TRAILWALKER

Issue 176 • Dec 2026

FREE

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FRIENDS OF THE HEYSEN TRAIL

Published by the Friends of the Heysen Trail and Other Walking Trails

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CITY OFFICE

Suite 203, Epworth Building
33 Pirie St, Adelaide SA 5000

Open Mon – Fri
10:30am – 2:30pm

T (08) 8212 6299
E heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au

MEMBERSHIP

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Membership is valid for 12 months from the date of payment.

TRAILWALKER

Editor/Sub Editor
Tammy Main/Barbara Sedgley



Cover image: Where the Trail meets the water, Flinder Ranges. Photo: David Roberts.

Trailwalker welcomes photo submissions suitable for the magazine cover. Please email your high-resolution images to trailwalker@heysentrail.asn.au

About the Friends

The Friends of the Heysen Trail is a voluntary organisation established in 1986, dedicated to the maintenance, development, and promotion of the Heysen Trail and other walking trails in South Australia.

The Heysen Trail is a long-distance walking trail in South Australia, running from Parachilna Gorge in the Flinders Ranges via the Adelaide Hills to Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula, spanning approximately 1,200 kilometres in length.

The Department for Environment & Water (DEW) is the authorised manager of the Heysen Trail on behalf of the SA Government. The Friends volunteers undertake operational maintenance, development and promotion of the Trail in partnership with DEW.

Members of The Friends can actively contribute to the development and maintenance of the Heysen Trail, participate in leadership roles in the regular walking program (catering to beginners and experienced walkers), provide a valuable information source for hikers and help promote the volunteer organisation and the benefits of walking.

New members are always welcome.

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S9-11 PeterDeacon
S12-13 Dom Henschke
S14 Hugh Greenhill
S15-20 Daniel Jardine Coordinator*
S19 Simon Cameron

**assisted by Retired Active SA Bushwalkers*

Key Dates

DECEMBER
No Council Meeting

JANUARY
No Council Meeting

FEBRUARY
10th – Council Meeting

MARCH
17th– Council Meeting

APRIL
21st– AGM

The Friends of the Heysen Trail acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the ancestral lands we traverse along the Heysen Trail, embracing the Ngarrindjeri, Kaurna, Peramangk, Ngadjuri, Nukunu and Adnyamathanha peoples.

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→ Ancient layers, clear flowing waters, Warren Gorge. • Photo: Ingrid Castle

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Editorial

Articles, reports and other submissions by members and interested parties are welcome. Article guidelines are available upon request. Contact the Trailwalker Editor at trailwalker@heysentrail.asn.au

Deadline for the next issue (April 2027):

12th February 2027

The Trailwalker magazine is available by subscription or online at heysentrail.asn.au/trailwalker and is published and distributed tri-annually:

- April
- August
- December

The Trailwalker magazine has a minimum of 1,500 copies printed for each edition. The estimated readership is in excess of 2,500.

Contributors are urged to contact the Editor to discuss their article prior to submission. The submission deadline is approximately 6 weeks prior to the month of publication.

Views expressed in contributed articles are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the Friends of the Heysen Trail.

Advertising rates (ex. GST)

1/8 PAGE $180 per 3 issues
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1/3 PAGE $315 per 3 issues
1/2 PAGE $450 per 3 issues
FULL PAGE $660 per 3 issues
FLYER (supplied for insertion) $265 per issue

Advertising specifications are available from the Advertising Officer at: trailwalker.media@heysentrail.asn.au

It never rains, but it pours!



How does that saying go? It never rains but it pours! The heavens certainly opened up in August, and walkers in the Flinders Ranges copped a flooding. All roads north from Hawker were closed, and Ikara was closed to all vehicle and foot traffic. Mark and his team did a terrific job looking after the E2E15 group, but sadly had to cancel the last week, and the group will now finish the Trail next year. Other sections of the Trail were damaged, washed away in parts and have lost their markers. Sections 49 and 50, from Dutchmans Stern and through the gorge between Eyre Depot and Mt Arden, are examples.

Please be mindful that the tracks going into and through many areas are maintained by landholders who have limited resources to repair tracks quickly. Vehicle access is not guaranteed. Walkers should respect all tracks and gates to avoid further damage, and take a cautious, safety-first approach on the Trail. Meanwhile, the Friends are working to re-mark the Trail through affected areas.

On the bright side, now that the roads are reopening, the land is covered in a mantle of green and purple and there is water in the main creeks. The wildflowers are out, making it a walkers' delight. Still, please check the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park website and the Friends website for the latest updates.

The new Department for Environment and Water (DEW) Coordinator for the Heysen Trail, Genki Kondo, is settling into his role. We have had several meetings with him and are inspired by his enthusiasm and shared understanding that the Heysen Trail is a legacy to protect and develop. He has already been very busy getting out on the Trail, meeting with landholders and local councils, and coming to grips with the complexities of managing the Trail. While dealing with the details of Licence Agreements and Asset Plans, Genki is also starting discussions around the next 5-Year Plan for the Heysen Trail when the current one expires next year. The Friends will be heavily involved in the process.

The spirit of the Heysen Trail gets into your heart. I'd like to invite you to give some of that back to the Trail by becoming one of our volunteers. Stay on the Trail and consider joining one of the teams of leaders on future walks. Or put your hand up to join the Trail Development workforce, either in a Trail section team, with the Shed team building equipment for the Trail, or with a working party installing that equipment. Governance of the Friends is managed by the Council, whose members serve two-year terms, so there is always some turnover to keep things fresh. There are vacancies for next year. You could also join the office team, where customer relations and IT skills are needed. There are plenty of different ways to give back to the Friends and the Trail. You can follow the "passionate volunteers" link on the homepage of our website for more information.

Until next year, enjoy a safe end to the year and a happy festive season.

Neil Hendry
President

"Leave the road. Take the trails."
— Pythagoras 45



Welcome new members!

The President and the Council would like to extend a warm welcome to the 133 members who have joined the Friends since the August edition of Trailwalker.

Members and supporters are the life-blood of the Friends, so being a member helps to safeguard this precious community resource for future generations. Thank you!

Nominations for Honorary Membership

In September 2026, Council requested a review of the Friends of the Heysen Trail's current Honorary Membership procedures and criteria to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate. The review has now been completed, and the following outlines the updated criteria for awarding Honorary Membership.

The Constitution of The Friends of the Heysen Trail Inc states :

6 (5) Honorary Member means an individual who is elected as such at a General Meeting of the Association because of distinguished service rendered to the association or for any other reason deemed appropriate. An Honorary Member shall be entitled to all rights and liabilities of membership without payment of subscription.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Honorary Membership, a nominee must:

- Be a current member of The Friends of the Heysen Trail; and
- Be nominated by at least two other current members of the Association; and
- Have provided a minimum of twelve (12) years cumulative service in one or more of the following capacities:

Executive or Council

- Member of Executive; or
- Distinguished service as a Council Member, demonstrating active and meaningful participation.

Committee Leadership

- Distinguished service as Chair of a Committee, demonstrating active and meaningful participation.

Trail Development Leadership

- Distinguished service as a Section, Activity or Project Leader, showing active commitment to the management of trail section/s or development projects.

Walk Activity Leadership

- Distinguished service as an Activity Leader in leading or coordinating multiple walk activities from the extended walk program.

Other Distinguished Service
(this category does not require minimum of twelve (12) years cumulative service)

- Other significant or highly distinguished service to the Friends not covered above. This category recognises individuals who have provided outstanding service and whose contribution has made a significant and lasting impact on the Association.

Nominations now open

Members are invited to submit confidential nominations for Honorary Membership to Julian Monfries, Chair of the Council's Honorary Membership Subcommittee, at julian.monfries@bigpond.com.

Friends Office - Christmas & Holiday Closure

The Friends Office will close for the Christmas and summer break at 2.30 pm on Friday 11 December 2026, reopening at 10.30 am on Tuesday 2 February 2027.

Online shop remains open

Our online shop will continue to operate during the break, although order processing will be limited. A small team of volunteers will help dispatch orders, with a target of within five working days of receipt.

Christmas delivery deadline: To allow time for last-minute Christmas purchases, orders received by 12 noon on Wednesday 16 December will be dispatched before the Christmas break.

When we're back

Volunteers will return for the Office Volunteers' Information Day on Monday 1 February 2027, with the office reopening for normal business the following day.

Contact the Friends Office

Friends of the Heysen Office
Suite 203, Epworth Building
33 Pirie Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Monday–Friday | 10.30 am–2.30 pm
Phone: (08) 8212 6299
Email: heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au

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David and Sally Henery of Alpana Station Blinman offer a friendly, flexible and accredited **transport service** to *the best end of the Heysen Trail*: Wilpena, Blinman, Parachilna Gorge Trailhead, for individual walkers or groups. Transfers to other destinations by arrangement.

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Celebrating the Heysen Trail: 2027 Calendar Winners

The beauty and diversity of the Heysen Trail will once again take centre stage in our 2027 Calendar, celebrating the landscapes, experiences and special moments that make the trail so remarkable.

Our annual calendar competition provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase the full length of the Heysen Trail, capturing its changing scenery and reflecting the year that has been. The winning photographs offer a snapshot of the trail throughout the walking season, bringing together the perspectives and experiences of those who have explored it.



Congratulations to our 2027 Calendar winners:

- Andrew Kamm
- Carolyn Wilson
- Chris Young
- Connie Yeung
- Ingrid Castle
- Izabela Buick
- Josh Fairlie
- Judy Cullen
- Kylie Shield
- Paul Camus
- Peter Crambrook
- Philip Bell
- Wai-Shing Cheung

A special thank you to Lance Perryman, David Roberts and Philip Bell for their valuable contributions to the photo selection and pre-press preparation, helping bring the calendar together.

We would also like to thank everyone who submitted an entry. Your enthusiasm, creativity and passion for the Heysen Trail make this annual project possible.

Importantly, proceeds from calendar sales help fund projects along the Heysen Trail, meaning every calendar purchased helps support the ongoing care and enjoyment of this much-loved South Australian walking trail.

Order online at **heysentrail.asn.au/shop/product/heysen-trail-calendar/**



Trailthinker Quiz

For those who need a little help, take a peek at the piece on page 15.

1. Who is the mystery person pictured above?
2. What role did he just win?
3. In which country was he born and raised?
4. Which famous conservationist did he meet at the Nairobi Animal Orphanage?
5. Which South Australian region did he first work in as a ranger?
6. Which South Australian wetland landscape did he describe as an ancient place of shifting sands?
7. What three practical facilities did he credit Friends volunteers with providing along the Heysen Trail?
8. What is the American Indigenous philosophy of thinking seven generations ahead intended to encourage?
9. What did our mystery person study in Canada?
10. What does our mystery person hope the Heysen Trail will connect through future generations?

ANSWERS PAGE 29



Vale

Jack Marcelis

19/12/1940 - 21/07/2026

"Your feet are incapable of walking long distances," declared the Marine Division of the National Service in the Netherlands.

Jack was sent to Surinam, where he regularly undertook forced marches of [only] 70 kilometres. These were long, hard days and, upon returning from military service, Jack decided to immigrate to Australia.

Arriving in 1965, he settled in the Rostrevor area. Morialta became Jack's favourite park, where he spent many hours exploring the trails with his family.

Jack joined the Friends in 1990 and continued volunteering until shortly before his death. He began with the maintenance crew before joining the office volunteers in 1997. In 2006, Jack took over as Office Manager, a role he held until 2010. However, he continued volunteering in the office, with Wednesdays being his regular day.

Jack was passionate about helping his fellow walkers, particularly those preparing to walk the Heysen Trail End-to-End. His first question to anyone planning to walk the Trail with a pack on their back was almost always, 'How much weight are you planning to carry?' He knew that the weight of a pack could make all the difference to how enjoyable a walk would be.

His friend and office colleague Gilbert recalls: 'Many people sought his advice over the years, including my group of four, who completed the Trail in 2006. We constantly sought advice from Jack, who was a wealth of knowledge.' Gilbert later joined the office team, working alongside Jack for 18 years.

Jack was elected an Honorary Member of the Friends in 2007.

Jack completed two solo End-to-Ends of the Heysen Trail, walking once from south to north and again from north to south. Water was always a major consideration, often requiring him to walk off-track to find a water source before returning to continue along the Trail. Fortunately, this is less of a problem today, but Jack's advice remains relevant: 'Always carry more water than you think you might need.'

Jack also walked the Trail with E2E4 and E2E7, alongside me, and revisited some sections on multiple occasions. Sleeping in a tent was Jack's idea of a good night out. He loved waking to the sounds of the bush and looking forward to the day ahead. He always took time to appreciate his surroundings and enjoy a cuppa along the way.

Walking was Jack's passion. He walked the Western Australian Bibbulmun Track twice and explored walking trails in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, India, Nepal, England, Scotland and Wales.



"Now walking amongst the stars"

- Judith Ellis

Fire Season and the Heysen Trail: Is the Trail closed?

The short answer is yes, in many sections – but not everywhere. South Australia's bushfire risk is high during summer, and the 1200 km Heysen Trail is no exception. During the declared Fire Danger Season, the entire Trail closes, including Heysen Trail huts and shelters, and hike-in sites on private land and ForestrySA.

These closures are essential for walker safety and to protect our ongoing relationships with private landholders and land management agencies, including National Parks Wildlife Service South Australia, ForestrySA and SA Water. Please respect all closures and never walk past a closure sign.

It's not just about bushfire risk

Some landholders also use the summer months to undertake feral animal control. Walking through closed sections of the Trail could put you at risk, even if there is no immediate fire threat.

2026–27 Fire Danger Season dates

The SA Country Fire Service (CFS) Chief Officer declares Fire Danger Season dates annually. The 2026–27 dates are:

Fire Ban District	Fire Danger Season	
	From	To
Flinders District	15 October 2026	15 April 2027
Mid-North	1 November 2026	30 April 2027
Mount Lofty Ranges	1 December 2026	30 April 2027
Adelaide Metro	1 December 2026	30 April 2027

The Heysen Trail crosses several Fire Ban Districts, so closure dates vary along its length.

Important: CFS-declared dates take precedence over dates shown on printed maps or local Heysen Trail signage. Always check the latest information before planning a walk, as dates and restrictions can change.

Check current dates and closures:

CFS: cfs.sa.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/restrictions/fire-danger-season-dates-permits/#dates

Friends of the Heysen Trail: heysentrail.asn.au/heysen-trail/fire-danger-season/

WHERE CAN YOU WALK THIS SUMMER?

Just because the Heysen Trail is closed doesn't mean your walking boots need to go into hibernation! South Australia has plenty of other walking opportunities, including several longer trails that remain accessible during summer, subject to local restrictions.

Wild South Coast Way – 74 km

Cape Jervis to Victor Harbor

The coastal section of the Heysen Trail, known as the Wild South Coast Way, remains open year-round, except on Total Fire Ban days. A great option for those wanting a longer-distance adventure.

parks.sa.gov.au/experiences/wscw/

Willunga Basin Trail – 130 km

Southern beaches and hills

A varied trail taking in the landscapes of the southern Fleurieu Peninsula. Closed on days of Extreme or Catastrophic heat and Total Fire Ban days.

willungabasintrail.org.au/

Yurrebilla Trail – 53 km

Adelaide Hills

The Yurrebilla Trail offers a great opportunity to explore the Adelaide Hills. Open year-round except on Fire Ban days.

walkingsa.org.au/walk/find-a-place-to-walk/section-1-belair-national-park-to-eagle-on-the-hill-yurrebilla-trail/

Looking for more ideas?

Walking SA has a comprehensive directory of walking trails and destinations throughout South Australia.

walkingsa.org.au/

BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT

Walking trails in national and conservation parks, ForestrySA forests and SA Water reservoirs may remain open during summer, but local closures and restrictions can still apply. Always check before setting out.

Useful links for current alerts and conditions:

National Parks and Wildlife Service SA: parks.sa.gov.au/know-before-you-go/closures-and-alerts

ForestrySA: forestrysa.com.au/forest-management/plantation-forestry/upcoming-forest-operations-2/

SA Water: reservoirs.sa.gov.au/conditions-of-entry

A FEW SUMMER WALKING REMINDERS

If you're heading out on an alternative trail this summer:

- Start early to avoid the hottest part of the day.
- Carry more water than you think you'll need.
- Protect yourself from the sun with a hat, sunscreen and suitable clothing.
- Avoid walking in extreme or catastrophic heat.
- Check Total Fire Ban declarations and local trail closures before departure.
- Always have a backup plan.

Enjoy the summer, keep exploring and save the Heysen Trail for when it reopens!

Challenges on the Trail in a Changing Climate

Melanie Sjoberg - Trail Development Chair

It is generally understood that the planet and nature are suffering through climate change. Trying to manage the Heysen Trail maintenance is a very small sub-set of aspects affected by that reality.

Bushfires

In February a devastating bushfire closed Deep Creek and the Trail for several months. Thanks to the local volunteer CFS and National Parks and Wildlife Service (Parks) fire fighters the town of Cape Jervis and most of the National Park infrastructure was protected.

Wuldi Krikin Ngawanthi/Eagle Waterhole walk-in site suffered damage to 5 tent pads, a bridge and parts of the shelter. Happily, Parks rangers coordinated repairs, allowing it to reopen in September. The Trail route from Trig to Tapanappa via the waterfall was severely affected, resulting in a reroute being put in place for 2026. Parks is not yet able to confirm a timeframe to reinstate the original part of the Trail.



Despite the fire, the vegetation is rapidly rejuvenating, so the Trail

Photo: Melanie Sjoberg. Deep Creek landscape, May 2026.

offers a fascinating experience for maintenance volunteers and walkers to witness the green shoots and wildflowers as spring brings things back to life.

Rain and Floods

In the Northern Flinders, sections have been inundated with heavier-than-usual late rains and widespread flooding. Roads have been closed on several occasions for weeks at a time due to wash outs and guttering: some are still not accessible without a high 4WD (at the time of writing). Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and walking trails were closed to visitors for weeks as creeks posed a danger from excessive high flows.

These conditions forced maintenance volunteers to postpone several planned work trips to the north, including the installation of the long-awaited replacement tank at Stony Creek (now completed). Access is a particular challenge, as volunteers rely not only on main and minor roads but also on tracks crossing private and pastoral land. These designated access routes may be damaged or, in some cases, no longer exist.

Of course, the rain was welcomed by farmers for crop production, but it follows that there's an exponential growth of vegetation along the Trail. The challenges of access and ensuring the safety of our volunteers has made it almost impossible to organise track clearance. Walkers may need to tread carefully in places and be alert for Trail markers to stay on track.



Photo: Melanie Sjoberg. Ikara-Flinders flood aftermath, September 2026.

SOUTHERN OCEAN WALK
the Wild South Coast Way specialists





We specialise in small group pack-free walks along one of the most spectacular sections of the Heysen Trail. If you've always wanted to experience this stunning stretch of coastline in comfort why not join one of our bespoke tours. Our walks include return Adelaide transfers, comfortable homestead accommodation each night, gourmet meals & regional wines, local guides & use of equipment. A proud SA family owned business with over 30 years experience on the Fleurieu Peninsula.





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Photo: Simon Cameron.
Willochra erosion, August 2026.

Northern Maintenance News

Simon Cameron - Trail Development Section Leader

The wettest season for fifty years has transformed the north and challenged the Trail, even closing Ikara National Park in August. The start of the season coincided with fuel uncertainties, delaying routine jobs, and then the rains came.

Water erosion in Buckaringa and along the banks of the Willochra required track repairs. The alternate descent around a 3m waterfall in Buckaringa had already been planned and became an urgent task, marked in July.

The northern bank of the Willochra was badly gouged, requiring filling and stabilisation. The long-planned realignment of the Trail off Partacoona Road became a secondary issue.



Photo: Simon Cameron.
Willochra track work, August 2026.

7 km was completed in August, and the final stage is due next year.

Looking ahead, there is still plenty to do, both to complete the realignment and to keep up with routine track maintenance. If you have some time to spare and would like to lend a hand, we'd be very grateful for your support.

Enquiries can be forwarded to:
heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au

Mid North and Southern Flinders Trail Work

Daniel Jardine - Trail Development Sections Coordinator

Two volunteers, Adam Matthews and Kevin Dennis joined me to spend four days in late August carrying out some much-needed Trail work in the Mid North and Southern Flinders.



Photo: Daniel Jardine.
Start of Trail spur

Marking Spur Trail at Broadview

The day walk spur access at Broadview (Sections 45 and 46) has now been marked. The spur now proceeds to the south of the Broadview Homestead and follows a fence line to intersect with the main trail. There is a sign on the new stile where the spur departs the main trail. The spur trail has been mark all the way out to Gunyah Road.

Boot Cleaning Stations in the Mid-North

Boot cleaning stations along with disinfectant have been installed at Georgetown, at the end of the road heading into Hiskeys Hut (for those walkers travelling North) and at Locks Ruin on Slattery Road (for those walkers proceeding South). Using the boot cleaning stations help protect our farming properties along the Trail, by reducing the spread of weed seeds, soil-borne pathogens and other pests.

Re-marked Wilmington Section

The Trail that runs along Horrocks Pass Road between Horrocks Lookout Road and Horrocks Pass has been remarked to use a bike track in the road verge rather than the paddock to the west.

Platform at White Park

A new platform has been installed at White Park walk-in campsite.





Photos: Daniel Jardine
Above: Boot cleaning station
Below: White Park Platform

Reconciliation

Acknowledging the Trail's First Nations Builders

Simon Cameron

As part of the Friends' reconciliation mission, walkers acknowledge Country, but the Friends of Heysen Trail also acknowledge the First Nations builders. In Terry Lavender's book, 'Last Post,' which describes the trials and tribulations of building the Trail, there is a remarkable tale of the first four men to work on the Trail, putting in the first posts in 1978.

The Trail had little support in the Labor Government of the day. The Minister for Sport and Recreation had begrudgingly accepted Lavender's proposal for a pilot build running 50 km from Mt Magnificent to Mt Lofty. It had to be completed in 3 months to convince the Minister it was feasible. Sport and Recreation offered a budget of $50,000 ($300,000 today), but Terry Lavender was experienced in the vagaries of government departmental funding and didn't expect to see the money up front. Instead, Terry knew that the easiest funds were to be found in departmental grants. You just needed to keep your ear to the ground and choose the right department. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs was offering a funding program for 'young Aboriginal men.' Terry's application was successful, and the funding provided four employees and a 4-wheel-drive vehicle.

Terry is adamant in his account. Without these 'first four', the Trail would never have been built. Terry was also very frank about his lack of experience with 'Aborigines.' He also claims that because of this he was not influenced by naysayers with the 'usual stereotypes about Aboriginal people.'

Terry's account is wry and informal, so we don't know the names of the 'first four.' He calls them 'Black Bob,' 'Hippo,' 'Big Norman' and 'Lionel' and he gives only brief background. All we know is that 'Black Bob' was a timber worker from NSW who was a whizz with a chainsaw and arrived at work just after sun up because he did not have a watch.

What we do know is that the job was finished on time, 'working over long days, and a lot of hard physical work in cold and wet conditions,' and before a cent of the Department's funds had been allocated. A heroic achievement that should be widely acknowledged. It would be fitting to put full names to the 'first four'. Someone may know, otherwise it is back to the archives.

On 17 November 1978, an opening ceremony was held for the Heysen Trail, with the Minister and Warren Bonython officiating. The Trail naysayers had been proven wrong and a great adventure trail was born. I cannot find any images of this first opening ceremony, but I like to imagine four proud First Nations men turning up early and being congratulated by all and sundry.

SOUTHERN OCEAN RETREATS

Deep Creek Conservation Park





Renowned as the crown jewel of the Fleurieu Peninsula, Deep Creek National Park offers spectacular coastal views, tranquil forests, and abundant wildlife. Make the most of your visit by staying in one of our charming cottages nestled within the park. With easy access to a variety of graded walking trails - including the iconic Heysen Trail - you can explore at your own pace. From cozy retreats to family-friendly stays, there's a cottage to suit every style and budget.





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Friends Summer Walk Programme 2026-27

	1ST WEEK	2ND WEEK	3RD WEEK	4TH WEEK	5TH WEEK
DEC	WED 2 DEC **Wild Dog Glen** Lance Perryman	WED 9 DEC **Crafers Loops** Karen Baker			
	FRI 4 DEC **Marino to Hallet Cove Loop** Kathy Wright				
	FRI 4 DEC **Marion Coastal Walk** Kathy Wright	SUN 13 DEC **Morialta Falls Loop** Rin Green			
JAN		WED 6 JAN **Famous Faces & Commemorative Places** Julian Monfries	WED 13 JAN **Seacliffe Breeze with History** Vicki Stewart	WED 20 JAN **Mitcham Reserve to Waite Arboretum** Kristyn Willson	WED 27 JAN **Karrawirra Pari - Torrens River Loop** Rin Green
		THUR 7 JAN **Carrick Hill Loop** Kathy Wright	FRI 15 JAN **Coastal Series - Outer Harbour to Semaphore** Kathy Wright	FRI 22 JAN **Coastal Series - Semaphore to West Beach** Kathy Wright	FRI 29 JAN **Coastal Series - West Beach to Brighton** Kathy Wright
FEB	WED 3 FEB **Linear Trail - West Beach Loop** Vicki Stewart	WED 10 FEB **Onkaparinga** Karen Baker	WED 17 FEB **Western Surprise** Kylie Gibbons	WED 24 FEB **Karrawirra Pari - River Torrens Loop** Rin Green	
	FRI 5 FEB **Coastal Series - Brighton to Hallet Cove** Kathy Wright	FRI 12 FEB **Coastal Series - O'Sullivan's Beach to Moana** Kathy Wright			
	SUN 7 FEB **Belair Adventure Loop** Rin Green	SUN 14 FEB **Brock Reserve to Chambers Gully** Kathy Wright	FRI 19 FEB **Coastal Series - Moana to Pt Willunga** Kathy Wright	FRI 26 FEB **Coastal Series - Pt Willunga to Sellicks Beach** Kathy Wright	
MAR	WED 3 MAR **Pt Noarlunga Coastal** Vicki Stewart		SUN 21 MAR **Aldgate Valley Loop** Rin Green		MON 29 MAR **Pioneer Womens Walk** Kathy Wright

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Red Rocks, Running Water and Red-Hot Ants: A Southern Flinders Hub Escape

Judy McAdam

There is a distinct magic that happens when you leave the city traffic behind to spend a weekend with like-minded people. For our latest hiking getaway, Mount Remarkable National Park turned on the charm, offering a spectacular mix of rugged peaks, hidden sanctuaries and unseasonal weather. To make it even better, we were joined by Tasmanians Di and Byron, eager to experience a slice of South Australia's premier walking terrain. Over three days, our intrepid group tackled a mountain, two iconic gorges and a healthy dose of outback hospitality.

Day 1: The Mountain and the Melrose Warm-Up

We kicked off our trip on a beautifully warm day, setting our sights straight on the Mount Remarkable Circuit. We chose to tackle the summit loop from the edge of Melrose, beginning with a steady, heart-pumping ascent up the Southern Trail. Passing through the grey box woodlands, the trail eventually linked up with the iconic Heysen Trail for our descent along the northern side. Walking the Heysen sections always sparks a deep appreciation for the volunteers who keep these world-class tracks maintained.

After a well-earned lunch, we kept the legs moving with the gentler Melrose Nature Hike, soaking in the local history. By mid-afternoon, our thoughts turned exclusively to cold refreshments. While we were disappointed to find the local brewery closed for a wedding, a local pub stepped up, providing the perfect place to clink glasses and celebrate our first 15-plus kilometres.

Day 2: Heat, Heights and High Drama in Hidden Gorge

Day two threw us into an entirely different landscape. Setting off from the Mambray Creek side, we committed to the 18-kilometre Hidden Gorge Circuit, walking clockwise under another unseasonably warm sun.

The limb up to Battery Ridge was a classic Flinders opener – an uphill start to the day! But the effort paid off at morning tea, where we sat high above the world, looking out across the shimmering blue waters of the Spencer Gulf.

We descended into the gorge, where Di and Byron, more accustomed to the greenery of Tasmania, found the contrast of fiery red rock and native pines nothing short of stunning.

At lunch, surrounded by towering gorge walls and abundant running water, the peacefulness was shattered by the afternoon's finest comedic moment. Our front pacer, Flex, somehow managed to anger an inch ant. The resulting bite drew a swift crowd – and vastly more laughter than sympathy from the group. By the time we hit that final, l-o-n-g kilometre back to the cars, everyone's feet were feeling the distance, but the mood was soaring.

That night, we headed to 'The Wilmo' (the Wilmington Hotel) for some classic Aussie pub fare. Over food and heaps of laughs, we reflected on the day – though the pub's water supply seemed to be running lower than the actual gorges!

Day 3: Warm Rain and Wading Through Alligator Gorge

Our final day brought a rare outback privilege: walking in the rain in the Flinders Ranges. Far from dampening our spirits, the warm downpour added an incredible atmosphere to Alligator Gorge. Walking clockwise, we tackled yet another steep morning climb to get into the canyon. Along the ridges, it was beautiful to see the landscape bouncing back with vibrant new growth, showing strong signs of recovery from the devastating February 2025 bushfires.

Down on the gorge floor, the sheer volume of water was unusual. The absolute highlight for many was navigating 'The Narrows'. The water was so deep that we had to wade knee-deep through the cold, crisp stream. As our feet said, "Aaaaah!", we spotted a group of kids in the cutest pink gumboots, completely fascinated by the local tadpoles. It was a lovely reminder that, despite fires and floods, some beautiful things never change.

The weekend wrapped up perfectly.

While some of the group had to dash back for work the next day, the remaining hikers retreated to Jacka's Brewery. We treated ourselves to wood-fired gourmet pizzas and a well-earned refreshment. A special shout-out must go to Katt, who introduced us to a dessert pizza so decadent it should probably be illegal.

With big smiles, tired legs and memories of a spectacular, water-filled outback landscape, we returned to reality. The Southern Flinders had delivered the ultimate weekend escape.

Photos: Roz Garrad, Anne Barnet and Izabela Buick

← Far left: Alligator Gorge

↗ Top Left: A little adventure, a lot of smiles and plenty of reasons to keep walking.

↗ Top Right: Wading through Alligator Gorge

→ Right: Looking out across the vast Willochra Plain from the slopes of Mount Remarkable

↓ Below: A little burst of sunshine.









BLINMAN, SA

FLINDERS & BEYOND

CAMEL TREKS



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Genki Kondo



As the new Heysen Trail Co-ordinator with DEW, Genki Kondo will play an important role in the ongoing management and development of our much-loved Trail. We caught up with Genki to learn a little more about his background, his connection to the outdoors and what he hopes to bring to the role.

Tell us a little about yourself and how you came to work in conservation and the parks service?

I started my journey into conservation in my **home country of Kenya** during my first year of high school, when I met the son of a local Ranger. His tales inspired me into spending every available weekend and school holiday working at the Nairobi Animal Orphanage.

What was just a part-time endeavour slowly began to shape my trajectory. I remember when **I met Jane Goodall** for the first time, such an unassuming force for nature! She was characteristically humble and very matter of fact, even bothering to introduce herself to little old me! As if any of us wouldn't have known her! We hardly shared more than a few pleasantries, but I realise now that those hours spent in her aura were a significant catalyst to realising how approachable and fundamentally human even the most legendary people can be.

I continued my work in Kenya, gaining opportunities to work within the National Park during the wildlife population census. Caring for orphaned wild animals taught me the fundamentals of service. Caring for denizens of the facility, some of whom I hand-reared and who would eventually grow up to be wild and untamed if I did the work properly. I was scratched, bitten and charged. No grateful thanks, no recognition of the hours drip feeding milk formula to an emaciated cub who grew to be the lion that bit my finger.

A few adventurous forays into the wild with the Rangers was spending time with my heroes – in my eyes they were legendary warriors, protecting nature and fighting with their lives and very old rifles. But their spirits were indefatigable and their dedication unwavering.

Studying Wildlife Biology in Canada honed my intellectual focus on subject matters; ranging from pure science to debating the treatises of some of our globe's greatest nature philosophers.

I travelled across the temperate landscapes of the North American continent, visiting places I had only seen on TV. Storybook nature came to life in the form of fern forests, mossy glades and snowy peaks stewarded by an articulate culture of people whose present work considered the lives of those seven generations ahead and taught me the power of legacy.

Endless wilderness showed me the power of solitude. Alone in these places, I grew to find a sense of kinship with the nature around me. It was no longer a place to visit, it was home and it had many beautiful rooms.

I returned to Kenya with a new fire and spent months **researching monkeys in the abandoned ruins of a 15th century Swahili city,** overgrown by coastal jungle and towering figs. Back home, yet changed, expansive in the awareness that life in the natural world would truly be my calling.

I crossed the Rubicon when I entered the tropical jungles of Costa Rica and found myself living on the other side of a moral code I had followed thus far.

I was adopted by a band of gold miners who lived in secrecy within a national park, sleeping in camouflaged shelters constructed out of basic materials, and shifting the river's sediment with hand tools to find the most minuscule flecks of gold, making less in a month than I could make in a day. The desperation that drove them to trespass into these protected lands at risk to their lives, showcased the injustice of a system that defended nature, in one of the most biodiverse places on the planet, while extinguishing many rights of the indigenous custodians of the land.

Holding two pink baby armadillos that Jose had rescued from the river only days before, I could not find fault in this wizened elder of the land, who was simply stuck between the waterways of his childhood and the demands of the modern world. The delicacy of his carvings, capturing an eagle in flight, or a resting serpent was evidence of a man who observed the depths of nature and listened to its stories. He and his companions loved their lands and invited me to experience its wonders.

What have you learned working across South Australia's landscapes?

I started my work in South Australia within the folded green valleys of the Fleurieu, learning the fundamentals of how the smallest actions can transmit across time. I have also learned the humility of our commitment as Rangers, where sometimes we realise that all we may be able to accomplish is to not let it get worse. The improvements and value of our efforts may not be something we see, but trusting in the incremental benefits of authentic action will actualise towards a tangible change.

I believe this mindset is essential in the energy I bring to the Heysen Trail. This will not be a singular effort, but a collective endevour that brings us closer to the nature along the Trail that existed long before I came to this place and should by all rights, continue to exist beyond all our lifetimes.

In my role within the South Metro team, I learned the value of honest communication. Under the generous guidance of a considerate leader, **I was trusted to work alongside a broad range of stakeholders**. Looking after the Heysen Trail requires taking the time to listen to all the stories of those who have given their energy to this work before me. I believe putting aside my own agenda and opinions will allow me to embody the essence of public service: working for the greater good, including those whom I may not necessarily align and abvoe all for the benefit of the natural world, whose voice is often a whisper.

My work in the Coorong allowed me to exist within an ancient landscape of shifting sands, where cultural connections are embodied in the lives of those who still live there and gave me their friendship and welcome. It was a reminder that the country I work within holds the continuing story of our planet's oldest living cultures. Long before our trails existed, lines that connected these knowledge keepers created far reaching networks. It is my hope to learn more about the country through which the Trail traverses and weave in the input of the traditional custodians.

What makes the Trail special, and what do you hope walkers discover?

The diversity of ecosystems that the Trail crosses is a wonderful showcase of the rich nature this state has to offer. Not only a vision into different wilderness areas, but a lens to better understand some of the state's history and see the regional communities that thrive within these beautiful towns. I expect anyone who walks the Trail will **become more enchanted with the quietly unassuming grandeur of South Australia.**

This state has taught me to really **appreciate subtler nuances of nature**. The sometimes-harsh conditions mean its plants are conservative and its animal residents are secretive. Slowing down to bend closer to the earth, I have discovered an intricate richness in the small and delicate plants. Walking slower and remaining still, I have seen and sometimes felt a glimpse of rare animals. A flash of a tail, a rustle of brown fur, an enchanting song from a hidden feather. **I hope those who walk will discover the simplicity of allowing our feet to transport, both physically and in awareness, to a greater elevation**.

What role do you see Friends of the Heysen Trail volunteers playing in the Trail's future?

I am humbled by the collective culture of volunteerism in this country. With regards to the Trail, **I see the incredible effort and consistency that the FoHT have executed over decades**. Without them, the Trail would not have the waymarkers to guide the hapless walker, watertanks to slake the parched and campsites to rest the exhausted. Beyond that, their advocacy for the Trail has increased its recognition, it has brought long awaited status and has been instrumental in securing the necessary funding, governance and strategy that will be crucial in the long-term sustainability of the Trail, and as a legacy beyond all our lifetimes.

Without the FoHT's indefatigable efforts, undertaking a 1200km journey would simply not be possible. Making the end-to-end walks accessible to a wider range of people has brought this connection with the landscape into the memories and homes of so many South Australians who have chosen to commit to the 6 year walk calendar. Many I have encountered recently speak with such deep pride of their journeys across years on the Trail.

How do you see your role in bringing different groups together?

The partnerships that allow the Trail to exist incorporate so much trust and goodwill from such a diversity of people. I believe one of the things that makes the Heysen Trail so special is how many people have been willing, over the years, to allow walkers to access private areas of land which may otherwise remain unknown. The landholders and their families have been incredibly generous and without their involvement, the Trail would simply not exist.

I have already seen how many relationships intertwine within the communities and towns but also across the length of the Trail. The FoHT have always remained a trusted group that coalesces communication. **I hope to learn from them, establish connections and over time, avail myself to the greater trail community. I would like to gain a better understanding of how each member or group see their long-term role in this collective work.**

I believe the ancient pathways that the Trail crosses and the Traditional Owners who care for the land will be a fundamental bond that secures this trail into perpetuity.

Always was. Always will be.

Looking ahead a few years, what would you hope to have achieved in the role?

My aspiration is that the work we do will cement the legacy of the Heysen Trail in this landscape well beyond our lifetimes. That the FoHT will continue to grow in strength and teach us through their tireless dedication how we can build upon the amazing work that they always do. That the various Traditional Custodians will continue to help us bring their lore back into this land. That we can all be a part of a living story that connects the ancient past to our footsteps.

Walking with Camels

Melanie Sjoberg



A change of plans led to an unexpected adventure across the vast, water-filled landscapes of Lake Torrens. Travelling with camels, this ten-day trek revealed a spectacular tapestry of wildflowers, wildlife, salt plains and desert colours, offering a slower-paced and memorable immersion in the beauty of the outback.

As I lingered atop a dune, my eyes were drawn to multicoloured layers of stony gibber plain and silver salt crust before gasping at the seemingly limitlessness across Lake Torrens. Mirages really do happen.

Heavy rains through July and August led to flooding throughout the northern Flinders Ranges, frustrating plans for Heysen hikers and other organisations. I received a phone call a few days prior to a scheduled July camel trek to learn that the Strzelecki Desert was closed. Instead we would kick off from Andamooka to explore the uppermost part of Lake Torrens instead.

Ten days walking with Flinders & Beyond Camel Treks across Mulgaria Station and along the uppermost sections of Lake Torrens proved to be a delight for the senses: immersed in the meandering pace of the camels I found opportunity to observe and ponder sights and sounds of the landscape.

Ngardamukla/Lake Torrens encompasses traditional lands of Kokotha, Barngala, Arabana and Adnyamathanha/Kuyani. Stretching some 250km and 30km wide it is now a protected environment containing diverse plant and birdlife managed by National Parks , Permission is required for access through pastoral properties. In respect of that privilege we followed leave no trace principles.

Sharing the journey with camels means they transport all equipment, food and water, so walkers only carry a day pack; no riding involved. It does, however, require a psychological adjustment as the camels set a manageable pace with their gentle pads, and which may include random stops for chewing on tasty vegetation. Plans for lunch and overnight camps are similarly dictated by the camels needs. It is a welcome luxury to let go of any organisational thoughts and allow the cameleer to call a morning tea or lunch stop with, hopefully, a bit of shade and tasty plants for the camels.

It doesn't take long to settle into a routine. Morning kicks off with breakfast around a fire before packing up the swag while the camels are rounded up for loading. Lunch of wraps, fruit and a billy for tea or coffee soon becomes a refreshing treat. Mid-afternoon the reverse takes place; it's time to unload the camels, collect firewood for cooking and set up swags for the night. The array of meals around the campfire under starry skies is certainly part of the adventure. Ryan the cameleer conjures up a variety of delicious dishes that are even more incredible for being juggled over coals.

The group is small and the camels large so there is scope to ramble at a bit of a distance. I had loads of time to stop for photos, investigate interesting plants, reptiles, birds and rocks or just gaze around without losing sight of the camel train. It's not too hard to catch up again.

The landscape offered a myriad of colours as our feet traipsed over a patchwork of small pale gibber stones, interspersed with red rocky patches,

followed by a trudge up and over soft white sand dunes.

Walking along yet another part of the lake we find our boots sinking into beige muddy spots and crunchy salt layers with the appearance of 1970s crazy pave. At one point I inadvertently slide down a narrow slimy edge that left my companion laughing hysterically while I skidded and slipped desperately aiming for grip to reinstate an upright position.

The extent of water, a legacy of recent heavy rains, was one of my greatest delights and surprises as it had encouraged drought-dormant seeds to rejuvenate. We wandered amidst carpets of wildflowers and skittering insects. The bright red Sturt Desert Pea (SA State flower) excited the group with ever more photos, no matter how often they appeared – and we were fascinated to find rare pink ones.

Each day delivered more. We were stunned by the abundance of samphire from brown to green to reds and purples, feathery saltbush, silver cassia along with bullock bush and wattles. We learnt about the "storks bill" spikes of the native pelargonium; an apt descriptor as they screw into the ground to settle until the next rains launch germination. I also discovered that my admiration of some fluffy white & red-flecked balls [cannonball burr/ball bindyi] was misguided as it transforms into strong spiky prickles that really hurt underfoot.

We were often entertained by variegated crickets that leapt around and into us as we created a path through knee-high troves of mulla mulla, sedges and grasses. I tried to be mindful not to damage the proliferation of spiders' delicate weaves among the grasses. At other times I was startled by the chirrups of boisterous zebra finches or the quails and pipits scattering as our feet hustled them from their scrub cover.

Living in urban density we easily forget how remarkable it is be in such vast open spaces that have been walked upon for tens of thousands of years. To experience the silence that accompanies a dark night sky in the desert is ear tinglingly awesome, especially when accompanied by millions of stars. This diverse arid country north of the Flinders certainly draws me back.

You can read about another camel experience 'Beyond the Heysen Trek' written by FOHT member Anne Kirk in Trailwalker Spring 2020.







Photos: Melanie Sjoberg

← Far left: Camels at rest.

↑ Top: View across Lake Torrens at sundown.

↖ Left: Curious Alf.

↗ Right: Sturt Desert Pea gone crazy.

BLINMAN, SA

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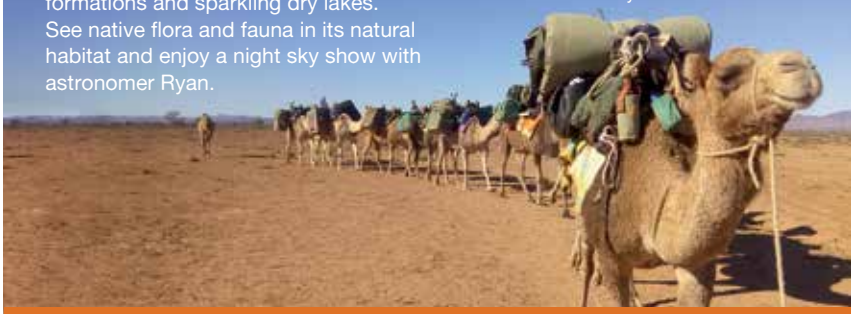

HEYSEN EXTENTION JUNE/JULY 2027



YES, YOU'RE RIGHT! THIS IS NOT AN AD FOR HEYSEN TRAIL ACCOMMODATION. BUT IT IS AN AD FOR A MARRIAGE CELEBRANT BECAUSE EVEN TRAIL WALKERS FALL IN LOVE...

...Or decide to renew their vows, or need a funeral celebrant, or want to celebrate other significant events in their lives.

Be assured that the booted, beanied, unshaven character you may have seen on trail can scrub up when required.

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The Art of 'Just Keep Going'

Jacqui Taylor

There are some adventures that are meticulously planned for over months or even years. Then there are those that begin with a thought that simply refuses to go away. For me, walking the Heysen Trail was somewhere in between.

I had just returned from five weeks in South Australia after deciding I needed to escape the Tasmanian winter for a while. Before long, I had committed to walking the full Heysen Trail, Australia's longest marked hiking trail, from Parachilna Gorge in the Flinders Ranges to Cape Jervis.

It was, in many ways, a bit of a whim. I didn't spend an enormous amount of time preparing, was that a good thing? Sometimes, having less time to think about everything that could go wrong makes it easier to simply get on with it. I organised food drops, booked accommodation in towns where possible and built some flexibility into my schedule.

This time, I deliberately allowed extra time before my flight home. After walking the Australian Alps Walking Track, where I had felt pressured to keep moving to meet a deadline, I wanted this trip to be different. I wanted to listen to my body and stop when I needed to. That was the intention, anyway.

In reality, I walked approximately 1,125 kms in 35 days, averaging around 32 kms a day, with almost 28,000 metres of elevation gain. Not a single rest day.

The Trail normally takes considerably longer, and looking back, that is probably the biggest piece of advice I would give: don't rush. Slow down and enjoy it.

Finding my rhythm

The first day was deliberately short. After a massive travel day involving multiple delays, I finally arrived in Port Augusta late at night. The following morning, I made my way to Parachilna Gorge, where I had originally planned to camp before properly starting the next day.

Instead, I decided to just start walking. Thirteen kms of mostly creek-bed walking brought me to Pigeon Bore just before dusk. I saw my first goat and its baby within the first fifteen minutes, along with kangaroos and plenty of birds. I didn't see another person once I started walking.

I remember feeling excited and grateful. That feeling continued through the early days, although it was soon accompanied by tiredness, irritability and the dawning realisation that this was going to be a much bigger physical undertaking than I had perhaps appreciated.

The Trail was incredibly diverse; red outback landscapes, rocky creek beds, steep ridges, rolling green hills, farmland, vineyards, pine plantations, forests, coastal cliffs and beaches. One day I could be scrambling through a rocky gorge; the next, walking beside a vineyard or along an exposed country road. That diversity was one of the things that kept me going.

Life became simple

Long-distance hiking has a funny way of stripping life back to its basics. Most days became a variation of: wake up, pack up, walk, eat, drink, walk some more, find somewhere to camp, set up, eat again and sleep.

The kilometres varied, but 30 km became almost normal. There were days of 40 km or more, including one 46.57 km day. There were also shorter days when I deliberately slowed down or walked into town.

My pack was constantly changing. After a resupply, it felt brutally heavy; by the end of a food carry, wonderfully



Photo: Jacqui Taylor

light. Food drops became little milestones to look forward to, as did showers, beds, washing machines and the promise of a proper meal.

Accommodation became a surprisingly important part of the journey. I had deliberately booked rooms in some towns to make the trip a little more enjoyable. After days of sleeping on the ground, a hot shower and a clean bed could completely change my mood.

Quorn was a perfect example. I arrived tired and irritable and ended up staying at The Mill, where I received an incredibly warm welcome, a beautiful, clean room, a robe to wear while doing my laundry and even a new gas canister. It was one of those unexpected acts of generosity that stays with you.

Food was another constant source of motivation. There was something deeply satisfying about sitting beside a creek for breakfast, stopping at a hut for lunch or arriving in a country town knowing there was a café waiting for me.

Of course, there were also days when food and water became sources of stress. On one section, I had only around 100 mL of water left with eight km still to walk. On another, I had to filter questionable water simply because I needed it. I learned very quickly that water could never be taken for granted.

The hard days

Not every day was beautiful. Some days were genuinely miserable. Long, flat, exposed road walks were surprisingly difficult. Creek beds, with their loose rocks, soft sand and slippery clay, became some of my least favourite terrain. Heavy packs after resupply were punishing, particularly when combined with heat and endless roads.

Then there was the weather. The South Australian winter delivered just about everything: rain, wind, freezing mornings, frost, sunshine, fog and sudden changes.

One of the toughest days came around Mount Bryan. The weather deteriorated rapidly. Fog rolled in, the wind became vicious and the rain returned. I was being blown off my feet and became acutely aware of the risk of hypothermia. I remember cursing my own stubbornness.

I ripped my pants climbing over a barbed-wire fence and descended the mountain in cold, wet conditions. By the time I reached the shelter, I was saturated and exhausted.

Then the door opened. Inside was a group of hikers sitting around a roaring fire. They invited me in and even lit another fire for me. Up until this point, I had camped alone, so this simple act of kindness felt enormous.

The Burra Hills also stand out as a memorable day, although perhaps not for the right reasons. Brutal gale-force winds and sideways rain made for some seriously tough walking. Character building, perhaps, but not particularly enjoyable at the time.

Of course, there were plenty of other difficult moments. At times I was angry, lonely, bored, exhausted or questioning my life choices. On some days, I cried simply because I was so tired.

But I never stopped.

People, animals and unexpected companions

One of the things I hadn't expected was how much company I would find in a place where I was often walking alone. For much of the Trail, I saw surprisingly few people. Sometimes I could go an entire day without encountering another hiker.

Instead, I had plenty of animal company. Kangaroos appeared regularly, as did emus, goats, sheep, cows, horses, galahs, cockatoos, eagles and countless other birds. Some became almost part of the daily scenery. The sheep, in particular, became my good mates.

There were plenty of little moments that made the journey memorable: encountering curious cows, watching eagles circling overhead and even spotting a kangaroo that needed wildlife rescue after getting its paw caught in a fence.

The people I did meet often left an impression because encounters were relatively rare. I crossed paths with fellow through-hikers, section hikers, trail runners, farmers, café owners, caravan park hosts and complete strangers along the way. The Trail repeatedly reminded me that although long-distance hiking can be solitary, it doesn't have to be lonely.

When the end came into sight

Somewhere along the way, the kilometres began to become milestones. 100 km. 200km. Then 600km... Halfway. And towards the end, 1,000 km. I made a point of stopping for a break whenever I came across a marker. A small celebration, if you like, but each one felt significant.

By the final week, the landscape began changing again. I reached the coast and suddenly the finish felt real. On the 33rd day, after walking 46.57 km, I followed the coastline towards Victor Harbor and could see West Island in the distance. I was tired, but excited and increasingly aware that the end was close.

The final days were a mixture of excitement, impatience and exhaustion. There were beaches, steep climbs, wind, soft sand and spectacular coastal views. The final beach sections seemed to take forever, particularly with erosion and tides making progress slow.

And then came the last day. I had imagined finishing the Trail would be some huge, emotional moment. The weather had other ideas. Rain arrived during the final hour. By the time I reached Cape Jervis, I was cold, wet and struggling to see through the rain. After 35 days of walking, the finish was almost an anti-climax. I had a lift organised, so I got out of there.

It wasn't until the next morning, when I woke up and realised I didn't have anywhere I needed to be, that it really registered. I had finished.

Would I do another 1,000km+ hike?

Well, I don't have to wonder for long. At the end of this month, I'm about to embark on the 1,000 km Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia. If I complete it, I will have completed the Australian Triple Crown of hiking in less than a year. That feels like a pretty extraordinary thing to be able to say.

The funny thing is that when I started the Australian Alps Walking Track, I wasn't setting out to prove I could complete three of Australia's great long-distance trails. I was simply looking for another adventure and a challenge that would push me outside my comfort zone.

What the Trail taught me

Perhaps the biggest lesson wasn't about how far I could walk. It was about learning to live with things not going exactly to plan. The weather changed. Water sources weren't always reliable. Accommodation didn't always live up to expectations. Distances were sometimes longer than anticipated. I took diversions, changed campsites, shortened days and occasionally pushed further than I should have.

The hardest thing for me was accepting that slowing down wasn't failure. I went into the journey wanting to practise listening to my body. I didn't always succeed. My stubbornness and determination often won out.

But somewhere among the long roads, steep hills, freezing mornings, beautiful sunsets, muddy paddocks and endless kilometres, I began to understand that finishing isn't necessarily the most important measure of an adventure. Sometimes it's simply being willing to keep moving.

The Heysen Trail tested me physically and mentally. I was tired, frustrated, lonely, happy, grateful, angry, excited and occasionally completely over it.



Mark your achievement and help the Friends advocate for improvements

The Friends of the Heysen Trail issue certificates to people who have hiked the entire Heysen Trail from Cape Jervis to Parachilna Gorge (Northbound) or from Parachilna Gorge to Cape Jervis (Southbound).

Apply for a certificate: heysentrail.asn.au/friends/end-to-end-certificate/

But I was also incredibly lucky.

I got to spend 35 days walking through an extraordinary and constantly changing landscape. I met kind people, experienced moments I never could have planned and discovered I was capable of much more than I thought.

And perhaps the hardest part wasn't actually the walking. It was coming home.

I find it surprisingly difficult to settle back into reality after spending a long time away hiking. Life can feel strangely complicated again after experiencing the simplicity of that daily rhythm.

Perhaps that's why I'm always planning the next adventure. Once I've experienced that freedom, part of me is always looking for a way back to it.

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Editor's note:
Planning a through-hike on the Heysen Trail takes careful preparation. The Friends of the Heysen Trail website offers useful information to help you plan your journey, including practical advice for long-distance walkers and current tank water levels along the Trail. Visit our website to help prepare for your adventure: heysentrail.asn.au


Photo: Jacqui Taylor



Eyes on The Ground – We Need Help from Heysen Hikers

What needs attention? What needs improvement? What have you noticed?

The Friends Trail Volunteers will be working closely with the new Heysen Trail Coordinator [Department for Environment & Water] to review the Heysen Trail 5 Year Management Plan 2022-2027. Does that sound a bit tedious?

We need a Plan. It helps guide what we collectively fund and work on to enhance the Trail. We take a look beyond stiles and marker posts to broader sustainability, longer-term maintenance and development.

Did ideas pop into your head as you walked? Was there a boardwalk or bridge that seemed unstable, a section of Trail eroding or an area that needed a boost to facilities? Were you wondering if the amenity could be improved at a location? What were your thoughts about the Trail experience?

Email your ideas to The Friends: heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au. Att: Trail Development Committee (TDC). Please include detailed information and, where relevant geo-location, Heysen Trail map sheet reference and photos.

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Seven Voices, One Trail

Photo: Izabela Buiick



The Heysen Trail winds through some of South Australia's most spectacular and diverse landscapes, but those landscapes are increasingly shaped by the effects of a changing climate. Bushfires, heavier rainfall, flooding and changing seasonal conditions are influencing not only the environment but also the experience of walking the Trail.

This past year has offered some striking examples. In February, a devastating bushfire swept through Deep Creek, closing the National Park and sections of the Trail for several months. Further north, unusually heavy late-season rain brought widespread flooding across the Flinders Ranges, cutting roads, damaging access tracks and closing walking trails for weeks.

For walkers, these events are a reminder that the Trail is never quite the same from one season to the next. A familiar landscape can be transformed by fire, tracks can become inaccessible after heavy rain, and vegetation can change the character of a walk. Yet there is also the remarkable resilience of nature to witness, from fresh green shoots and wildflowers emerging after fire to the renewed life that follows welcome rain.

While the conditions present challenges for those maintaining the Trail, they also shape the experiences, observations and memories of the people who walk it.

In this article, we hear from seven walking groups, each with their own perspective and connection to the Heysen Trail. Their stories remind us that while we may share the same trail, no two walking experiences are quite alike. For some, it is a challenge to be conquered; for others, an opportunity for adventure, friendship, personal discovery or simply an escape into the spectacular South Australian landscape.

A NEW START

End-to-End 20

Words and Photo: Lyn Nottage

Excitement was palpable in April as our new end-to-end group, E2E20, the Tenacious Twenties, set off on our very first walk on the Heysen Trail. However, instead of the usual post-lunch climb up Cobblers Hill on Section 1, we found ourselves taking in the mighty Waitpinga Cliffs and spectacular Encounter Bay on Section 4.

Why, you ask? The bushfires at Deep Creek just before the hiking season had burnt large tracts of Section 1 and destroyed much of the infrastructure along Section 2, necessitating a rethink of our walking program.

We could have started with Section 3, but who would return after their very first walk on the Heysen Trail involved climbing the infamous Balquhidder Hill? So, we decided to skip ahead to Waitpinga, returning to the coast only for the last walk of the season.

Walking out of sequence gave us a new perspective on the Trail. Normally, the walk from Inman Valley to Myponga happens at the end of the walk season, but for us it was in June and involved a slippery slide through the mud up Sugarloaf Hill. Kyeema Conservation Park, usually walked in June, was ablaze with wildflowers in September, including many varieties of native orchids.

Next year, we start our weekend walks and will once again experience the coast as we return to the official start of the Heysen Trail at Cape Jervis. From there, we will make our way through the Adelaide Hills and the Barossa, eventually finishing north of Kapunda.

What a range of scenery we will experience next year! Turns out changing things up can be a good thing!

Along the way, our group of strangers has evolved into a group of friends. I am also blessed to have a brilliant and highly experienced leadership team comprising Dom, John, Rin, Paul and Roz. I greatly value their support, particularly as we have had to make so many changes along the way.

Check out our special leadership badges next time you see one of us. They celebrate a very special friendship within the Friends of the Heysen Trail.



WHAT I REMEMBER MOST

End-to-End 18

Words: Sally Staggs and Photo: Alan Kull

When I think back over Year 3 of E2E18, there isn't one particular moment that stands out. Instead, what I remember most is the gradual development of friendships, camaraderie and connections within our wonderful group of walkers and leaders.

Year 3 marked the beginning of our weekend walks, and for many of us, the weekend really started on Friday night. Gathering in the caravan park camp kitchen, sharing food and drinks, laughing, chatting and preparing for the walks ahead became an important part of the experience.

Over these weekends, we got to know each other beyond the walking trail. Conversations started with the basics: what we did, where we lived, our families and children, and why we had decided to take on this challenge. Before long, conversations extended to books we had read, first concerts, travel, interests and all sorts of unexpected connections. It has been wonderful to discover how much we have in common, while also learning about the very different lives and experiences within our group.

One of my highlights has been our Saturday night dinners. And, of course, the themes! Give this group an excuse to dress up and they are more than happy to embrace it! These evenings have created some great memories and plenty of laughs.

What makes E2E18 particularly special is that we are all there for the same reason. We love walking, and we share the goal of completing the incredible Heysen Trail. We come from different backgrounds, are different ages and have different abilities, but out on the trail we are all doing the same thing: walking that road, climbing those hills, coming down the other side, encouraging one another, and eventually enjoying that very welcome lolly snake before spotting our cars at the end of the day.

A huge thank you goes to our wonderful leaders, who continually inspire, encourage and support us while keeping us safe along the way. They also have a wonderful habit of not telling us 'exactly' how far we have to walk.

Looking back, Year 3 has been about people, friendship, laughter, shared experiences and the feeling of belonging.

So here's to E2E18: more fun, more hills, more snakes, more dressing up, more Friday night gatherings and, most importantly, more friendship in 2027!







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Photo: The Four Peters

AN ENSEMBLE OR A CONFLUENCE?

End-to-End Minus 3

Words and Photos: David Roberts

You know, I was kind of guessing this might happen. A new group, the first few days getting to know people, slotting in, finding a nice pace. But this time, walking south with the sun on your back is such a joy. Some familiar faces, some not.

I'm checking my images at the end of each day. Ahh, that's Peter Clarke. And yes, Peter Cranbrook. A few days later, it's Peter Solomon this time, and yes, Peter Deacon. But wait! Peter Nation. How many is that?

A few days later, we arrive at the trail junction, otherwise known as "Peter's Corner" (Section 50/51, the Warren Gorge walk-out/walk-in). I really can't believe how green it is!

Time for a group shot. I have four Peters together on the day, all at the same time, at the "corner". Who would have guessed? An ensemble or a confluence?

So much Heysen Trail knowledge, so many kilometres under their belts, so much leading and sharing, exploring alternative routes and completing a swag of maintenance.

It seems to me that every Heysen Trail experience is different. No two days are the same, no two groups are the same, and every point along the trail looks different at every moment of the day.

Let's hope that in 30 years' time, it will be a group of Aidens or Emmas standing for a photo at the "corner", reflecting on their individual contributions and their love of South Australia's great long-distance walking trail.

With so much rain this year, yes, a confluence, but it's always better "ensemble".











↖ Top, Left: Peter Clarke
↖ Top, Right: Peter Nation
← Far Right: Peter Crambrook
← Middle Right: Peter Deacon
← Right: Peter Solomon

WHAT DO THEY SAY? A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS!

Photos: Leanne Chalker



↑ Above: E2E19's second encounter with a fierce bull this year.



↑ Above: Goanna fleeing from Nifty 19's and their mascot Sniff the Echinda.



↑ Above: 300km down, 900 to go.



↑ Above: Some of the best walking companions have been standing here for centuries.



↑ Above: Meredith wins best costume for her tomato at the E2E19 Red dinner in the Barossa Valley

THE TRAIL, MY SANCTUARY

End-to-End 17

Words and Photo: Lynne Bullen

Every bushwalker knows that a long-distance trail is measured in kilometres, but for me, the Heysen Trail has become a measure of personal transformation. My journey with this iconic South Australian track didn't follow a straight line; instead, it took an unexpected detour that completely altered my life's landscape.

My true connection to long-distance walking sparked far from home, when completing the rugged terrain of Tasmania's South Coast Track reignited my deep passion for walking. Driven by that newfound enthusiasm, I decided it was time to tackle and complete our own 1,200-kilometre masterpiece. I originally set out by joining the End-to-End 13 (E2E13) group. But, as it did for so many, life soon threw up a series of formidable roadblocks.

In 2019, I had to walk away from the group as COVID-19 disrupted the world and everyday life demands became increasingly difficult to juggle.

I was then thrown a challenging curveball: a serious health diagnosis. Suddenly, the future felt deeply uncertain, and the sweeping open ridges of the trail felt a world away.

Yet the pull of walking, and what it offers me, never truly faded.

When the opportunity arose, I stepped back out into the elements and joined End-to-End 17 (E2E17). Coming back was about far more than just ticking off uncompleted sections; it was a conscious choice to reclaim my health and my spirit.

Looking back, the challenges I faced before my return make the rewards of the track taste so much sweeter. The vast, open spaces and the therapeutic greenery have provided a profound sense of healing that medicine alone could never replicate. More than anything, the deep, unconditional friendships formed on the track, forged through shared mud, steep inclines, sweat and laughter, have rewritten my perspective on resilience.

End-to-End Awards

Congratulations to the walkers who received End-to-End awards for completing the Trail up until the **end of October 2026**.

Barbara Birkett
Lucy Brooke
Adele Caon
Peter Deacon
Veronica Denwick
Philip Downing
Jesse Fenner
Paula Gill
Amanda Gulliver-Mort
John Gavin
Ji Hang Lee
Peter Hicks
Malcolm Jones
Kado Lee
Suzanne Macauley
Julia McLachlan
Jarad Mellor
Dean Mortimer
Niccy Pallant
Dianna Payne
Irena Rayner
Phillip Reichardt
David Rees
Nick Richardson
Di Robinson
Schalk Roelofse
John Schumann
Naomi Small
Lawrie Stanford
Rurik Symon
Jacqui Taylor
Jane Turnbull
Mark van Zuilekom
Kevin Ward
Gavin Wasson
Nicholas Waite

The Heysen Trail began as a hiking goal, but it has ultimately become my sanctuary. It taught me that while life can unexpectedly interrupt our stride, the trail, the unconditional friendships, the community and the open sky will always be waiting to welcome us home.





A FEAR OF WATER?

End-to-End 15

Words: Wayne Miller and Photos: Vince Rose



We earned our name by surviving a Pamplona incident early in our quest to conquer the Heysen Trail. Trapped in a road reserve with a herd of cattle, it was the steers who jumped the fence to escape the formidable walkers!

However, we have also earned a reputation for being afraid of water. To be fair, the weather gods have generally been kind to us, and rarely have we been challenged by water, either from the sky or underfoot.

We had one memorable rain event in the early days on the South Coast. Rain was coming at us horizontally from the Antarctic as we crouched behind tussocks on a sandhill, trying to eat our lunch. A few aspiring walkers decided that the Heysen Trail wasn't for them that day.

Fast forward to Crystal Brook, where a dry creek bed one day turned into a babbling brook just when we needed to follow it. Drought conditions had prompted the authorities to release an environmental flow from the reservoir upstream. Unprepared, we followed the creek and had to cross it nine or ten times. All manner of solutions were attempted, including climbing high up the creek banks and removing footwear to wade, but nothing saved us from getting wet feet. Some survived the first few crossings, but all eventually succumbed to soggy socks.

This year, things really came to a head.

In June, we headed to Hawker for a week of walking. The weather forecast was uncertain, but our spirits were high. Four walks over five days were planned, and we largely dodged the rain for the first three walks, although not the mud!

Friday saw us walking from Leigh Creek Road to Mt Little Station. It was wet, with water coming from the sky as we left the bus, and water underfoot along the creek beds that made up most of the day's walk. Early in the day, the crossings were easily traversed, but along the way we encountered a couple of walkers heading in the opposite direction. Their parting words were, "You're going to get wet." We laughed it off. Surely not us!

Our luck ran out at the confluence of Wonoka Creek and Mernmerna Creek, where the combined flows become



the Hookina Creek. The volume of water was too much for our boots. Innovation didn't help, and no alternative routes could be found. One walker even tried a pair of boot-shaped plastic bags, which we all coveted until it became clear that the slippery rocks made the going perilous. We all ended the day, and the week, with wet boots.



Sadly, our grand finale, completing our six-year quest, was cancelled at the last moment. I hasten to explain that this wasn't because of our fear of water, but because the Flinders Parks had been closed following record-breaking flooding.

We're still processing our disappointment, but are already looking forward to a great finish in 2027!

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DELIGHT IN DEPOT CREEK

End-to-End 16 by Catherine Paterson and Ingrid Castle

by Catherine Paterson and Ingrid Castle

Spectacular! Our Year 5 journey on the Trail finished with a challenging hike through the splendour of Depot Creek, complete with flowing cool water, waterfalls, rocky sections and ledges. Magnificent surrounding gorges, with their folded, layered and angled quartzite formations, provided a canvas for contemplation and awe. From the moment we started, this walk never stopped giving, with spectacular views and iconic Flinders Ranges scenery.

Leaving Quorn in convoy at 6.10 am, we arrived at Warren Gorge just as the first rays of sunlight illuminated the sky in hues of pink and yellow through a thin layer of low grey cloud. Below, vertical red rocky outcrops were punctuated by green cypress pines, the grey bark of gums and sprinklings of wildflowers. Heavy raindrops fell briefly on this warm, humid morning, causing a flurry of coats to be donned for the short walk to the bus, although they were not needed again. At 6.45 am, we departed for the rather lengthy two-hour journey to Eyre Depot, on the western side of the ranges where Wilkatana Station is located.

A short 1.7 km walk-in along a red dirt track, strewn with gibber and low green scrub, with views towards distant layered ranges, brought us to the junction between Sections 49 and 50. There, a stone monument lists the European expeditions to the area. In 1839, Eyre made his discovery, naming Depot Creek after finding a permanent spring, already known and used for millennia by the traditional owners of the land.

We will remember our good fortune in being here following recent heavy rainfall. It was a unique experience from drier years. The resulting terrain presented obstacles and challenges not usually encountered, requiring greater care, close attention to the surfaces underfoot and careful consideration of how best to tackle each one. Progress was slow, but exhilarating. Like a true explorer, our leader Michael led the way, demonstrating his experience as he navigated the best route around each obstacle!

What an adventure! We climbed upwards and northwards for 9 km, following the creek bed and rock-hopping as we criss-crossed the water countless times. We scrambled over larger rocks and boulder formations, negotiated cascading waterfalls and fallen tree trunks, climbed under and over tree roots, and pushed through lush, thick vegetation and narrow paths along the creek edges. Walking poles were extremely useful in some sections, but less so when handholds and footholds were needed. Great care was taken to find the best places from which to climb, balance or land. There were a few minor stumbles, but thankfully no serious injuries.

The forecast was spot on and, by lunchtime, we were feeling the heat. Sweat, fatigue and faces feeling as dry as sandpaper. Finding respite in the shade of the gorge beside the creek, we welcomed the opportunity to soak our feet, cool our towels and clothing, or simply sit quietly. This is a place where a connection can be felt, very personally, with the history, the landscape and the people.

More ascending and descending followed as we entered and left gullies with fascinatingly layered walls and floors, shaped over time. Panoramic vistas from higher ground revealed distant peaks and ranges so typical of the Flinders. We left the trail at Peter's Corner, where a walk of about 5 km brought us back to the cars at Warren Gorge.

Thanks again to Kathy, our coordinator, who inspires us all, and to the walk leaders, who were always available to assist walkers through tricky sections and difficult moments on a very warm day. We are grateful for their tireless preparation, endless generosity of spirit and the wonderful experiences we enjoy because of the time and energy they give. Our thanks also go to our exceptional backup team, who support us in so many ways, often exceeding expectations.

We will remember this relatively short section with delight: for the rare privilege of experiencing the creek in seasonal abundance, the arduous creek navigation and the awe-inspiring scenery. We can feel content in having completed what is said to be the toughest year on the Trail, as we look forward to the year ahead.



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Step by Step, Stitch by Stitch

Heather Thompson

Photos: Heather Thompson

The community-driven Knitters Without Borders (KWOB), ably guided by Rose Fox, have been meeting for seven years. The group have a creative team of around 25 members, all skilled in a variety of handicrafts and happy to share their knowledge and skills with others.

Their handmade creations are sold at trading tables over long weekends, while weekly contributions to the community piggy help raise funds to support a wide range of local charities.

Recently, KWOB was delighted to be 'commissioned' to provide 50 warm, colourful and individually knitted beanies for a Heysen walking group. No problem for this talented team of knitters!

It was a wonderful opportunity for the End-to-End 17 walking group to support a valued community organisation with a donation towards its charitable work.

The End-to-End 17 group set off from Cape Jervis in 2023 and, on a blustery, chilly day in July 2026, reached the halfway mark just outside the old Mount Bryan East School.

Walkers were delighted to receive a beanie as a memento of the occasion and wore them with pride as they continued along the Trail, climbing to the summit of Mount Bryan before crossing the range to Hallett.

Knitters Without Borders is a friendly Normanville group where knitting, laughter and good company come together Monday mornings at Caffe On Bungala. For more information on KWOB email: roxyfox46@gmail.com









Trailthinker
Quiz Answers

1. Genki Kondo
2. Heysen Trail Co-ordinator
3. Kenya
4. Jane Goodall
5. The Fleurieu Peninsula
6. The Coorong
7. Waymarkers, watertanks, campsites
8. Considering long-term impacts on the environment and future generations
9. Wildlife Biology
10. The ancient past with our footsteps

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Image: Maggie Moy

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