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Elder Camp at Arkaba Station

1 FLINDERS RANGES Australia

A 280-mile stretch of scorched, craggy peaks in southern Australia, Flinders Ranges was forged by millions of years of geological push and shove. It was untouched Aboriginal territory until the mid-19th century, when Arkaba Station was one of a handful of sheep-shearing stations, and isolation eventually broke the spirit of the European pastoralists, and the miners who came after them. Arkaba has now reopened as a five-room hotel offering a fascinating window onto this stretch of sun-baked Outback. Unpretentiously renovated and decorated with watercolours of galahs and browning photographs of its colourful history, the lodge has stripped wooden floors, a leather-chaired library, kitted-out jeeps and an open-plan dining room/kitchen. Richard, the Tasmanian chef, produces freshly baked bread alongside an

imaginative menu of local delicacies, and resident guide Kat is a splendidly well-informed nature geek whose head is an almanac of flora and fauna - the local bird-life here is particularly dazzling. Activities on offer include hot-air ballooning, petroglyph hunting and, best of all, the Arkaba Walk, four days of sleeping under the stars, or in a traditional swag if you like, and hiking among the wildlife. Arkaba isn't about the thread count or delicious food, although it boasts all these things. This is a romantic, bleak, defiantly untamed place. It's one of those few corners of the world that still have the ability to creep into your soul and take up permanent residence. **BELLA POLLEN**
Your nights at Arkaba Station, from £2,180 a person full board, with Wild Bush Luxury (+61 2 9571 6399; www.wildbushluxury.com).
The hotel can be booked for exclusive use as part of a bespoke itinerary.

PHOTOGRAPH: RANDY LARCOMBE

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