

CHRISTMAS  ISLAND

# SWELL LODGE

## BOOKING SWELL LODGE DURING RED CRAB MIGRATION (Oct-Jan)?

### ARE YOU SURE?

Christmas Island is full of red crabs, every day of every year. While more prolific in the wet season, even during the dry season you will still find plenty of them, whenever you want, so don't feel that you have to come during crab migration' just to see our famous crabs – and as you'll read below, while a spectacular event to witness if you're lucky, there are drawbacks too which may effect your stay:

Please keep in mind that if you are visiting during the crab migration which **CAN FALL ANYTIME BETWEEN OCTOBER AND JANUARY AND LAST FOR UP TO SIX WEEKS** many of the roads around the island will be closed to allow the crabs safe passage. This includes the roads to many of our scheduled daily-guided activity destinations like Dolly Beach, the Blowholes, Lilly & Ethel, the Grotto, Hughes Dale and Margaret Knoll Lookout. While it's still possible to walk to/from some of these destinations (depending on your fitness level – some involve several kilometers of walking each way and/or steep, gravelly hills!) we'll likely need to adjust everyone's program almost every day, depending on which roads are open and the fitness level of all guests at the lodge. So, please keep in mind that during migration **WE CAN NOT GUARANTEE THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE AND DO THE USUAL PLANNED ACTIVITIES**. We work closely with Parks Australia to ensure we deliver you the best possible experience while staying at Swell Lodge during migration and will keep you well-informed of itinerary changes, however our priority is of course to minimize any impact on the crabs.

Swell Lodge is located inside the national park on the coast and is one of the best spots on the island for experiencing the red crab migration. However, the road to Swell Lodge itself is often closed during the red crab migration too. If our road is closed, our permit still allows us vehicle access to Swell Lodge between about 11:00 am and 2:30 pm (as well as after dark) when the crabs are less active, providing we use our special crab-safe vehicle attachment. This means that if the road is closed during your stay at Swell Lodge all your daily guided activities will likely be scheduled between 11 am and 2:30 pm and your dinner will be brought out to you after dark at about 7:30 or 8 pm. Sometimes mid-migration, there may be days when the crabs stop moving and Parks may open the road allowing us to return to more regular-timed activities, however as we can't guarantee it, we will not take bookings for optional extras such as photography tours, yoga, massage, fishing trips or 4WD hire between October and January, as all of these activities require the road to Swell Lodge to be open. In an emergency situation of course we can always get you out of the lodge at any time.

On the up-side, the benefit of having the crabs migrate during your stay is that you'll get to walk along jungle tracks carpeted in a sea of red crabs – absolutely a once in a lifetime experience and one Sir David Attenborough includes in his Top 10 natural wonders on Earth!

### CRAB SPAWNING:

The reason the crabs migrate is of course to mate and then cast their eggs into the sea to breed. Their mass, synchronized spawning truly is a spectacular sight to see, usually occurring about 4am in the morning right at a certain part of the tide, during a certain phase of the moon, which the whole migration is timed around.

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Only about a 20min walk from Swell Lodge is a secluded beach that's one of the best viewing spots on the island to witness the red crabs spawning. You'll have to get up super-early and sneak down with a head torch - and you may have to share the little beach with the likes of BBC and IMAX film crews because it really is the best spot - but trust us, it's worth it.

Once the crabs start migrating, the spawning date can be pretty accurately determined +/- a day or so as the correct phase of the moon only happens once each month, however until the crabs start migrating (which depends on when the rains come) it's anyone's guess as to which month this will all happen in, so booking your stay at Swell Lodge specifically to see the spawning is a bit of a gamble. You might see it, or you might be a month or two off! If you're a month late however, all is not lost, as you may be lucky enough to see the other equally-interesting event, which is when the baby crabs which have been drifting around out at sea for a month come back ashore!

## BABY CRAB RETURN:

The baby crab eggs hatch as soon as they are cast into the sea, then they are at the mercy of the ocean currents for about 3-4 weeks, after which they start to transform from free-swimming megalopes into tiny crabs, which need land to survive. If they're lucky, the currents will miraculously bring them back to Christmas Island, and suddenly one morning the island awakes to discover millions of these adorable little blue-eyed crabs washing ashore, covering the rockpools in a living red carpet that's slowly flowing up into the jungle.

Just like the adult crab migration, allowing the safe passage of millions of tiny baby crabs can also cause logistical challenges for access around the island and to/from Swell Lodge, however the disruption is usually briefer, lasting only a few days. Again, we work closely with Parks to best manage access, but again, please be patient and accept that some of the regular activities may not be possible, and/or scheduled times may have to be changed to fit around road closures etc.

## SUMMARY:

We certainly don't mean to deter you at all from booking Swell Lodge to see the red crab migration on Christmas Island - it really is an incredible sight to see and our guests have been blown away by it - we just want to make sure you have realistic expectations about your Swell Lodge & Christmas Island experience during this time. We always work hard to ensure you have the best possible experience, but road closures, red crabs and wet season rains are all out of our control and may impact on your wider island experience. As we said, you can see red crabs in the forest year round on Christmas Island if you just want to see some during your stay. If you really want to see the red carpet, or even more specifically wish to see them spawn, then please realize the dates are not predictable so you could easily still miss the event and your movements around the rest of the island and the optional extras available to you will be restricted. Either way, you'll still have an amazing time at Swell Lodge!