



ARKABA  
Wild Bush Luxury

# Seasonality: what to expect

## Autumn

The combination of warm days and cool nights make for a fantastic time to explore the Ikara-Flinders Ranges. Late rains bring much needed relief to life and land, with wildflowers beginning to bloom in response, bringing splashes of rainbow colours to the formerly sunburnt horizon. View the wildlife becoming more active during the middle parts of the day due to the comfortable temperatures.

### Birds

Keep an eye out for the explosions of colour that are the Purple-backed Fairywrens flying about sampling food from the garden. Don't forget to look down to spot the ground forager Apostlebirds that build their nests in many creek beds that carve their way through Arkaba. Recovering River Red Gum understory habitat supports healthy populations of Galahs, Honeyeater species, Parrots & Emus.

### Mammals

Short-beaked Echidna's venture out in May & Mallee thickets on the outer edge of Wilpena Pound is a good spot for Brush-tailed possums & Western Quolls who are re-introduced species to the area & are thriving in their old home for the first time in decades.

### Flora

Hollowed out Red Gums are the 'riparian apartment blocks' for wildlife, with roos resting beneath, & reptiles, marsupials & birds all living & nesting inside these gargantuan trees. Bush Bananas' (which taste like cucumbers!) & Ruby Saltbush start to fruit & flower, adding colour to our semi-arid country & flavour to our salads. Several late bloomer species including Shrubby Rice-flowers, Clammy Daisy Bush's & some Mallee Eucalypts produce unique flowers that breathe frondescence into the outback landscape.

### Reptiles & Amphibians

Sleepy lizards bask on rocky outcrops enjoying the sun. The open grassland & scattered Acacia supports many reptile species like Shingleback lizards, Bearded Dragons & Masked Rock Skinks endemic to Central Australia. Thick-tailed geckoes are always a joy to see as they are an indicator our feral predator controls are working.

## Winter

Winter brings warm, dry and cloudless days, making spotting active wildlife an enjoyable experience. Emus and wedge-tailed Eagles are pairing off building nests to accommodate their future offspring. The regeneration cycle with a red landscape replaced by a natural green carpet covering the land. By dusk, the outback sky starts putting on an incredible sunset show. Spend evenings by the firepit with a glass of the local vintage in hand.

### Birds

Winter is the time of courtship for many bird species & Wedge-tailed Eagles start to pair off. This process includes building impressive nest structures that can measure up to 1.8m across & be 3m deep & have been known to weigh up to 400kg! Not forgetting smaller colourful species such as the White-winged Fairy-wrens, Banded Lapwings and Striated Pardalotes. Special highlights along our Arkaba Creek include Apostlebirds, Yellow-throated Miners and the stunning Elegant Parrot. Standout encounters include Rufous Whistler, Grey-fronted Honeyeater, Spotted Harrier, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes and the Inland Thornbill amongst many others.

## **Mammals**

As the temperatures continue to cool, the Short-beaked Echidnas form love trains where females lead a line of up to eleven males on a mating performance through the outback. The Western Grey Kangaroo is abundant as is Australia's third-largest Macropod, the Common Wallaroo.

## **Flora**

As the outback prepares for rain the last of the late bloomers start to flower to propagate. Senna bushes surround the homestead in a vivid bright yellow & flowering wattles, daisies, Spider & Sun orchids & native apricots grace our outback landscape with their pops of colour. Saltbush thrives & can be spotted (& sampled!) & frequently makes its way into Arkaba's food scene. Saltbush cured flank cooked over a crackling campfire under the stars anyone?

## **Reptiles & Amphibians**

The colder months can be a tough time to spot sun-loving reptiles but there are favourite locations, such as on top of fence posts, exposed rocks & in Madge's Gully that provide plenty of warm spots for Shingleback Lizards, Gidgee Skinks & Tawny Dragons. Don't forget to keep a close eye out for the aptly named Desert Treefrog who like to live amongst the bark.

## **Spring**

In Spring, wildflowers bloom once again and the horizon is patterned by hues of greens, yellows, blues, pinks, and reds of Paper Daisies, Early Nancies and Vanilla Lillies. The vegetation is lush and signs of life can be seen everywhere. Spot emu chicks as they begin hatching and migratory birds begin to return. Watch as the Wedge-tail eagle chicks hatch between August and September, though starting small, the chicks will grow to become Australia's largest bird of prey with impressive nest structures that can weigh up to four hundred kilos.

## **Birds**

Ringnecks, Elegant, Red-rumped & Mulga Parrots become more active with the germination of seeds from late winter rainfall & are courting for breeding. Huge areas of pioneer Acacia species provide both food & habitat for incredible numbers of thornbills, babbler, Red-capped Robins and little explosions of colour in the busy Fairy-wren species. Horsfield's Bronze & Pallid Cuckoos actively seek out the nests of fairywrens & thornbills, honeyeaters & robins to lay their eggs in Brood Parasitism.

## **Mammals**

We delight in healthy populations of Australia's largest living marsupial in the Red Kangaroo which can be seen hopping around every part of Arkaba in search of water, from discovering water sources beneath seemingly dry creek beds to our permanent water source at the Hide. The very rare Fat-tailed Dunnart is one of the cuter inhabitants of our wonderful backyard & is a true testament to our wildlife recovery. During Spring the chances of spotting them are higher as they emerge to mate.

## **Flora**

Expect lots of wattles, daisies, peas and all sorts of hidden gems! Silver Mulla Mulla is found in good quantities like the dot paintings of desert art. Not to mention species like Rock Sida & Jockeys Cap in full swing if we have had a good year of rain. Keep alert for the sweet scent of the Vanilla Lily which can be found in rocky nooks & outcrops. As the name suggests it smells divine! Blushing Quandong fruit at the end of spring and are the signature ingredient in our "Dirty Quandong" cocktail. You'll need to get to them fast as they are Emu's favourite food. The native garden also provides us with a variety of beautiful Eremophilas which bring native flourishes to our table.

## **Reptiles & Amphibians**

Spot the male Tawny Dragon colour up their "beards" to try and show off to the females in this courtship period. The beginning of springtime can be interesting to watch male Central Bearded Dragons compete for mating rights of females, with beard flaring and circling. You might even hear the distinctive call of the Barking Gecko.

## **Summer**

During Summer, the days can be hot and the landscape dry - a true outback experience. Although The Arkaba Walk does not operate, guests can still enjoy a summer stay at the Homestead. Be surprised by the diverse range of wildlife that remain active at this time of year. Western Grey Kangaroos are hopping around with joeys in their pouches and if you're lucky, you might even spot a rare Yellow-Footed Rock Wallaby. Don't forget to look up to see the array of colourful migratory birds that stop in the ranges during this time. Marvel at vibrant sunsets created by residual dust in the air and expect a show with December's theatrical storms bringing life and motion to the skies around Arkaba.

## **Birds**

The warm updrafts through summer make for perfect gliding conditions & we regularly see majestic Wedge-tailed Eagles & other raptors such as Little Eagles, Brown Falcons, Black-shouldered Kites & Nankeen Kestrels. Brown Goshawks frequent Arkaba & Spotted Harriers can be found rapidly responding to large rainfall events or boom periods of prey. Tropical bird species migrate to the Flinders Ranges for a change of scenery, bringing the likes of the Scared Kingfisher to our backyard.

## **Mammals**

The Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby is a beautiful marsupial mammal! Threatened to the point of near extinction but are on the road to recovery after competing with feral herbivores for vegetation, water & habitat. Victims of feral predation by foxes & feral cats, there is an estimated remaining population of approximately 2,000 animals in South Australia. They are still considered a rare sighting as they prefer rocky sloped areas that are usually difficult to access. Don't be put off though, the chance of spotting any of the Kangaroo & Wallaroo species is high & as easy as sitting on the deck of our pool overlooking the creek which provides shade to many species.

## **Flora**

The harsh outback environment can sometimes be lush, green & full of life with summer flowers like the Leafless Cherry & vibrant Garland Lilly providing pops of colour to the bush. During a dry hot summer, the River Red Gums will drop their limbs to survive. Sacrificing limbs create hollows & hiding spots for bats & brush-tailed possums & also provides homes for Moths, Butterflies & Grubs.

## **Reptiles & Amphibians**

Shinglebacks are our most frequently sighted lizard species. Though they are a solitary species most of the year they come out in summer for their breeding season where monogamous pairs will birth only one or two offspring. Don't forget to keep a close eye out for the aptly named Desert Treefrog who like to live amongst the bark.