



GREAT
COASTAL
WALKS
.....
SOUTHERN
OCEAN WALK,
SA

COAST WITH THE MOST

On the Southern Ocean Walk, Hayley Rochford discovers the essential elements to a great hike.

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WORDS AND PHOTOS_
HAYLEY ROCHFORD



Left: Happy hiker Hayley.

I HAVE always loved the idea of walking the Heysen Trail, but at a distance of 1200km from Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula to Parachilna Gorge in the Flinders Rangers, where does one begin? A new guided walk, the Southern Ocean Walk allows you to experience the first 50km of this magnificent walk. On most of my trips I'm accompanied by a friend or a family member but on this trip it was just me, my new hiking companions and our guide.

My decision to walk without friends or family came about because, having just returned to SA after six months on the road experiencing van-life with my two daughters, I needed some mummy-self-care top-up time. In the past, my multi-day hikes have consisted of me carrying my pack and pitching my tent each evening, so this was going to be a whole new experience. What a dream – my favourite things all packaged into a guided walk with a focus on connecting to nature. Days filled with bushwalking and learning; evenings of wine and homemade local food; along with plenty of time to reflect, be in the moment

and dream – not to mention, a hot shower and comfy bed. I have always felt bushwalking is meditation in motion (see pg32), and this hosted and guided-style walk was going to be next level ... what a gift to give oneself.

Over the last six months I have travelled 20,000km by road and visited many beautiful paces, and had my breath taken away at the beauty of nature in Australia time and time again, but the saying 'There's no place like home' couldn't be any truer. The Southern Ocean Walk is in my home state of SA, and what a way to re-orientate to being at home. This experience for me was like a homecoming back to self and nature and place, and it exceeded my expectations.

The Southern Ocean Walk is so much more than a walk – it is an experience in its own right. An all-inclusive experience during which you are guided, fed and cared for, whilst walking this stunning part of the iconic Heysen Trail. Each day you are looked after by your guides, and transferred daily to and from the trail to the homestead accommodation – and let me tell you, it is special.



Above: Morning briefing with Barry.

Below: Birdsong to the left of me, ocean to the right.





“THE SOUTHERN OCEAN WALK BOASTS SOME OF THE MOST STUNNING COAST I HAVE EVER LAID MY EYES ON,”

Above: A creek crossing and a spot of rain added to the adventure.

NEED TO KNOW

The Southern Ocean Walk is 90 minutes from Adelaide. Trips depart each Monday between 1 April – 30 September. There are two trips available: Southern Ocean Walk: 4 days/3 nights and Deep Creek Highlights: 3 days/2 nights. More info southernoceanwalk.com.au

For more info on the Heysen Trail visit heysentrail.asn.au

The Southern Ocean Walk hosts are a warm and extremely knowledgeable husband and wife team, Barry and Jane, who have met the challenge of finding the way to every hiker's heart – be it through the scenery; the stomach; the informative guides and caring team; the comfortable, warm and welcoming accommodation; or the perfect balance between social and quiet time. Barry calls this the ‘five essential elements to a great walk’ – and he and his team have perfected them.

Scenery

From the moment I started the drive down the Fleurieu, to my return home after four days of walking, I felt like my senses were being saturated in natural beauty and diversity. The Southern Ocean Walk boasts some of the most stunning coast I have ever laid my eyes on, but it's not just this that held me awe-struck – it was the diversity of landscape in the distance that we covered; it was the islands off the coast and the abundant flora; it was the over-the-top cuteness of the 'roos with their inquisitive joeys checking us out as much as we were them; it was spotting an osprey followed by scarlet robins and shingleback lizards, dolphins, echidnas and so much more. This walk is certainly a nature lover's dream.

Accommodation

Arriving at the homestead, I flung myself onto my big, warm bed and looked out at the view, my mind racing as to ways I could come back here again. The homestead's decor has been meticulously styled with a country charm. The homestead is in Deep Creek Conservation Park, so the daily transfers to and from the walk are also a stunning journey in themselves, and returning each afternoon feels like coming home. Jane goes above and beyond at the homestead to make it feel welcoming, with the fires lit, and nothing too much trouble. The highlight for me at the accommodation was the afternoon we returned to individual foot baths complete with rosemary and Epsom salts. With a glass of bubbles and a platter, we all sat outside and soaked our weary feet and felt like the luckiest hikers in the world. It was in this moment I realised that I LOVE surprises and this new way of walking is something else. I made a point each evening of heading out to one of the decks and looking up into the sky, before jumping into bed and snuggling in with the electric blanket.

WALK NOTES | SOUTHERN OCEAN WALK, SA

Time: 4 days | **Distance:** 49km | **Grade:** easy-moderate



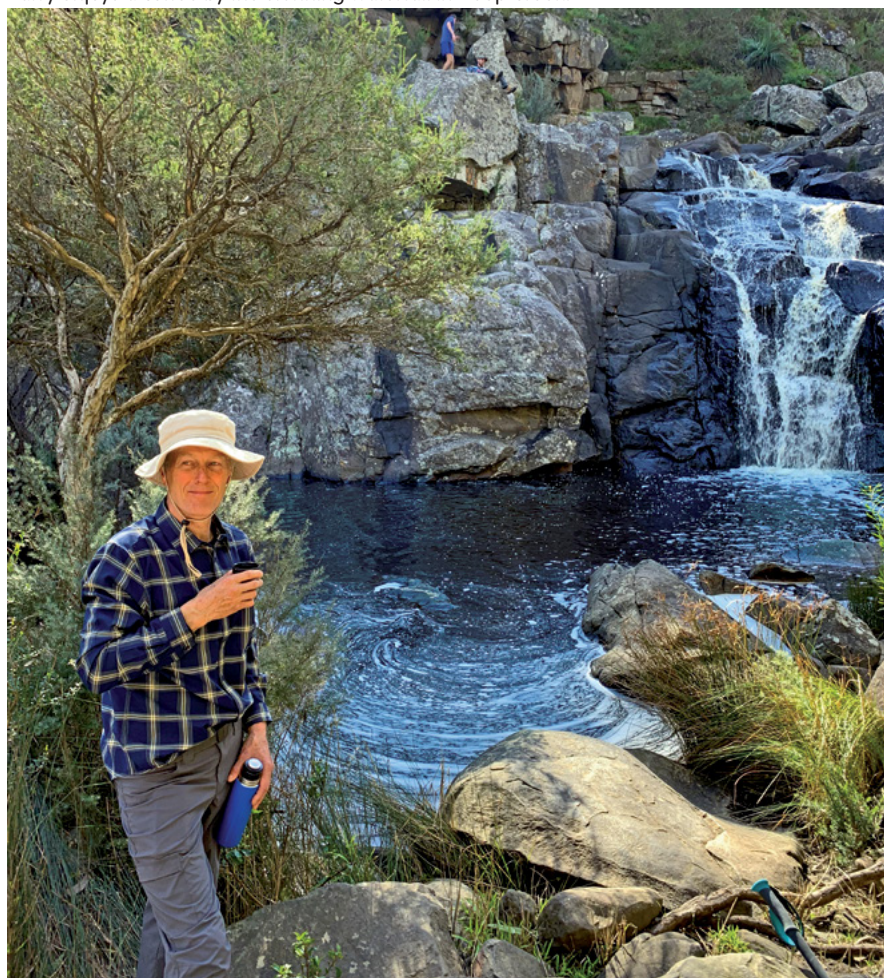
Day 1: Cape Jervis to Deep Creek. 5hr

Day 2: Exploring Deep Creek. 5.5hr

Day 3: Deep Creek to Tunkalilla Beach. 4.5hr

Day 4: Newland Head Conservation Park. 5.5hr

Barry enjoys a coffee by the stunning waterfall in Deep Creek.



Food

Who knew you could walk 50km and put on weight?! I joke, but seriously, Jane takes nourishing the walkers seriously – her Italian heritage and love of the Fleurieu Peninsula shine through. The region is renowned for its top-quality produce and wines, beers, ciders and juices – and they are paired and presented with homemade love and care.

The Southern Ocean Walk Experience includes all your meals and drinks, and by this I mean a fully cooked brekky if you fancy one; a packed lunch and snacks; morning and afternoon tea; and upon return to the homestead each day, a welcoming platter of local produce and the popping of a cork. The dinners were themed – Italian, Mediterranean and modern Australian, and presented as three courses matched to local wines. Jane explains the produce and where it came from on the Fleurieu, the lack of food miles involved, and her love of the region – and this level of care makes her food shine.

The highlights in the food/ beverage area for me were too many to mention – but the platters of local produce were certainly a favourite. In fact, the Little Acre chicken pate almost caused a cracker duel. The local wine matching to the meals was great and my favourite tippie was a McCarthys Orchard Cider by the fire. The pannacotta desert was delicious. And a special shout-out for the super tasty on-trail packed lunches.



Clockwise from above:

Look at those packed lunches. Yum!

Loving the coastline on the Southern Ocean Walk.

Footbath and a glass of bubbles with new friends.

Guides

The Southern Ocean Walk team of guides, drivers and cooks made the experience extra special. On the trail, Barry and Jen guided us, while Graham, the driver, did the daily transfers. With Jane back at base, as I liked to call the homestead, they had everything covered. Barry's knowledge is mind blowing – he would be the perfect person to have on your quiz team.

Barry's passion for the area – the history, the flora and fauna – and his ability to share his knowledge with guests along the trail was a real bonus. The stories he told really brought the landscape to life for me and I gained a deeper understanding of the land and its rich history. Barry had an on-trail guest meet us on day four at the most picturesque picnic table imaginable. Local Elizabeth Steele-Collins is a wildlife conservationist (also known locally as 'the eagle woman') and while we ate lunch, she gave us a passionate talk about the Newland Head Conservation Park, the white bellied sea eagle and the southern right whale, including Milkyway – the whale she got to name. And although we didn't spot Milkyway the whale, Elizabeth gave us each a Milkyway bar instead – a sweet touch.

Social/solitude

I have come away from the Southern Ocean Walk with a deeper sense of calm and connection to nature and also with some new friends (even if Alexis won both games of backgammon). There's plenty of time over the four days and three nights for a balance of solitude and being social to be struck. Friendships on the trail develop quickly and are often intense. There's something special about sharing an experience like this, where stories are told along the way, and there's time for them to impact you and bring perspective and understanding. There were also times for nourishing solitude, where you could walk and simply listen to the sounds – of the sea, the trees, the birdsong – and get lost in the moment. Bliss.

I often joke about having decision fatigue in daily life; with so many choices and therefore so many decisions to make. The Southern Ocean Walk experience was such a gift. Being cared for in such a way, doing something that I love, and having the opportunity to learn and really connect with this part of the world is something I will be forever grateful for. 🌀

Great Walks was a guest of
Southern Ocean Walk