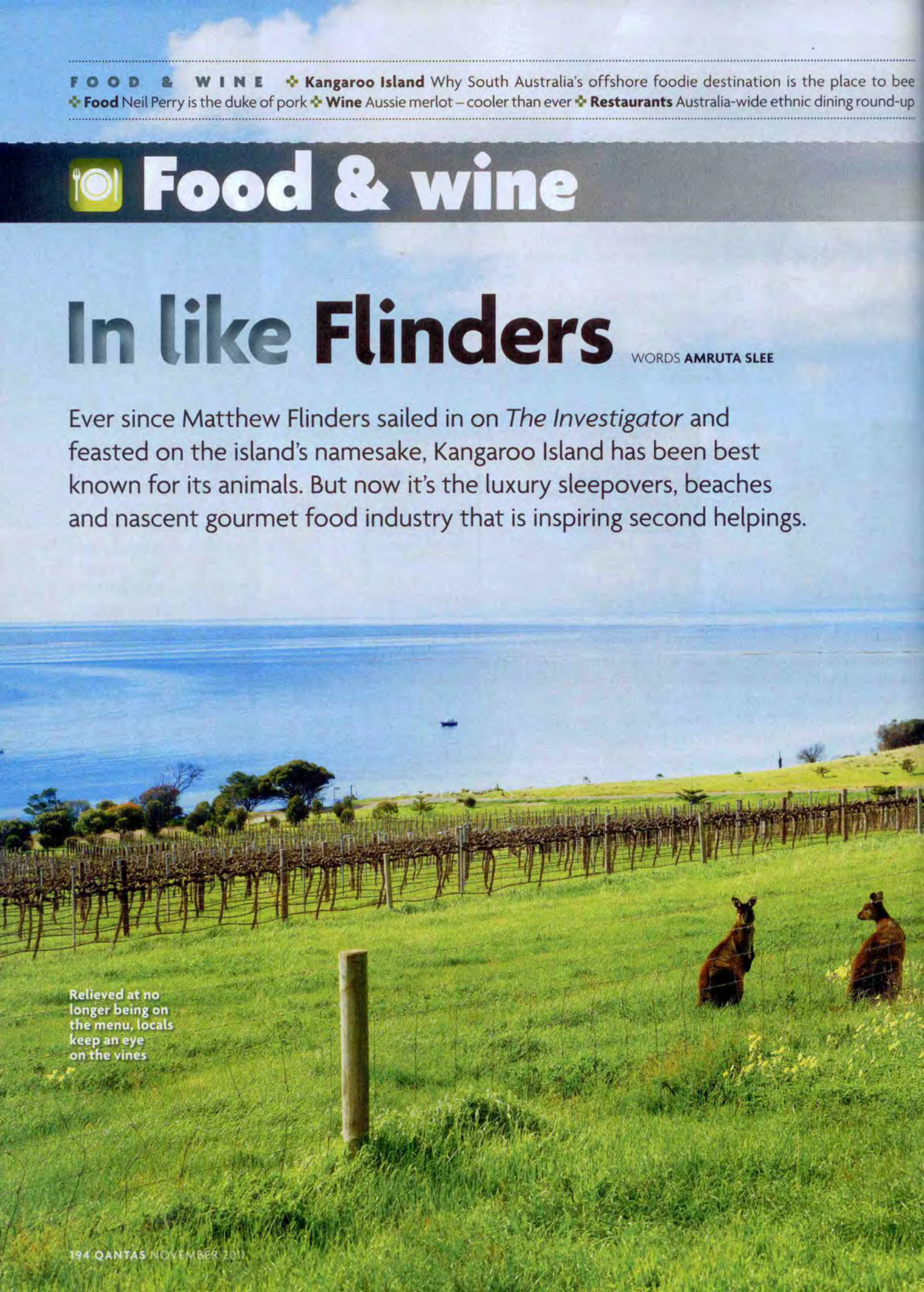


Food & wine

In like Flinders

WORDS AMRUTA SLEE

Ever since Matthew Flinders sailed in on *The Investigator* and feasted on the island's namesake, Kangaroo Island has been best known for its animals. But now it's the luxury sleepovers, beaches and nascent gourmet food industry that is inspiring second helpings.



Relieved at no longer being on the menu, locals keep an eye on the vines



SOUTH AUSTRALIA KANGAROO ISLAND



Clockwise from top left: Kangaroo Island fixer-upper; Island Pure haloumi cheese; Australian sea lions at Seal Bay; make a beeline for Clifford's Honey Farm produce

KANGAROO ISLAND SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Flinders Chase
National Park, the
Remarkable Rocks
in the distance



K

ANGAROO ISLAND'S history as a food destination began, famously, with Matthew

Flinders in 1802. The explorer was charting the southern coast of Australia when he stumbled upon a large land mass not far from the mainland of Terra Australis. Here, hopping about in the sun, was a sizeable roo population, tame from generations of living without human threat. Flinders' crew – starving from months at sea with the odd dry biscuit to sustain them – fell upon the wildlife, slaughtering 31 kangaroos. As a way of saying thanks, Flinders named the island after his menu.

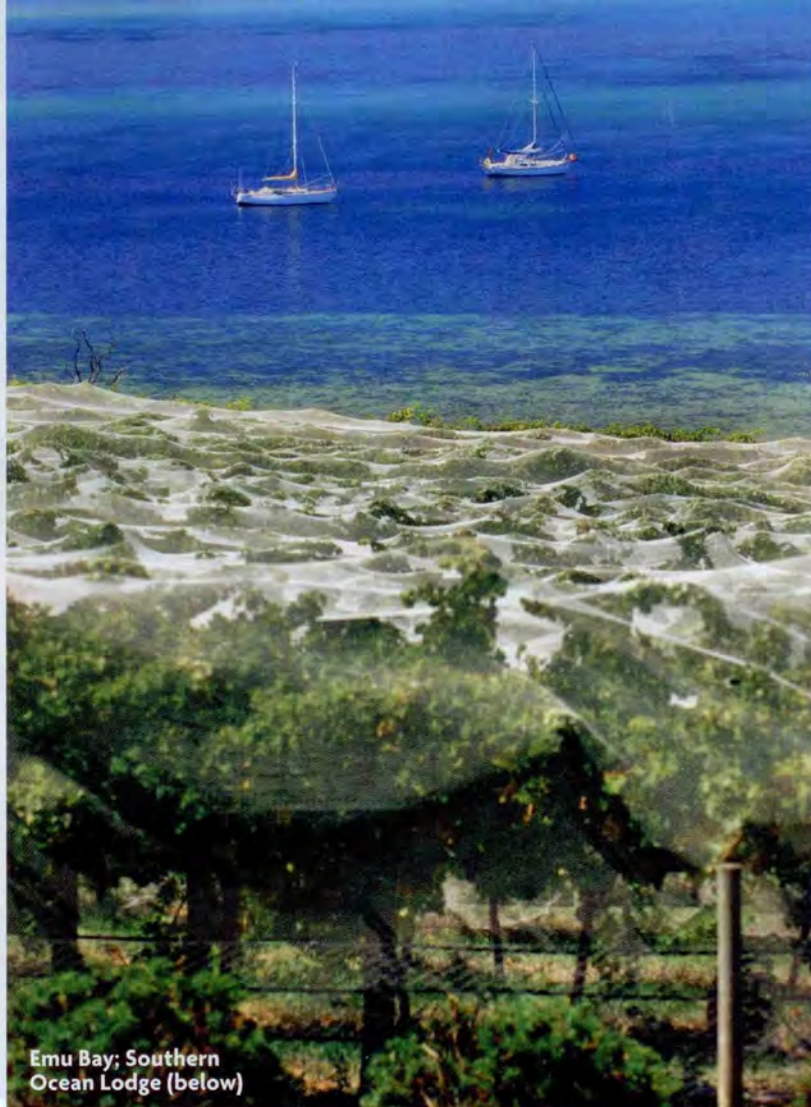
In the years that followed, Kangaroo – or KI as the locals call it – became a site of many such bloody slaughters – the island's seals, roos and whales faced extinction from over-hunting. Emus did die out. The place itself became a stomping ground for renegade settlers: escapees from the mainland, eccentrics and loners, people who, suspiciously, grew their own vegetables and, according to one early record, got around "smelling like foxes".

There's still a touch of that independent mentality among the island's 4000 or so residents, but that's the only reminder of its beginnings. Wildlife is now protected (some species are coming back, but healthy numbers are still a way off) and drivers slow down to avoid hitting animals at dusk or dawn.

But while KI is known for its animals, its views and beaches, in the past few years its resume has expanded to include locally grown and produced food – a cottage industry still, in scale and distribution, but increasingly successful. It's an industry that grew out of need when the bottom fell out of the cattle market in the 1990s. Island entrepreneurs started turning their land to other uses; sheep's milk products replacing lamb and beef, home-grown vegetables becoming dips and spreads, vineyards turning out boutique drops.

Among other selling points is that the island's natural border has protected it against disease and chemicals – there is GM-free grain here and the purest strain of honey bees in the world. The local association, Good Food Kangaroo Island, is working to showcase local produce through farmers' markets, cooking schools and trade shows, and the island's best-known high-end hotel, the Southern Ocean Lodge, mostly uses local produce.

Recently, the lodge's head chef, Tim Bourke, snapped up the entire crop of local saffron (a jarful) and he encourages farmers – or even just people growing a few staples in their plot – to bring him their wares. What starts as a backyard veggie can, after all, be transformed on SOL's nightly menu, as part of the pan-roasted fillet of locally caught snapper, grilled leek, parmesan gnocchi and cauliflower dish. It's a long way from roo soup and hardtack. >



Emu Bay; Southern Ocean Lodge (below)





Andermel Marron; eggs KI-style (right)



The Islander Estate Vineyards, established by Bordeaux-based Jacques Lurton (left) in 2000



SEE & DO

The big surprise is how big KI is – it's Australia's third-largest island after Tasmania and Melville Island, but that doesn't convey much until you're there taking in the size and remoteness and wishing you'd allowed another day or two. Most locals say three days is the minimum needed to get a feel for the place (and to negotiate its distances). Visitors come in to the eastern end by ferry from Cape Jervis to Penneshaw (www.sealink.com.au) or by plane from Adelaide to Kingscote Airport. Two major roads – the South Coast Road and the Playford Highway – go all the way around the island; various unsealed roads and bumpy, just-about-to-be-completed tracks lead off these. Signage is minimal and often eccentric.

Wildlife

Plentiful and mostly friendly, but please keep a polite distance. Seal Bay Conservation Park is the place to see Australian sea lions bodysurf and snuggle on the sand. The visitors' centre leads tours, dispatches information and provides a horribly stark reminder of what plastic bags are doing to ocean life. New Zealand fur seals (non-cuddlers) can be seen in colonies at the western end of the island at Cape du Couedic.

Hanson Bay (western KI) has a koala walk that is also home to several kangaroos. Platypus, echidnas, heath goannas, penguins and tammar wallabies, prolific bird species and reptiles also call the island home – many of them even call your home, home: "Don't leave the front door open," warned a welcome

note at one holiday house. "The magpie is always trying to rush inside." www.tourkangarooisland.com.au

Aside from the natives, there's also a community of immigrants settling in at the Rare Breeds Farm. William Marshall's project is to conserve breeds of farm animals dying out around the world – here, black-head Persian sheep share their yards with Sri Lankan cattle and Old English pheasant fowl. www.rarebreedsfarm.com.au

Natural wonders

There are beautiful beaches all the way around KI; Vivonne Bay is a popular spot for summer visitors; Stokes Bay and Emu Bay also have miles of white sand and turquoise water. The island's best-known landmarks are the

Remarkable Rocks in Flinders Chase National Park (western KI). The name is justified; these giant granite shapes teeter dramatically on the edge of a cliff. Also in the park, a short drive from the rocks, Admirals Arch is a fantastical Palladian curve eroded into the rock wall. Beyond it, huge black-water swells start their journey towards Antarctica. www.parks.sa.gov.au



EAT & DRINK

Kangaroo Island Source

104 Willoughby Road, Penneshaw. 0412 194 840. www.kangarooislandsources.com.au

Kate Sumner and her husband, Jock, a sixth-generation sheep farmer, run this combination of cooking school and catering outfit while producing their own line of condiments – there's a famous line of beetroot relish and a mean spicy eggplant dip. Source is located in Penneshaw – or you can get their products at the monthly Penneshaw farmers' market. The website is an essential first stop to get the lay of the (food) land, book food tours and get a rundown on who is making what.

The Islander Estate Vineyards

Jumbuck-Bark Hut Road, Parndana. (08) 8553 9008. www.iev.com.au

The French were only metres behind Flinders in discovering KI and they named several sites. Almost 200 years later, Jacques Lurton, who comes from a Bordeaux family, landed in KI on his honeymoon and decided to set up a vineyard there, keeping the republic's presence active. >