

MEDIA RELEASE

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Email bookings@sealink.com.au

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Kangaroo Island in Demand

South Australia's award-winning tourism destination, Kangaroo Island, has celebrated its best-ever December visitor numbers.

Tania O'Neil, Tourism Kangaroo Island's Regional Tourism Manager, said that for many of the island's tourism operators this has been one of the busiest December / January holiday periods they have ever seen.

"With the momentum caused by the many tourism awards Kangaroo Island has won over the past 12-months and the associated publicity of places like Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island has become the new must-see destination in Australia," said Ms O'Neil.

Numbers have also increased across the board for Kangaroo Island. The Department for Environment and Heritage Commercial Manager for Kangaroo Island, Christine Wrench, said visitors were up at all sites with the Seal Bay visitors up a huge 35%.

"The fires of December 2007 have provided a unique opportunity for visitors to witness the resilience and revival of the bushland on the island," she said.

"In addition, five major tourist sites managed by the department were recently awarded the 'eco-tick' of approval by Ecotourism Australia – something visitors appear to be embracing."

Jeff Ellison, SeaLink Travel Group's Managing Director said Kangaroo Island SeaLink had reported the best ever December passenger numbers and after the devastating bushfires in December 2007, it was great to see that Kangaroo Island's visitor numbers had more than recovered.

He said SeaLink passenger numbers for December 2008 were up more than 4,230 compared with the previous year.

"Kangaroo Island's pristine beaches, abundance of wildlife and relaxed atmosphere has proven to be a major attraction for self drive holiday makers this season, particularly within the family market," he said.

"We are seeing people extend their time on the island and expect this trend to continue throughout the holiday period."

He said that despite the unpredictable financial times, it seemed Australian families were making the most of the drop in fuel prices and the traditional self-drive family holiday had once again become a favoured option.

Families were opting for a 2 to 4 hour drive 'destination holiday', which had put Kangaroo Island high on the list as the ideal getaway for South Australians and interstate travellers.

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“We have seen a large surge in the number of Victorian cars on Kangaroo Island,” Mr Ellison said.

Kangaroo Island has been heralded as the US National Geographic Traveller magazine’s top pick for the best of the Asia Pacific’s islands.

Located just a one and a half hour drive from Adelaide and a 45-minute ferry ride from Cape Jervis, Kangaroo Island offers a brilliant array of natural wonders and wildlife in a stunning, unspoilt environment.

Contact:

Jeff Ellison
Chief Executive
SeaLink Travel Group

Ph: 8202 8668 or 0407 407 123 (mobile)

Tania O’Neil
Regional Tourism Manager
Tourism Kangaroo Island

Ph: 8553 1185 or 0429 000 855 (mobile)