

# West Kangaroo Island Parks – Planning for tourism



## Reimagining Kangaroo Island - what does the future hold for tourism?

The South Australian Government recognises how important parks are to South Australians. Our parks must be conserved and passed onto future generations to enjoy. Parks also offer world class nature and wildlife experiences that are a major driver of tourism and that can complement conservation goals.

South Australia's parks and heritage places already contribute 1.7 billion per annum to the State's economy and have potential to generate an extra 3.4 billion and 4,000 new jobs over the next 10 years. Kangaroo Island in particular, offers experiences that are truly unique and have potential to support the sustainable growth of the sector. This will require a continuation of a focus on the sustainable management of guided tours, wildlife interactions, walking experiences and car-based attractions. It will also need eco-experiences to evolve so that they remain attractive and internationally competitive.

The 'Reimagining Kangaroo Island' project will explore the capacity of the West Kangaroo Island Parks to cater for more visitors, offer a greater diversity of eco-experiences and offer deeper immersion into the landscape, the culture, and its conservation. It will also investigate improvements to the infrastructure and facilities that will be needed to ensure that these eco-experiences match or exceed international standards.

### More information:

The Kangaroo Island Engagement Hub <https://reimagine-ki.parks.sa.gov.au/>

South Australian Regional Visitor Strategy. <https://tourism.sa.gov.au/research-and-statistics/strategies/south-australian-regional-visitor-strategy>

Nature Like Nowhere Else – Activating Nature Based Tourism in South Australia. <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/state-wide-park-strategies/nature-based-tourism-plan>

## What does 'best practice' tourism look like in parks?

Tourism is an effective way of establishing an awareness and understanding of parks and fostering a stronger commitment to their conservation. The business activity initiated by tourism is important for regional economies and the goals of nearby communities and may provide further impetus for parks to be properly resourced and managed.

Tourism in parks must be sustainable, and therefore must contribute to the conservation of natural and cultural values on which it depends over the long term. The United Nations Environment Program and World Tourism Organisation define sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".

Natural forces and ecological processes and careful management have sustained ecosystems and biodiversity values within parks in a near natural state. Facilitating the sustainable growth of the tourism sector without upsetting this delicate state is a particularly challenging task that requires skill, knowledge and a collective effort.

Best practice tourism involves Aboriginal people, local communities, the tourism sector, and Government working together towards a common goal. This approach is underpinned by excellence in customer service, appropriate management controls, and sound decision making about the type, scale and location of tourism enterprises.

#### More information:

Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy-Makers. Madrid and Paris: UNWTO and UNEP, 2005. <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/8741>

Tourism and visitor management in protected areas: Guidelines for sustainability. IUCN Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/47918>

### **What provides the legal foundation for tourism in parks?**

South Australia's foundational legislation for parks is centred on the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. Each contains provisions to ensure that tourism activities are compatible with park objectives, properly authorised, and sustainably managed.

Cape Bouguer, Cape Gantheaume, Cape Torrens, Ravine des Casoars and Western River Wilderness Protection Areas are managed through the provisions of the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*, associated Wilderness Protection Area Regulations and the Code of Management for Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones. The Act and Regulations prevent any new leases, modification to the landscape or erosion of wilderness quality. The Code sets out objectives for wilderness management and principles for access, recreation, and tourism.

Flinders Chase National Park and all conservation parks within the planning area are managed through the provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and associated *National Parks and Wildlife (National Parks) Regulations 2016*.

Most forms of tourism require authorisation under this legislation. Depending on the activity, this may be in the form of an area set aside for a particular purpose, special permission, a lease, licence, or agreement.

#### More information

Wilderness Protection Act 1992 <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/WILDERNESS%20PROTECTION%20ACT%201992.aspx>

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/NATIONAL%20PARKS%20AND%20WILDLIFE%20ACT%201972.aspx>

### **How will park legislation and policy influence tourism development?**

The role of park management plans under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* are similar. Both Acts require park management plans to be developed, and describe the process for their development. Parks must be managed in accordance with the adopted plan.

Park management plans describe the foundational policy settings, management arrangements, key values, and threats to those values. They are a reference document for the community, guide the development of operational plans, assist in setting priorities and support day-to-day management decisions. While they do not generally provide direction for tourism at an operation level, they may place restrictions on tourism activity where this is necessary to prevent, limit, or guide its sustainable growth.

Decisions about complex, or larger scale tourism developments in parks are required to consider the park's foundational legislation, its management objectives, and its environmental, cultural, economic, and social values. There are several ways that the park planning process can assist such decisions. These range from the establishment of broad principles for tourism development, the establishment of zones for specified purposes through to more detailed proposals for specific activities or developments.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a park management plan to provide for specific tourism development proposal. However, in practice, the timing of tourism development proposals, their environmental assessment and the park planning process are unlikely to coincide. For these reasons DEW develops park management plans that provide the anticipated direction and context for future decisions about tourism. The Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park Management Plan is one example of a plan that adopts this approach.

#### More information

Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park Management Plan <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/state-wide-park-strategies/park-management-plans>

### **How are decisions about tourism in parks made?**

There are many forms of tourism activity that may require management. These range from visitor access to larger scale construction activities.

The assessment of any tourism activity in parks requires an understanding of the nature of the tourism activity proposed, its location, land tenure, its likely interaction with park values and its legal context. Processes for the

assessment of tourism proposals are not uniform across all parks because park values are dynamic and vary between each park. Due to the structure of the foundational legislation, multiple authorisations may be required from DEW. It is also possible that there will be authorisation requirements under other legislation which may mean more than one Government organisation is involved.

The Wilderness Protection Act does not allow the grant of a new lease, or the construction of roads, tracks buildings or structures within wilderness protection areas, unless these developments have been specifically authorised through their management plans. The Code of Management for Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones stipulates certain activities that are incompatible with the maintenance of wilderness quality should be prohibited within wilderness protection areas.

In all cases, tourism activities will be assessed to ensure they are compatible with the protection of park values. There may also be additional factors (e.g. commercial viability, procedural fairness, compatibility with strategies etc) that are considered before decisions are made and given effect through approvals, set asides, leases, licences or agreements. In addition to the necessary assessments and authorisations under park legislation, tourism activities involving private sector development also require assessment and approval through South Australia's new State Planning System.

#### More information

Code of Management for Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/our-places/wilderness-protection-areas>

### **What is the process for approval of private sector tourism development?**

Once 'in principle' support for a private sector development has been established (see above - How are decision about tourism in parks made?), the proponent may proceed to the next stage of assessment by submitting a development application to the State Planning Commission.

South Australia's Planning and Design Code describes the processes that will be used to assess all developments on private land as well as in parks. Tourism developments in parks will be assessed by the State Planning Commission and the criteria used will be dependent on the type of development.

Private sector tourist accommodation development in parks will be classified as Restricted Development. These applications will be assessed against the provisions of the State Planning and Design Code as well as any other considerations that may be necessary. These assessments will involve public notification and provide opportunity for appeal by third parties.

A tourist accommodation development proposal that is, a) in a park proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and, b) has been 'envisaged as a land use' in the park management plan, will be classified as a Performance Assessed Development. In these parks, development will be assessed by the State Planning Commission through the Code Assessed Pathway. This pathway includes public notification but does not provide for third party appeals.

#### More information

SA Planning Portal – Assessment Pathways  
[https://www.saplanningportal.sa.gov.au/planning\\_reforms/new\\_planning\\_tools/assessment\\_pathways](https://www.saplanningportal.sa.gov.au/planning_reforms/new_planning_tools/assessment_pathways)

## **More information**

Barry Hayden – Team Leader Park Management Program

National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia

M 0434 6029 484

E [Barry.Hayden@sa.gov.au](mailto:Barry.Hayden@sa.gov.au)

[www.environment.sa.gov.au](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au)