

What to see and do around American River, when staying at the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge



Boating And Fishing

Boating and fishing is one of the most popular activities in this area, due to the sheltered waters which are home to fantastic fishing grounds, especially for the prized Australian King George Whiting and make boating and fishing a delight. The best way to explore them is with a local who'll take you out in their boat to all the good spots. The local charter operators have many years' experience and offer full day and half day charters which usually include lunch, transfers, bait and tackle and fish cleaning. If you have your own boat, there is a boat ramp at American River, too.

The Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge will help you with your catch! They will be happy to arrange cleaning, filleting, packing, freezing and even cooking your catch!

If you'd prefer to fish from land, then fishing and crabbing off the wharf, boat ramp, beach and rocks around American River are also very popular. The Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge has fishing sets for hire including rods, reels, tackle rigs, berley buckets and crab nets. They'll also even help you with the tide times and sell you a bag of cockles! Other general bait is available from the General Store.

Another way to view the quiet waters of American River and Pelican Lagoon is to take your own or hire a kayak and travel to the reaches of the Bay into Eastern Cove and along to exclusive Island Beach. Stop for a swim or just bask on the white sands of this gorgeous beach.

Walks, Drives & Nearby Attractions

Nocturnal self-guided walk

The area around the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge is blessed with a healthy population of very cute and inquisitive Tammar wallabies. Grab a torch from Reception after dinner and wander through the garden. You'll be amazed at what you will see. Fact sheets on wallabies and possums are available at Reception.

Redbank's drive

This scenic route involves an 8km drive on dirt roads through farmland areas up behind the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge. You'll come to magnificent coastline, bordered by a bank of the red cliffs that inspired the name. Get a real sense of oneness with nature as you stroll along this quiet pristine beach.

Beach, Birds and Bush trail walk

This is a coastal walk of approx. 8 kms, east from the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge along the water's edge and through a little scrub to the old Cannery Works at Ballast Head. This was once the primary shipping port of Kangaroo Island. It's not unusual to see kangaroos, wallabies and koalas on the land and then cast your eyes out to sea and see a pod of dolphins, and even the occasional whale!



The Oyster Stroll

Visit The Oyster Farm Shop (Mon-Fri) - Showcasing Island Aquaculture and Sustainable Seafood. When in season you can taste the freshest oysters on the island (fresh from their farm across the road), Green Lip Abalone, King George Whiting, Marron, Sheoak Smoked Oysters and Smoked oyster dip from the Chill and Grill lunch menu.

Pennington Bay

This is Kangaroo Island's premier surf beach, and has to be seen to be believed. From American River to Pennington Bay is a 15 minute drive and you are basically going from one side of the island to the other as you traverse the narrowest part of the island! Ride the plank or simply marvel at the shifting forces of nature as the swell rolls in and out. Why not make an outing of it and take a picnic from Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge; they'll even provide a beach umbrella for you. Book your picnic basket at Reception.

Pelican Feeding

Every second morning (so as not to encourage daily binge fish eating by the birds), the pelicans are fed by the staff from the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge. Come and get some eyeball contact with 'Bump', 'Grind', 'Shimmy' and 'Biggles' and the rest of the balmy air force. It happens around 9.00am.... and it's free!

Other local attractions

American River is centrally located and a great base to access all parts of the island. A short drive of 20 minutes or less will take you to Emu Ridge Eucalyptus Distillery, Clifford's Honey Farm, Island Sheep Dairy, KI Spirits and many of the local wineries and cellar doors such as Bay of Shoals Wines, Sunset Winery, Dudley Wines, Chapman River Wines and Islander Estate (appointment only).



Feeding the Pelicans

A 30 minute drive East will take you to Penneshaw and Cape Willoughby or go North West to the main island town of Kingscote and Emu Bay.

An hour's drive will comfortably take you to Seal Bay and Vivonne Bay, the middle of the island to Parndana and the nearby KI Wildlife Park and Andermel Marron Farm, and to the North Coast to Snelling Beach and Stokes Bay, all well worth a trip.

Flinders Chase (including Admirals Arch and Remarkable Rocks) Hanson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Kelly Hill Caves and the Western River district are about a 90 minute drive from American River. Also well worth a visit!

What to do at the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge

History Wall

Both the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge and American River are steeped in history, as the first European settlement on Kangaroo Island, and in fact in South Australia. The History wall, located in Linnett's Bar inside the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge and is a photographic historical showcase of the rich history of Kangaroo Island and American River.

Picnic lunches to Go

The Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge provides delicious picnic hampers with your preferred selection of sandwiches, dips, cold chicken, smoked salmon and cheese selections, home-made cakes, muffins and fresh fruit. Wash it down with a bottle of wine, a thermos of tea or coffee and bottled water and soft drinks.

Interpretive Trail and 'Red Tailed Glossies'

An interpretive trail around the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge tells the tale of the flora and fauna located in



Enjoying fresh oysters





Red Tailed Glossy Black Cockatoo

this area, including a flock of the endangered Red Tailed Glossy Black Cockatoo that inhabits the Sheoak Trees around the property. There are all kinds of things to see and do as you wander around the property, or perhaps you would just like to sit and contemplate your surroundings in the Serenity Seat, overlooking the bay.

Sauna

Kangaroo Island Lodge has two small sauna rooms (2 persons per room).

Swimming

The Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge has a large swimming pool called "Our Dawn" which overlooks the bay. The pool name is dedicated to the woman who came here and opened it, the Australian swimming legend - Dawn Fraser.

There is also a toddler's pool and pool towels are available at Reception.

Recreation Room

A small recreation room is available at the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge with an 8-ball table, numerous board games and dart board.

There is also a modest book collection in the library.

Tennis

"Centre Court" (slightly overrated) is available for a bit of fun tennis and beautiful views over the bay. Tennis racquets and balls are available from Reception.

History of 'The Lodge and American River'

Indigenous presence

Kangaroo Island separated from mainland Australia around 10,000 years ago, due to rising sea level after the last glacial period. Known as Karta ("Island of the Dead") by the mainland Aboriginal tribes, the existence of stone tools and shell middens show that Aboriginal people once lived on Kangaroo Island. It is thought that they occupied it as long ago as 16,000 years before the present, and may have only disappeared from the island as recently as 2,000 years ago

A mainland Aboriginal dreaming story tells of the Backstairs Passage flooding:

"Long ago, Ngurunderi's two wives ran away from him, and he was forced to follow them. He pursued them and as he did so he crossed Lake Albert and went along the beach to Cape Jervis. When he arrived there he saw his wives wading half-way across the shallow channel which divided Naroongowie from the mainland. He was determined to punish his wives, and angrily ordered the water to rise up and drown them. With a terrific rush the waters roared and the women were carried back towards the mainland. Although they tried frantically to swim against the tidal wave they were powerless to do so and were drowned."



A peaceful morning at American River

European settlement – Then & Now

Then Englishman, Captain Matthew Flinders first set foot in the American River area when he left his ship, 'Investigator' and set off in a small cutter to explore the eastern cove of Nepean Bay on the 4th of April 1802.

Now The property looks out onto Eastern Cove, yet was misnamed American River due to its estuarine appearance; there is no river, just beautiful ocean!



Then With his naturalist, Mr Robert Brown, Flinders sailed up into a body of water which he named Pelican Lagoon. When they climbed the 'sandy eminence' behind it, they discovered they were on an island.

Now You can easily climb Prospect Hill and on a clear day when the wind is blowing from the north east you can see Mount Lofty, 125 kilometres away.

Then Flinders didn't visit the South Coast; he left that to the Frenchman, Captain Nicholas Baudin, hence the French names. The two met by sheer coincidence at a time their respective countries were at war.

Now Don't miss stunning Pennington Bay which is on the rugged south coast and only minutes from American River. It's likely you will see dolphins or a sea lion surfing alongside a local surfer and from May-October you may even be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a Southern Right Whale; a great place for a beach picnic.

Then In February 1803 whilst at King George Sound in WA, Baudin came across a brig named The Union. He invited the American Captain, one Isaac Pendleton, to dinner aboard his ship. Pendleton was on a sealing expedition and needed more seal skins to complete his cargo. Baudin relayed Flinders' account of the abundance of seals here and so Pendleton set sail, arriving during the winter of 1803. Using local native pines he built a 35 ton schooner and named it, 'Independence.' This was the first ship built in SA. Although the area was dubbed Union Bay by Captain Pendleton, later mapmakers called it American River. In effect, these American sealers settled South Australia some 33 years before it was officially proclaimed in 1836, so American River quite rightly claims the mantle of the first white settlement of South Australia.

Now On the small flat at the foot of Muston Hill, just out of American River, a cairn recognizes the building of the Independence.

Then The first Italian Ligurian Bees on Kangaroo Island were brought to American River in 1884, providing superb honey that has become part of the American River legend. As well, 'The River' has always been famous for its fishing and widely known for large catches of whiting in its sheltered waters that back onto a protected fish breeding estuary. Local, Ernie Walters caught 72 dozen in one day-with a hand line, his fingers bleeding by nightfall.

Now At breakfast, try the honey that is collected from hives kept nearby. At dinner, the Lodge is renowned for its fresh Kangaroo Island Whiting and American River Oysters.

Then The first guesthouse in American River was built by Nils Ryberg in 1894, in the area where the current Bar stands at the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge. Purchased not long after by the Linnett family, the property soon became an iconic tourism hot spot in South Australia known as Linnetts' Resort.

Many will remember it as an exotic destination, reached from Adelaide by aeroplane or by sea, via the "7 hour ship", the MV Troubridge from Port Adelaide, that was a honey-mooning favorite from the 1930s.

Airlines of South Australia were great supporters of Linnett's Resort, as was well known Adelaide travel agent, TV Personality and Tour Host, Jan Springett.



Linnetts tour bus used for picking up arriving passengers and touring.

Now For the past 13 years, the Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge has been owned and operated by 3 partners who are committed to the experience, the environment and the community and continue the tradition of offering a unique experience in an extraordinary, natural environment. The Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge now hosts people from both Australia and all over the world who come to experience its reputation as a tranquil haven for rare and magnificent flora fauna and marine life, and as a piece of living Australian history.

Linnett's Bar is always open and is a great place for a drink and to reflect, while viewing the photographic history of what was for many years, 'Linnetts'.

