

ADELAIDE



Climbing Mt Remarkable.  
GAVIN CAMPBELL

## North to Flinders The Heysen Trail

Walk it in stages or walk it in one go. There's loads of adventure to be found on South Australia's 1200km Heysen Trail. Profiled by Gavin Campbell - Friends of the Heysen Trail.

### THE WALK

South Australia's Heysen Trail is approximately 1200km long and goes from Cape Jervis (100km south of Adelaide) to Parachilna Gorge in the North Flinders Ranges (500km north of Adelaide). It follows tracks, roads and occasionally crosses trackless paddocks and creeks. The flora encountered is mostly native, interspersed with pasture and occasional gardens, especially in the Adelaide Hills. Native animals are regularly encountered. The trail's greatest appeal is its wide open spaces and diversity of landscapes. The terrain and climate is akin to walking from England, with its rolling green hills, to the mountains and deserts of North Africa. It is a perfect place to regenerate your soul and enjoy South Australia from a different perspective.

### THE TRAIL

The Heysen Trail is well marked and the terrain is not overly strenuous. Mountains are few but those that are crossed offer great views. It is the length of the trail that provides the greatest challenge, with the more arid stretches farther north offering the added challenge of waterless terrain. Along the way there are many spur trails to lookouts, towns and other interesting attractions, so it is worth allowing plenty of time.

### 1 CAPE JERVIS TO VICTOR HARBOR (APPROX. 90KM)

To say that this section is spectacular is an understatement. The coastal cliffs and views from the rises are unsurpassed and the little coves and long sandy beaches are enchanting. In spring the wildflowers are not only visually stunning, but their perfumes can almost take your breath away. There are some steep sections along this stage as the trail winds its way up and down many hills and crosses many creeks. Deep Creek is particularly challenging for those who prefer a quiet stroll. But the effort is rewarded with much to see. One day we passed a sperm whale washed up on the shore of Tunkalilla Beach. Another time while watching the surfers at Parsons Beach from a nearby cliff, a seal swam into the lagoon between the surf and the beach, caught a large salmon and then rolled onto its back and joined us for lunch.

The walk from Waitpinga Beach to Kings Beach, near Victor Harbor, would have to be one of the best

sections of the entire Heysen Trail, with wildflowers, island views and spectacular cliffs that drop away to the Southern Ocean. Seals, whales and sea eagles can be seen during the winter. Expect a close encounter with an echidna; each time I have walked this section I have nearly tripped over one.

### 2 KINGS BEACH TO THE BAROSSA (APPROX. 310KM)

The walk north from Kings Beach into the Mount Lofty Ranges comprises rolling green hills and countryside. This is mostly dairy and sheep country interspersed with numerous native reserves; my wife and I have witnessed several animal births along this section. Mount Magnificent is aptly named, as the views of the Coorong, Murray Mouth and Southern Ocean from its summit are as the name suggests. From here to the hill suburbs of Adelaide is mostly forest walking through stands of pine and eucalypt. Jupiter Creek offers several old goldmine shafts to explore and there is a miner's cottage, blackened in the devastating fires of Ash Wednesday in 1983. The towns of the Adelaide Hills offer beautiful autumn and spring walking, with the botanic gardens beneath Mount Lofty being especially beautiful at rhododendron and camellia time. From Mount Lofty the trail heads towards the Barossa Valley, passing through the Mount Crawford pine and eucalypt forest. This forest often records the coldest temperatures in

the state. Walkers have even reported snow coating the trees, which provides a remarkably European feel.

### 3 THE BAROSSA TO THE FLINDERS RANGES (APPROX. 450KM)

Eventually the trail reaches the famous wine growing region of the Barossa Valley. Those walkers who like a drink of wine are urged to pause in Tanunda, the Barossa's central town.

The trail then heads for Kapunda, and then on to Burra, both historic copper mining towns. The hills around Burra are devoid of trees as these were cleared to stoke smelters. Every time I have been to this region it has been windy. This stage is made all the more interesting by the delightful Tothill Range, plus the trail's only visit to the dryer malley country east of the range; I found this small section terrific for its dry-land beauty.

The trail leaves the Mount Lofty Ranges when it passes over Mount Bryan, its highest peak. After this it crosses low ranges and long, wide valleys to Crystal Brook, the most southern point of the iconic Flinders Ranges.

### 4 THE FLINDERS RANGES TO PARACHILNA GORGE (APPROX. 500KM)

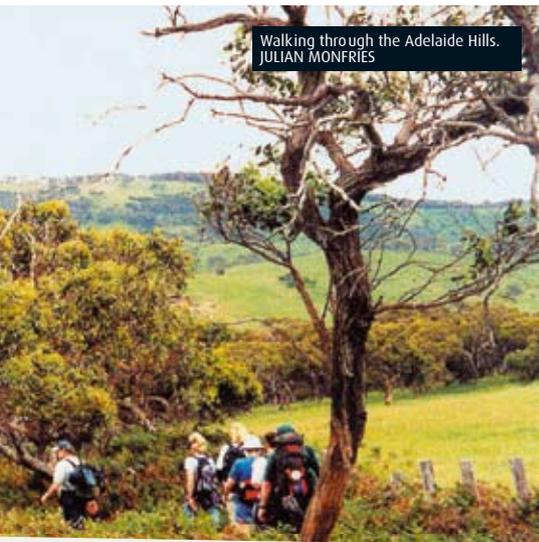
The Flinders Ranges are possibly the most picturesque mountain range in Australia near a major capital city.



Welcome to Hawker, the town of no shade. OLIVER FREAK



Almost the comforts of home. OLIVER FREAK



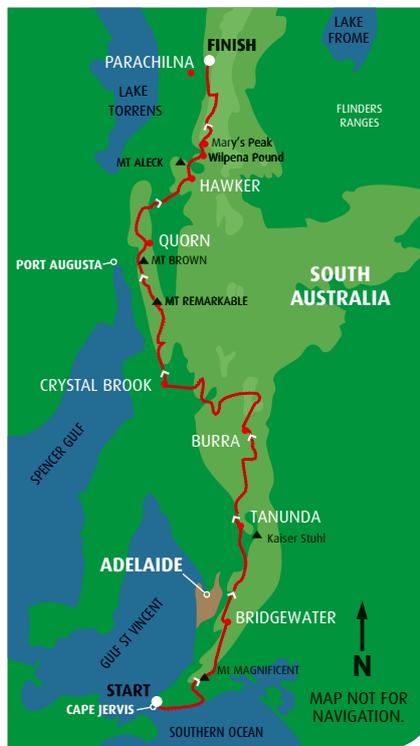
Walking through the Adelaide Hills. JULIAN MONFRIÉS



Walkers following a fence line. DAWN BON

I am certain their rugged beauty will not disappoint any walker who visits. The range forms a sandstone backbone that stretches from Crystal Brook in the south to Mount Hopeless in the north; it was Mount Hopeless that Burke and Wills were intending to reach. Through the town of Crystal Brook runs a creek of the same name. The sandstone cliffs along its length set the stage for the rest of the Flinders walk. The trail then heads to Mount Remarkable, so named by Eyre in his pre-European settlement travels. The climb

over Mount Remarkable is beautiful yet gentle, since a recent reroute was completed. When we climbed Mount Remarkable in the spring of 2004 there were copious wildflowers, including many native orchids. Those who are attentive may spy a plane crash site in one of the scree valleys. The trail then heads into Alligator Gorge, named not for its reptiles but for the sandstone walls that resemble alligator skin. The Heysen Trail then winds north over Mount Brown, Pichi Richi Pass and then into the historic town of Quorn. Quorn has been the setting for many films, most notable being *The Sundowners*, *The Shiralee*, and *Sunday Too Far Away*. After Quorn walkers pass Dutchman's Stern, then Eyre Depot, which looks over the vast, almost endless plains of the South Australian Outback. The trail then climbs up Mount Arden, where, after taking in the view for a few seconds, an atheist friend stated: "If there is a God, he surely created this!" Buckaringa Gorge, the town of Hawker, the Elder Range, Wilpena Pound, the ABC Range, and the Heysen Range make a fitting climax to a walk along the Heysen Trail. Dawn on the Elder Range is a must-see. I help maintain the section of trail from Hawker to Wilpena and the scenery is as good as it gets. The section from Wilpena is arid so each time I have walked it I have been surprised by the forests of native pine. One walker has even walked in snow at the base of Wilpena, a surreal experience in such a hot and dry part of the world and a testament to the terrain's many moods. Parachilna Gorge marks the trail's end.



**FACTS TO GO**

**DISTANCE:** 1200km  
**WALKING TIME:** 2-3 MONTHS IF WALKED CONTINUOUSLY, BUT IT IS BEST DONE IN STAGES

- GRADE:** Easy to strenuous walking/basic navigation/on-track
- SUITABLE FOR:** Fit, experienced walkers. Sound navigation skills an advantage.
- BEST SEASONS:** Autumn, winter and spring
- MAPS AND INFO:** Strip maps are available from most outdoors shops in South Australia, or from the Friends of the Heysen Trail. These are gradually being phased out in preference of a comprehensive guidebook.
- SAFETY AND COMFORT:** The best walking season is April to November. Outside these times it is considered too dangerous to walk because of bushfires, snakes and dehydration. Walking beyond the trail's northern terminus is considered dangerous.
- WATER:** Do not rely on rainwater tanks; no guarantee is given for the quality or availability of water in these. For your own safety, carry enough water for your needs or make alternative arrangements for further supplies.
- GETTING THERE:** Some parts of the trail are serviced by public transport, but on the whole it is most conveniently accessed by private vehicle. The trail can be walked as a series of day walks with a car shuffle.
- ACCOMMODATION:** There are numerous campsites and shelters scattered along the trail, but not enough to walk between day by day, so walkers should aim to be totally self-reliant in terms of accommodation. The facilities that are provided offer only a small sleeping shelter and a rainwater tank. In some locations huts have been provided, however these are also very basic with a rainwater tank, simple bunks, toilet, fireplace, tables and seats. Huts cannot be pre-booked or reserved so carry a tent in case shelters are fully occupied. The trail passes many towns with excellent overnight accommodation. B&Bs, farm-stays, hotels, motels and caravan parks can be found in many areas; check with the South Australian Tourism Commission ([www.tourism.sa.gov.au](http://www.tourism.sa.gov.au)) or the RAA ([www.raa.net](http://www.raa.net)) for the latest information and guides. Walkers should consider using the accommodation available in areas where the trail passes as this builds local support.
- MORE INFORMATION:** For more information contact Friends of the Heysen Trail: 10 Pitt St, Adelaide, SA 5000. Ph: (08) 8212 6299. Fax: (08) 8212 1930. Email: [heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au](mailto:heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au). Website: [www.heysentrail.asn.au](http://www.heysentrail.asn.au) or [www.parks.sa.gov.au/heysen.html](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au/heysen.html). Please be patient in your enquiries as this is a volunteer organisation and the office is not always attended.

**THIS WALK PROFILE** was prepared with assistance from Friends of the Heysen Trail. Contact: (08) 8212 6299, [www.heysentrail.asn.au](http://www.heysentrail.asn.au)

**OUTDOOR AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS** bushwalking clubs and recommends walking with a club for safety. Check [www.outdooraustralia.com](http://www.outdooraustralia.com) for club links and a full explanation of walk grades used in these profiles.

**Be careful when crossing roads. Motorists do not generally expect to see walkers.**