

# Hey Mister - What's a Heysen Trail?

by Charlie Adams

Good question son, like a mirage, a lot depends on who you are, where you've come from and how you answer yourself.

The trail is many things to many people, even its length seems to vary, my guess is 1060 km. At the physical level the trail rises from sea-level to over 1100 metres if you include a quick detour up St. Marys Peak. And you know for an arid track it can be mighty wet at times. But let's not knock the rain for without it we wouldn't have the yellow (politically correct) canola, Jane's blue or those myriads of tiny little wildflowers that cushion our lumping boots. Rain of course means water, perhaps the biggest gauntlet thrown down by the Trail.

Man (politically incorrect) rises to more than the physical I hear you say. Indeed son, it is on the mystical plane that the Heysen Trail becomes an intangible will-o-the-wisp. The landform is sea, sand, forest, rugged crags and many highly forgettable kilometres of mid-north rolling plain, though I'm sure many a walker has welcomed the easier walking. Who am I to impose my values anyway. Either way, choose your own, a gentle day stroll or a hard slog. The Trail can be a burning passionate challenge or a thing to get around to one-day. For sure though it's not really a practical way to get from one place to another. It offers two chances, some wonderful fellowship or real solitude in contemplation of an emptiness full of wind, open space, grass, trees and even a bird or two.

A great South Australian has, albeit posthumously, lent his name to our very own Trail. I'm sure he wouldn't mind sharing that tribute with many other people. As always, too numerous to mention but here goes, to the landowners who let us cross their properties, to the visionaries who inspired the concept, to the volunteers and professionals who negotiated, marked and still maintain our long and winding Trail.

I walked with clubs, like-minded impromptu groups, sometimes using two cars, or one car and two bicycles, walk out and hitch-hike back.



*Descending from Mt Bryan*

Son, be gentle on an old guy - the highlight - what will probably stick in my mind the longest will be seeking shelter in a storm on top of Stein Hill. Is that ever a paradox. Other than that, sand on the south coast, yet another Wild Dog Creek or a pub meal in Burra. Perhaps it's that mirror on this country of ours - the uneasy truce between eucalypt and pine in Wirrabara Forest, the two standing side by side, each waiting for the other to give ground. It was eerie too, clothed in a September mist.

Good question son, try it some time and find out. Take with you though the Golden Rules of the H.T.

1. The density of the marker posts is in inverse relationship with the difficulty of the track.
2. The duller the section you want to do next, the fewer companions you can find to come with you.
3. The longer and hotter the day, the longer and hotter the length of bitumen you need to cover to get to the car.

Charlie Adam