

Cape Willoughby lightstation

Self guided walk

Cape Willoughby has long been a landmark. Even before Kangaroo Island finally separated from the mainland around 8,500 years ago, this headland was a prominent hill overlooking a coastal plain.



In 1802 Matthew Flinders became the first navigator to chart Backstairs Passage. Soon after, sealers and whalers moved into the region.

In 1849 work commenced on the lighthouse. The light was first shown in January 1852. For the first 65 years the light source was 15 oil-burning lanterns. Then came a pressure kerosene light and eventually electric light in the 1950's.

A major change in 1925 was the installation of a first order Fresnel lens and new lantern room – both re-located from Tiparra Reef in Moonta Bay in Spencer Gulf. This lens and lantern room were removed in 1974. They are now on show at the Hope Cottage Museum in Kingscote.

Cape Willoughby is still a working lighthouse and crucial navigational aid. Since 2011 the lantern has been powered by an efficient LED light.

Cape Willoughby was home to lightkeeping families for more than 140 years – our last keeper left in 1992. Unlike the lighthouses on the remote western end of Kangaroo Island, the keepers here enjoyed regular contact with the local settler and farming families.

Both Seymour and Thomas cottages are available for holiday rental. Each sleeps up to eight guests in comfort. With panoramic views of Cape Willoughby and the seas beyond, the cottages provide a great opportunity to experience the atmosphere and seclusion of the lightkeeping life.

With food and supplies arriving by ship only every three months, the keepers had to be resourceful with their kitchen gardens and fishing rods! The road to the lighthouse was only established in the 1940s.



For more information

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