

Cape Willoughby Lightstation



Photo credit: Quentin Chester Photography

Cape Willoughby Lightstation is located on 17 hectares on the eastern tip of Kangaroo Island. It is an area of historical significance perched atop the steep rugged granite coastal cliffs overlooking Backstairs Passage with views of the Pages Islands, Dudley Peninsula and Fleurieu Peninsula (mainland Australia). Immerse yourself in the history of the lightstation by attending a guided tour. Heritage accommodation is also available if you wish to further experience the beauty and remoteness of the site.

History

Cape Willoughby Lighthouse, the first lighthouse to be built in South Australia, was originally known as Sturt-Willoughby Light after the explorer Captain Charles Sturt. It was officially opened on 10 January 1852 on a site originally chosen and surveyed by Captain Lipson. For many years the lighthouse has aided navigation for passing ships moving through Backstairs Passage. The lighthouse and the original limestone keeper's cottages were constructed from local granite and limestone. Quarrying is evident near the lighthouse and in the Devils Kitchen gulch.

The original lightkeeper's cottages were located some distance downhill from the lighthouse near the beach and jetty. The small settlement consisted of a boat ramp, boat shed, stores building, butchery, a blacksmith shop and two assistant keeper's cottages. The head keeper's cottage was

further up the hill, closer to the lighthouse. In 1882 a report was filed suggesting that the keepers had difficulty walking up the half-mile hill to the light from the cottages, particularly in strong head winds and rain. As a result the existing lightkeeper's cottages were built.

Cape Willoughby is also a critical weather station for the prediction of weather for many parts of South Australia. Weather has been recorded at Cape Willoughby since 1881 with some of the most consistent records of anywhere in Australia. While the weather station is now automatic, in the past weather had to be recorded manually at three-hour intervals.

Guided tours

Guided interpretive tours of Sturt Light and the weather station are conducted Thursday to Monday and daily during school holidays (except Christmas Day). Visitors can climb to the top of Sturt Light to experience and enjoy the panoramic view and to listen to stories about past life in a remote location.



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Short walks

If you have some spare time walk around the area and marvel at the spectacular Devils Kitchen - remember some of the granite was mined here for the lighthouse. You may also wish to walk down around the old cottage ruins and jetty area. Please discuss your plans with a staff member at Cape Willoughby.

Visitor Centre

The third lightkeeper's cottage is used as a visitor centre from which the guided tours commence. Old photographs of the lightstation are displayed along with equipment previously used at the site. A selection of retail products and light refreshments are available for purchase.

Heritage accommodation

Thomas and Seymour cottages are available for accommodation. Experience living at a remote working light station. For accommodation enquiries please telephone (08) 8553 4410.

Do not feed the wildlife – it makes them sick

Visitors are asked not to feed the native animals as this upsets their digestive systems and changes their natural behaviour. Animals can become aggressive to secure food on offer. Please help keep wildlife wild and healthy and remember to **observe not interact**.

For your safety

Black Tiger and Pygmy Copperhead snakes can be seen in the warmer months. Please keep clear and slowly move away. Do not try to handle a snake: their bite is venomous.

Please do not climb on the base of the lighthouse or any historical equipment.

The lighthouse contains a flight of stairs – take care and use handrails when climbing to the top of the lighthouse.

Children must be supervised when participating in a tour of the lighthouse. Please do not carry children when climbing the stairs of the lighthouse. Children under the age of four must be securely held in a child carrier backpack or similar device.

Appropriate foot wear must be worn during the guided tour – heels over 5 centimetres in height are not permitted to be worn on the lighthouse tour.

Please keep well back from the edge of the coastal cliffs – walking along the edge is dangerous.

For more information

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