

Flinders Chase National Park recovery

Accurate at 16 March 2020

Flinders Chase National Park is known for its rugged wilderness, featuring iconic landmarks such as the world-famous sculptured granite boulders of Remarkable Rocks and the beautiful natural rock arch, Admirals Arch.

The 2019-20 bushfire event on Kangaroo Island was the largest in the island's recorded history and burnt almost half the island.

Here's how Flinders Chase National Park was affected and what recovery actions are underway:

Bushfire damage to the park

The western end of the island, which is home to Flinders Chase National Park, was particularly bushfire-affected, with 96 per cent of the park and the adjoining Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection Area being burnt.

The Rocky River visitor precinct has been destroyed, including the visitor centre and the boardwalk and toilets facilities at Remarkable Rocks.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail – which weaved through Flinders Chase National Park and Kelly Hill Conservation Park – has been lost, this includes the infrastructure built for the trail.

Flinders Chase National Park has been closed to the public since January 2020 for public safety, as well as to give the fragile bushfire-affected environment time and space to regenerate and allow for clean-up efforts by the Australian Defence Force, among others.

Park sites that survived the bushfire

Although the iconic Flinders Chase National Park was severely affected, the park's Cape du Couedic Lighthouse and lighthouse keeper's cottages were saved.

Admiral's Arch, a famous home to a colony of long-nosed fur seals, was also unaffected.

Remarkable Rocks' granite boulders have not been damaged and the Cape Borda Lightstation and heritage keeper's cottages were saved.

Park recovery efforts

National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia (NPWSSA) is working hard and leading the bushfire recovery of Kangaroo Island's affected parks and reserves, including supporting native wildlife recovery, rebuilding parks infrastructure and creating a process to reimagine nature-based tourism in parks.

Work is underway to help affected wildlife, ranging from rapid assessment surveys and native animal relocations, to feral cat and pig management in parks.

NPWSSA is working hard to support the Kangaroo Island tourism industry and will soon be allowing licenced commercial tourism operators to provide guided tours of Flinders Chase National Park via a 'safe corridor' that takes visitors to iconic sites in the park. The safe corridor starts at the entrance gate of the park and runs about 25km to Remarkable Rocks, Cape du Couedic Lighthouse and Admirals Arch.

Tourism and the park

Tourism contributes \$7.6 billion dollars to the South Australian economy (FY ending June 2019) and \$1.4 billion of that is attributed to nature-based tourism expenditure (International and National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra, June 2019).

In 2018-19 Kangaroo Island parks contributed more than \$53 million to South Australia's economy and supported 360 jobs. The park attracts more than 120,000 visitors each year and up to 1,000 visitors a day at peak season.

Future of tourism and the park

Flinders Chase National Park will be closed to full public access for some time. However, the park will reopen for guided tours at the end of March to help support the

tourism recovery on the island. The guided tours are an opportunity to see first-hand the beauty of regeneration in Flinders Chase.

Flinders Chase National Park has always been a key part of the Kangaroo Island visitor experience. The first stage of re-opening the park will provide access on an authorised route for licensed operators and their guests only.

Funding of \$7 million will also be spent on bushfire-affected parks to support the Kangaroo Island tourism industry, which has been hard hit by national and international events – from bushfires to coronavirus.

This includes:

- upgrades to visitor facilities at Seal Bay Conservation Park
- creating a new visitor precinct at Antechamber Bay in Lashmar Conservation Park
- upgrades to visitor facilities at Murray Lagoon in Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park
- creating a new camping experience at D'Estrees Bay in Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park
- creating new visitor experiences at Cape Willoughby in Cape Willoughby Conservation Park.

NPWSSA continues to work with its network of licensed tour operators and regional tourism leaders to find new and creative tourism offerings in Kangaroo Island parks.

Other parks on Kangaroo Island

Eleven bushfire-affected parks on the western end of Kangaroo Island will continue to be closed for several months at least.

This includes:

- Flinders Chase National Park (including Cape Borda)
- Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection Area
- Cape Torrens Wilderness Protection Area
- Western River Wilderness Protection Area
- Kelly Hill Conservation Park
- Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area
- Parndana Conservation Park
- Latham Conservation Park
- Vivonne Bay Conservation Park
- Seddon Conservation Park
- Mount Taylor Conservation Park.

Six stunning parks on Kangaroo Island were unaffected and continue to provide visitors with great opportunities to experience the island's natural and heritage wonders.

They include:

- Baudin Conservation Park
- Beyeria Conservation Park
- Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park and Wilderness Protection Area
- Cape Willoughby Conservation Park
- Lashmar Conservation Park
- Seal Bay Conservation Park.

There is still so much wildlife to see and experiences to enjoy in Kangaroo Island's unaffected parks, including visiting one of the island's top tourist destinations, Seal Bay Conservation Park, and staying overnight at the Cape Willoughby heritage cottages.