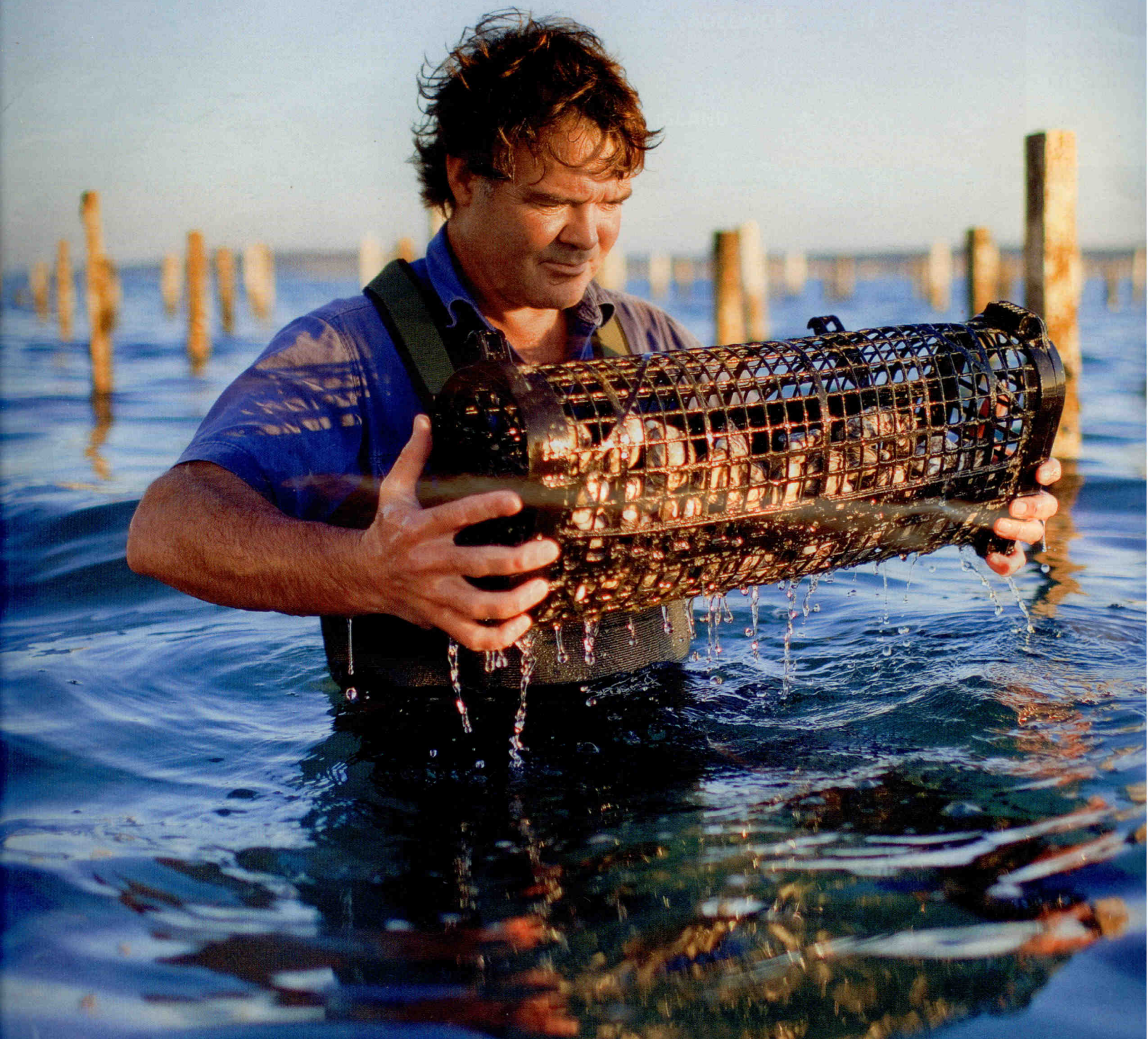
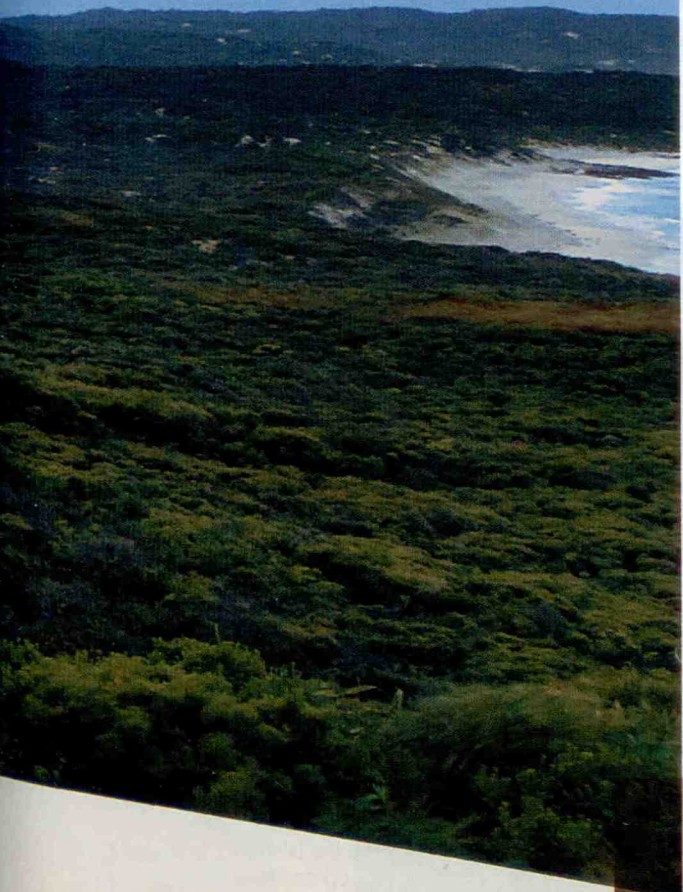


the (south australia guide



Hidden treasures
The best of South Australia,
from Coffin Bay oysters to
Kangaroo Island luxury

Pristine wilderness? Tick. Sweeping panoramas of wild ocean? Of course. Luxurious, hang-the-expense accommodation? Absolutely. **Caroline Baum** visits Kangaroo Island to discover a South Australian destination without equal.



SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE

And on the seventh day, God created Southern Ocean Lodge. Perched above a deserted coastline at Hanson Bay on the island's south-west, the elegant, glass-fronted structure of just 21 suites is all about the elements: light in all its moods, pounding waves that create a hypnotically relaxing thrumming thunder, native bush teeming with birds, echidnas, goannas, kangaroos and wallabies.

While the wow factor of the setting is high, the luxury element is understated. The suites have borrowed nature's palette – soothing neutrals, pale wood and stone. Added comfort and tactile pleasure come from underfloor heating, sheltered private decks (perfect for spotting whales, dolphins and seals) and thoughtful touches such as the day-pack with brushed-steel water bottle and small torch; the well-chosen library; the selection of leaf teas and snacks; the oil burner lit in the evening; the Bose sound system. Some have fireplaces. One has a timber bathtub. Televisions are available on request but why would you bother? Instead, gather around the central fireplace for a pre-dinner drink and swap stories with fellow travellers or simply gaze out at a diamond canopy of stars.

Generating its own power, capturing its own rainwater and recycling its own waste, Southern Ocean Lodge demonstrates benchmark sustainability but does it discreetly. Nothing here screams a message: it's all about a low-key aesthetic that reminds you of the island's unique flora and fauna – nowhere more so than in the dining room's mesmerising gum-leaf collages created by award-winning local artist Janine Mackintosh.

The tariff includes all meals, matching wines and an extensive open bar, supplemented by a walk-in cellar that includes impressive local wines from The Islander vineyard, where Frenchman Jacques Lurton blends his native know-how with the local grapes (try the Majestic Plough malbec or the Yakka Jack cabernet franc/sangiovese). Seventy-five per cent of ingredients on the menu are produced locally, including sheep's-milk cheeses, marron, limited-season oysters, rare-breed organic pork and, in a great initiative, barramundi farmed by an entrepreneurial local school.

If you can tear yourself away from the view, the lodge offers a program of full- and half-day tours: no matter how lazy you feel, don't miss the opportunity to visit the Remarkable Rocks – nature's spectacular version of a sculpture park – and Cape du Couedic, where a lively colony of some 50,000 fur seals frolics in the surf. Further along the coast at Seal Bay is a large colony of sea lions, which come remarkably close to visitors. There's also quad-biking, kayaking and platypus-spotting.

Tired muscles are the perfect excuse to visit the lodge's spa: an aromatic smoking ceremony and warm foot soak begin the ritual. Treatments use the organic, Aboriginal plant- and mineral-based Li'tya range with its invigorating bush aromas.

Some guests cancel their travel plans and just stay put here. So far, the record length of stay is 16 days.

● Hanson Bay Road, Hanson Bay, Kangaroo Island. Phone: (02) 9918 4355. southernoceanlodge.com.au. Suites from \$900 per person per night (two-night minimum stay, including food and beverages).

Left to right: Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island's south-west coast; sea lions at Seal Bay; an Ocean Retreat suite.

